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Influence of Social Media on Patients' Perception of Healthcare Services in Afe Babalola University Multisystem Hospital, Ado- Ekiti, Ekiti State

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Article history: Received 16 June 2025, Reviewed 23 July 2025, Accepted for publication 14 September 2025

Abstract

Background: The influence of social media in the society is on the increase. As a result, misinformation could influence patients' perception of healthcare services received. It is therefore important to assess social media's impact on healthcare. This study aimed to determine the influence of social media on patients' perception of healthcare services in Afe Babalola University Multisystem Hospital, Ado-Ekiti.

Methods: A descriptive research design was used for this study, one hundred and eighty consenting participants mostly outpatient attending AMSH were selected using purposive sampling technique.

Result: The findings of this study showed that respondents deemed information obtained on social media regarding their health conditions and treatments as important. It also showed that 8.3% of the respondents used social media for health-related reasons. 60% of the respondents believed that health related information on social media is reliable, but 75% of the respondents consulted with their physician before applying such information. However, 68% of the respondents agreed that social media has an influence on their views about health and healthcare. The hypothesis tested showed that there is significant relationship between social media use and patients' perception of healthcare at ($P = 0.000$, $X^2_{Cal} = 4.005^a$).

Conclusion: This study showed that social media has an influence on patients at AMSH. Most patients believed that information on social media about health and healthcare is reliable. Considering the high level of acceptance of health-related information on social media, it should be included in health education of patient to ensure their proper understanding of the information.

Keywords: Social Media, Influence, Healthcare, Patient's Perception



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How to cite this article

Fadare RI, Ayorinde OW, Ogbeye GB, Bello CB, Fadare OE. Influence of Social Media on Patients' Perception of Healthcare Services in Afe Babalola University Multisystem Hospital, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The Nigerian Health Journal 2025; 25(3): 1058 – 1068.
<https://doi.org/10.71637/tnhj.v25i3.1128>



INTRODUCTION

Patients in need of healthcare services wish for individualized, high-quality care, which is also the main goal for providing that care. Patients' individual perceptions of healthcare services are important because they may reflect patients' perceptions of standards and also clarify how patients define quality.¹

Healthcare services are intangible; therefore, patients tend to derive information and form opinions about the services from what they see in the hospital environment, the behavior and action of the healthcare service providers, the equipment and facilities of the hospital and also their interactions with healthcare providers and other patients.² Likewise, patients' expectations on requested healthcare services are influenced by words of mouth, past experience and their needs.² In recent times, the existence and increased use of social media has led to an ease in communication and easily accessible information. Therefore, it is worth considering that social media could also have an impact or influence on perception of healthcare services.

Social media as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary³ is "any form of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other contents such as videos". Social media is now considered to be among the most important tools for communication and networking in today's society and it is being utilized in almost all sectors in the society including the healthcare sector.⁴ social media has become more accessible thereby leading to an increased use and influence among individuals. There is a noticeable increase in the prevalence of social media use among patients for health-related reasons.⁴ Social media can be a form of psychosocial support for patients as it allows them to connect with others regarding health-related matters and also procure and share health information.⁴

In addition, social media supports patients in form of empowerment as it increases the knowledge of patients and puts them in a place where they are able to control their personal health care needs.⁵ Use of social media in healthcare has effects on both the patients and healthcare professionals, one of which is more effective communication between both parties. Effective communication is essential for delivery of healthcare

services. Information gotten from social media has made patients more informed about their health issues and improved understanding of their conditions which has led to an effective and more equal level of communication between patients and health care professionals.⁶ social media has become accustomed in the lives of many individuals and has changed how patients communicate with each other. For instance, patients compare treatments, investigations, findings and even compare their physicians on online support groups.⁶ This makes them more involved and active in their health care and also influences their opinion.

Although, social media is beneficial to patients there are still some concerns in regards to the use of social media by patients for health-related issues. As social media is readily available to almost everybody, not all information shared on the platform is authentic.⁶ Hence, it is necessary that information gotten by patients from social media is from a reliable channel or source in order to prevent misinformation which could influence patients' compliance to healthcare professional recommendations. Perception of healthcare services received could also lead to worsening of health conditions. For this reason, it is important to investigate social media's impact on healthcare services. Specifically, the influence of social media on patients' perception of healthcare services they receive, as there is a noticeable increase of social media use and influence of social media in the society at large.⁷ Individuals use and refer to social media for basically almost everything including healthcare. Social media has proven to be of great importance and help in terms of providing support for patients, supplementing health information and also giving them a platform to voice their opinions and concerns.

