

**KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF ENUGU STATE SOCIAL MEDIA
USERS ON FACEBOOK REPRESENTATION OF HEPTATIS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examined the knowledge, attitude and practice of Enugu State social media users regarding Facebook representation of hepatitis in Nigeria. Specifically, it assessed users' level of knowledge, perceptions, behavioural responses, and the factors influencing their understanding of hepatitis information shared on Facebook. The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised an estimated 1.2 million social media users in Enugu State, while a sample size of 384 respondents was determined using Cochran's formula. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency, percentage and mean statistics. Findings revealed that Facebook contributed positively to respondents' knowledge of hepatitis, promoted favourable attitudes towards prevention and treatment, and encouraged positive health practices such as screening, vaccination and information sharing. However, misinformation, irregular exposure to health content and limited access to credible information affected users' understanding. The study recommends increased dissemination of accurate hepatitis information by public health agencies through Facebook and strengthened efforts to combat health misinformation on social media.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Information about health services is a key part of public health promotion and disease prevention in contemporary societies. Health communication is a very important factor in creating knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding health problems and issues by disseminating accurate and timely information that enables it to facilitate informed decision making (Rimal & Lapinski, 2020; Schiavo, 2022). The traditional ways of communicating health information are via newspapers, magazines, radio and television. But, the landscape of communication has changed and communication channels have increased with the advancements in information and communication technologies and increased sharing and consumption of health information (Finset et al., 2020). Social media has had a significant impact on health communication; in particular, the interactive features of social media enable the sharing of information, participation, and engagement from the audience.

In terms of the definition, social media is defined as online based applications which allow users to develop, share and interact with content in virtual communities and networks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These platforms have become a major part of everyday communication and information-seeking activities, worldwide. The proliferation of smartphones, internet technology, and digitalization have played a large part in the expansion of social media use among youth and the urban population. Unlike regular media, social networks are places where people not only consume information but also create it, comment on the subject in the posts, share their experience, etc., and are very active in the discussion.

As a result, social media has grown as a primary source of information about political, social, economic and health matters (Moorhead et al., 2013).

There are a lot of social media sites in the world, but one of the ones that are the most widely used is Facebook. Facebook has grown into a formidable communication tool that brings billions of people from all over the world and diverse cultures together since its inception in 2004. The platform allows users to post text messages, photos, videos, live broadcasts, links and other multimedia that are shareable. The features have drawn organizations, institutions, governments, healthcare agencies, and advocacy groups to Facebook as a venue to share information and communicate with audiences (Ventola, 2014). Facebook is still one of Nigeria's most used social networking sites because of its accessibility, ease of use and interactive nature. Therefore there are growing numbers of public health campaigns and health awareness programmes using Facebook to convey health information to different groups of people.

As more people have turned to Facebook for health communication, social media science has become interested in the representation of health issues on the site. Representation is used to describe the ways in which meanings are constructed and communicated about events, people, a subject and social reality through the use of media (Hall, 1997). Media representation also has an impact on the perception and interpretation of issues as the media are not just a mirror image of reality, but rather part of the process of constructing understandings of reality as it selects, frames and presents information (McQuail, 2020). In health communication, the representation of the disease can impact the population's awareness, risk perception, attitudes and health-related behaviours (Schiavo, 2022). Therefore, the depictions of hepatitis on Facebook can have a profound impact on the way that social media users think about the disease and act on health messaging regarding prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

An issue that remains on the public health communication agenda is hepatitis. Hepatitis is defined as liver inflammation caused by viral infection or excessive alcohol consumption and can be caused by autoimmune diseases, exposure to certain harmful chemicals, or side effects of certain medication (World Health Organization [WHO] 2024). The most common type is viral hepatitis, which has five types: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, hepatitis D and hepatitis E. There are several different types of these forms, which transmit in different ways, present in varying degrees of intensity and with a range of health effects. Some types of hepatitis can clear up without permanent damage, but others can lead to a chronic infection that leads to cirrhosis of the liver, liver failure or liver cancer (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024; WHO, 2024).

Hepatitis continues to be a major health issue worldwide. The World Health Organization (2024) estimated that there were around 304 million persons infected with chronic hepatitis B and C in the world in 2022. The group also said that viral hepatitis claimed around 1.3 million lives each year and was one of the global's major killers of people from infectious diseases. Despite the medical progress in treatment and prevention, millions of people are not diagnosed or treated, especially in developing countries with inadequate health care services. This data highlights the ongoing public health threat posed by hepatitis and the need for continued awareness and efforts to address the disease (WHO, 2024).

There is a significant global burden of hepatitis in Africa. The WHO Regional Office for Africa (2024) estimates that over 90 million people in Africa are infected with viral hepatitis, which is a large proportion of the world's infections. There still are issues including lack of public awareness, low vaccination rates in some parts, health communication systems, limited access to testing and treatment facilities. These problems are responsible for the continuing high incidence of morbidity and mortality due to hepatitis in many African countries.

Therefore, there is still a need for health education and awareness campaign to build public awareness, and motivate people to practice prevention, as public health experts have stressed (WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2024).

Nigeria continues to be one of the most affected countries in Africa for the problem of hepatitis. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2024), the prevalence of hepatitis B in Nigeria for the 15-64 age range population is estimated to be around 8.1%, compared to hepatitis C which is estimated at about 1.1%. These prevalence rates equate to an estimated hepatitis B infection of 18 to 19 million people in Nigeria, considering Nigeria's large population. This makes Nigeria one of the countries in the world with the highest hepatitis burden in the world. Even so, it has been established that awareness about hepatitis is relatively low among many Nigerians although the burden of this disease is increasing (Spearman et al., 2017; Olayinka et al., 2016). In addition, misconceptions, misinformation, and lack of health information are continuing to pose challenges to the prevention, early detection, and treatment efforts.

National prevalence estimates indicate that several hundred thousand people in Enugu State are likely to be infected with hepatitis. Extent of surveillance data remains limited in Enugu State, but applying the national prevalence estimates to Enugu State indicates that several hundred thousand residents of the state may have hepatitis infection. As such, it is important to have effective health communication interventions that can increase awareness and promote preventive health behaviours among residents. The importance of public knowledge is noted in relation to the fact that hepatitis can be prevented through vaccination, safe health practices, early testing, and appropriate treatment when diagnosed (WHO, 2024).

Facebook has been a critical communication channel for information about hepatitis in recent years. The government, health organizations, hospitals, advocacy groups, media outlets and

individual users use Facebook in various ways to post information about hepatitis prevention, symptoms, vaccination, diagnosis and treatment, live Facebook interactions, and awareness campaigns. These can enhance public awareness and foster attitudes for healthy living. Social media have been found to be a powerful tool in health education, providing health information and supporting public participation in health-related issues (Moorhead et al., 2013; Ventola, 2014).

With its advantages also comes concerns about social media health information quality and reliability. Social media platforms are different from conventional media outlets that typically have professional gatekeeping systems, as they allow almost anyone to post and share content. In turn, users can be exposed to misinformation, misleading health claims, unverified medical advice and sensationalised disease imagery, which can easily proliferate among users (Wang et al., 2019). Misinformation about health issues can have harmful impacts on the public's health understanding, miscreate fears, reinforce misconceptions and impact health-related decision-making. Therefore, the utility of Facebook as a health communication tool is partly reliant on information availability and partly on how accurate and credible the Facebook representations are to the users of the platform.

With the rapid growth of Facebook as source of health information and the ongoing challenges of hepatitis in Nigeria, it is important to look at how Hepatitis is portrayed on Facebook and the impact of such representation on users of social media. The knowledge, attitudes, and practices of people who use social media regarding hepatitis can give insights to the effectiveness of health communication efforts using Facebook. It can also inform evidence-based approaches to raise awareness, dispel misinformation, and encourage positive health behaviours among social media users.

This study aims at looking at the Knowledge, attitude and practice of people who use social media in Enugu State pertaining to the representation of hepatitis on Facebook in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

With all the developments in medical research, vaccination, diagnosis and treatment, Hepatitis is still a challenge to the global public health. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) reports that millions are still infected with chronic hepatitis and many are also unaware that they are infected until they get to a later stage of the infection. The burden of hepatitis is especially high in Nigeria, with an estimated 18-19 million people infected with hepatitis B in Nigeria. The blight's durability has drawn the interest of governments, health organizations, international bodies and public health advocates all looking for increased public awareness and encouragement of healthy prevention habits.

Hepatitis is becoming a serious public health problem and with it the role of social media as a vehicle for health communication is gaining in strength. Of these, Facebook stands out as a key platform because of its size, accessibility and interactive capabilities. This explains why all the time there are several organizations and institutions including the World Health Organization (WHO), World Hepatitis Alliance, Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria (VHAN), Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), healthcare institutions and public health advocates sharing hepatitis information on Facebook. These forms of representation can be in the form of educational posts, awareness campaigns, videos, infographics, live discussion, personal testimonies, preventive health messages or advocacy campaigns to help raise awareness of the disease in the public.

In spite of the proliferation of hepatitis related postings on Facebook, many social media users seem to be lacking in knowledge, attitudes and practices. Public perceptions of the disease continue to be misinformed regarding transmission, prevention, vaccination, and treatment of hepatitis. Likewise, there are still people who don't get regular screening,

vaccinations, or prompt healthcare even after being exposed to reminders countless times. And there is also a negative perception and a stigmatising attitude towards people with hepatitis in many communities. This means that the information available does not necessarily lead to the right knowledge, positive attitudes or appropriate preventive practices. In addition, the information found on Facebook is a blend of credible and non-credible. Some people share false information, maybe because it is exaggerated, incomplete, unproven or even medically inaccurate. These competing messages could potentially impact people's perception of information about hepatitis and their reaction to health messages. These raise questions about the role of Facebook hepatitis representations in real public knowledge and behaviour change.

