

EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AMONG HEALTH SOCIAL WORKERS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of social media use on information dissemination among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis. Social media provides tremendous opportunities for people, including healthcare and social workers to connect with others in their profession, across the country, and across the world.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and simple random sampling technique was used to select two hundred and fifty (250) respondents from selected hospitals in Ibadan metropolis. A questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection, while descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and ANOVA were used for data analysis.

It was discovered that there was a significant effect of knowledge acquisition on information dissemination among health workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis. It was also reported that there was a significant effect of awareness, acquisition on information dissemination among health workers while social networking significantly affected information dissemination among the health workers in the selected hospitals in Ibadan metropolis.

If social media is well explored by the health workers in the selected hospitals, there is the tendency of promoting health information literacy and acquisition among the general populace. It is therefore recommended that health workers should also avail themselves of the opportunity offered by social networking to promote collaboration among other health professionals for effective knowledge sharing and health care delivery. Also, hospital management should facilitate the use of social media among health workers by making available adequate infrastructure that supports internet connectivity in the hospital environment.

KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Social Networking, Information Dissemination, Health Workers, Social Work*

INTRODUCTION

Social work is concerned with individuals, group, communities, societies, and cultures, while Social media with its digital nature offers endless possibilities for connecting with each of these categories. Social media can enhance social work practice in so many ways, such as information provision, advocacy, social support, counseling, networking, group work and research Kirwan (2014).

Social workers are adept at helping people meet these sorts of needs – and so they are found in many locations where health services are delivered. These social workers are known as medical and health care social workers. They may serve as case managers, patient navigators, and therapists. The largest percentage of healthcare, social workers work in hospital settings while some are in outpatient health centers.

In hospital settings, social workers may handle discharge and also review new admissions for issues that need addressing. They may help patients locate various resources within their communities. In these settings, they may work any hour of the day or night. Health social worker may have a caseload of patients with widely varying needs. Some will need to weigh the risks and benefits of different health care options while some will need help writing advanced directives or making an end of life planning. In addition to handling the regular routines, a health, social worker needs to handle crises as they arrive. This may involve offering counseling or therapy. Social workers in medical settings sometimes treat or even diagnose psychological conditions (Social Work Licensure.org. nd).

Digital, online, and other electronic technology have transformed the nature of social work practice. Contemporary social workers can provide services to clients by using online counseling, telephone counseling, video counseling, cybertherapy (avatar therapy), self-guided Web-based interventions, electronic social networks, e-mail, and text messages. The introduction of diverse digital, online, and other forms of electronic social services have created a wide range of complex ethical and related risk management issues Reamer (2013). Social media provides new ways to connect, interact and learn. We can find people with similar interests; we can share knowledge and experiences. We can learn from each other, and we have an opportunity to develop ourselves personally and professionally.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) particularly the social media are becoming essential to social work practice by providing increased treatment possibilities, reducing barriers to service and supporting effective information service delivery Lopez (2014). Social media can be described as forms of electronic communication such as websites for social networking and microblogging through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (“Social media,” n.d.). Includes real-time communication sites (e.g., Skype), blogs (e.g., Blogger), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), content communities (e.g., YouTube), and virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life) Matthews-Juarez et al. (2013).

Social media also provides forums in which people can both offer and benefit from social support. Social media also affords users tremendous opportunity to exchange information in a rapid, efficient, low-cost manner Allen & Naughton (2011). Some research also shows that individuals use social networking sites or online discussion forums to seek information and learn from others. The power of social media as a vehicle for transmitting information may be especially useful in the wake of a crisis or disaster. Many modes of communication can become disrupted in the wake of a serious event, and people often long for accurate information. Social media that provides timely, accurate information can be incredibly reassuring to social workers Borden (2015). In addition, many social media platforms allow for communication with a large number of people at the same time from around the globe. This structure allows for the formation or strengthening of social bonds in groups and can support collaborative problem-solving Bingham& Conner (2010).

Statement of the Problem

Professional social workers must be mindful of social media use because the information shared on social media platforms can be used by clients, other professionals and the general public shape their opinions about social workers as a whole. It is also observed that social media as new technology being adopted in social work practices present a lot of challenges to the health social workers. Some social workers are not familiar with social media tools other than Facebook and Twitter and when they do, they use it mainly for communication and sharing information with family and friends instead of professional purposes. All of these have a negative effect on information dissemination by social workers. It is against the foregoing that this study investigates the effect of social media use on information dissemination among health social workers.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study is to investigate the effect of social media on dissemination of information among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis. Specifically the term of the study is :

- To Examine the effect of social media on knowledge acquisition among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis;
- To Investigate the effect of social media on awareness, acquisition among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis;
- To Examine the effect of social media on the exploration of ideas among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis;
- To suggest the measures of providing effective dissemination of information to health social workers in hospitals.
- Finally, to make recommendations for further improvement, such recommendations will be based on the outcome of the study.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the set aims and objectives of this study, the following research questions shall be used as a guide in the research work.

