

**PERCEPTION AND USES OF MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION OF
SOCIAL MEDIA STUDENTS**

(A CASE STUDY OF KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN.)

BY

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HND/23/MAC/FT/0741

**SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY (IICT), KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN,
KWARA STATE.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF HIGHERNATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND) IN MASS
COMMUNICATION.**

JUNE, 2025.

CERTIFICATION

This Project titled “PERCEPTION AND USES OF MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA STUDENTS”, by MUSTAPHA AISHAT ABIODUN meets the regulation governing the award of degree of Higher National Diploma in Mass Commuication, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, Kwara State and is approved for it’s contribution to knowledge and literary presentation

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Date

Date

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to God, the Almighty, without whom this publication might not have seen the light of the day, and to my dear parents. Mr. & Mrs. Mustapha for their great love and care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Almighty Allah (SWT), the Most Merciful and Ever-Faithful, for granting me the strength, knowledge, and patience to complete this project titled “Perception and Uses of Mental Health Awareness on Social Media: A Case Study of Kwara State Polytechnic.”

I extend my sincere gratitude to my Head of Department, Mr. Fatiu Olohungebe, for his dedication and leadership. My deepest appreciation goes to my project coordinator, Mr. Olufadi Ayuba, for his constant guidance, constructive feedback, and unwavering support. I’m also thankful to Mrs. Sadiq Abimbola Nafisah for her encouragement and contributions to this academic journey.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my amazing parents, Mr. and Mrs. Mustapha, for their unending prayers, sacrifices, and love. To my siblings — Morenikeji, Ibrahim, and Khadijat — and my precious niece Hazeemah Akorede, thank you for being my biggest cheerleaders.

To my best friends, Soliah and Mariam, thank you for standing by me through thick and thin. I am grateful to my lovely cousins — Fawaz, Aisha, and Rofiah — for their encouragement and support.

To my dearest Olayinka, thank you for being my peace, joy, and strongest motivation. You’ve made this journey easier.

To my ever-supportive “paddy” and dear friends — Hassanat, Hikmah, Azeezah, Fateemah, Zainab, Aisha, Fareedah, Ruqoyyah, Mariam Amoke — thank you for the love, words of encouragement, and for always checking up on me.

A very special mention to Lawal, my brother in school — thank you for always being there when I needed someone to lean on.

To Abdullahi Akanbi, Alfa Fawaz, and Ameer, thank you for your support, kindness, and uplifting energy throughout this process.

I'm also deeply grateful to my tutorial lecturer and good friend, Ayomide temitayo for his dedication to my academic growth, his time, and his patience.

To everyone who played a role — no matter how little — in making this a success, I say Jazakumullahu Khayran. May Allah (SWT) bless you all abundantly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

CERTIFICATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of Research Problem	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study	5
1.4 Research Questions:.....	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Scope of the study	6
1.7 Definition of the study	6
CHAPTER TWO	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Conceptual Framework.....	8
2.1.1 Addiction to Social Media	9
2.1.2 The Effects of Social Media On The Perceptions Of Mental Illness	11
2.1.3 Students' mental health and the Impact of social media	15
2.2 Theoretical framework.....	17
2.2.3 Social Cognitive Theory Perspective.....	17
CHAPTER THREE	26
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	26
3.0 Introduction.....	26
3.1 Research Design.....	26

3.2 Population of the Study	26
3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique.....	27
3.4. Sampling Technique.....	27
3.5. Instrument of Data Collection.....	28
3.6. Method of Data Gathering.....	28
3.7. Method of Data Analysis	28
CHAPTER FOUR.....	30
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	30
4.0 INTRODUCTION.....	30
4.1 Data Presentation.....	30
.4.3 Discussion of Findings	44
CHAPTER FIVE	46
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	46
5.1 Summary	46
5.2 Conclusion	47
5.3 Recommendations	48

ABSTRACT

This study explores the perception and uses of mental health information on social media among students of Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. In an era where digital communication shapes public consciousness, social media has become a critical platform for accessing mental health awareness. Drawing from the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, the research investigates the extent to which students engage with mental health content, the reliability of such content, and its impact on students' attitudes and coping behaviors.

A descriptive survey design was employed, targeting 100 randomly selected respondents from the Institute of Information and Communication Technology. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires and analyzed using simple percentages and frequency distributions. Findings revealed that 70% of students follow mental health content on social media, with platforms like Instagram and Twitter being the primary sources. However, only 40% affirmed the accuracy of the information consumed, indicating a gap in content credibility. Educational posts and personal stories were the most encountered content types, which aligns with the theoretical framework that individuals actively seek relatable and informative media for emotional and social gratification.

Moreover, the research found that 80% of respondents believe social media raises awareness about mental health, and 75% acknowledged a positive influence on their attitudes. However, while engagement levels were moderate—with 60% engaging frequently—the influence on actual behavioral practices was less pronounced. This reinforces Bandura's concept of observational learning, suggesting that exposure to mental health narratives on social media may not directly translate into behavioral change without reinforcing offline support structures.