Due to this increased influence of social media, authenticity of information put out on this platform especially health information and opinions is important. Influence of social media, is not always beneficial as it may mislead patients about health information and health conditions by misinformation and incorrect information. Hence, reviewing and assessing the influence social media has on patients' perception of health care services is important as it investigates the acceptance level of health information from social media, prevalence of social media use for health reasons and also investigate if social media has an influence on

the perception of healthcare services by patients. This benefits both the patients and health care professionals as it ensures the dissemination of accurate health information and also empowers patients with the right information and provides positive influence on their perception of healthcare.⁷ It is anticipated that the results of this research will bring to limelight the effects social media has on healthcare generally and thus, fortifying the knowledge of the respondents and the researcher. Also, it will provide an insight into acceptance of health information through social media usage. To policy makers, the results of this study through its communication can serve as a means of developing policies for regulations of social media use, if social media influence negatively the patients' perception of healthcare. Finally, the result of this study has added to the body of knowledge and serves as a benchmark for other researchers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design The study was a quantitative study that adopted a descriptive research design.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at Afe Babalola University Multi-System Hospital (AMSH), Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The private tertiary hospital is located in Ado – Ekiti, the capital city of Ekiti State in Southwestern Nigeria. It is a health system set up as an academic health and health science institute. The state-of-the-art academic health centre in Ekiti State consists of a specialised, educational health facility. This facility is one whose departments are well equipped, functional and well-staffed with professional and qualified consultants, physicians, registered nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, medical laboratory scientists and health assistants. Some specialty departments that provide day to day inpatient and outpatient care include accident and emergency (A&E), surgery, internal medicine, physiotherapy, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, community medicine and dentistry amongst others. The 400 bed hospital affiliated with Afe Babalola University has a top-quality medical diagnostic centre equipped with MRI, X-Ray, Ultrasound Scanners and CT scan.

Target Population

A monthly average population of 328 patients that comprised outpatients in Afe Babalola University Multi-System Hospital (AMSH), Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State were

used. It included patients attending the general outpatient department March to May, 2022.

Sampling Size

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane⁸ formula which is

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n is the sample size required

N is the total population

e is the sample error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{328}{1 + 328(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{328}{1 + 328(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{328}{1 + 0.82}$$

$$n = 180.21$$

Approximately, n= 180

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the study participants. Samples were taken from patients who attended the out-patient department of the hospital.

Inclusion criteria: outpatients who gave consent to participate in the study. Patients with cognitive impairment were excluded.

Instrument for data Collection

The research instrument that was used for data collection was a well-structured adapted questionnaire. The items of the questionnaire were adapted from information obtained from a published study tool namely: effects of social media on patient perceptions and compliance (Butare & Gupta, 2019). The questionnaire was divided into three sections namely; demographics data, social media use and connection between social media use and healthcare. Adjustments were made, to meet the objectives of this study, hence making it an adapted questionnaire.

In order to ensure its validity, the questionnaire was closely examined and refined by Dr Idowu Fadare an expert in the field of nursing education to ensure that they can accurately measure the intended variables.

This questionnaire was self-administered to participants that met the inclusion criteria. Participants were earlier informed about the purpose of the study and guidelines on how to fill the questionnaire. The participants were reassured about confidentiality and anonymity.

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23. Data analysis and presentation of results involved the use of descriptive statistics with the use of percentages, frequency tables and charts while relationships between variables were determined using Pearson's Chi square with level of significance set at 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). This section also answers all the research questions. Data were computer-analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 23.0 version.

Prior to the commencement of this study, all necessary ethical issues and guidelines were adhered to. Before the data collection, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their oral consents were obtained. They were informed about the nature of the study and what findings needed to be obtained.

Participants were informed that they have the right to choose voluntarily to participate or not participate in the research. The names and identities of the respondents were not asked in order to ensure confidentiality and protection of respondents' privacy. The respondents were assured that their participation will not be used against them and the respondents' were selected based on the research criteria without any form of discrimination. An ethical approval AMSH/REC/AOW/088 was obtained from Afe Babalola University Multisystem Hospital, Ado-Ekiti Ekiti before the commencement of the research.