- What is the effect of social media on knowledge acquisition among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis?
- What is the effect of social media on awareness, acquisition among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis?
- What is the effect of social media on the exploration of ideas among health social workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis?
- What are the ways of providing effective dissemination of information to health social workers in hospitals?
- What are the contributions of the government towards the ' improvement of present information- sources and services?

Related Studies

Social media is a platform that facilitates information sharing and participation from users of the media in order to create and/or distribute the content (Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke, 2014). These platforms have shifted the emphasis of Internet services from being consumed-based towards becoming more interactive and collaborative, thereby creating new opportunities for interaction between organizations and the public (Henderson and Bowley, 2010). Distinct from old forms of media, social media can include both web-based and mobile technologies (Mou et al., 2013). Organizations should consider using social media because of the changing trends among consumers.

Social media, according to Suraweera, Razali, Chouhan, et al. (2010), referred to a process of relationship building among a group with a common interest. Social media emerged in Nigeria principally for the purpose of socializing. Facebook was initially used only for social discussions. Within a few years, however, the categorization of individuals into specific groups emerged. Professional groups started to spring up and within time, the library profession had its own group with the sole purpose of sharing ideas and gathering first hand information regarding the profession.

According to Rogers (2012), social media is information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies. At its most basic sense, social media is a shift in how people discover, read, and share news, information, and content. It's a fusion of sociology and technology that transforms monologue (one-to-many) into dialogue (many-to-many), and is the democratization of information that transforms people from content readers into publishers. Social media networks are good at knowledge gathering. They have been utilized in research of social sciences to gather professional knowledge and the responses from research objects (Poynter, 2010). With millions of users, SNS offers opportunities for libraries to reach out to communities and gather knowledge from the interaction between librarians and users (O'Dell, 2010). Users can help create new library services by contributing their knowledge through an online network (Casey & Savastinuk, 2006). The social media network is efficient for communication. Research finds that low-self-disclosure on social media make it easier for users to launch conversations with acquaintances (McElvain & Smyth, 2006).

Social Media refers to the form of media technology brought about as a result of the information superhighway that delivers all kinds of electronic services: sound and video, text, data to household and business (Hasan, 2013). Social media is a means of interacting with people in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It is an internet-based application that is built on the ideological and technological foundations that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan, 2012 in Balarabe, 2014).

Social media tools are online collaborative tools that enable people to communicate, participate, collaborate and thus share information (Chua & Goi, 2010; Harinarayana & Raju, 2010). Social media has also been described as "collaborative online applications and technologies which enable and encourage participation, conversation, openness, creation and socialization amongst a community of users" (Bowley, 2009:15), web-based tools and practices enabling participation and collaboration based on individuals' activities (Storey et al, 2010). Surowiecki (2005) defined that social media is to make use of the "wisdom of the crowd". A group of people are better at problem-solving, fostering decision making than the individuals alone. New ways of inspiring and exploiting information dissemination are forcing organizations to expand their knowledge acquisition technologies and practices (Mentzas et al, 2007).

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social media as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 1). The difference between these technologies and other standard forms of ICTs are users are able to make their views, perceptions and knowledge public via the system. This form ties with other individuals who may have similar interests, needs or problems. While networking may not be the primary motivator for their use, these technologies allow knowledge sharing through the creation of knowledge networks.

The impact of the more sophisticated, more glamorous and more “powerful” electronic media (Hasan, 2013) is gradually transforming society, thus, making more complex compared to the traditional media system. The introduction of films helps to convey contemporary messages visually; radio programming sends messages to farmers, rural dwellers and civil servants more efficiently. And now the new media crowns it all by making it more individual, on the spot and efficient, especially doing away with censoring “bottlenecks” (Usman, 2014). The use of the internet (via personal computers) by individuals, both at home and workplaces made people (having the skills) to use computers in their daily life activities. The old message for large, heterogeneous, the anonymous and scattered audience is gradually replaced by people connecting themselves via a network of computers to share information and ideas with less/minimum official interference.

According to Usman (2015), the social media articulates a list of other users with whom they share a connection. More so, individuals and communities share, co-create and modify user generated content, construct a public or semi public profile within a bounded system. Users of the social media also traverse their lists of connections and those made by others within the system. It is also free of conventional media control.

The IGI Global (2014) described information dissemination as the distribution or broadcasting of information. Information dissemination has in some cases been described even as explosive (Kwon, Kim & Park, 2009) and in a best case scenario information can spread very wide and for a long period of time. The ever increasing contribution of the internet and the revolution of information distribution over the last few decades, has significantly exaggerated the relationship between professionals like social workers and their clients (Sahu, 2013).