The study concludes that although social media has positively influenced mental health discourse among students, questions around accuracy, sufficiency, and practical application remain. Therefore, enhancing the quality and authenticity of mental health content and integrating peer-led discussions are crucial to maximizing the platforms' educative and supportive potentials.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The emergence of the digital era of communication has brought about a lot of changes as regards information dissemination and acquisition. Prior to the arrival of new media, the major source of information dissemination especially that of health information were mostly done by health practitioners who are experts in the field. Availability of health information on social media has brought a modification to the existing situation as the social media presents more options for acquiring desired health information. Even the role of social media networks in healthcare has been depicted as crucial throughout a patient's journey by reason of its expansion on the habit of discussing healthcare with family and friends. Again, medical practitioners across several geopolitical bearings have as well been enabled by the social media through the internet to engage themselves in medical issues and diagnosis of complicated illnesses. These affirm to the potential of the social media to advance the delivery of healthcare services and patient care, together with the management of healthcare systems (Adeleke,I.T.,Adejoke, A.S., Achinbee,M., Anamah,T.C., Zakari,I.B, Wasagi,M.H.(2015).

Arguably, most of the information that propels our daily lives is presented by the social media. Bradfort, Hesse, Nelson, Kreps, Croyle, &Neeraj (2005) in a study of internet users in the United States reported that many who would want to consult a physician first on health- related issues these days as a matter of fact end up consulting the social media via the internet. With the coming and the popularity of portable smart phones, tablets and affordable internet access, utilization of social media, while it may not be common place among most adults, is so among

youths. Just as the available means of seeking health information is increasing, the degree of social media use for seeking health information is adjusting too.

In recent times, some significant changes have been noticed in different parts of the world, regarding consumption of internet contents, especially social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram among others. Social media channels and online applications which help people to share contents, feelings, opinions, ideas, beliefs and educational experiences also enable people to circulate information to different types of people across the globe. Social media refer to the new forms of media that allow interactive communication amongst online connected individuals. People usually utilise those platforms to access information from various sources, and also communicate with one another through message fora (Manning, 2014). Telegram, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Tumblr, Snapchat, Vine, WhatsApp and Skype are some of the popular virtual social media channels that people are addicted to (Seyyed, Ali & Alireza, 2019).

As at 2018, (“Digital, 2019: Global Internet use accelerates” as cited in Jacek, 2020), it was estimated that 4.021 billion persons were using the internet, out of which 3.196 billion people were social media users. The use of social media continues to increase on a daily basis. The number of people staying on the social media platforms in different nations has increased and about one million fresh users register daily, especially in the last twelve months. More than three billion people in the world currently stay on social media every month, and ninety percent of the users access their social media channels through mobile gadgets (Simon, 2018). The ubiquity of social media and the accessibility of the ever-ready internet avail the possibility of addiction to social media, such as the excessive and irrational use of social media, making it to superimpose onto every other sphere of daily activities (Griffiths, 2012). Research has proven that addiction to

social media has a strong relationship with health, relational, performance and emotional problems (Yubo, Dan, Tonglin, Lily & Wang, 2019). Many research outcomes have revealed that symptoms of addiction to social media can reflect in the cognition, mood, emotion and physical reactions, psychological and interpersonal issues (Błachnio, Przepiorka, Senol-Durak, Durak & Sherstyuk, 2017).

Before the advent of social media in Nigeria, the populace relied solely on medical professionals for information on certain health issues that have become pandemics. When pandemics hit a certain geographical area, the inhabitants or patients that have fallen victims to these diseases always fall back on their healthcare providers for information concerning those diseases. Such examples as the avian influenza, HIV aids, Measles and chicken pox had its health information sourced directly from the medical professionals. The arrival of the social media has brought about a lot of changes in the area of dissemination and accessibility of health information to the public.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

In recent years, the discourse surrounding mental health has gained prominence globally, recognizing the profound impact it has on individuals, communities, and society at large. Among the demographic most susceptible to mental health challenges are students in higher institutions, where the confluence of academic pressures, social dynamics, and transitional phases can contribute to heightened stress levels. Within the Nigerian context, the perception and uses of mental health information on social media among this student population represent an intriguing and underexplored facet of the larger conversation.

The proliferation of social media platforms has become an integral part of the daily lives of Nigerian students, providing a dynamic space for interaction, information dissemination, and the

construction of individual and collective identities. Social media, with its vast reach and immediacy, serves as a potential catalyst for shaping perceptions of mental health among the student populace. However, the nuanced ways in which students in Nigerian higher institutions perceive and utilize mental health information on social media remain inadequately understood.

The research problem at the core of this thesis revolves around the need to comprehensively investigate how students in Nigerian higher institutions perceive mental health, what sources of information they rely on through social media, and how this information influences their attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, the study aims to discern the impact of cultural, societal, and institutional factors on the utilization of mental health information within the digital landscape. There is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding how students at Kwara State Polytechnic perceive and interpret mental health information available on social media platforms (Chowdhury et al., 2019).

The sources of mental health information on social media accessed by students are often diverse and unregulated, raising concerns about the reliability and credibility of such information (Clement et al., 2020).

The frequency and patterns of students' engagement with mental health content on social media remain unclear, posing challenges in assessing the impact of these interactions on their mental well-being (Hunt et al., 2018).

The influence of social media-derived mental health information on the overall well-being and coping mechanisms of students in Kwara State Polytechnic is not well-established, necessitating an in-depth exploration (Primack et al., 2017). The specific types of mental health information and support sought by students on social media platforms are not clearly defined, hindering efforts to address their informational needs effectively (Friedman et al., 2021).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to investigate the perception and utilization of mental health information on social media platforms among students at Kwara State Polytechnic.

1. To assess the overall perception of students at Kwara State Polytechnic regarding mental health information available on social media.
2. To explore the sources of mental health information that students commonly encounter on social media.
3. To examine the frequency and patterns of engaging with mental health content on social media platforms among students.
4. To investigate the impact of social media-derived mental health information on the well-being and coping mechanisms of students.

