Access and Usage of Social Media for Health Information among Residents of Sabon-Gari, Kano State

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Abstract
This study examined access and usage of social media to seek for health information among residents of Sabon-Gari Area in Fagge Local Government of Kano State. The survey method was adopted and questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. A sample size of 200 was drawn using purposive sampling. The findings of the study revealed that a majority of the respondent's access various social media platforms to seek for health information but only a few had shared health information on social media. Also, a majority of the respondents perceive social media as a trusted source of health information and are positively influenced by the information. The study recommended that social media users should be encouraged to participate in discussions about health on social media platforms.
Keywords: *Access, usage, influence, health information, social media, Sabon-Gari.*

Introduction
The use of social media is significantly increasing in recent times. According to Internet World Statista, the estimated internet users as of January 2021 stood at 4.66 billion. According to Data Reportal, internet penetration in Nigeria stood at 50.0% in January 2021 and there were 33 million social media users in Nigeria in January 2021. As a result, individuals have the opportunity to access various information on politics, economy, education, social and other issues, including health. Good health is key in achieving human and societal development because a healthy individual can make meaningful contributions. To have a healthy life, it is imperative to have access to the appropriate health information. There are different dimensions of health and they include physical, mental, and psychological health. According to Bound (2016), the advent of social media came with opportunities for news outlets to engage more people thereby leading to an increased spread of information to a wider audience.

There are different sources of information on health such as television, radio, print, health personnel, family and friends. However, Huo et al. (2019) assert that the newly emerged social media-based health information dissemination offers valid space to promote accurate health information to the public. Hence, social media has

been identified as a source of information on health. According to Sahni and Sharma (2020) and Ahmad and Murad (2020), social media are seen as fast and effective platforms for searching, sharing and distributing health information among the general population. Similarly, Revathy, Aram and Sharmila (2018) explain that many individuals turn to social media for health information. What this implies is that the emergence of social media has paved the way for individuals to be actively involved in their health status, including that of friends and family members. Social media users access health information to educate and enlighten themselves on health issues thereby gaining health knowledge. Weaver, Lindsay and Gitelman (2012) assert that though social media is relatively new in healthcare, it creates an opportunity for the e-communication effort in any healthcare setting. In addition, social media as an emerging technology has made health information easier to access by individuals.

The main objective of this paper is to assess the use of social media to seek for health information among individuals residing in Sabon-Gari in Fagge Local Government Area of Kano State, the believability, and the influence of such information on social media users.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are

1. To find out the level of access to and usage of health information on social media among the residents of Sabon-Gari, Kano.
2. To identify the types of health information accessed by the residents on social media.
3. To determine the influence of social media health information on the residents.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the residents of Sabon-Gari access health information on social media?
2. What are the types of health information accessed on social media by the respondents?
3. To what extent does social media health information influence the respondents?

Conceptual Clarification and Review of Related Literature

Scholars have written extensively on health information and its benefits to individuals. Before the advent of the Internet, the main sources of health information were traditional media, family, relatives, friends and health

professionals. However, the Internet is regarded as an additional source of information on health among individuals who have access to the Internet. According to Huo et al. (2019), in recent years, the improved and increased access to internet services have led to increased interest in implementing social media-based health promotion and intervention programmes. Gambo and Apuke (2017) also explain that the birth of social media has facilitated its use to access health information instead of face to face consultation. Hence, health information is available in traditional media and Internet.

Health Communication

Basically, health communication is the effective use of communication to improve the health of individuals. It is the synergy between health and communication. Brent (2014) defines health communication as the multidisciplinary field of study and practice that applies communication strategy, theory and creativity to promote behaviors, policies, and practices that advance the health and well-being of people. Schiavo (2007) gives a broad definition of health communication by stating that it is a multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach to reach different audiences and share health-related information with the goal of influencing, engaging, and supporting individuals, communities and health professionals, special groups, policy makers and public to champion, introduce, adopt or sustain a behavior, practice, or policy that will ultimately improve health outcomes. In a similar position, Lederman, Kreps and Roberts (2017) assert that health communication does not focus on illness and disease alone. It covers everything about health, including the definitions of health, prevention and strengthening of bodies and minds that are healthy and well, physically, mentally and emotionally.