Although few studies have specifically looked at how HIV representations on Facebook affect the knowledge, attitudes and practices of social media users, there are some studies that have examined hepatitis prevalence, awareness campaigns, and social media use in health communication. Most importantly, there is less empirical data on this topic within Enugu State. This leaves gaps in knowledge about the ways in which hepatitis representations presented on Facebook are actually raising awareness and changing attitudes and preventive health behaviours.

In this background, the present study aims to explore the knowledge, attitudes and practices of Facebook users in Enugu State towards representation of Hepatitis in Nigeria to find out how representation of Hepatitis on Facebook affects users' knowledge, attitudes and corresponding health practices.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The focal aim of the study was to examine the knowledge, attitude, and practice of Enugu State social media users on Facebook representation of hepatitis in Nigeria. Meanwhile the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the knowledge level of Enugu State social media users regarding Facebook representations of hepatitis in Nigeria.
2. Examine the perception of Enugu State social media users toward hepatitis based on Facebook representations of the disease.
3. Assess the health behaviours of Enugu State social media users regarding hepatitis as influenced by Facebook representations.
4. Identify other factors that influence the Understanding and health behaviours of Enugu State social media users regarding hepatitis.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the knowledge level of Enugu State social media users regarding Facebook representations of hepatitis in Nigeria?
2. What perceptions do Enugu State social media users hold toward hepatitis based on Facebook representations of the disease?
3. To what extent have Facebook representations of hepatitis influenced the health behaviour of Enugu State social media users?
4. What other factors influence the Understanding and health behaviour of Enugu State social media users regarding hepatitis?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The thematic focus of the study rested on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding hepatitis prevention and management as influenced by Social media specifically facebook. The study focused specifically on this radio programme, excluding other programmes and health issues outside of hepatitis.

Geographically, the study was limited to residents in Enugu metropolis, the metropolitan area or city in Enugu State, which includes:

1. Enugu-North
2. Enugu-South
3. Enugu-East Local Government Areas.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was significant to several groups whose interests and activities intersect with health communication and hepatitis awareness in Enugu metropolis. For Enugu residents and Nigerians generally, whose health is paramount, this study provided empirical evidence on the level of hepatitis knowledge, attitudes, and preventive practices among the population. The findings will help residents make better-informed decisions, recognise potential early symptoms, and take the necessary safety measures once they are aware of how hepatitis affects the body.

For Facebook platforms, this study offered critical feedback on the effectiveness of the Knowledge, attitude and Practice of Enugu state media users on Facebook representation of Hepatitis in Nigeria in driving behavioural change. The findings will help broadcasters improve their health messaging strategies, adopt more effective communication formats, and better understand how to reach and influence their target audience.

For health professionals and organisations working in the area of hepatitis prevention and control, this study provides useful data on public knowledge gaps and attitudinal barriers that hinder the uptake of vaccination, screening, and treatment services among Enugu residents. This can inform the design of more targeted health interventions and communication campaigns.

For the academic field, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on media and health communication in Nigeria, particularly regarding the use of social media as a tool for disease prevention. It adds empirical evidence to existing theories on the relationship between media exposure and health behaviour, and offers a reference point for future researchers interested in broadcasting, public health communication, and KAP studies in the Nigerian context.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Here, the major concepts of the study were explained below in order to make it easier to understand;

Knowledge: The information and understanding that the residents of Enugu metropolis have about hepatitis, on the causes, symptoms, transmission, prevention, and treatment of hepatitis.

Attitude: The emotions, beliefs, and understanding of the residents towards Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Enugu on Facebook representation of Hepatitis in Nigeria, which may influence their willingness to take preventive care.

Practice: The actions of Enugu metropolis residents in engaging in preventive measures against hepatitis. It may include screening, testing, hygiene, vaccination, and seeking help from a medical practitioner.

Facebook: Facebook is a social networking platform that enables users to create personal profiles, connect with other users, share information, post text, images, videos, and engage in discussions on various social, political, economic, and health-related issues. In this study, Facebook refers to the platform through which hepatitis-related information is disseminated and accessed by social media users.

Hepatitis: This is a medical condition that is the inflammation of the liver, often caused by viral infections and poses a significant threat to public health.

Social Media User: A social media user is any individual who actively uses social networking platforms to access, share, create, or interact with online content. In this study, a social media user refers to any resident of Enugu State who uses Facebook and is exposed to hepatitis-related content on the platform.

Enugu Metropolis: This is the metropolitan area or city in Enugu State, which includes Enugu-North, Enugu-South, and Enugu-East.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, materials were reviewed according to the following subheading:

- Conceptual Review
- Empirical Review
- Theoretical Framework
- Summary of Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Social Media Defined

In the modern society people interact, communicate and get information by the help of social media platforms. The difference between traditional media and social media is that most media works in one-way communication while social media allows users to create, modify, create and share content and interact with other users in real time. As internet access and digital technologies have become more widely available, social media have played a significant role in the expansion of these platforms and have become critical communication and information sources, entertainment, education and public engagement mediums in the world.

There are several definitions for social media from different angles. According to Wikipedia, "social media platforms are web-based applications developed on the base of the internet and

Web 2.0, which enable the production and sharing of user-generated content. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is a set of Internet-based applications which rely on the concepts and technology of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The idea of an engaging social media by allowing its users to create and share information. Likewise, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) view social media as "mobile and web-based technologies that enable interactive dialogue among people, organizations and communities". If you read these definitions, you'll realize that what sets social media apart is that it can facilitate interactions, collaboration and the exchange of information among users.

With the advent of social media, communication has drastically changed around the world. Until the age of social media, traditional media outlets like newspapers, radio and television stations dominated communication. But with the rise of social media, common people are equally capable of generating and sharing information with large audiences without the intervention of traditional media gatekeepers (Carr & Hayes, 2015). As a result, information is now readily available in an international manner, with the ability to receive a wide range of information on a wide range of topics, such as educational, political, social development and business.

In the years that have passed, there are a number of social media options available, such as face book, X (once more referred to as Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. Out of these platforms, Facebook is one of the most popular because of its versatility and capacity for various means of communication like text, images, videos, live streams, and discussion forums. The popularity of social media platforms has made them key communication tools for governments, organisations, institutions, businesses

and other advocacy groups who want to reach large and diverse audiences (Appel et al., 2020).

Social media has a larger impact than just on the interpersonal level. It has turned out to be an effective tool of public education and awareness creation, advocacy and social mobilization. Today, social media has become a platform that is not only for socializing with friends, it is also being used an increasing amount by health and educational establishments and by international agencies and NGOs to share information, encourage campaigns and reach the general public on issues they feel passionate about. Social media are effective tools that can be used in transmitting information to the public during outbreaks and public health emergencies. For instance, during COVID-19, social media was an increasingly important tool in governments and other health actors to communicate preventive information and public health guidelines (Finset et al., 2020).

In the health communication field, social media has emerged as a significant platform to promote awareness of diseases, healthy behaviours, prevention strategies and health care-provider-to-user interaction. Users can access health information, join in discussion, ask questions, share personal experience, and join in health campaigns, etc. via social media. This has led to an increased availability of access to health information in the public sphere and improved opportunities for health education (Moorhead et al., 2013). The openness of social media, on the other hand, can also harm consumers by impacting their attitudes and behaviors due to the dissemination of false information, misinformation and unverified health claims (Wang et al., 2019).

Rising internet penetration, mobile ownership and digital literacy is driving the increasingly high popularity of social media in Nigeria. Nigerians are using social media platforms for almost every purpose every day, from consuming news, to communicating with others,

seeking information and joining public discussions on these platforms. The popularity of the social media platforms has also prompted health care organizations and public health advocates to take advantage of the social media platforms for health promotion activities, including awareness campaigns on the hepatitis disease. Therefore, social media is increasingly important as a health information source for a lot of people.

Social media plays a key role in today's health communication, and it has a wide reach, an interactive character, and can provide information. Because it can influence public awareness, public attitudes and public behaviors, it is very useful in the field of public response to health related information. In this study, therefore, social media will be viewed as an essential communication tool for the dissemination and consumption of information related to hepatitis by users.

2.1.2 Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the world and now is a key player in communication, information dissemination, education, marketing and public engagement. Users can build their own profiles, join with friends, communities, share multimedia, discuss, and access information on a variety of topics. Facebook is now more than just a social media platform, with the wide reach and interactive nature of its platform making it a major digital communication tool that impacts the way people receive and share information (Appel et al., 2020).

Facebook has changed the way people are communicating today in drastic ways. Unlike conventional media, which are more unidirectional, Facebook gives users the freedom to contribute to the generation, dissemination and interaction of content. Users can interact directly with information and with each other, via the use of features like pages, groups,

stories, live broadcasts, comments and reactions. This Interactive approach has increased the level of audience involvement and opened avenues for public engagement in social, political, economic and health issues (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Facebook has been one of the leading sources of information for many across the world. Its versatility of linking organisations, institutions, government, business and advocacy groups with the target audience without restriction of traditional communication media is a helpful tool. This can include the dissemination of information throughout a broad population in a short period of time, which might create an opportunity for awareness campaigns, public education and community engagement and make that a very attractive platform to do this on Facebook (Appel et al., 2020). Facebook has increasingly become relevant in health communication in the last few years. The platform is used by health organisations, hospitals, public health agencies, NGOs and healthcare professionals to share health information with people that includes details about disease prevention, treatment, health promotion, and behaviour change. It has been established that social media especially Facebook helps in enhancing the access to health information and communication between health workers and the community (Naslund et al., 2020; Zhao & Zhang, 2023).

The importance of Facebook in health communication grew during large health communication campaigns and disease outbreaks. In the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19, for instance, health organizations turned heavily to Facebook to share information regarding disease prevention, vaccination and public safety measures. Likewise, other bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO), World Hepatitis Alliance, Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria (VHAN), Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and many others have consistently used Facebook to update the public on topics of hepatitis awareness, prevention, screening for treatment and advocacy. These activities have made Facebook a key

communication tool for delivering health messaging and impacting public awareness of diseases (WHO, 2024).