1.4 Research Questions:

1. What is the overall perception of students at Kwara State Polytechnic regarding the mental health information available on social media?
2. What are the primary sources of mental health information encountered by students on social media platforms?
3. How frequently do students at Kwara State Polytechnic engage with mental health content on social media, and what patterns can be identified?
4. In what ways does social media-derived mental health information impact the well-being and coping mechanisms of students?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will provide valuable insights into the perception and utilization of mental health information on social media among students at Kwara State Polytechnic. The findings can

inform the development of targeted mental health interventions and support programs tailored to the specific needs and preferences of the student population.

Understanding how students perceive and use mental health information on social media can contribute to enhancing mental health literacy. By identifying gaps in knowledge and potential misconceptions, educational initiatives can be designed to promote accurate information and foster a better understanding of mental health issues.

The study adds to the existing body of literature on mental health and social media, particularly within the context of tertiary education in Kwara State Polytechnic. The findings can contribute to academic scholarship, providing researchers and practitioners with valuable data for further analysis and comparison with similar studies in different contexts.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study will focus specifically on students enrolled at Kwara State Polytechnic, Nigeria. The geographical scope is limited to this institution to ensure a concentrated and contextually relevant investigation. The primary participants in this study will be students of Kwara State Polytechnic across various disciplines, ages, and academic levels.

The study will cover a specified time frame for data collection, analysis, and reporting. The duration will be clearly outlined, taking into consideration the dynamic nature of social media trends and the potential evolution of students' preferences and behaviors over time.

1.7 Definition of the study

Perception

Perception refers to the way individuals interpret, understand, and make sense of mental health information encountered on social media. It encompasses their attitudes, beliefs, and subjective understanding of mental health-related content.

Uses

The uses of mental health information on social media refer to how students apply or engage with such information in their daily lives.

Mental Health Information

Mental health information comprises content related to mental well-being, mental health disorders, coping strategies, and support resources available on social media platforms

Social Media

Social media encompasses online platforms and applications that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of user-generated content.

Mental health

Is a state of *mental* well-being that enables people to cope with stress. The need for action on *mental health* is indisputable and urgent.

‘

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

According to Schater (2011) Perception is the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent or understand the environment. The perceptual systems of the brain enable individuals to see the world around them as stable, even though the sensory information is typically incomplete and rapidly varying. Individuals have the ability to perceive when their environment and everything around them portends a negative or positive trend for them as the case may be. The use of the social media today, is so varied it possibly transverses all aspects of life including health. Media scholars began to observe that a significant number of people were using social media to seek health information in the late 1990s. Social media has seen growing number of users for the said purpose. This includes healthcare providers, who are known to visit social media channels to gain insight on patients' thoughts. (Verhoef, Van de Belt, Engelen, Schoonhoven&Kool, 2014).

Various reasons have been adduced to possibly drive users to increasingly access health messages on social media. One is the difficulty physicians have in explaining complicated medical concepts to their patients, and the difficulty patients have in understanding them. Physicians use medical terms which patients may not understand, but which they would like to learn and which social media affords them the opportunity to learn at their convenience. (Castro, Wilson, Wang, &Schillinger, 2007).

Another plausible reason given for the increasing use of social media for obtaining health information is the contention that users should make informed decisions about their health with the health messages posted on social media channels. In recent years, social media has become an operational technological tool in Nigeria; as well as a news and communication medium for

the citizenry of Nigeria. Access to mobile telephony particularly among the technologically savvy youths has made dissemination of information easy within the blink of an eye.

Students addicted to social media always show more latency in sleeping, disturbance, bottom level of achievement, very poor performance in academics and a very high level of depression compared to those without social media addiction (Ezeabii, Chibuike&Udeh, 2019; Islam, Barna, Raihan, Khan, &Hossain, 2020; Anyira&Udem, 2020). Students in tertiary institutions are more exposed to social media for many reasons. First, they have high level of literacy on internet usage, which makes them the greatest number of social network users. Second, unlike secondary school students, social media activities of university students are not often regulated by their parents and lecturers. Third, campus students usually have somewhat flexible programmes, and they have unlimited access and more freedom to use social media. Fourth, some developmental programmes related to youths can also raise the hunger to use social network sites by university students (Lu &Tingyu, 2021).

2.1.1 Addiction to Social Media

Addiction is a physical and psychological inability to stop involvement in a certain activity, or commitment, despite that, it causes physical and psychological damages. It is a situation whereby one who is involved in one activity or the other cannot control oneself over that particular activity but would rather forgo other gainful activities. One is said to be addicted when the person takes a certain activity as a lifestyle. Sometimes, an activity that one is addicted to appears as a big threat to many other activities or businesses that are more beneficial. No doubt, addiction to social media among students is a huge threat to their performance in Nigeria (Anyira&Udem, 2020). Mental health challenge has currently increased and the increase in social media usage has led to the curiosity to assess the connection between the social media