Therefore these definitions show that health information is expected to contribute to the prevention, control and treatment of various diseases. It is also meant to educate and enlighten individuals on how to stay healthy through healthy lifestyle and appropriate healthy behavior. In the health communication discourse, there are several stakeholders who are expected to play critical roles in order to attain a healthy society. Health communication creates awareness about various diseases including their prevention, treatment and management through different approaches. In other to reach the various audience, different channels are utilized such as television, radio, magazines, newspapers, billboards and the Internet. Others include friends, family members, community members and health

professionals. Therefore, the goal of health communication is to improve the general health and well-being of individuals.

Social Media and Health Information

Kaplan and Haenlein quoted in Anand, Gupta and Kwatra (2013) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. According to Gonzalez-PadiIla and Tortoter-Blanco (2020), social media platforms are amongst the most widely used sources of information on various issues. By implication despite the challenges of social media, it has been recognized by many individuals as a source of information on various issues.

Ahmad and Murad (2020) corroborate that the social media has become a significant source of health information and that people have used social media to discuss personal experiences and have expressed opinions and concerns about various illnesses. Anand, Gupta and Kwatra (2013), explained how social media could be used to improve relationship between individuals (patients) and physicians or health professionals. According to the scholars, health professionals can monitor public response to health issues and disseminate important health information to targeted communities.

According to Huo et al. (2019), there are four reasons individuals use the social media for health information (a) to gain knowledge about their diagnosed disease (b) to get advice from other patients with the same disease (c) to receive support from individuals online (d) to communicate with a physician on social media. Similarly, Pagoto, Waring and Xu (2019) explain that patients use social media to connect with other patients about their health and this is referred to as 'peer to peer' health care, a term coined by Susannah Fox at the Pew Research Center in 2011. Almozainy (2017) observes that health personnel also use social media platforms like Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and blogs in their practice and to also get patient referrals. Cline and Haynes quoted in Sokey, Adjei and Ankrah (2018) explain that there are three main ways that people utilize the Internet to access health information: (a) search for health data, (b) take an interest in well - being care groups and (c) collaborate with health experts. However, Smailhodzic et al. (2016) provide that one of the main reasons why individuals, especially patients, access health information on social media is dissatisfaction with healthcare professionals' inability to meet the patients' emotional and informational needs. In

other words, individuals access social media to get information and emotional support that is difficult to get from health professionals.

In a related development, Chen et al. (2018) explain that social media offer educational interventions to promote health information. In addition, users can identify, locate, obtain, read, understand, evaluate, and effectively use online health information. According to Almozainy (2017), the versatility of social media creates numerous options for the presentation of information and the collaborative nature of social media allows for a meaningful contributing for all user groups.

The use of the Internet as a source of health information yields a lot of benefits. Dutta-Bergman, quoted in Sokey, Adjei and Ankrah (2018), asserts that as a rule, people who utilize the Internet as a medium of information were likely to be health conscious and participate in numerous health related exercises and practices. According to Wald, Dube and Anthony (2007), internet-based health information makes users to be well-informed about various health issues including their health conditions. Corroboratively, Reis, Visser and Frankel (2013) opine that users of social media health information are usually well informed about ailments, and that in some cases, patients are way ahead of healthcare professionals when using digital technology to access health information. Smailhoodzic et al. (2016) believe that access to health information on social media enhances the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the users. Further, they explain that for users who belong to online communities, they are able to discuss their conditions and in some cases get support from group members.

In the words of Payne et al. (2015), though some individuals prefer to get health information from medical practitioners, there are a growing number of individuals who seek for and share health information through social media. Higgins et al. (2011) and Smailhoodzic et al. (2016) have also argued that the use of social media as a source for health information should be seen as a complement to health information and not replacement of other sources of health information. And that individuals access social media for health information to fulfil the needs that cannot be met by the healthcare professionals.

The use of health information among individuals is determined by various factors as discussed by scholars. Kontons et al. in Palsdottir (2014) examined the demographic profile of adult users of social networking sites for health information

and found that the use decreased as age increased and that those with lower education and income levels were more frequent users of social networking sites than those with more education and higher income levels. However, some studies came up with contrary results. For example, Revathy, Aram and Sharmila (2018), and Vartonova and Gladkova (2019) reveal that those who are educated access the Internet for health information than those who are less educated. Higgins et al (2011) specifically point out that those who access and use online health information are usually more educated and have higher earnings.