As to hepatitis, Facebook is a medium through which various hepatitis related representation is shared with the site users. These can be made using a variety of different means such as education posts, awareness raising, infographics, short videos, personal stories, health tips, advocacy messages and statistical reports. These representations are designed to raise awareness and promote positive health behaviours. The platform also allows for the dissemination of information that is not accurate or verified, which could influence the interpretation and action that users take based on the health-related information they encounter (Wang et al., 2019; Suarez-Lledo & Alvarez-Galvez, 2021).

Still, Facebook is a force to be reckoned with in the realm of health communication, owing to its large user base, ease of access, and capacity to provide platforms for information disseminators and receivers to engage. Therefore it remains as a major influence on the public's knowledge, attitudes and practices about health issues like hepatitis.

2.1.3 Overview of Hepatitis

Hepatitis is a condition in which the liver becomes inflamed, which is an organ that carries out several important functions, including detoxification, metabolism, protein synthesis and storage of nutrients. If the liver is inflamed, it may have a reduced capacity to carry out the functions effectively, leading to a number of health problems. Viral infection, excessive intake of alcohol, autoimmune disorders, exposure to toxins and side effects of some medicines can lead to hepatitis. Viruses continue to be the most prevalent and most relevant

which cause liver diseases from a public health perspective in terms of prevalence and possibility to lead to chronic liver disease, liver cirrhosis, and liver cancer (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024).

World hepatitis continues to be a significant health problem. The World Health Organization (2024) estimates the prevalence of chronic hepatitis B and hepatitis C infections to be about 304 million people in 2022 and an estimated 1.3 million deaths due to viral hepatitis each year. These statistics rank hepatitis as one of the top causes of infectious disease death in the world. Even with the improvements in prevention and treatment, there are still millions of people who are undiagnosed, which puts them more at risk for going on to transmit and incurring long-term health issues.

Hepatitis has a special significance in Africa. According to WHO Regional Office for Africa (2024), more than 90 million people in the African region are infected with viral hepatitis. High level of infection in the region is attributed to issues of low levels of awareness, poor access to healthcare services, low testing rates and low levels of vaccination coverage in some communities. Therefore, hepatitis continues to be a significant public health threat and ongoing efforts of awareness creation and prevention are needed.

Nigeria is one of the nations with high burden of hepatitis in the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2024) the prevalence of HIV/STDs in Nigeria is about 8.1% of the population aged 15-64 for hepatitis B and 1.1% for hepatitis C. The rates represent 18 to 19 million Nigerians who are infected with hepatitis B. Vaccines and treatment are available but many people are not aware of their infection status and there are misconceptions about how and why the infection is transmitted and prevented in the population.

Hepatitis A and E are mainly spread via contaminated food or water while hepatitis B, C, D is spread through bodily fluids. These, however, are typically short-lived and don't typically lead to chronic liver disease. All hepatitis B, C and D are spread by infected blood and other body fluids. These types are more dangerous to public health because they may lead to chronic infection and complications of the liver if not addressed (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024).

Symptoms of hepatitis depend on the type of infection and its severity. Others get symptoms of the infection and turn out to be infected for many years, especially with chronic hepatitis B and C infections. There are symptoms, though, that are common – such as feeling tired, having a fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, not eating well, dark urine, pale stool, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Many people don't get symptoms at the start of an infection and don't know that they are infected until the liver is damaged (WHO, 2024).

Prevention is one of the best way to minimise hepatitis burden. Blood and medical instrument barrier protection, screening of blood products, safe sexual activity, regular health screening, vaccination against Hepatitis A and B, and hygiene/sanitation. Public awareness and health education also play a significant role as it will help the people know the causes, means of transmission, symptoms and preventative measures of the disease. Raising awareness can play an important role in early diagnosis and suitable treatment.

Medical science has seen the improvement of the treatment and management of hepatitis. Good vaccines are available for hepatitis A and hepatitis B and excellent antiviral drugs are available for the treatment of chronic hepatitis B and hepatitis C infections. Timely diagnosis and timely treatment can minimize the complications and enhance the quality of life of affected people. However, many cases go undiagnosed because of poor awareness and outreach of healthcare service providers, especially in less-developed countries.

Social websites like Facebook have turned into significant resources that have provided details of Hepatitis in recent years. Many health organisations, hospitals, advocacy groups and public health agencies use Facebook to inform the public about hepatitis prevention, symptoms, testing, vaccinations and treatment. These platforms play a role in raising public awareness about COVID-19, promoting preventive health actions, through awareness raising, the dissemination of educational videos, the production of infographics and the interactive care with participants. With the rise of Facebook's importance in health communication, it becomes imperative to study the effects of the disease representations on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of Facebook users on the disease in question.

2.1.4 Media Representation and Health Communication

Media representation is one of the basic concepts in the study of communication that can be interpreted as a mechanism through which media represent, interpret and communicate information to audiences on individuals, events, issues and social realities. The media do not simply mirror reality; they create realities by selecting, organizing, emphasizing and presenting information. Therefore, audiences tend to form their knowledge about a social issue based on how it is presented in the media. Representations in the media construct perceptions, influence opinions, strengthen beliefs and help to develop public attitudes towards specific topics.

Today, the media play a huge part in shaping people's perceptions and awareness of health matters. The information provided in the media about health is a vital source of information for many, including information on disease, prevention, treatment, and health risks. Representation of health issues may affect how the population views diseases, their estimation of risk, their interpretation of health messages and their implementation of

recommended health behaviours. Consequently, representation in the media has emerged as an important component of health communication and health promotion.

Health communication is the use of strategic communication processes and media to transmit health related information and to influence decision-making that improves the health of individual and community. It is the sharing of information that promotes health awareness, healthy lifestyle and reduces the chances of developing a disease and/or supports behavioural change. Health communication can empower people to choose to improve their health and to assist with public health interventions and disease prevention programs.

In the past few decades, health communication has shifted from using traditional media like newspapers, radio and television, to also include digital media and social networking websites. Social media has revolutionized the dissemination and the consumption of health information. Social media platforms offer opportunities for interactive communication, participation, immediate feedback and information sharing in contrast to traditional media. This transformation has greatly broadened the scope and impact of health communication initiatives.

The depiction of diseases in media messages is especially relevant because when people don't fully understand their health condition, they often turn to media messages for information. The portrayal of the disease has potential to influence public understandings of the cause, the seriousness, susceptibility, therapeutic options, and prevention strategies. Positive and accurate representation can raise awareness; enhance understanding; have the potential to correct behaviours; and, stimulate testing and treatment for certain conditions. On the other hand, false, distorted or exaggerated information can foster fear, stigma, misinformation and the wrong health behavior or choice.

These days, social media platforms have been employed to represent diseases. Often, health organisations, governments, advocacy groups and healthcare institutions, as well as individuals, will use social media platforms to pass on information about diseases. Diseases are depicted in posts, videos, photos, infographics, live stream broadcasts and personal reports, hoping to reach audiences and educate them, to persuade and inform and to influence. These representations may include symptoms, causes, preventative strategies, therapeutic possibilities, risk factors and perspectives from those impacted.

With the growing trend in using social media for health communication, so has the mode of engagement. Social media users play an active role in the communication process as they comment, share, react, question and discuss health information in contrast to people who consume information passively from traditional media. These exchanges can help spread and understand health messages and affect the user's attitude to health issues. Thus, the impact of health communication on social media is equally dependent on the information being disseminated as well as the individual interpretation and interaction of the audience receiving the information.

Hepatitis has been a hot topic on social media of late, as it has become one of the many health issues that has become important. Digital platforms are commonly used by various organizations for the dissemination of information about hepatitis, such as the World Hepatitis Alliance, World Health Organization, Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria (VHAN), healthcare institutions and public health advocates. The messages of these communications are usually aimed at raising awareness, prevention, vaccination, testing and treatment for the disease and the dispelling of any misconceptions about hepatitis. Public recognition of the disease has been enhanced with these representations, which have made social media platforms valuable components in this regard.

Representation of hepatitis on social networks isn't always consistent, though. Some content may present accurate, evidence-based information, and other content may be incomplete explanations, misinformation, sensationalized narratives, or unverified health claims. This often leads to conflicting sources of information gaining simultaneous attention in the public eye and to users' attitudes and behaviours being negatively impacted. This has raised concerns over the quality, credibility and effectiveness of health information that is disseminated via social media.

As more people turn to social media as a source of health information, it is becoming more significant to study the way hepatitis is produced online. The portrayal of hepatitis can affect knowledge about the disease, perceptions of people living with hepatitis, and health-prevention behaviors. Thus, analyzing the Hepatitis presence in the Facebook platform is a chance to understand the contribution of social media health communication to hepatitis users' knowledge, attitudes and practices. It is the concept of media representation that is key to understanding the relationship between the Facebook contents and the reactions of the public to hepatitis related information.

2.1.5 Facebook Representation of Hepatitis

Today, Facebook is one of the world's biggest platforms for spread of health information. The platform has enriched health organisations, advocacy groups, healthcare professionals, and public institutions with a means to directly reach and engage large crowds, by combining text, images, videos, live broadcasts, infographics, and interactive discussion. Consequently, the use of Facebook as a medium has been seen as a platform to represent and communicate on the issues of disease, health hazards, preventive measures and treatment options to the public (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Diseases presented on Facebook include how health conditions are depicted, explained, framed and communicated to Facebook's users by means of various media. These depictions shape the perceptions of diseases, risk assessment, evaluation of prevention and health-related behaviors among audiences (Suarez-Lledo & Alvarez-Galvez, 2021). Facebook is an

important tool for exchanging information about a disease such as hepatitis, whether it's from international health organisations, government agencies, health organisations, advocacy groups or individual users.