Information dissemination as part of social work practice refers primarily to the provision of information to individuals and communities. It seeks to raise peoples' awareness of the dangers and to promote safe behavior. It is primarily a one-way form of communication transmitted through mass media, including the social media, which may provide relevant information and advice in a cost-effective and timely manner (United Nations - IMAS, 2005).

One major function of social networks (in particular, massive online social networks) is the dissemination of information such as scientific knowledge, news, and rumors. As an important form of social organization, information can shape public opinion, inform and misinform the society, cause panic in a society, promote products, etc. Information can be propagated by the members of the network via natural connections in written, oral or electronic form. Due to its importance, information dissemination or diffusion has been one of the focuses in social network research. For example, theories of rumor spreading are proposed in to study the information dissemination. Game theoretical approach to information propagation (namely, to learning) has been suggested by Gale et al., Acemoglu et al. Ellwardt and van Duijn explored gossiping in small (organizational) social networks.

The dissemination of health information from the health social workers should be in the language and format that the people understand so as to enhance mutual intelligibility. This implies that health social workers must: (a) identify the health needs of the people; (b) package or re-package such information in simple formats that are acceptable to the people; and (c) use the languages of the people to disseminate health issues with them (Soji – Omoniwa, Omoniyi and Omoniyi, 2014).

According to Akande (2014), food borne diseases, communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, socio-behavioral illnesses, teenage pregnancy, maternal mortality, and unhealthy practices constitute major health problems in Nigeria. The way and manner that health care workers often package, re-package, and disseminate information about rural health challenges is not too inspiring. In fact, Akande (2014) observed that a large majority of health workers like doctors, nurses, pharmacists and laboratory scientists are largely found in cities and urban settlements while more community workers are found in the cities and towns than in the rural areas where their presence is supposed to be felt most.

The health social workers are specialized in disseminating health information services such as sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, reproduction and family planning, immunization, child and maternal care, dental care, accidents and first aid, among others. Health social workers also disseminate health information that will provide psychosocial support to individuals, families, or vulnerable populations so they can cope with their health conditions. They also advise family caregivers, counsel patients, and help disseminate health information for patients' needs after discharge from hospitals. Health social workers like those involved in social services work in hospitals, nursing and personal care facilities, individual and family services agencies, or local governments (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Health information sources are used by social workers to assist in the dissemination of health information to people (Bii and Otike, 2003). They inform people and provide knowledge about health and general well-being. Health information sources as revealed by Bi and Otike (2003) are friends, parents, relatives, health care workers, radio, posters and other visual aids, books, religious leaders, newspapers, herbalists, television, magazines, films and video shows, teachers, seminars and workshops. Other sources of information are recorded music and audio recordings, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and group leaders, drama and plays, leaflets, booklets, pamphlets, demonstrations and exhibitions. In addition, formats of information sources that could be utilized in the health sector include oral or verbal, audio, visual, print or written and multimedia (Bii and Otike, 2003; Ojedokun, 2007) and the most recent of the sources being the internet and social media.

Another study Sigalaa andChalkiti, (2015) investigates the relation between social media use and employee creativity by adopting a knowledge management approach in order to consider the influence of social networks and interactions on individuals' creativity. Their findings highlight the need to shift focus from identifying and managing creative individuals (micro level) and/or organizational contexts (macro level) to creating and managing creative social networks (meso level). The use of social media for externalizing, disseminating and discussing information with others within various social networks as well as for combining and generating shared (new) knowledge can further trigger, enrich and expand the employees' individual cognitive abilities and provide them with stimuli for generating and (co)-creating more and newer ideas/knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This was considered appropriate because it is an empirical method which presents the description of events as they were and the variables were not manipulated. The design also enhanced, an easy collection of factual information about the research problems. The study was carried out in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis. The population of the study comprises of Two hundred and Fifty respondents (250) Health Workers, which was randomly selected in Ibadan Metropolis comprising of all the Five major Local Government Areas in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The result was presented in the table formats.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
21 - 30 years	80	32.0
31 – 40 years	90	36.0
41 – 50 years	57	22.8
51 – 60 years	23	9.2
Total	250	100.0

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution by age. Out of the total of 250 respondents in the study, the majority of age 90(36.0%) were between the age of 31-40 years while 80 (32.0%) were between the age range 21-30 years, 57(22.8%) were within the age range 41-50 years and 23(9.2%) were within the age range 51-60 years.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	117	46.8%
Female	133	53.2%
Total	250	100.0%

Table 2 indicates the sex distribution of the respondents of the study, 117 (46.8%) of the respondents were males, while their female counterparts were 133 (53.2%). This result implies that there are more of female respondents during the data collections in the field.