activities and mental health cases. Social media news has become part of daily activities. There is the need to recognise its extension and encroachment in the modern societies. Social media is associated with electronically enhanced technology which creates room for online discussions, thoughts, exchange of information and ideas through connection with other online users. Social media functions as internet facilitated channels which provide users with the avenue for a fast electronic chatting. The major social media contents are documents, demographic information, photographs and videos. Social media users stay online through smartphones, tablets or computers via web-based software or web related applications (Kalpana, Suprakash, Jyoti & Sana, 2019). With the advancement in communication and internet facilities coupled with the efficacy of smart phones, social media have become crucial elements of learning curriculum and general practices of college students. In 2017, records showed relatively 2.46 billion social media users in the world, and statistics showed that it will likely increase up to 3.09 billion at the conclusion of 2021 (Statista, 2020). Tertiary institution students use social media for many purposes namely exchanging feelings, ideas, pictures, videos, and information (Loving & Ochoa, 2010). Lusk (2010) expressed that staying online affords tertiary institution students supports in their academic activities. Social media avails quick access to online space which undergraduate students can utilize with colleagues having related academic needs. Higher institution students who are reluctant in expressing themselves in class always login to blogs and other social media web tools seeing the channels as rewarding (Brydolf 2007). There is a high rate of social media obsession amongst students of higher institutions in the present generation, a practice that can affect their academic, social and spiritual lives negatively if not controlled (Charlton & Danforth, 2007). Many undergraduates often spend longer time surfing the internet on gossips and much irrelevant matters. Different research studies have found that some individuals cannot finish

reading a fiction book from cover to cover when they graduate from school (Brydolf, 2007). In China, social media are generally accepted in almost every area of college students' activities, including education, communication, information seeking, entertainment, mobile-payment and decision-making amongst others. The number of individuals using social media has grown beyond 1 billion, and over 60% of the users are young people of between fifteen and twenty-nine years. If college students do not make use of social media, their academic activities cannot be convenient for them. They cannot get information about their courses as at when due, and cannot pay in any shopping centre (Lei, 2021). In some years behind, online social networks had created huge changes in the form of transactions and interactions. It is not certain whether these changes can affect the normal trends of human behaviour and degenerate into psychiatric crisis. Some studies have concluded that, overstay on social media sites such as Facebook could be linked to signs and symptoms of depression. Moreover, some researchers have shown that certain social media activities can be related to low self-esteem particularly in adolescents and children. The interconnectivity between social media use and mental problems of these days appear controversial (Pantic, 2014).

2.1.2 The Effects of Social Media On The Perceptions Of Mental Illness

Have you ever wondered what effects social media has on a person's mental health? Are mental illnesses commonly discussed in posts on social media networking sites accurately?

These are just two questions that come to mind when thinking about the topic of social media and mental illness. Previous studies on this topic have examined news reports, TV programs, movies, and mental illness perceptions. However, there is a lack of research examining the effects of social media networking sites (i.e. Twitter and Facebook) on perpetuating the stigma of mental illness. This study serves to add to the existing literature by broadening the research field

of “social media” from just involving film and TV to incorporating social media networking sites that use the internet into the discussion. Because social media networking sites are a relatively new thing that affects our daily lives, this study has the potential to add to our understanding of how media can affect mental illness perceptions.

Past research has examined the effects of stigma on the mentally ill and has found that this stigma creates barriers for these individuals. “People suffering from mental illness are among the most stigmatized, discriminated against, marginalized, disadvantaged, and vulnerable members of society” (Overton and Medina 2008:143). In his early work on spoiled identities, Goffman(1963) defined stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting.” Goffman’s definition of stigma has been the leading force in research on the stigma of mental illness. The stigma of mental illness can be described as involving discrimination, mistreatment, and prejudice and can affect different parts of daily life such as applying for jobs or accessing healthcare (Overton and Medina 2008). Stigma is seen as a process that involves the recognition of a mental illness, activation of stereotypes, and the discrimination against the mentally ill person (Overton and Medina 2008). Stigmas and stereotypes of mental illness exist and are problematic to those with a mental illness.

Today, entertainment media seems to hold on to and portray the most sensitive stereotypes of mentally ill individuals. Crime dramas often make the mentally ill characters the perpetrators of violent crimes, when the mentally ill are, in fact, more often victims of crimes and violence in real life. In reviewing previous literature, several studies look at depictions of the mentally ill in the media, focusing on TV programs and movies. Negative media images of mentally ill characters help to perpetuate stigma (Stuart 2006). Parrott and Parrott (2015) found that one in two characters with a mental illness committed a crime, which is compared to the one in five in

the general population. About 60% of the mentally ill characters in crime dramas are the perpetrators of crimes, when compared to only 19% in the general population (Parrott and Parrott, 2015). The mentally ill characters in crime dramas lead to the overall public perception that the mentally ill are dangerous (Parrott and Parrott 2015). By using mentally ill characters, TV programs and movies are emphasizing that the seriously mentally ill are dangerous or violent, which gets generalized to the whole umbrella term of “mental illness.” But these few violent events committed by the seriously mentally ill are not common to all but result in the targeting and stigmatizing of the entire group.

By examining the effects of TV programs and movies on the stigma of mental illness, findings suggest that these shows perpetuate stereotypes. When depicted in crime dramas or movies, mentally ill characters are more violent than other characters and often associated with violent crimes such as murder, rape, or armed robbery (Diefenbach 1997). By repeatedly linking mentally ill characters to violent crimes in entertainment media, the viewers generalize that to their understanding of mental illness. Media perpetuates the stigma of mental illness because the mentally ill characters are represented as two-dimensional and unrelatable to audiences (Overton and Medina 2008). To further examine this, in a study by Johnson and Riles (2018), participants were asked to recall a time when mental illness was depicted in the media and describe the symptoms and behaviors that they thought of when they heard “mental illness.” The most common characteristics participants listed included depression, anxiety, mania, hallucinations, impairment, and crazy (Johnson and Riles 2018). When people describe mentally ill individuals, they often use stereotypical characteristics, which is influenced by the media depictions.