The various images of hepatitis depicted in online content can be summarized as follows: Facebook search results for hepatitis-related content are analyzed to show that there are several representations of the disease. The most of the common form is a form of educational representation. The education part of the representation is directed towards the fact to present information on causes, symptoms, transmission, prevention and treatment of Hepatitis. Infographics, brief videos and awareness campaigns are widely used tools to disseminate information on hepatitis and get people tested and treated, like those from the World Health Organization (WHO). These representations are designed to help to enhance public awareness and dispel misconceptions about the disease (WHO, 2024).

Preventative representation is another common way of representation. The type of content focuses on actions people can do to prevent getting infected. Examples of this include posts about hepatitis vaccines, regular testing, safe sexual behaviors, good hygiene practices and safe use of sharp objects. Preventive representations are intended to promote behavioural change and to make the person aware of what they can do to make themselves and others safer from the risk of infection. Such repeated exposure to the messages of preventive health has been found to be a significant factor in enhancing awareness and practice of health in accordance with the messages (Zhao & Zhang, 2023).

There are also advocacy depictions of hepatitis on Facebook. Typical advocates who create content are World Hepatitis Alliance, the Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria (VHAN), and other organizations. These representations aim to generate support in the population, to shape policy discussions, organize awareness campaigns and to initiate collective action for hepatitis elimination. Advocacy messages can be released in conjunction with campaigns or days like World Hepatitis Day and can cover campaign slogans, awareness hashtags, public pleas and events. These representations are designed to raise hepatitis visibility as a public health problem and raise more attention for the disease in the society.

The other substantial kind of representation on Facebook is the representation of risk. This includes discussing risks and effects of hepatitis. Some of the posts in this category focus on other complications like liver cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer. They might also share

national and global data on the hepatitis burden and hepatitis deaths. Representation of risk is designed to enhance the perception of risk level on both susceptibility and severity, and to motivate preventative measures like seeking treatment, getting vaccinated, and testing. When risk communication is accurate and responsible, it has a critical role to play in motivating health-protective behaviours, public health experts point out (WHO, 2024).

There are also personal testimony representations on Facebook, where people share their stories of suffering from hepatitis, being treated, or caring for a loved one who is suffering. Personal stories can give audiences a perspective that the audience can relate with; these stories can also diminish stigma and spark empathy among audience members with regard to the person living with the disease. These stories can augment formal health communication campaigns and help make health messages more relatable and personal to them.

While these representations have several advantages, there are also potential issues. Facebook's lack of rigorous verification procedures allows its users to create and share content freely. This means that misinformation and inaccurate medical advice, along with misleading statements about hepatitis can spread along with evidence-based information. Miscommunication, misinformation and misconceptions can have a negative impact on health behaviours, as the exposure to inaccurate health information can further cause confusion and perpetuate misconceptions (Wang et al., 2019; Suarez-Lledo & Alvarez-Galvez, 2021). Media literacy and source credibility have become an important part of modern health communication, as a result of this challenge.

The Facebook posts of this study that were extracted from organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria (VHAN), and World Hepatitis Alliance, showed that the representation of hepatitis in the social media is mostly in awareness creation, campaigns to reduce infection rates, advocacy campaigns and educational messages. The aim of these representations is to raise awareness of the disease in the general public and promote positive health practices. It is important, however, that the impact of such representation on the knowledge, attitude and practices of the society which uses social media should not be neglected. For this reason, it is crucial to investigate the influence Facebook representations of hepatitis have on their understanding, perceptions, and behaviour towards the disease.

2.1.6 Knowledge of Hepatitis among Social Media Users

Knowledge plays an important role in health behaviour: people are more likely to engage in preventive behaviour when they have sufficient knowledge about a disease. In public health research, knowledge is defined as the awareness and understanding people possess about the causes, symptoms, transmission, prevention and treatment of a health problem. Having sufficient knowledge helps people to make decisions about their health and plays an important role in disease prevention and management (Glanz et al., 2022). With the rapid growth of digital communication technologies, social media has become a major source of health information for many people. Platforms such as Facebook provide users with access to information shared by healthcare professionals, public health organizations, advocacy groups, government agencies, and other users. Consequently, social media users increasingly rely on online platforms to obtain information about diseases, treatment options, preventive measures, and health-related developments (Naslund et al., 2020).

Studies have demonstrated that social media can be used effectively to enhance public awareness of different diseases and health issues. Through educational posts, awareness campaigns, videos, infographics, and interactive discussions, users are exposed to information that can enhance their understanding of disease symptoms, risk factors, prevention strategies, and treatment options (Zhao & Zhang, 2023). Social media can be easily accessed and used interactively for people to get health information easily and access health topics that reflect their health concerns.

Knowledge is especially important in the context of Hepatitis, as many people who are infected are not aware of the infection. Sometimes, a person develops a hepatitis infection, often either hepatitis B or C, without any symptoms and signs, and the infection can lead to serious complications later on. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of the disease, how it can

be transmitted, the symptoms that it causes and how to prevent it, so that it can be diagnosed and treated early. Raising awareness is still a fundamental measure to prevent hepatitis burden all over the world, according to World Health Organization (2024).

Facebook has emerged as one of the biggest platforms for disseminating information about hepatitis to the public. Hepatitis information, including prevention, vaccination, screening, symptoms and treatment, are being collectively disseminated by World Hepatitis Alliance, World Hepatitis Organisation (WHO), Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria (VHAN) and healthcare institutions on regular basis. Repeatedly consuming such information might lead to increased awareness and understanding of the disease to social media users.

Educational posts on hepatitis on Facebook tend to be geared towards debunking myths and delivering factual information on the condition. This type of content often covers the fact that there are a number of viruses that can cause hepatitis, hepatitis types, common symptoms and possible prevention measures. Screening, vaccination, and early treatment are also stressed as a component of educational posts. This message is meant to increase consumers' understanding and to empower them to make informed health choices.

Though health information is available on Facebook, social media users' knowledge about it may differ a lot. Educational attainment, health literacy, how often they use social media, the credibility of the source from which the information is obtained, and experiences with misinformation can all affect the comprehension and understanding of health information. Individuals may receive accurate knowledge during their contact with credible content, or they may not. Some users may get exposed to information that is inaccurate or conflicting, leaving them misinformed (Suarez-Lledo & Alvarez-Galvez, 2021).

In addition, there is the question of trustworthiness of information sources. The research indicates that consumers will be more likely to trust and take information from a well-known health organization than an unknown or unverifiable source (Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, the impact of spreading knowledge on hepatitis via Facebook can vary depending on the credibility of the pages and organizations that publish the hepatitis-related information.

Audience engagement also plays a part in the use of social media as a knowledge acquisition tool. People who like, comment, share or engage in conversations about health-related material might be better able to remember the information than those who just watch it. The engagement can help foster understanding and awareness of health topics, such as hepatitis.

As the use of Facebook as a source for health information grows, it is imperative that the representations of hepatitis available on the platform make a meaningful contribution to the public's understanding of hepatitis. It is important to understand how much knowledge social media users have about hepatitis to gain insight into the efficacy of Facebook-based health communication campaigns and to pinpoint if the existing hepatitis representations are effective in educating the public about the disease.

2.1.7 Attitude of Social Media Users Toward Hepatitis

Attitude is what people feel, think, believe, and tend to have towards an object, a topic, a person and a particular behaviour. It is important to understand the concept of attitude in health communication as it impacts the way people are likely to receive health information and adapt to recommended health behaviours. Negative attitudes towards prevention and

treatment of health conditions can decrease uptake of prevention, while positive attitudes can promote healthy behaviors (Glanz et al., 2022).

Attitudes towards health issues are influenced by a variety of factors such as personal experience, cultural beliefs, social interactions, education and information received from the media. The importance of social media as a source of information, with the capacity to influence information and worldviews concerning diseases and health matters has grown in recent years. Users can form positive or negative attitudes after seeing repeated health messages, about specific diseases and people suffering from them (Naslund et al., 2020).

When people use Facebook, they see different kinds and images of hepatitis as part of the awareness, educative, advocate, video, testimonial, and discussion campaigns. These depictions can shape the perception and behavior of people regarding the disease—which relates to prevention, testing, vaccination and treatment. Positive and evidence-based representations can lead users to consider hepatitis as a preventable and manageable condition, and foster positive attitudes regarding prevention and people affected.

Stigma and discrimination is one of the greatest problems with hepatitis. A person with hepatitis may face the stigma, discrimination, and stereotype of other members of their society as well as misunderstandings about how hepatitis itself is transmitted. Attitudes like this could prevent people with the infection from getting tested, treated, or emotional support. So, the goals of health communication campaigns are to raise awareness and also instill positive attitudes and to minimize stigma observed with hepatitis (World Health Organization, 2024).

Representations of hep on Facebook often focus on the need to support, understand and provide access to health care services to those infected, instead of discriminating. World

Hepatitis Alliance and the Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria are among the advocacy groups that frequently communicate messages that challenge misconceptions, and foster empathy for persons with hepatitis. These types of representations are designed to foster a more positive public attitude and normalize the disease.

Social media users' attitude towards Hepatitis can also affect their willingness to take part in preventive measures. People who believe that hepatitis is a significant public health problem are more inclined to back vaccination programmes, to become routinely tested, to persuade others to be tested, and to access medical assistance if needed. However, people who either dismiss the severity of the disease or think that they are not at risk are less likely to engage in prevention behaviors.

It has been reported that two or more exposures to credible health information can have a major role in attitude formation and change. Clear and consistent health messages that are based on scientific evidence will have a more positive influence on audience perceptions than over-confusing or contradictory messages will have (Finset et al., 2020). Users repeatedly see messages promoting the importance of vaccination, testing, treatment and healthy behaviors on Facebook, potentially building favorable attitudes toward hepatitis prevention and control over time.