Criticisms against Health Information on Social Media

Despite the benefits of accessing health information on social media, several criticisms have been levelled against this phenomenon. According to Lederman, Kreps and Roberto (2017), there is a plethora of health information on the Internet, but not all of the information is equally valid. Similarly, Obi-Ani, Ani Kwenze and Isiani (2020) argue that while some information on social media are ennobling, most are debasing, mischievous and outright falsehood. Further, social media is used by individuals to spread panic, fear and confusion among the audience. Therefore, Smailhodzic et al (2016) caution that since anybody with access to social media can post "advice" on how to deal with a certain health condition, it is imperative to create reliable online communication avenues to prevent health problems being exacerbated.

According to Huo et al. (2019), the use of social media for health information does not necessarily mean that social media users always receive high-quality evidence-based, validated health information. By implication, some of the health information are false and misleading. In fact some information are harmful to the health and wellbeing of social media users. The advent of the Internet which also led to the birth of social media has also facilitated the emergence of citizen journalism. Citizen journalists can create, produce, post, and share information. However, this also means that some of the information posted on social media by citizen journalists (who have not undergone any journalistic training) is either not verified or fake. Pagoto, Waring and Xu (2019) define health misinformation as information that is false and spread by someone who believes it to be true while health disinformation refers to information that is false and spread by someone who is aware it is fake and is intent on misleading people. The authors went further to say that both misinformation and disinformation are growing on social media and have attracted a lot of attention due to its negative impact. Be that as it may, the authors argue that "inoculating the public against health information (and disinformation)

requires an understanding of whether and how they influence attitudes, beliefs and behavior, and who is susceptible to being duly influenced." "It creates confusion, spreads fear, and affects responses to health challenges or issues" (Sahni & Sharma, 2020). Almozainy (2017) concludes that misinformation on social media constitutes a risk as health professionals cannot control the content that is posted or discussed. Brent (2014) corroborates that as a result of the nature of social media it will be difficult for health professionals to mediate the information received from 'other' caregiving sources, and as a result are unable to control the quality, safety, accuracy or applicability.

Hence, the issue of source credibility and trust in websites become a major concern especially among health practitioners (Higgins, Sixsmith, Barry, & Domegan, 2011). Berry, Wharf, Higgins and Nayler, quoted in Change (2012), assert that health information can play both a positive role by promoting public health and a negative role by sensationalizing health issues and causing unnecessary fear. The social media have also been criticized for invading peoples' privacy which results in anxiety among social media users. According to Smailhodzic et al. (2016) not all social media health information seekers actively use social media. Sometimes users only access social media to read about other people's health conditions without actively contributing themselves. The researchers termed this set of people as lurkers. At individual level, Huo et al. (2019) argue that it is sometimes difficult to maintain privacy on social media especially for users who are not familiar with complicated privacy settings. The above analysis shows that social media has its resultant negative impact on individuals and the society at large.

Despite the growth and penetration of the Internet and social media, the problem of digital divide prevails and this is of great concern as it hinders the usage of social media to obtain health information. What this implies is that despite the benefits and vast information available on social media about health, some categories of individuals do not have access to or use such information. Ojo, quoted in Sokey, Adjei and Ankrah (2018), argues that the high level of illiteracy, poverty, and absence of basic infrastructure prevent some individuals from accessing and using most new media devices (social media) to get health information. Hence, Pagoto et al. (2019) advise that there should be efforts to close the digital divide in order to facilitate access to health information on social media platforms.

Empirical Review

In Zhang's (2013) study among 38 college students in Research University Texas, it was found that a majority of the respondents had accessed health information through social media. In addition, respondents shared health related information such as diet, recipes, exercise, nutrition, weight loss and mild conditions among themselves. However, 21 percent of the respondents were concerned about privacy issues; they believed that health issues are personal issues that should not be shared. Price Water house Coopers quoted in Weaver, Lindsay and Gitelman (2012) in a survey of 1,040 young adults, ages 18 to 24 showed that 80% shared health information on social networks, and almost 90% said they trusted health information found on social networks.

In Saadeh, Saadeh and De La Torrer's (2020) study to assess the usage of social media for medical information among medical and dental students in Jordan, a majority of the respondents did not consider social media as a trusted source of medical information. The study concluded that respondents were reluctant to use social media for medical information because of the belief that social media is mainly for socialization and entertainment. Another study by Huo et al. (2019) among 6,470 respondents found that respondents use social media for health reasons. However, a majority of the respondents preferred to use social media to exchange medical information with healthcare professionals than to share health information. Chen et al.'s (2018) study among 457 patients revealed that a majority of the respondents searched for health information online to solve medical problems. In addition, the study found that health information accessed by respondents influenced their health decision making.