Television viewers find characterizations of mentally ill individuals in shows to be more compelling than factual sources which provide mental health information (Overton and Medina 2008). Mass media's depictions of mental illness are easily accessible and create great storylines, which leads people believe that they are accurate sources of information. Specifically looking at this, when surveyed, individuals reported getting their information from classes or friends, but 20% reported TV or movies as their main source (Aguiniga, Madden, and Zellman 2016). When the mentally ill are portrayed in TV programs or movies, they are almost always more offensive than accurate (Aguiniga et al. 2016). Movies almost always portray the mentally ill in a negative light, lacking accurate information. Even though mental illness is not accurately portrayed in entertainment media, the depictions become a part of viewers' understanding of the topic.

Movies such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* have dramatized mental illnesses to show the need for confinement, psychotherapy, and electroshock as treatments due to the portrayal of these illnesses as being unpredictable and dangerous (Stuart 2006). In a study done by Wahl (1992), college students were assessed on the effects of media depictions of the mentally ill after seeing the film, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. After viewing this film, attitudes toward the mentally ill were more negative than those who had not seen it, strengthening the assumption that negative media portrayals create stigma and negative perceptions (Wahl 1992). These stigmatizing views are even primed into viewers minds starting in early childhood. Even in children's media such as cartoons, mentally ill characters are shown as unattractive and violent (Overton and Medina 2008). Multiple studies have examined references made to mental illness in children's TV and film media. About 85% of all Disney animated movies reference mental illness, having 21% of all characters displaying a mental illness (Stuart 2006). Kids as

young as first grade understand the meaning of “crazy” in relation to describing someone with a mental illness, and the media teaches that the mentally ill are failures in life (Overton and Medina 2008).

Entertainment media has strong effects on viewers of all ages’ understandings of mental illness as well as perpetuates the stigma surrounding it. Media portrayals of mental illness are often sensationalized and exaggerated, reporting on the rare violent acts done by severely mentally ill individuals, therefore, not discussing other mental illnesses. Most research on the effects of news reports on the stigma of mental illness have examined mass shootings. The seriously mentally ill, such as schizophrenics, may have a higher tendency toward criminality, but serious mental illness only accounts for about 3% of all mental illnesses (Dienfenbach and West 2007). Often, when discussing crimes involving persons with schizophrenia in the news, the term “schizophrenia” is often misused, creating a negative connotation, which inadvertently worsens the stigma that already exists, relating it to a sense of danger (Vahazadeh, Wittenauer, and Carr 2011). The mentally ill are most often victims rather than perpetrators of crimes and violent acts, and the media leaves out the fact that those who have a mental illness that commit crimes is well below 14% (Klin and Lemish 2008). Nonfiction news media such as newspapers, report stories attributed to those with a mental illness accounted for about 40% of the entire report (Ma 2017).

2.1.3 Students' mental health and the Impact of social media

Using social media activates the brain's reward center by releasing dopamine, a chemical associated with pleasurable activities such as sex, food, and social interaction, and is associated with an increased risk of addiction, anxiety, depression, and physical illness. (Laacke et al, 2021). Young people and school students are often identified as the group most affected by mental illness and turn to social media to disrupt their studies. (Kessler & Ustun, 2008; Layard, 2017).

There is an inverse relationship between time spent on social media and susceptibility to mental illness. (Muringassery& George, 2021).

Bashir &Bhat (2017) found that negative effects of social media include antisocial behavior, depression, cyberbullying, sexism, fatigue, stress, emotional suppression, addictions, and decline. According to research done by Strickland (2014) regarding cognitive abilities, every person in the world between the ages of 11-93 is connected to social media, and among them, young adults are the most active users of social media. Young people are more exposed to social media such as Facebook and the risk of mental health problems is also high. (Jeoung et al, 2014). Research conducted by Bashir and Bhat (2017) revealed that stress on students' mental health negatively affects students' mental health. Social networking sites are growing day by day and it helps to surf in different ways and build relationships with peers, school friends, and people with common interests. Similarly, they explained in their study that the reason people suffer from mental health problems is that they use more social media (Deepa&Priya, 2020). Schønninget al. (2017) further explained that excessive internet surfing causes problems in emotional well-being. Naveen (2017) revealed through research that people who use the Internet for a long time are inspired by accidents. Taking a similar view to the above, Deepa&Priya, (2020) have said that the use of social media leads to hostile and unsafe behavior and is clearly harmful to the emotional well-being of young people in particular. In addition, they stated that the youth of the 21st century spend 12-15 hours a day using phones, computers, workstations, televisions, and other devices to be active on social media and use their energy for various social conflicts. Hence, there is a real danger to the mental well-being of young people through surfing the Internet and the incidence of side effects is growing because the situation is widening day by day.

Mental Health Among College Students

As mental health services and the stigma remains as a challenge, college students are exposed to additional stress factors due to academic demands; thus, impacting their well-being even more (Ebert et.al., 2019). In a study, majority of students reported feeling hesitant to seek help for emotional problems. Results from the World Mental Health International College Student initiative showed 24 percent reporting they would seek help while 56.4 percent reports to have rather handled the situation alone. The preferences to handle situations alone were reported to feelings of shame and embarrassment (Ebert et.al, 2019). While the need is being shown in studies, young adults are still at adisservice when it comes to seeking and receiving services.