A total of 180 respondents were recruited and all the 180 respondents completed the questionnaires and had adequate data for analysis. This translated to a response rate of 100%.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency (n=180)	Percentage (%)
Age	less than 15 years	6	3.3
	15-20 years	99	55.0
	21-40 years	30	16.7
	41 years and above	45	25.0
Gender	Female	117	65.0
	Male	63	35.0
Marital status	Single	123	68.3
	Married	39	21.7
	Separated	12	6.7
	Divorce	6	3.3
Religion	Christianity	150	83.3
	Islam	18	10.0
	Others	12	6.7
Ethnicity	Yoruba	63	35.0
	Igbo	63	35.0
	Hausa	9	5.0
	Others	45	25.0
Occupation	Student	120	66.7
	Civil Servant	21	11.6
	Self employed	39	21.7
Level of education	Primary	6	3.3
	Secondary	12	6.7
	Tertiary	162	90.0

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

As shown in table.1, respondents' ages ranged from 14-41 years of age. Majority (55%) of the respondents were in the age range of 15-20 years, 65% of the respondents were females while 35% were males. Most of the respondents were single

(68.3%), Christians (83.3%), and of the Yoruba and Igbo tribe (35%). Other tribes such as Ebira, Ijaw, Igala and Urhobo were scarcely represented. Large percentages (66.7%) of the population were students. Most of the respondents (90%) had tertiary education, while 6.7% had secondary education and 3.3% had primary education.

Table 2: respondents use of social media

Variables	Categories	Frequency(n=180)	Percentage (%)
Do you use social media?	Yes	180	100
	No	0	0
What purpose do you use social media for?	Networking	9	5.0
	Education	33	18.3
	Research purpose	60	33.3
	Professional reasons	39	21.7
	Health related reasons	15	8.3
	Entertainment	24	13.3
Number of hours spent on social media daily?	Less than 1 hour	9	5.0
	up to 2 hours	33	18.3
	up to 3 hours	24	13.3
	up to 4 hours	24	13.3
	up to 5 hours	42	23.3
	more than 5 hours	48	26.7
Do you think social media is accurate?	Yes	57	31.7
	No	72	40.0
	I don't know	51	28.3
How do you measure information from social media?	Very accurate	9	5.0
	Accurate	129	71.7
Does social media influence you?	Inaccurate	42	23.3
	Yes	42	23.3
	No	39	21.7
	Sometimes	96	53.3

As shown in table 2 above, all respondents use social media. 24 respondents (13.3%) use WhatsApp, 18 respondents (10%) use twitter, 33 respondents (18.3%) use Snapchat, 48 respondents (26.7%) use Instagram, 39 respondents (21.7%) use TikTok and 18 respondents (10%) use YouTube. The table highlights that 9 (5%) respondents' use social media mainly for networking, 33 respondents (18.3%) use social media for education, 60 respondents (33.3%) use social media for research, 39 respondents (21.7%) for professional purpose, 15 respondents (8.3%) for health-related purpose and 24 respondents (13.3%) for entertainment. It also showed that, 9 respondents (5%) spend less than 1 hour daily on social media, 33 respondents (18.3%) spend up to 2 hours, and 24 respondents (13.3%) spend up to 3 hours and 24 respondents (13.3%) spend up to 4 hours daily. However, 42 respondents (23.3%) and 48 respondents (26.7%) spend up to 5 hours and more than 5 hours respectively. In table 2, 57 respondents (31.7%) think social media is accurate while 72 respondents (40%) think it is not accurate. However, 51 respondents (28.3%) were indifferent about social media's accuracy. Although, 23.3% of the respondents were influenced by social media, 39 respondents (21.7%) were not influenced and 96 respondents (53.3%) were sometimes influenced.