Almozainy (2017) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia to assess the use of social media as a source of information on dentistry. A total of 1,030 respondents were drawn for the survey. Findings indicate that a majority of the respondents (98%) had access to social media, 70% of the respondents said they accessed social media for information on dental issue. Thirty one point nine (31.9%) percent of the respondents said social media prompted them to select and visit a dentist. The study concluded that social media has paved the way for younger people, minorities, women and lower socio-economic groups to be able to access health information that would have been difficult through the traditional media. In Fox and Duggan's (2012) study, it was found that 72% of adult internet users sought for support and medical information online. In Europe, a World Health Organization (WHO) e-

health cross country survey of 7 countries, quoted in Higgins et al. (2011) reveals that 71% of internet users had accessed the Internet for health purposes.

In Palsdottir's (2014) study to assess the health and life style of different groups of Ice Landers, internet and telephone survey were used to obtain information from 6,000 respondents. Results show that participants in all groups preferred to use social media to access health information. However, it was found that most participants rarely post information or make comments about information from others. Further results indicate that women accessed the social media for health information more than men, younger people accessed health information more, and educated people access health information more than the less educated.

Payne et al. (2015) conducted an internet survey among 196 community health workers (CHWs) to find out their use and acceptance of social media. Most of the respondents were female (85%) and 81.3% used the media in both their personal and professional lives.

In a qualitative study by Criss et al. (2015) among Hispanic women, a majority of the participants agreed that they use the Internet to access health information on fetus, child development, nutrition, breastfeeding and feeding practices. Other sources include family members and mass media. Most of the participants also said they validated health information by checking various sources for consistency and resolving contradictory information. However, some participants also claimed that though they access health information on Facebook, they rarely discuss personal health as it is not a space for that.

Revathy, Aram and Sharmila's (2018) study to assess the use of social media as an interactive platform to overcome stress and depression among women in India found that younger women (25years) were actively involved (45%) in accessing social media for information on stress and depression, while only 5% of older women (35 years) were involved in this phenomenon. This means that age is strongly associated with social media usage. In addition, most of the respondents who used social media for information on depression said they preferred Facebook to Youtube.

Igbinoba et al.'s (2020) study among women in Ota, Ogun State of Nigeria found that 48% of the respondents used social media to get information on maternal

health. In addition, the study found that the women (those who used social media for maternal health information) were affected knowledge wise. A quantitative survey among female students in faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in Taraba State University in Jalingo Metropolis of Nigeria by Gambo and Apuke (2017) found that a majority of the respondents had access to social media. A majority of the respondents agreed that social media is a credible source of health information. In addition, a majority of the respondents (65%) agreed that they have benefited from health information on social media; it helped them to make informed choices thereby living a healthy life.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in uses and gratifications (U&G) theory. The theory focuses on what and why individuals use the media and for what reasons. The basic assumptions of the theory are (a) Individuals are active users of the media (b) Individuals prefer certain media and media content based on some identified needs (c) Individuals use the media to satisfy the identified needs.

The emergence of the Internet has brought new dimensions to the theory. And one of the dimensions is that it facilitates social interaction between social media users. According to Musa, Azmi and Ismail (2015), though the theory seems old to some individuals, the emergence of social media breathes a new life into this aging or old theory.

The uses and gratifications theory postulates that individuals are motivated by certain reasons to seek for media and media content. Hence, West and Turner (2010) queried whether people's motivation to use the old media will apply to new media. Larose and Eastin, quoted in West and Turner (2010), provide that in addition to explaining internet use, uses and gratifications theory can also explain new variables such as expected activity outcomes and social outcomes. Larose and Eastin also suggest that individuals may enhance their social status by finding like-minded others through the Internet and expressing their ideas to them. This position can be used to explain the utilization of social media to find support and discuss health issues with individuals who have similar health problems. The theory can also be used to explain the result of the use of the Internet by those who have access to social media.