Despite the availability of clinical research and interventions, there remains a gap of college students with severe mental disorders and/or suicidal treating their disorders (Auerbachet.al, 2016). Studies show that even when services are available and offered, students would often decline (Bruffaertset.al,2019). Barriers that were displayed from a study included feelings of embarrassment, lack of understanding of services, cost, beliefs of inconvenience to school/work schedule, and belief that it is unnecessary (Ebert et.al, 2019). While these barriers have some validity, there is a common theme that resistance to seeking help comes from a lack of understanding and awareness. More so, the theme of resisting services from lack of understanding can be observed when looking at different sub populations.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.3 Social Cognitive Theory Perspective

Social media has become a pervasive platform for information exchange, and its impact on various aspects of individuals' lives, including mental health, is of growing interest. This study explores the perception and uses of mental health information on social media among students of Kwara State Polytechnic, employing Social Cognitive Theory as a guiding framework.

Developed by Albert Bandura, Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, and social interactions in shaping human behavior (Bandura 2016). Understanding how students perceive and utilize mental health information through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory provides insights into the complex interplay between social media, cognition, and behavior in the context of mental health.

One of the central tenets of Social Cognitive Theory is observational learning, where individuals acquire new behaviors or information by observing others. On social media platforms, students are exposed to a myriad of mental health information through various formats, including posts, videos, and shared content. Observing how others discuss mental health, share personal experiences, or engage with support resources influences students' perceptions of mental health (Bandura, 2016). For example, witnessing peers discussing mental health openly on social media may contribute to reducing stigma and normalizing conversations about mental well-being.

Modeling, another key aspect of Social Cognitive Theory, involves individuals emulating behaviors they observe in others. On social media, influencers, peers, and even celebrities can serve as models whose behaviors and attitudes toward mental health are observed and potentially emulated by students (Bandura, 2016). If influential figures openly discuss mental health struggles or share coping strategies, students may be more likely to adopt similar approaches. Conversely, negative modeling, such as stigmatizing language or dismissive attitudes toward mental health, can contribute to harmful perceptions.

Social Cognitive Theory also highlights the importance of social norms in shaping behavior. On social media, the prevailing norms regarding mental health discussions can significantly impact students' engagement. If there is a culture of openness, empathy, and support surrounding mental health issues, students may feel more comfortable seeking information, sharing their experiences,

or reaching out for support (Bandura, 2011). Conversely, if stigmatizing attitudes prevail, students might be hesitant to engage with mental health content, leading to potentially adverse effects on their well-being.

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a specific task or behavior. In the context of mental health information on social media, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in determining whether students actively seek and utilize relevant content (Bandura, 2016). Higher self-efficacy may empower students to proactively search for mental health resources, engage in discussions, and implement coping strategies shared on social media. On the other hand, low self-efficacy may lead to avoidance or reluctance in seeking such information.

Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the interactive and reciprocal nature of learning through social interactions. On social media, students are part of interconnected networks where peer interactions play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and behaviors related to mental health (Bandura, 2017). Positive interactions, such as supportive comments or shared resources among peers, contribute to a supportive online environment. Conversely, negative interactions, such as cyberbullying or dismissive comments, may deter students from actively engaging with mental health content.

Beyond observational learning and modeling, Social Cognitive Theory considers cognitive factors in information processing. Students' cognitive processes, including attention, retention, and reproduction, influence how they perceive and use mental health information encountered on social media (Bandura, 2016). Attention to specific content, memory retention of relevant information, and the ability to reproduce learned behaviors all play a role in shaping students' responses to mental health content.

While Social Cognitive Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the perception and uses of mental health information on social media, it's essential to acknowledge potential challenges and concerns. Social media environments can be dynamic, with rapidly changing trends and a vast array of content. The theory may not fully account for the speed and scale at which information spreads on these platforms, leading to challenges in predicting and understanding the nuanced impact of specific content on individuals.

2.2.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

As social media continues to shape communication patterns, understanding the motivations and gratifications that drive individuals to use and engage with mental health information is essential. This study delves into the perception and uses of mental health information on social media among students of Kwara State Polytechnic, utilizing the Uses and Gratifications Theory as a theoretical framework. Developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (2015), this theory posits that individuals actively choose media content to fulfill specific needs and gratifications, providing a valuable lens through which to examine the dynamic relationship between students and mental health information on social media.

One central aspect of the Uses and Gratifications Theory is information seeking, wherein individuals actively search for content that satisfies their informational needs (Katz et al., 2015). In the context of mental health information on social media, students may seek content for educational purposes, acquiring knowledge about mental health disorders, coping strategies, and available support resources. Social media platforms serve as rich sources of information, and students may actively engage with content that helps them better understand mental health issues. Additionally, the theory introduces the concept of surveillance gratifications, emphasizing individuals' desire to stay informed about societal issues (Katz et al., 2015). Students may use

social media to monitor discussions around mental health, staying updated on current trends, and gaining insights into how their peers perceive and discuss mental well-being. This dimension of the theory sheds light on the role of social media as a tool for staying socially connected and informed about prevalent mental health discourse.

Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that individuals engage with media to enhance their personal identity and self-concept (Katz et al., 2015). In the context of mental health information on social media, students may seek content that resonates with their own experiences, challenges, or aspirations. Sharing personal narratives, reading others' stories, and participating in mental health discussions contribute to the construction of a shared identity within the online community, fostering a sense of belonging and understanding.