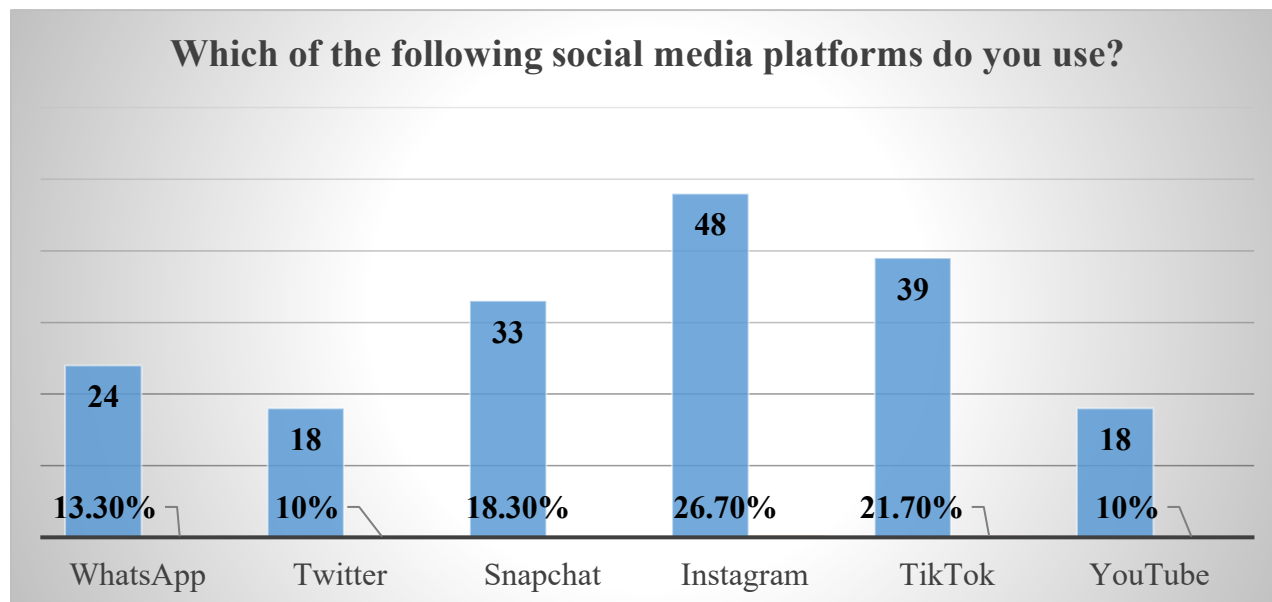


Figure 1: Respondents use of social media platforms

According to the figure 1 above, 24 respondents (13.3%) use WhatsApp, 18 respondents (10%) use twitter, 33 respondents (18.3%) use Snapchat, 48 respondents (26.7%) use Instagram, 39 respondents (21.7%) use TikTok and 18 respondents (10%) use YouTube.

Table 3: Relationship between Social Media Use and Perception of Healthcare Services

Variables	Categories	Frequency (n=180)	Percentage (%)
I am satisfied with my current healthcare	Strongly agree	42	23.3
	Agree	108	60.0
	Disagree	24	13.3
	Strongly disagree	6	3.3
My physician educates me on my conditions, my medications, and all treatment options	Strongly agree	39	21.7
	Agree	93	51.7
	Disagree	39	21.7
	Strongly disagree	9	5.0
My physician ensures my understanding of my conditions and medications	Strongly agree	27	15.0
	Agree	105	58.3
	Disagree	33	18.3
	Strongly disagree	15	8.3
I learn about my medical conditions on social media	Strongly agree	24	13.3
	Agree	93	51.7
	Disagree	42	23.3
	Strongly disagree	21	11.7
I believe the information I encounter on social media about health and healthcare is reliable	Strongly agree	18	10.0
	Agree	90	50.0
	Disagree	42	23.3
	Strongly disagree	32	16.7
	Strongly agree	21	11.7
	Agree	48	26.7

Variables	Categories	Frequency (n=180)	Percentage (%)
I don't think the information I encounter on social media about health and healthcare is reliable	Disagree	96	53.3
	Strongly disagree	15	8.3
Social media has an influence on my hospital and physician choice	Strongly agree	84	46.7
	Agree	45	25.0
	Disagree	21	11.7
	Strongly disagree	30	16.7
I research my symptoms online before I receive healthcare	Strongly agree	45	25.0
	Agree	78	43.3
	Disagree	39	21.7
	Strongly disagree	18	10
I consult a healthcare provider before applying health information on social media	Strongly agree	45	25.0
	Agree	90	50.0
	Disagree	42	23.3
	Strongly disagree	3	1.7
Information about health and healthcare on social media has influenced my views about health and healthcare	Strongly agree	18	10.0
	Agree	105	58.3
	Disagree	39	21.7
	Strongly disagree	18	10.0

The influence of social media on perception of healthcare services among the respondents was assessed using a likert scale to elicit response ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The result shows that majority of the respondents (83.3%) agreed that they were satisfied with their healthcare while 16.7%. It also revealed that 73.4% agreed that their physician educated them about their condition, medication and treatment option, while 26.6% disagreed. However, majority of the respondents (73.3%) also agreed that their physician ensured their understanding about their condition, medication and treatment option.