Social media, however, can also make people develop negative attitudes. The tendency of sharing unverified health information and misinformation on social media may help to foster fear, confusion, and negative perceptions. Misrepresentation of the actual disease may also perpetuate stereotypes, and dissuade people from engaging in good health habits. Thus, health information on Facebook continues to play an important role in shaping public

attitudes towards hepatitis, with qualities and trustworthiness of information being a critical factor.

Moreover, roles of audience interpretation in attitude toward social media messages are significant. The meaning of the same message to one person can be different to another, depending on their educational background, prior knowledge, cultural beliefs and experiences. However, it is not enough to merely be exposed to Facebook representations to gain positive attitudes; these attitudes are dependent upon the credibility, relevance, and understandability of the information.

As people turn increasingly to social media for health-related information, it is critical to assess the attitudes of social media users toward hepatitis, and to see if the images of hepatitis on Facebook are improving perceptions and health supportive behaviours. Knowledge of these attitudes can be helpful in determining how successful Facebook health communication programmes are and their potential for future contributions to hepatitis awareness, prevention and behaviour change.

2.1.8 Practices of Users of Social Media in relation to Hepatitis.

Practice means the specific actions, behaviours and activities people undertake as a result of their knowledge and attitudes to a particular issue. In health studies, practice is normally utilized to see whether people utilize health information in daily life activities by taking health promoting and disease preventing actions. Attitudes and knowledge can be important, but do not necessarily lead to proper action. Therefore, health practices are a good indicator to gain insight in the extent to which individuals practice recommended health behaviours (Glanz et al., 2022).

When it comes to hepatitis prevention, it is quite crucial to decrease the transmission of the illness and its health effects. These involve getting hepatitis immunisation, regular screening, testing, avoiding the sharing of sharp objects, safe sex and maintaining good hygiene and seeking medical attention if symptoms are noted. These practices play a major role in the prevention, early detection and management of hepatitis infections (World Health Organization, 2024).

As more and more people use social media to communicate about health, the possibilities for people to get information that could affect their health-related behaviours are growing. Users are targeted with awareness campaigns, educational videos, infographic, personal stories, and preventive health messages about hepatitis through Facebook. These visualisations can lead to the adoption of behaviours that minimise the risk of infection and promote early detection and treatment. This has made Facebook a key social media tool for changing public health behaviors.

Facebook is often used by health organizations and advocacy groups to promote hepatitis screening and vaccines. For instance, awareness campaigns highlight the need to get tested regularly to find out about one's hepatitis status. The message should inspire users to take steps to improve their health. Research has demonstrated that health-related information shared on social media platforms can have a positive impact on health-seeking outcomes, especially when the content is deemed credible and pertinent to the viewer's needs (Zhao & Zhang, 2023).

Vaccination is also an important preventative practice advocated on Facebook depictions of hepatitis. One way that Hepatitis B can be prevented is by getting vaccinated and following the required dosage schedule, so many awareness campaigns encourage people to get these vaccines and follow the dosage schedule. Educational posts and campaigns against

vaccination and in favor of public health are set regularly on social media and are kept in people's consciousness. These messages help educate the public about the need to be immunized to avoid getting hepatitis.

Facebook representations also promote behaviours that can help to decrease transmission. Recommendations to avoid sharing needles, cutting utensils and other sharp items that might be exposed to infected blood are frequently emphasized in educational materials. Likewise, users are being educated about the values of safe practices and proper hygiene in limiting infection. Facebook provides an opportunity to reinforce the health messages so users can act in healthy ways and prevent disease from occurring by repeat messages.

Individuals using social media can also participate in information sharing behaviours, apart from adopting personal preventive measures. Users have been seen to share awareness posts, educational videos and health campaigns with their friends, family members and online communities. This behavior also helps to spread health messages more broadly, and can amplify awareness for people who may not have seen them otherwise. Sharing of health-related information is therefore an important aspect of sharing health related information through social media.

While there are apparent benefits associated with Facebook representations, there are some barriers to their adoption of positive health practices. Having knowledge about a health issue may be not enough to trigger behaviour change. Reasons for not taking action, such as availability of health services, vaccination and treatment cost, cultural beliefs, perceived fear of infection, and confidence in health information sources could influence the uptake of information. This means that some people might have a good knowledge of the disease but not practice preventive measures.

Additionally, the credibility of information is a major factor affecting the behavioural outcomes. When health information comes from trusted sources like WHO, healthcare providers, trusted health authorities, users are more likely to adopt health preventative practices. On the other hand, exposure to misinformation or conflicting health messages can lead to unhealthy behaviors and de-incentivize good health behaviours (Suarez-Lledo & Alvarez-Galvez, 2021).

The effectiveness of Facebook representations in influencing health practices therefore depends not only on the availability of information but also on how users perceive, understand, and apply the information in their daily lives. Examining the practices of social media users regarding hepatitis provides an opportunity to determine whether Facebook-based health communication is contributing to meaningful behavioural change. This is particularly important in understanding whether exposure to hepatitis-related content on Facebook translates into preventive actions such as screening, vaccination, safe health practices, and the promotion of awareness among others.

2.2 Empirical Review

Social Media and Health Communication

In the study "Opportunities and challenges of social media in health communication", Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020) examined the opportunities and challenges that social media provide in health communication. The study looked at the function of social media platforms as a channel of health information and to encourage the involvement of the

public in health-related issues. The researchers analyzed the existing literature to identify that social media platforms are emerging sources of health education, disease awareness and patient support. The study additionally found that social media improves health information accessibility, as well as connecting healthcare providers and society. But the researchers found misinformation to be a big problem with online health communication. The study is relevant to the present research as it shows that social media are increasingly being used in health communication. But it did not look at the hepatitis-related depiction on Facebook by the social media user.

Zhao and Zhang (2023) examined the impact of social media health promotion campaigns on Internet users' public health awareness. The study used a survey research design with 512 respondents obtained from various online places. Results revealed the significant contribution of social media campaigns in raising awareness and understanding of various health conditions among its users. The research also confirmed that engagement with the content was higher for video and infographics than for text-only messages. The significance of the study is related to the examination of the study of social media as a health communication tool. This study, however, did not centre on hepatitis or Facebook representations, as did the present study.

A systematic review on the dissemination of health-related misinformation through social media platforms was carried out by Suarez-Lledo and Alvarez-Galvez (2021). This study used empirical evidence across various countries to assess how misinformation impacts people's public health-related behaviour. The results showed that misinformation in social media can have a negative impact on perception, attitudes or health decisions. The study found that source credibility is one of the key determinants of effectiveness of online health communication. The present study is unique from this work, however, in that it examines

Facebook representations and their effects on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the users.

Facebook and Health Awareness

In the study by Appel, Grewal, Hadi and Stephen (2020), they explored how social networking sites are changing in their use to communicate and engage the public. The research concluded that Facebook is still a very influential platform in terms of information dissemination because of its interactive and large customer base. They noticed that there is a growing use of Facebook in delivering messages related to information and awareness regarding education to targeted groups by organisations. The study is relevant because the paper demonstrates the ability of Facebook to shape public understanding and actions. Only health communication about other diseases was studied, however, except for hepatitis.

Their study, which remains a commonly referred to study in recent health communication research, was conducted by Moorhead, Hazlett, Harrison, Carroll, Irwin and Hoving (2013). The study revealed that Facebook and other social network sites help to better access health information and prompt public engagement in health-related conversation. Users said they felt more conscious of their health after consuming health-related information online via social media. The study reinforces the concept that Facebook has the power to shape health knowledge and awareness of its users.

Wong, Merchant and Moreno (2021) explored the role of "Facebook" in communicating public health messages to young adults. The study was a survey-based study and showed that health-related Facebook content exposure was a significant factor in awareness and perception of health risk among health Facebook users. The study also showed that users who consumed a high amount of health information on Facebook had greater health knowledge

than others who had lower amounts. The study is relevant, because it has set up a relationship between the exposure to Facebook and health awareness.

Hepatitis Awareness and Knowledge

Abiola, Agunbiade, Badmos, Lesi and Lawal (2021) investigated the awareness and preventive behaviour of adults in Nigeria regarding hepatitis. The study used a survey design with a cross sectional approach and revealed that the rates of awareness of hepatitis was relatively high while the knowledge of hepatitis in terms of transmission, prevention and treatment remained limited in many individuals. The researchers suggested that there be continued public awareness campaigns to help educate the public about this disease. The study is relevant because although it focused on awareness of hepatitis it did not examine the role of facebook in the knowledge and behaviour.

In Nigeria, Musa, Ige and Ojo (2022) studied the knowledge, attitudes and preventive practices about Hepatitis B among the urban population. Results showed that the more health information the respondents were exposed to, the more they were knowledgeable about and had favorable attitudes regarding hepatitis prevention. The study also confirmed that availability of health information was a significant driver of preventive practices such as vaccination and testing. The present study is unique in that it specifically examines Facebook as a source of information on hepatitis.

Social Media's influence on health behaviour.

The study explores how social media influences health behaviour among the young adult population, by analysing the influences of social media exposure on health behaviour by young adults, conducted by Chen and Wang (2022). The study showed that people who were exposed to high frequency health information on social media were more likely to engage in health-screening activities and preventive health behaviours. According to the researchers,

there is good potential for positive behaviour change to occur when information is accurate and credible, via social media. The study indicates that the assumption that Facebook representations could affect health behaviors with respect to hepatitis may be correct.

In a study by Vraga and Bode (2020), we can read about studies concerning the correlation between information exposure on social media platforms and behavior during public health campaigns. It was found that the exposure to credible health information led to the increase of knowledge and actions intentions among users of social media. The results of the study also showed a positive association between the trustworthiness of information source and action tendency towards health recommendations. The importance of the study is that it is an example of how the content within social media can affect a behaviour. However, it didn't really target the hepatitis or Facebook representations.