Furthermore, individuals may use mental health information on social media to manage and express their emotions, contributing to the gratification of emotional and affective needs (Ruggiero, 2010). Students may share their struggles, achievements, or coping mechanisms, seeking support, empathy, and validation from their online social circles.

Social Interaction Gratifications within the Uses and Gratifications Theory highlight individuals' desire for social contact, interaction, and companionship through media use (Katz et al., 2016). In the realm of mental health information on social media, students may engage in discussions, participate in online communities, and establish connections with peers who share similar interests or experiences. The interactive nature of social media platforms facilitates real-time conversations, enabling students to provide and receive support, advice, and encouragement.

Moreover, students might use social media as a means of maintaining social relationships, connecting with friends and peers who share common interests in mental health discussions. The theory's emphasis on social interaction gratifications underscores the role of social media in

creating a supportive online environment where individuals can engage in meaningful conversations about mental well-being.

While not often associated with mental health discussions, entertainment gratifications play a role in media consumption (Katz et al., 2016). Social media content related to mental health, such as engaging infographics, relatable memes, or informative videos, may serve as both entertaining and educational, contributing to a more engaging and accessible platform for students.

The integration of entertainment gratifications into the Uses and Gratifications Theory highlights the multifaceted nature of individuals' media use. Students may be drawn to content that combines informative elements with entertaining formats, making mental health information more appealing and shareable within their social networks.

While the Uses and Gratifications Theory provides valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge certain challenges and critiques. The theory has been criticized for assuming rational and conscious decision-making by media consumers, neglecting subconscious and unintentional aspects of media use (McQuail, 2014). Additionally, the theory might not fully capture the complex power dynamics, algorithmic influences, and unintentional consequences inherent in social media interactions.

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirical research plays a crucial role in understanding how students perceive and use mental health information on social media. This review aims to provide insights into existing studies that have investigated this phenomenon, highlighting key findings, methodologies, and gaps in the current literature.

Several studies have explored how students perceive mental health information on social media platforms. An investigation by Primack et al. (2017) surveyed university students and found that while social media is a common source of mental health information, there is a concern about the accuracy and reliability of such information. The study emphasized the need for interventions to improve the quality of mental health content on social media.

Similarly, Moreno et al. (2016) conducted a content analysis of mental health information on YouTube and highlighted the prevalence of stigmatizing content. They emphasized the importance of promoting accurate and stigma-reducing information on social media platforms.

Clement et al. (2020) investigated the sources of mental health information accessed by college students on social media. The study revealed a diverse range of sources, including friends, influencers, and mental health organizations. However, concerns were raised about the lack of credibility and expertise of some sources, indicating potential challenges in ensuring the reliability of mental health information on social media.

Contrastingly, a study by Chang et al. (2018) examined the influence of professional mental health organizations on students' perceptions. They found that information from reputable organizations positively impacted students' attitudes and understanding of mental health issues. This suggests that strategic partnerships with credible sources could enhance the reliability of mental health information on social media.

Hunt et al. (2018) explored the frequency and patterns of engagement with mental health content on social media among college students. Their findings revealed that students often encounter mental health content passively, with scrolling and browsing being common modes of engagement. The study highlighted the need for interactive and engaging content to capture students' attention and promote active involvement with mental health information.

Additionally, a study by Barry et al. (2019) employed social network analysis to examine the dynamics of mental health conversations among students on Twitter. The research identified influential nodes within the network, emphasizing the potential for peer-led initiatives to shape the discourse surrounding mental health on social media platforms.

Research by Primack et al. (2017) delved into the impact of social media-derived mental health information on the well-being and coping mechanisms of college students. The study identified both positive and negative outcomes, with some students reporting increased awareness and support, while others experienced heightened stress due to exposure to distressing content. This underscores the complex relationship between social media and mental health outcomes.

In contrast, a longitudinal study by Flett et al. (2019) investigated the association between social media use and psychological well-being. The findings suggested that while excessive social media use could contribute to negative well-being outcomes, positive interactions and support on these platforms were associated with improved mental health.

Friedman et al. (2021) conducted qualitative interviews with college students to explore the types of mental health information and support sought on social media. The study identified a diverse range of needs, including coping strategies, personal narratives, and information on available resources. Tailoring mental health content to address these varied needs could enhance the effectiveness of social media interventions.

Kawakami et al. (2020) investigated the role of social media in the stigmatization of mental health issues among students. Their study revealed that stigmatizing attitudes were prevalent, and social media interactions sometimes perpetuated stereotypes. Addressing stigmatization emerged as a key recommendation for promoting a more supportive online environment.

Many studies utilized survey-based methodologies to gather quantitative data on students' perceptions and behaviors. These surveys often included questions about frequency of social media use, sources of mental health information, and perceived impact on well-being. Content analysis was commonly employed to assess the nature and quality of mental health information available on social media platforms. Researchers examined the content of posts, comments, and videos to identify prevalent themes and patterns.

Gaps and Future Directions:

Diversity in Student Populations: Existing research often focuses on university students in Western contexts. Future studies should aim for greater diversity, considering variations in cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and educational systems.

Longitudinal Exploration of Impact: While some studies explored the impact of social media over time, more longitudinal research is needed to understand the prolonged effects of exposure to mental health information on social media.