The U & G theory is applicable to this study because it shows that individuals' need for health information makes them to access and use social media. Hence, the

theory is used to examine the types of health information the respondents' access on social media and reasons for the choices.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey method and used questionnaire to collect data from the study population. Respondents were drawn from Sabon-Gari in Fagge Local Government Area. Fagge Local Government is one of the eight Local Governments in Kano Metropolis. Its headquarters are in Waje. It is an area made up of people from other parts of the country and neighboring countries. Ethnic groups in Sabon-Gari include Igbo, Yoruba, Nupe, Idoma, Urhobo, and many others. Only a few Hausas reside in Sabon-Gari. By implication, a majority of those residing in Sabon-Gari area are non-Hausas. Islam and Christianity are the two major religions practised by the residents and they engage in various economic activities. Therefore, a total of 200 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the residents in Sabon-Gari Area. Purposive sampling was used to administer questionnaire to those who were social media users in the study population.

Data Presentation and Analysis

All the 200 copies of the questionnaires were retrieved. One hundred and thirty seven were male respondents while 63 were female respondents. A majority of the respondents (70) had Advanced level education, 43 respondents had SSCE, 62 of the respondents were graduates and only 25 respondents were educated up to Post-graduate level. A majority of the respondents were between the age range of 26-40(78), those between 18-25 were 55, those between 41-55 were 47 in number, and finally those between 56 years and above were 20.

Table 1: Whether respondents seek for health information on social media

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Yes	155	77.5
No	45	22.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 was designed to determine the extent to which the respondents access social media for health information. The data in the table show that majority of the respondents deliberately seek for health information on social media.

Table 2: Frequency at which respondents seek for health information on social media

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Often	70	45.16
Less often	55	35.49
Once in a while	30	19.35
Total	155	100.00

Table 2 is a follow-up to the question in table one. The data in table 2 shows the frequency at which respondents access health information on social media. A majority frequently access health information. Only a few respondents (30) access health information from time to time.

Table 3: The social media networks respondents' access for health information.

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Facebook	70	32.26
WhatsApp	42	16.13
Twitter	25	16.13
Instagram	55	19.36
Youtube	50	19.36
Telegram	30	6.45
Others	30	6.45
Total	302	100

Table 3 shows the social media networks that respondent's access for health information. Respondents seek for health information through various social media platforms, especially Facebook. Note that some respondents seek for health information from multiple sources.

Table 4: Types of health information respondents' access on social media

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Physical heath	84	26.13
Emotional health	66	23.00
Psychological health	56	20.00
Reproductive health	60	20.21
Others	32	11.15
Total	298	100

The data in table 4 show the types of health information the respondents accessed on social media. A majority of the respondents seek for information on physical health. Other health information accessed include emotional, psychological, reproduction and others.

Table 5: Reasons respondents accessed health information on social media

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Information	105	20.2
Enlightenment	97	18.7
Prevention	81	15.6
Treatment	66	12.7
Improve health	99	19.0
Get Support	42	8.1
Others	30	5.8
Total	520	100

Table 5 above shows that a majority of the respondents accessed health information in order to be informed about various health issues. Ninety-seven respondents accessed health information to be enlightened about health issues. 81 accessed social media to get information on how to prevent certain diseases. For 66 of the respondents, health information helps them to treat a health condition. Ninety-nine respondents used the information to improve their health status. 42 respondents accessed social media to get support from individuals about various health conditions. Finally, 30 respondents said they accessed health information on social media for various reasons.

Table 6: Whether respondents had ever shared any health information on social media

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Yes	52	33.55
No	103	66.45
Total	155	100.00

Table 6 above shows that a majority of the respondents (66.45%) had never shared any health information on social media. Only 33.55% agreed that they had shared health information on social media.

Table 7: Respondents' participation in any health discussion on social media platforms

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Yes	60	38.71
No	95	61.29
Total	155	100.0

Table 7 above indicates that a majority of the respondents had never participated in any health discussion on social media which is represented by 61.29% while 38.71% of the respondents said they had participated in health discussion at some point in time.

Table 8: Influence of Health information on respondents

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Yes	110	70.97
No	45	29.03
Total	155	100.00

Table 8 shows the responses on the influence of health information on the respondents. A majority of the respondents agreed that health information on social media has influence on them (70.97%) while 29.03% of the respondents disagreed to that effect.

Table 9: Nature of influence on respondents

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Positive	82	74.55
Negative	28	25.45
Total	110	100.00

Table 9 was designed as a follow-up to the question in table 8. The data in the table show that a majority of the respondents said they were positively influenced by health information on social media while 25.45% of the respondents claimed health information had negative influence on them.

Table 10: Social media as a trusted source of health information.