As shown in the table above, 65% of the respondents agreed that they learn about their medical conditions on social media while 35% disagreed. Amongst the respondents, 60% believed that information they encounter on social media is reliable. A large percentage of the respondents (71.7%) agreed that social media has an influence on their hospital and physician choice. When the respondents were asked if, they research their symptoms online before they receive healthcare, 68.3% agreed while 31.7% disagreed. However, 75% of the respondents also agreed that they consult with their physicians before applying health information they encountered online.

Additionally, 58.3% agreed while 10% strongly agreed that social media has influenced their views about health and healthcare. This implies that 68.3% of the respondents agreed that social media has an influence on their views about health and healthcare. However, 31.7% disagreed that social media has an influence on their views about health and healthcare.

Hypothesis testing

Decision rule: If the P-value is less than 0.05 the null hypothesis (H_0) will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted otherwise null hypothesis be accepted and the alternative will be rejected.

Hypothesis one

H_0 --- There is no significant relationship between social media use and patients' perception of healthcare services

H_1 – There is significant relationship between social media use and patients' perception of healthcare services

Table 4. Association between social media use and patients' perception of healthcare services

Statement		I learn about my medical conditions on the internet or on social media		X ²	df	P-value
		Yes	No			
I am satisfied with my current healthcare	Strongly agree	78	10	4.005 ^a	3	.000
	Agree	22	10			
	Disagree	8	30			
	Strongly disagree	12	10			
Total		120	60			

Inference: Since the P-Value (0.000) is <0.05 level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is significant relationship between social media use and patients' perception of healthcare services.

Hypothesis two

H₀ --- There is no significant relationship between respondents' level of education and perception of healthcare services.

H₁ – There is significant relationship between respondents' level of education and perception of healthcare services.

Table 5. Association between level of education and perception of healthcare services

Variable		I believe the information I encounter on social media about health and healthcare is reliable		X ²	df	P-value
		Yes	No			
Level of education	Primary	9	10	73.055 ^a	3	.060
	Secondary	1	10			
	Tertiary	109	25			
	No formal education	11	5			
Total		130	50			

Inference: Since the P-Value (0.06) is >0.05 level of significance, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between respondents' level of education and perception of healthcare services.

DISCUSSION

This research work was carried out with the aim of studying the influence of social media on patients' perception of healthcare services in Afe Babalola University Multisystem Hospital, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The use of internet has fundamentally changed healthcare and health decision-making. The current study revealed that all respondents use social media as the study returned 100% for social media usage, which is higher when compared to the result of a study conducted by Yoon et al.¹⁰ which revealed that 97.7% use social media, this is consistent with finding of Brown et al.¹¹ and Suranin et al.¹² Therefore, it can be said that social media is playing a significant role in health delivery and its management. Additionally, the study also revealed that all social media platforms such as

WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube have almost uniform usage. Social media was predominantly for networking, education, research purpose, professional reasons, and health management to entertainment in this study, which is as well consistent with Yoon et al.¹⁰ These findings indicate that social media may have a potential to provide a medium for communication of health-related topics with the patient and networking among patients. Furthermore, Ventola¹³ shows that patients can join virtual communities, participate in research, receive financial or moral support, set goals, and track personal progress. The study revealed that respondents who spent more than 5 hours daily on social media were the highest with 26.7% and those who spent less than an hour were the least with 5% this was in line with

previous study conducted where 31% of the respondents spent more than 4 hours daily on social media.¹⁴ In contrast, Butare & Gupta⁹ revealed over three quarter of the patient population uses social media regularly, and spend an average of 2.23 hours.

However, 31.7% of the respondents think social media is accurate while 40% think social media is inaccurate, which corresponds with previous study where 36% of the respondents believed social media was inaccurate.⁹ It is a common belief that social media platforms are not very reliable, and this study has further established it. The main limitation of health information found on social media and other online sources is a lack of quality and reliability.¹⁵ Authors of medical information found on social media sites are often unknown or are identified by limited information. In addition, the medical information may be unreferenced, incomplete, or informal.¹⁶ While evidence-based medicine de-emphasizes anecdotal reports, social media tend to emphasize them, relying on individual patient stories for collective medical knowledge. Similar problems exist with traditional online media; however, the interactive nature of social media magnifies these issues, since any user can upload content to a site. Social media users may also be vulnerable to both hidden and overt conflicts of interest that they may be incapable of interpreting.¹³

Social media is another community on its own and has a way of shaping the lives of those who utilize it. Therefore, this study has shown that 23.3% of the respondents were influenced by social media, while 53.3% were sometimes influenced by social media and 21.7% were not influenced at all. The study showed that 83.3% of the respondents were satisfied with the healthcare services provided for them, while 16.6% were not satisfied. In addition, 21.7% and 51.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that their healthcare provider educated them on their condition, medication and treatments options. This implies that, 73.4% of the respondents agree to the hypothesis which is significant at 0.005 level. This is similar to findings from a study conducted by Butare & Gupta⁹ in New Jersey, where majority of the respondents agreed that their healthcare provider educated them on their condition, medication and treatments options. The study also revealed that respondents understood their medical conditions, and also utilized social media as a tool to learn about their medications and health conditions.