Yousaf, Noreen and Saleem (2024) studied the effect of social media health communication on the prevention of diseases in internet users. The researchers used a survey design, with the result that the number of repeated messages played and the presentation of these messages in user friendly designs significantly influenced the preventive health behaviour. The study affirmed that social networks are suitable to use as an effective media in raising public health awareness and behavior changes. The study provides support for the present research by highlighting the relationship between health communication and behavioural outcomes among social media users.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework gives the intellectual basis on which this study is rooted. It outlines the principles that will be followed in the evaluation of the Facebook content's impact on the Residents' knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of Hepatitis. This framework assists in explaining the actions with the help of which media messages can be construed, assimilated and converted to health related behaviour. The Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) Model and the Health Belief Model (HBM) were selected as the theoretical foundation for the study, as the study is communication based and focused on the behavioural consequences.

2.3.1 Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP) Model

The Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP) Model is one of the most commonly used models in public health, behavioural sciences, and health communication research. It was developed as a result of health education research from the 1950s and 1960s and was designed to explain the process of knowledge acquisition, attitude formation, and behavioural practices of the individual in relation to health problems. Since then the model has proven to be a significant means of understanding behavioural change and assessing the effectiveness of health communication interventions.

The KAP model assumes that human behaviour occurs in a sequential process, in which the knowledge affects the attitude, and the attitude affects the behaviour. The model suggests that people learn about an issue, form beliefs and perceptions about the issue based on this information and then convert the perceptions into actions or behaviours. From a health communication perspective, the model also proposes that the more people come into contact

with accurate health information, the more they are likely to know, to have positive attitudes, and to engage in positive health practices.

The major tenet of the KAP Model is that knowledge serves as the foundation for behavioural change. The model argues that people are unlikely to adopt positive health behaviours if they lack adequate knowledge of a disease or health condition. People are more likely to have positive attitudes toward recommended health practices if they receive relevant information about causes, symptoms, risks, prevention and treatment. The attitudes, in turn, enhance the probability of behavioural uptake and ongoing health behaviours.

The KAP Model has been widely used in research on infectious diseases, immunisation programmes, disease prevention campaigns, reproductive health and awareness-raising campaigns in public health. The model is widely employed by researchers to evaluate the success of communication campaigns by determining whether recipients of health information are better informed, have had their attitudes changed and/or have their behaviors altered. The model also has been used in digital health communication research, in which social media platforms are used to communicate health information to significant masses.

Social media has become significant sources of health information in today's society. Facebook, in particular, offers users access to health campaigns, educational videos, and infographics, as well as to testimonials and awareness messages about various diseases. Users may adjust their knowledge about health issues, their attitude towards prevention and treatment and their practice to help them live healthily after repeated exposure to this information. The KAP Model, therefore, offers a useful paradigm to explain the impact of the dissemination of health-related information on social media on behaviour.

The impact relevance of the KAP Model for this study is because it is directly linked with the variables that are studied. This study aims to explore the knowledge, attitude and practice of

the users of social media in Enugu State on the representation of hepatitis in Nigeria on the Facebook social media platform. The model offers an adequate explanation on how Facebook representations of hepatitis can influence the hepatitis-related practices of their users while affecting their attitudes towards hepatitis prevention and treatment, and their knowledge of the disease. It is thus a good tool to comprehend how the link between exposure to Hepatitis content on Facebook and the behavioural reactions of social media users works.

2.3.2 Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM) was created by social psychologists Godfrey Hochbaum, Irwin Rosenstock and Stephen Kegels with the United States Public Health Service in the 1950s. The model is designed to help understand the factors that influence whether individuals will or will not engage in health-related behaviors and is among the most influential theories in health communication and public health research.

The Health Belief Model suggests that people's health behaviours are shaped by their beliefs and perceptions about a disease or health condition. The model states that there are four factors that make people more vulnerable to adopting preventive health actions: perceived susceptibility to the disease, perceived seriousness of the disease, perceived benefits of the preventive action, and perceived barriers to the recommended action.

Perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy are the key constructs of the model. Perceived Susceptibility is the thoughts a person has about their risk of developing a disease. Perceived severity: beliefs relating to the severity of the disease and its consequences. Perceived benefits are beliefs about the effectiveness of preventive actions and perceived barriers are beliefs that could

hinder taking action. Cues to action are cues that elicit a response from behavior and self-efficacy is a person's confidence in their ability to engage in a specific health behavior.

This model has been applied in a variety of vaccination, disease screening, treatment adherence, and preventive health studies. The HBM has been consistently applied to provide an explanation of health behaviour adoption and non-adoption despite similar levels of knowledge.

The value of the Health Belief Model for this study is that it can account for how Facebook images of hepatitis represent the disease and subsequently affect its perceptions. Messages about the severity of the disease, the health impacts of hepatitis, how the disease is transmitted, and the roles that prevention actions (like vaccination and screening) play can influence the perceived susceptibility to infection and the significance of preventive actions like vaccination and screening among users. In this regard, the model is a good indicator of the behaviour that can be expected when posting content about hepatitis on Facebook.

2.4 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this study focused on the following concepts: Social media, Facebook, Hepatitis, Media representation, Health communication, Facebook representation of hepatitis; and Knowledge, attitude, and practice of social media users about health-related information. The review confirmed that social media is a valuable tool for disseminating information and communicating with the public and Facebook is one of the most commonly used platforms for communicating information and health awareness campaigns. Another finding of the review was that Facebook offers health groups, healthcare providers, advocacy

groups and public institutions a platform for sharing health information with a broad and wide audience.

The review also revealed that, despite progress in prevention, diagnosis and treatment, hepatitis continues to be a significant public health problem worldwide. People around the world are still suffering with hepatitis, and many are not even tested or even certain if they are infected. Hepatitis continues to be a major health problem in Africa and in Nigeria, where public awareness and health communication are vital to public health efforts to prevent and control the disease.

The review on media representation and health communication found that the way health issues are represented in the media affects the public's understanding, perceptions, attitudes and behavioural responses. The literature also showed that Facebook can be used as an educational platform for the dissemination of information on hepatitis, prevention information, advocacy information, communication of risk and personal stories. These images are created to educate and promote healthy lifestyles. The review, however, suggested that social media also could influence the health communication.

This was clearly seen from the empirical studies reviewed as social www applications have a significant role in health communication, awareness creation and behaviour change. Past research has mostly found positive associations between social media health communication exposure and health knowledge, health attitudes and preventive health behaviors. However, the majority of the reviewed studies were related to social media health communication in general, health awareness campaigns, or specific population's awareness of hepatitis. There were very few studies that focused specifically on Facebook representations of hepatitis and the resulting impact on knowledge, attitudes and practices of social media users.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP) Model, Health Belief Model (HBM), and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). We used the KAP Model to conceptualize how knowledge gained through the Facebook representations could affect attitudes and practices related to hepatitis. The model of Health Belief Model was used to gain insight into the role of user's susceptibility, severity, benefits and barriers in preventive health behaviours. The Uses and Gratifications Theory helped to account for the intentional pursuit of health information on Facebook to fulfill subscribers' information requirements.

Although Facebook is gaining popularity as a communication medium for health promotion, there is still insufficient empirical evidence on the effect of hepatitis representation on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of Enugu state social media users. The lack of this knowledge is the justification for the current study which aims at understanding the knowledge, attitude and practice of Facebook users in Enugu State on the representation of Hepatitis in Nigeria on social media.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey design involves the systematic collection of data from a population or sample in order to describe existing conditions, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours without

manipulating variables. The design is suitable for studies that focus on people's perceptions, awareness, and self-reported practices.

This design was considered appropriate for the study because it enables the researcher to examine the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of residents of Enugu metropolis regarding hepatitis and to assess the influence of Social media on these variables. The study does not seek to manipulate respondents' exposure to the programme but rather to analyze their experiences and perceptions based on natural exposure.

The descriptive survey design also allows the use of structured questionnaires to collect firsthand information from respondents. This makes it possible to quantify responses and analyze the data statistically. Therefore, the design is considered appropriate for investigating the influence of a radio health programme on hepatitis awareness, attitudes, and preventive practices among residents of Enugu metropolis.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises social media users in Enugu State. Social media has become an important medium through which individuals access information, interact with others, and participate in discussions on social, political, economic, and health-related issues. Given the increasing penetration of internet services and digital technologies in Nigeria, a significant proportion of residents of Enugu State actively utilize social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube.

The projected population of Enugu State is approximately 4.9 million people. Based on an estimated social media penetration rate of 35%, the number of social media users in the state is estimated at 1,715,000 users. This estimate was obtained as follows:

$$1,715,000 = 4,900,000 \times 35\%$$

Therefore, the population of this study consists of an estimated 1,715,000 social media users in Enugu State. This population forms the basis from which respondents were selected for the study.

3.3 Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for large populations. The formula is considered appropriate because the study population is large and exceeds 100,000.

The formula is expressed as:

$$n_o = Z^2pq / e^2$$

Where:

n_o = Sample size

Z = Standard normal deviation corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p = Estimated proportion of the population possessing the attribute of interest (0.5)

$$q = 1 - p \text{ (0.5)}$$

e = Margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n_o = (1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5) / (0.05)^2$$

$$n_o = 3.8416 \times 0.25 / 0.0025$$

$$n_o = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$

$$n_o = 384.16$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study was approximated to **384 respondents**.

The sample size was considered adequate to provide reliable information regarding the knowledge, attitude, and practice of Enugu State social media users on Facebook representation of hepatitis in Nigeria.