Table 3: Frequency Distributions by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	77	30.8%
Married	151	60.4%
Separated	12	4.8%
Divorced	10	4.0%
Total	250	100.0%

Table 3 reveals the marital status of respondents, where 77(30.8%) respondents parents are single, 151(60.4%) are married and constitutes most of the respondent's parents, 12(4.8%) are separated, 10(4.0%) are divorced.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary Education	7	2.8%
Secondary Education	26	10.4%
Tertiary Education	211	84.4%
Others	6	2.4%
Total	250	100.0%

Table 4 shows the educational distribution of the respondent's level of education 7 (2.8%) are primary school leavers, 26(10.4%) have secondary education, while 211 (84.4%) have tertiary education and 6(2.4%) were four others. This shows that those with higher education constituted the majority of respondents.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Income per Annum

Level of Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below ^100,000.00	121	48.4%
#101,000 - ^200,000	55	22.0%
#201,000 - #300,000	27	10.8%
#301,000 - #400,000	21	8.4%
#401,000 and above	26	10.4%
Total	250	100.0%

Table 5 above shows that majority 121(48.4%) earns below ^100,000 per annum, 55(22.0%) earn between the range of ^101,000 - ^200,000 per annum, 27(10.8%) earn between the range of ^201,000 - ^300,000 per annum, also 21(8.4%) earn between the range of ^301,000 - ^400,000 per annum, 26 (10.4%) earn between ^501,000 and above per annum.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing Effects of Knowledge Acquisition on Information Dissemination among Health Workers

Source of Variance	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	P
Between groups Variance	310.033	3	103.344	5.1	2.60	<0.05
Within groups Variance	4998.531	246	20.319			
Total Variance	5308.564	249				

F= 5.1, Df = 3/249, P <0.05

Table 6 shows that knowledge acquisition has a significant effect on the information dissemination among health workers in Ibadan Metropolis. The result indicated that F-calculated value (5.1) is greater than F-critical value (2.60) at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected and this indicated that there was a significant effect of knowledge acquisition on information dissemination among health workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis.

This result is in line with the findings of Davis, et al (2012) and Pacharapha and Rectham (2012) and Veletsianos (2013) that, knowledge acquisition is among the services which are highly facilitated by social media tools. Therefore, health institutions and the practitioners need to incorporate social media tools in order to enhance knowledge acquisition practices.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Effect of Awareness Acquisition on Information Dissemination among Health Workers in Selected Hospital in Ibadan Metropolis

Source of Variance	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	P
Between Groups Variance	1213.948	3	404.649	24.3	2.60	<0.05
Within Groups Variance	4094.616	246	16.645			
Total	5308.564	249				

F=24.3, Df=3/249, P<0.05

Table 7 shows that awareness, acquisition has a significant effect on information dissemination among health workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis. The result shows that F-calculated value (24.3) is greater than F-critical value (2.60) at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected and this showed that there was a significant effect of awareness, acquisition on information dissemination among health workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis.

This result is in line with the findings of Mpofo and Salawu (2014); Fox & Duggan (2013), Quintana et al (2001) that, there is a need for strategies that can communicate and disseminate credible health information in a form that consumers can use and understand. The internet is one of the most widely used resources for health information.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Effect of Social Networking on Information Dissemination among Health Workers in Selected Hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis

Source of Variance	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F-ca	F-crit	P
Between Groups Variance	773.722	3	257.907	13.991	2.6	<0.05
Within Group Variance	4534.842	246	18.434			
Total	5308.564	249				

F=13.991, Df=3/249,P<0.05

Table 8 reveals that Social Networking has a significant effect on information Dissemination among health workers in selected hospital in Ibadan metropolis. The result shows that F-calculated value (13.991) is greater than F-critical value (2.6) at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected and this indicated that there was a significant effect of social networking on information dissemination among health workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis.

This result is in line with the findings of the White (2010) that, social media tools are suitable for exploration of ideas through social networking e.g. Facebook, twitter etc, to get exposure, to find knowledge from a global community of experts and to engage others to share knowledge, especially on health services.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that knowledge acquisition, awareness, acquisition, and social networking had significant effects on information dissemination among health workers in selected hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis. Consequently, if the social media is well explored by the health workers in the hospitals, there is the tendency of promoting health information literacy and acquisition among the general populace. This also brings about effectiveness in healthcare delivery and efficiency in healthcare services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

- Health workers in government hospitals in Oyo State should take full advantage of social media to disseminate basic health information. This will help them reach out to many people at a time as well as improve access to health information services.
- Health workers should also avail themselves of the opportunity offered by social networking to promote collaboration among other health professionals for effective knowledge sharing and health care delivery.
- Hospital management should facilitate the use of social media among health workers by making available adequate infrastructure that supports internet connectivity in the hospital environment. This will encourage the health workers to use the social media at work for health information dissemination.
- Social media should be seen by health workers as a means to create awareness of general health information that would benefit the masses and healthcare professionals.

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