While about 58.3% agreed that information about their health on social media was reliable and 71.7% of respondents agreed that social media has influenced their hospital and physician choice. This was in contrast to the findings from the study of Isik et al.¹⁷

The study also revealed that 18(10%) and 105 (58.3%) respondents strongly agreed and agreed that information about health and healthcare on social media has influenced their views about health and healthcare. This implies that, the view of 68.3% of the respondents about health and healthcare were influenced by social media. This was in contrast to previous study where 25% of respondents agreed that they research their symptoms online and consult with their healthcare provider before applying information encountered on social media. According to Isik et al.¹⁷ information about health and healthcare on social media has an effect on the health attitudes of individuals as they are amenable to this kind of sharing on social media, and they found such news more reliable. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Butare and Gupta⁹ over three quarter of this patient population uses social media regularly, and spend an average of 2.23 hours a day as well but only 2.6% believe that what they read on social media is accurate. It further showed there is significant relationship between physician recommendations and “direct in-office patient education” because physician ensures patient understanding of conditions and medications regardless of social media use and attitudes regarding the opioid epidemic. Marcia and Tina¹⁸ revealed in a study conducted among industry workers that more than one-third of respondents (38%) said they were likely to seek travel advice on social media.

Nearly one-quarter of respondents (21%) said they were likely to seek advice in decision-making related to financial services, healthcare (25%) and retail purchases (18%) It is the physician and nurses' responsibility to ensure that their patients are collecting credible and accurate information. Considering the significant proportion of patients using social media to assist with medical decision making, physicians should incorporate this into their patient education in order to ensure patient understanding of the information gathered both outside and inside the medical office, thereby improving compliance and outcomes. Social media is a great tool in the present-day society as many things are present on it that both positively and negatively influences the users.

Nurses and other healthcare professional must therefore actively engage this tool to provide beneficial information to ensure positive perception among patient using healthcare. Furthermore, the current study will be a source of knowledge in nursing education on the effects social media has on patients regarding making health-related decisions, and the effects on their thoughts about healthcare generally. The study will also provide an insight for nurses on the acceptance of health information through social media usage by patients.

Strengths and limitations of the study

This study was able to establish that social media has an influence on patients', therefore, considering the high level of acceptance of health-related information on social media, it will be wise to include health education as part of patient care to ensure proper understanding of the information. There are limited studies conducted on this topic, which made it difficult to have enough literature to use. Financial constraint prevented the coverage of large population of participant.

Implications of the findings of the study

The results of the study revealed that the perceptions of majority of the respondents were influenced by social media, while a minority of the respondents use social media for health-related reasons while majority use social media for research purposes. More than half of the respondents agreed that information about health and healthcare is reliable. A very high percentage of the respondents believed that information from social media is accurate and very accurate respectively. The findings of this study showed a significant usage of social media by respondents and its great influence on them which need to be regulated.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from the study revealed the following: The hypothesis tested showed that; there is significant relationship between social media use and patients' perception of healthcare services, and there is no significant relationship between respondents' level of education and perception of healthcare services. Therefore, this research study has highlighted significant results in the influence of social media on patients' perception of healthcare services in Afe Babalola University Multisystem Hospital, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Where majority of the patients were influenced by social media, it is imperative that intervention such as

developing policies for regulations of unverified information about health and healthcare should be enforced.

Declarations

Authors' Contribution: Conceptualization and design- Fadare RI, Ayorinde OW, Bello CB, Data Collection- Ayorinde OW, Fadare RI, Gbemisola BO, Data Analysis- Ayorinde OW, Fadare RI, Kayode A, Fadare OE Write up- Fadare RI, Ayorinde OW, Fadare OE, Bello CB, Gbemisola BO, Ayuba SB

Conflict of interest: Conflict of interest: Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Funding: Nil

Acknowledgement: The authors would like to acknowledge the staff of the Faculty of Nursing, Afe Babalola University for their contribution during the study.

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