3.4 Sampling Technique

In this study, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select respondents from the total population of residents in Enugu metropolis. The multi-stage sampling technique was considered appropriate because of the large and heterogeneous nature of the population spread across different Local Government Areas and wards within Enugu metropolis. Also this type of sampling techniques allows the use of different sampling techniques in stages to arrive at a specific selection of respondents for a study. The cluster, simple random and quota sampling technique was employed to aid the selection process. The table below presents the sampling techniques used at each stage and how they were implemented.

Stage One: At this stage, the researcher clustered the Local Government Areas (LGA) and communities that makes up Enugu metropolis they include;

Local Government	Communities
Enugu-East	Trans-Ekulu, Ugwuogo, Amorji, Ibagwa Nike, Abakpa Nike Nkwo, Umuchigbo, Emene, Thinkers Corner,

Enugu-North	New Haven, Ziks Avenue, New Layout, GRA, Okpara Avenue, Ogbete, Independence Layout
Enugu-South	Ugwuaji, Garriki, Awkunanaw, Agbani Road, Meniru, Achara Layout, Ozalla, Maryland, Obiagu, Uwani

Stage Two: At this stage, through randomization the researcher selected two communities from the aforementioned communities in the LGAs to as representativeness to the entire communities

Local Government	Selected Communities
Enugu-East	Abakpa Nike Emene
Enugu-North	New Haven GRA
Enugu-South	Agbani Road Obiagu

Stage Three: The quota sampling technique was used in the distribution of 64 copies of the questionnaire to residents in the selected areas for the study "Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Enugu social media users on Facebook representation of Hepatitis in Nigeria".

$$\text{Sample Size: } \frac{384}{6} = 64$$

Stage Four: At this stage, purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents from the selected communities. The technique was considered appropriate because only respondents who met specific criteria relevant to the study were selected. To qualify for participation, respondents had to be active Facebook users residing in the selected communities and must have been exposed to hepatitis-related content on Facebook. This ensured that only individuals capable of providing relevant information on the knowledge, attitude, and practice of social media users regarding Facebook representation of hepatitis in Nigeria were included in the study.

3.5 Description of Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher in line with the objectives and research questions of the study to ensure relevance and adequacy of data collected. The questionnaire was subdivided into two sections; the demographic group of the respondents concentrated on the first cluster. The information elicited in this section included age bracket, gender and occupation of the residents. These variables were added in an attempt to give a background data of the respondents and in the analysis of the data.

The second group is the psychographic data which examine the KAP analysis of the study using the four point likert scale of

- Strongly Agree (SA) 4
- Agree (A) 3
- Disagree (D) 2
- Strongly Disagree (SD) 1

3.6. Validity of Research Instrument

In determining the validity of the research tool, two expert in the field of Mass Communication in Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu assessed copies of the questionnaire, alongside the title of the research objectives and research questions. This was done to ensure that the instrument was adequate in addressing the variables of the study and measured what was meant to be measured. The face validity considered the clarity of items, the appropriateness of the questionnaire to the study objectives, the level of language suitability, and the conceptualization of covering the various study variables. Their views and recommendations were put into serious considerations and integrated into the final format of the questionnaire.

3.7 Reliability of Research Instrument

A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the research instrument before the main data collection. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to 20 residents in a neighbouring area outside the study location who possessed similar characteristics to the target population but were not included in the final sample. This was done to avoid contaminating the actual study population. The responses obtained from the pilot study were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha reliability test to determine the internal consistency of the instrument was found acceptable with a value of 0.82. This indicates that the questionnaire items possessed a high level of internal consistency and were reliable for data collection. Based on this result, the instrument was considered reliable and suitable for the main study.

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left[1 - \frac{\sum S^2 y}{S^2 X} \right]$$

Where:

K	Number of items
$\sum s^2_x$	Sum of the item variance
s^2_X	Variance of total score
α	Cronbach's alpha

3.8 Method of Data Collection

This study used questionnaires to gather data from the respondents on structured questions. The researcher using the help of research assistants gave the questionnaires to the users of social media in the selected communities of Enugu metropolis. Participants were screened to ensure they used Facebook and had been exposed to Facebook content about hepatitis before taking the survey.

The questionnaires were given personally with the view of eliciting high response rate and clarifying the issues, if needed. Time was allowed for respondents to fill out the questionnaire, and questionnaires were retrieved immediately after the questionnaire was finished. This method helped obtain primary data which was relevant to the aim of the research.

The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents in the selected communities, which totalled 384 copies. Completed questionnaires were picked up, sorted, coded and ready for data analysis.

3.9: Method of Data Analysis

All the data gathered in this study were analyzed descriptively. The data gathered from the questionnaires were coded, tabulated and analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test. The reliability of the research instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The instrument contained 25 items, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.73, indicating that the instrument possessed acceptable internal consistency and was therefore considered reliable for the study. Data were presented and analysed in the form of frequency tables, percentages and mean scores.

Frequency counts and simple percentages were used for the analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Mean scores of respondents' responses to the questionnaire items were used for the answers given to the research questions. The interpretation of the mean scores was based on a decision benchmark of 2.50. Items that obtained a mean score of 2.50 or more were considered to have accepted while those that obtained a mean score below 2.50 were considered to have rejected. The mean score was calculated using the formula:

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Mean Score Formula

$$\bar{X} = \Sigma FX / N$$

Where:

$\bar{X}$ = Mean Score

ΣFX = Summation of Frequency $\times$ Scale Value

N = Total Number of Respondents

Decision Rule:

Mean $\geq$ 2.50 = Accepted

Mean < 2.50 = Rejected

The findings were presented in tables and interpreted in line with the objectives and research questions of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presented and analyzed through the administration of questionnaire, the data generated on the knowledge, attitude and practice of social media users on Facebook representation of Hepatitis in Nigeria.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data presentation and analysis was done using the quantitative method whereas information from the respondents was gathered via the questionnaire. The researcher shared and retrieved 384 copies. The measuring instrument had two segments which focused on the demographic and psychographic data

4.1.1 Analysis of Demographic Data

The focus here is on the gender, age bracket and occupation residents in Enugu Metropolis.

Table 4.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	174	45%
Female	210	55%
Total	384	100%

The table above shows that 55% of the respondents represented the females in the distribution.

4.1.2 Age Distribution

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18–25	118	31%
26–35	126	33%
36–45	72	19%
46–55	43	11%
56 and above	25	6%
Total	384	100%

The result shows that the majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 18–35 years, representing 64% of the total respondents.

4.1.3 Occupation Distribution

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	126	33%
Civil Servant	92	24%
Business	104	27%
Unemployed	38	10%
Others	24	6%
Total	384	100%

The table above shows that students constituted the highest percentage of respondents with 33%, followed by business owners with 27%, while civil servants represented 24%.

4.2 Analysis of Psychographic Data

The section focused on analyzing the psychographic data which centered the extent to which residents in Enugu metropolis are knowledgeable about Hepatitis based on their exposure to

Facebook content that represented Hepatitis in Nigeria, their attitude towards Hepatitis as a health issue and their practice towards the detection, prevention and treatment. This section comprises of the three research questions crafted for the study which was developed using the four-point likert scale and analyzed using mean analysis. According to the mean decision rule, a decision is accepted if the calculated mean is equal to or greater than the criterion mean (2.5), and rejected if the calculated mean is less than the criterion mean (2.5).

Research Question One: What is the knowledge level of Enugu State social media users regarding Facebook representations of hepatitis in Nigeria?

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
Hepatitis is caused by variety of infectious virus and non-infectious agent.	140	180	44	20	384	3.14	Accepted
Hepatitis has five main types; A, B, C, D and E.	126	174	58	26	384	3.04	Accepted
Hepatitis can lead to serious liver diseases such as cirrhosis or liver cancer.	181	150	37	16	384	3.29	Accepted
The main mode of Hepatitis transmission is through contact of contaminated blood or body fluid.	162	158	42	22	384	3.20	Accepted
Yellowish skin and eyes, dark urine, extreme fatigue, vomiting, abdominal pain and nausea are symptoms of Hepatitis.	147	169	48	20	384	3.15	Accepted

Average Mean						3.16	
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Analysis from the table shows that with an average mean of 3.16; residents of Enugu Metropolis have a good knowledge about hepatitis based on their exposure to social media.

Research Question Two: What perceptions do Enugu State social media users hold toward hepatitis based on Facebook representations of the disease?

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
It is advisable for people to always get tested for Hepatitis.	186	152	30	16	384	3.32	Accepted
I highly recommend early vaccination against Hepatitis.	210	130	28	16	384	3.39	Accepted
I feel that hospitals should discourage the donations of blood from an infected person.	174	148	40	22	384	3.23	Accepted
Shaking and hugging infected persons is not wrong.	102	168	78	36	384	2.88	Accepted
Average Mean						3.20	

Analysis from the table shows that with an average mean of 3.20; respondents in Enugu Metropolis have a positive perceptions towards hepatitis prevention and treatment

Research Question Three: To what extent have Facebook representations of hepatitis influenced the health behaviour of Enugu State social media users?

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
I am willing to take screening testing if I notice any symptoms of Hepatitis.	180	152	34	18	384	3.28	Accepted
I avoid sharing sharp objects with people as preventive measures.	194	144	28	18	384	3.34	Accepted
I am willing to take Hepatitis vaccination if offered for free.	220	118	28	18	384	3.41	Accepted
I wash and sanitize my hands after being in contact with body fluid.	175	160	32	17	384	3.28	Accepted
I have shared information about Hepatitis based on my exposure to Programmes on Facebook platforms	144	168	50	22	384	3.13	Accepted
I have encouraged others to learn about hepatitis because of information I saw on Facebook.	132	150	70	32	384	2.99	Accepted

I have encouraged people to show sympathy toward hepatitis patients.	158	164	42	20	384	3.20	Accepted
Average Mean						3.23	

Analysis from the table shows that with an average mean of 3.23; residents in Enugu metropolis have indicated through the above factors that they have been influenced by Facebook Platforms

Research Question Four: What other factors influence the Understanding and health behaviour of Enugu State social media users regarding hepatitis?