Options	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Yes	100	64.52
No	35	22.58
Not sure	20	12.90
Total	155	100.00

Table 10 above shows that a majority of the respondents (64.52%) agreed that social media is a trusted source of health information. 22.58% of the respondents disagreed to that effect and, finally, 12.90% of the respondents were not sure.

Discussion of Findings

Social media is a useful source of information on various issues including health as shown in this study. Hence a majority of the respondents (77.5%) said they accessed the social media for health information. These findings corroborate with the studies of Almozainy (2017) and Huo et al. (2019), where they found that a majority of the respondents accessed social media for health information.

Findings also show that respondents accessed multiple social media platforms for information on health. These platforms include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Telegram and others. However, a majority of the respondents accessed health information through Facebook. This is similar to the studies of Gonzalex-Padilla and Tortoter-Blanco (2020), and Ahmad and Murad (2020) which revealed that individuals accessed various social media platforms for health information. In Revathy, Aram and Sharmila's study (2018) majority of the respondents accessed health information through Facebook.

There are different categories of health information and this study found that respondents accessed the social media for health information on reproduction, physical, emotional and psychological health as shown in table 4. The study also revealed the usage of health information accessed by respondents. As shown in table 5, a majority of the respondents said they use information accessed on social media to educate and enlighten themselves. In addition, respondents also use health information obtained from social media to prevent or treat various illnesses. This position is in line with the U &G theory which postulates that individuals make deliberate efforts to use media and media content based on identified needs.

Respondents' use of information to satisfy health needs also implies an active audience as explained by the theory.

It was also found that a majority of the respondents (66.45%) had never shared any health information on social media, especially their health status. Further probing revealed that respondents' reluctance to share health information on social media was mainly because of privacy issues. Therefore, the respondents do seek for health information in order to read and evaluate the information without necessarily sharing any information (personal of otherwise). In Paldottir's study (2014), despite the fact that participants accessed the social media for health information they rarely share information or make comments about health information posted on platforms. On the contrary, in Zhang's study (2013), a majority of the respondents shared health related information. This phenomenon requires further research in other to identify the factors responsible for the difference.

Social media platforms allow individuals to interact and discuss various issues of interest; however, this study revealed that only 38.71 percent of the respondents had participated in discussions about health as shown in table 7. This is corroborated by the study carried out by Criss et al. (2015), where some participants said they hardly discuss personal health information on social media.

A majority of the respondents (70.97%) were influenced by health information accessed on social media. For 74.55% of the respondents it is positive influence and for 25.45% of the respondents, it is negative influence (see tables 8 and 9). In Chen et al.'s study (2018), respondents who had access to health information on social media were influenced in making decisions about their health. Igbinoba et al. (2020), and Gambo and Apuke (2017) also found that respondents were positively influenced by health information accessed on social media because it made them improve on their health status.

Despite the phenomenal growth of the Internet and access to social media, it is sometimes not seen as a trusted or credible source of information. This is connected to the fact that the nature of social media allows individuals to post information without restrictions. As a result, a lot of fake news and misinformation are found on social media; hence individuals see it as a less credible source of health information. As shown in table 10 of this study, 22.58% of the respondents did not perceive social media as a credible source of information. This is similar to Saadeh, Saadeh and De La Torre's (2020) study, where it was revealed that a majority of

the respondents did not consider social media as a trusted source of health information. On the other hand this study found that a majority of the respondents (64.52%) agreed that social media is a credible and trusted source of health information. This is also corroborated by the findings of Gambo and Apuke (2017). In the study, a majority of the respondents also agreed that social media is a trusted source of health information. What this implies is that the credibility of social media is perceived from two perspectives. While some individuals see it as a trusted source of information, others see it as a not credible source. This phenomenon requires further research to find out the factors responsible for the differences in perception among social media users.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the access and usage of social media to seek for health information among residents of Sabon-Gari in Fagge Local Government Area of Kano State. Findings of the study revealed that respondents accessed social media for health information through various platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, and Google. This is in line with the U & G theory which postulates that the audience deliberately choose media and media content in order to satisfy some identified needs. Finally, social media is seen as a credible or trusted source of health information which results to positive influence on social media users.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Health personnel should be encouraged to participate in social media platforms so that users can trust health information posted on social media.
2. Social media users should be encouraged to acquire digital skills in order to make maximum use of social media to get adequate and rich information on health.
3. Government should come up with policies that will enable more people to have access to social media in order to maximize its use for health benefits.

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