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
Irregular exposure to hepatitis-related content on Facebook reduces awareness.	182	148	34	20	384	3.28	Accepted
Poor internet connectivity affects access to hepatitis information on Facebook.	170	156	36	22	384	3.23	Accepted
Limited availability of hepatitis-related content affects awareness.	160	164	40	20	384	3.21	Accepted
Language barriers affect understanding of hepatitis information on Facebook.	128	156	68	32	384	2.99	Accepted
Misinformation from other sources affects understanding of hepatitis.	176	150	38	20	384	3.25	Accepted

Lack of repeated exposure to hepatitis messages affects behavioural change.	194	146	28	16	384	3.35	Accepted
31. Some social media users are not interested in health-related content on Facebook.	148	166	46	24	384	3.14	Accepted
Economic limitations reduce regular social media usage.	142	170	48	24	384	3.12	Accepted
Average Mean						3.2	

Analysis from the table shows that at an average mean score of 3.2; Social media users in Enugu metropolis generally indicates that the aforementioned factors significantly affect the effectiveness of Facebook platforms in promoting hepatitis awareness and behavioural change.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions, empirical studies reviewed in Chapter Two, and the theoretical framework adopted for the study.

A. Knowledge Level of Social Media Users Regarding Facebook Representations of Hepatitis

The results obtained from the study indicated that there was a high level of knowledge of social media users in Enugu State about hepatitis based on the disease representations on Facebook. The respondents did show knowledge about causes, symptoms and ways of

transmission and possible complications of hepatitis. This indicates Facebook is playing an important role in a public's knowledge of health issues and as a source of health information. The discovery suggests that hepatitis-related content on Facebook has improved users' knowledge about hepatitis and raised awareness of its health consequences.

The discovery aligns with the study conducted by Wong, Merchant and Moreno (2021) which revealed that when Facebook users were exposed to health-related content, there was a considerable increase in their awareness and understanding of health conditions. It also lends credence to the findings of Abiola, Agunbiade, Badmos, Lesi and Lawal (2021) that establishing access to health information has a positive effect on the awareness of the population on the disease hepatitis.

The discovery also validated the Knowledge–Attitude–Practice (KAP) Model which states that knowledge exposure leads to increased knowledge and understanding. The findings suggest that representations of hepatitis on Facebook have contributed to enhancing the level of knowledge of the users of this social media in Enugu State.

B. Perceptions of the Social Media Users towards Hepatitis based on Representations of Facebook

Results indicated that the general relationship that enugu state social media users have with hepatitis prevention and treatment was positive. Participants agreed with regular testing, early vaccination, safe blood donation practices, and showed a reduction in discriminatory attitudes towards people living with Hepatitis. This implies that a Facebook hepatitis representation may have helped shape a positive view of prevention and management of hepatitis.

This is in line with the study by Musa, Ige and Ojo (2022) which found that the public attitudes towards prevention and control of hepatitis positively affected when they have access to health information. The result is also similar to those of Zhao and Zhang (2023) who found that social media health campaigns had a significant effect on the public perception and awareness of health-related concerns.

This discovery offers further confirmation for the Health Belief Model that proposes that people are more inclined toward forming favorable attitudes toward preventive health behaviors when they are aware of the severity of the medical problem and the usefulness of the action for prevention. Respondents' positive perception might therefore relate to the content that they see on Facebook.

C. Influence of Facebook Representation on Health Behaviour

The study showed that the social media representations of Hepatitis had a positive effect on the social media user's health behavior in Enugu State. Among the respondents, there was willingness to get screened for hepatitis, avoid sharing sharp objects, get vaccinated, practise good hygiene and positive attitude to the hepatitis patients. The number of respondents who exposure to hepatitis-related content on Facebook led to dissemination of information to others also increased.

The results are consistent with the results of the study conducted by Chen and Wang (2022), who concluded that access to health information in social media can stimulate preventive health behaviour. The result also corroborates with the study conducted by Yousaf, Noreen and Saleem (2024) which found that a barrage of health messages in social media plays significant role in disease prevention and behavioural change practices.

The findings again validate the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Model, which suggests that improvement of knowledge and positive attitudes might help to achieve positive behaviours. The results are also consistent with Uses and Gratifications Theory in which users take an active part to gain information about health decisions and health-related actions on Facebook.

D. Factors Influencing the Understanding and Health Behaviour of Social Media Users Regarding Hepatitis

The results showed that there are some factors that affect understanding and health behaviour of social media users related to hepatitis. These are: exposure to hepatitis-related content not regularly enough, language barriers, misinformation from other sources, lack of repeated exposure to health messages, poor public interest in health-related information, and economic restrictions on Internet connectivity and/or social media consumption. Of these, the lack of repeated exposure and misinformation were found to be significant problems in understanding and behavioural reactions.

This finding aligns with Suarez-Lledo and Alvarez-Galvez (2021), who reported that mistrust of social media information could impact on the public understanding and health decision making. It also aligns with the findings of Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020), which challenged misinformation and access to digital resources as significant issues facing the field of health communication over social media platforms.

This means that although Facebook is a medium that can promote awareness and health education about hepatitis, a credible and consistent source of health information, ease of access and frequency of messages to users will all influence the effectiveness of the communication. The discovery also validates the theory of Uses and Gratifications as it claims that the interest of users and the patterns of media use will affect the extent of their engagement with information they receive. Therefore, a better quality and more visible

hepatitis-related content on Facebook can contribute to better public understanding, and there are possibilities of influencing healthier practices on Facebook.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the knowledge, attitude, and practice of the users of social media in Enugu state regarding the representation of Hepatitis on Facebook in Nigeria. This study had four objectives and four research questions. A total of 384 respondents had their data collected and analyzed via frequency distribution, percentage and mean scores. Based on the findings of the study, the following summaries were made:

1. The study revealed that the social media users in Enugu state had a significant knowledge of Hepatitis as it appeared on Facebook. Participants showed knowledge of the causes, symptoms, modes of transmission, and potential complications of Hepatitis, which is important as Facebook provides a helpful source of information for health.

2. The results of the study showed that there was a positive attitude of the people using social media about the prevention and treatment of Hepatitis. Participants agreed with the importance of routine testing for hepatitis, the need for vaccination, the need for safe blood

donation practices and demonstrated a decrease in discriminatory attitudes about people with hepatitis.

3. The results of the study showed that the representation of hepatitis on Facebook had a positive attitude on the health behaviour of social media users. The respondents showed a willingness to test themselves for hepatitis, get hepatitis vaccine, and to not share sharp objects, maintain good hygiene, and share information with others.

4. Among the findings of the study were several factors that affect social media users' conceptualization and health conduct of Hepatitis. These factors range from inaccurate information from other sources to language barriers, lack of interest, economic constraints that reduce the use of the internet, to no repeated exposure to information about hepatitis.

5.2 Conclusion

The study aimed at assessing the knowledge, attitude, and practice of people who use social media in the study area (Enugu state) regarding the portrayal of Hepatitis on the social media platform (Facebook). The findings showed that Facebook is an important medium for the transmission of health information, and has been an effective medium in the public's awareness of the hepatitis disease among social network users. After seeing hepatitis-related content on Facebook, users showed an improvement in their knowledge of the causes, symptoms, mode of transmission, prevention, and health effects of the hepatitis.

It also found that Facebook portrayal of hepatitis has helped shape positive perceptions of hepatitis prevention and treatment. Favourable attitudes were observed among social media users regarding hepatitis testing, vaccination and various other prevention measures, and a decrease in stigmatizing attitudes was observed regarding people with hepatitis. This implies

social media can be a pivotal lever to encourage health education and positive public attitude toward health issues.

Additionally, the results indicated that the Facebook representation of hepatitis had a positive effect on health practices of social media users. Respondents were encouraged to use health preventive behaviours after being exposed to health information through Facebook, including screening, vaccination, changes in hygiene, and spreading of health information. This means that social media communication can play a role in the awareness creation and behavioral change.

The study, however, found that several factors affect the efficacy of Facebook representations of hepatitis, such as misinformation, inconsistent exposure to health-related information, language barriers, limited internet connectivity, and a lack of public interest in health-related information. Thus although Facebook is regarded as useful medium for health communication, the measures need to be taken to make information about hepatitis accurate, reliable, accessible and visible for better health outcomes.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the results of this study:

Therefore dissemination of accurate and updated information about hepatitis on Facebook should be promoted by health organizations, government bodies and non-governmental bodies to increase awareness and public knowledge regarding hepatitis.

More interactive, video, infographic and animation rich, audience-friendly public health education campaigns about hepatitis should be created on Facebook by public health institutions that can capture greater audience attention and engagement.

Healthcare providers, nurses and health communication specialists need to work with influencers and content creators to disseminate accurate information about hepatitis and to publicize misinformation on Facebook.

People using Facebook should be urged to make sure any health information they post is accurate and from a reliable source to help prevent the spread of false or misleading information about hepatitis.

Health promotion campaigns aiming at citizens and to encourage positive health behaviours should be conducted on the internet using Facebook and other social media and should be promoted by government and public health agencies.

There is a need to enhance access to internet services and digital health information, especially for those who are not accessing them, to increase exposure to health information and preventive health messages related to hepatitis.

5.4 Recommendations for further Research:

The study participants were social media users in Enugu State with the aim of establishing their knowledge, attitude and practice about the portrayal of hepatitis on Facebook in Nigeria. Future studies can expand on this work by reviewing and investigating how other social media, like Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube, shape public awareness and behaviour towards hepatitis and other health related topics.

Other countries/geopolitical zones in Nigeria can also be used to carry out further studies and the results compared with the findings. Furthermore, future studies can assess how the depictions on social media influence uptake of specific prevention strategies including vaccination, screening practices, and stigma reduction across different groups and demographic.

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