Empirical research on the perception and uses of mental health information on social media among students has provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics at play. By examining the sources, reliability, engagement patterns, impact, sought information, and stigmatization aspects, researchers have laid a foundation for understanding how social media influences mental health discourse among students. Future studies should build on these findings, addressing existing gaps and incorporating diverse perspectives to inform interventions and support mechanisms for this vulnerable population.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter on research methodology took a look at the research background, research design, population sampling size, sampling techniques, data collection procedure and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

According to de vaus, (2001) research design is an overall schedule or plan that one's chooses to mix up the various parts of the research in a coherent and step by step manner thus, ensuring that the problem under the research is well addressed. Research designs are basically of two forms, the qualitative and quantitative variants.

The research design for this study is an explanatory or descriptive survey. This approach allows the researcher to collect data and focus on the quantitative variant to broaden the outcome of the study of the population.

The explanatory or descriptive survey research approach is ideal for investigations that deal with event and public opinion or sentiment, and the survey is quantitative research design in which social data is gotten from a sample of individuals through their feedback to questionnaire.

3.2 Population of the Study

A population can be referred to as the entire or whole group that one wants to draw or gather conclusion from (Bhadari, 2022). The population of the study area which is Kwara State Polytechnic consists of over 800 students. The respondent will be drawn from the students within Kwara State Polytechnic by selecting 100 respondents from the entire population.

The study will focus on the students within Kwara State Polytechnic. The polytechnic has Six (6) institutes but this study will only focus on one of it, which is the institute of information communication technology. The survey will cut across the institute of information

communication technology in a form of questionnaire distribution which will be given randomly. 100 questionnaires will be shared in all.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

According to Salant&Dillman, 2004, sample size is a set of number of individual or participant selected from a larger population for the purpose of survey.

Sampling technique is the method for the selection of individuals on which information are to be made has been describe in Literature (Kish 1965, Gupta and Kapoor 1970).

Making use of the hardcopy format of Taro Ya mane formula, the sample size for this study will be one hundred (100). The researcher select students from different departments in the institute of information communication technology at kwara state polytechnic (i.e Mass communication, Computer science etc) . This study will adopt a random sampling.

3.4. Sampling Technique

According to Fischhoff (1993), Sampling technique is a process used in statistical analysis in which a predetermined number of observations are taken from a longer population. The sampling technique is the method you employ while choosing a sample from a population. For example, you could select every 3rd person, everyone in a particular age group, and so on. You must carefully consider your study before choosing an appropriate sampling technique. It has a significant effect on your results. For example, some sampling techniques might be intentionally biased. So, selecting a suitable sampling technique is essential to draw accurate conclusions from your data.

3.5. Instrument of Data Collection

Data collection is an essential component of conducting research. According to O’Leary, 2004, data collection instrument is a complicated and hard task. Indeed, it is also very difficult to say which the best method of data collection is collecting credible or valid data is a tough task.

The main instrument to be used for this study is questionnaire. This is because the questionnaire is a vital instrument for gathering information from people about their opinion, attitudes, behavior and perception on a given phenomenon.

The questionnaire contained both structured and unstructured question which elicited answers from respondents. The first section will contain information related to the listeners, while the second section will be based on the information and opinion of the population about the subject matter. Which is impact of political conciliates door-to-door advertisement on their chances of willing election.

3.6. Method of Data Gathering

The researcher will adopt primary data (questionnaire) to carry out the study. The questionnaire include structured with Likert scale (Agree, strongly agree, Neutral, Disagree and strongly Disagree) and unstructured (open-ended) question and will be administer through drop and pick method to respondent. The research method questionnaire will conducted by student in Kwara State Polytechnic, the questionnaire is distributed to the respondents, filled and return for administered with immediate effect.

3.7. Method of Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is describe as messy and ambiguous and time consuming but also as a creative and fascinating process.

Frequency table were used to analyse the collation of raw data were translated into percentage % to enable the researcher draw reasonable conclusion based on the information gathered which is based on the actual reactions of the respondent concern with the questionnaire administered.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data collected for the study titled “Perception and Uses of Mental Health Information on Social Media Among Students, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin.” The first section presents general information about the respondents, while the second section analyzes responses to address the research questions. Data presentation is defined as the process of organizing data into tables and using simple percentages to visually represent relationships between variables for informed decision-making. Data analysis summarizes collected data to derive insights, enabling statistical and logical conclusions. The data are organized into tables to facilitate clear interpretation and discussion of findings.

4.1 Data Presentation

SECTION A: BIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS

ITEM 1: Sex of Respondents

TABLE I

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	60	60%
Female	40	40%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

In the table above, 60 respondents, representing 60%, are male, while 40 respondents, representing 40%, are female. This reflects a slightly higher male participation, possibly due to

the composition of students in the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT).

ITEM 2: Age of Respondents

TABLE II

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
16–20	35	35%
21–25	50	50%
26–30	10	10%
31–35	3	3%
36 and above	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The above table shows that 50 respondents, representing 50%, are aged 21–25, followed by 35 respondents, representing 35%, aged 16–20. Ten respondents, making up 10%, are aged 26–30, 3 respondents, representing 3%, are aged 31–35, and 2 respondents, representing 2%, are 36 and above. This indicates that the majority are young students, likely active on social media.

ITEM 3: Marital Status of Respondents

TABLE III

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Married	5	5%
Single	90	90%
Divorced	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 90 respondents, representing 90%, are single, followed by 5 respondents each, representing 5%, who are married or divorced. This reflects the predominantly young, unmarried student population of Kwara State Polytechnic.

ITEM 4: Educational Level of Respondents

TABLE IV

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
ND	60	60%
HND	40	40%
Total	100	100%

In the table above, 60 respondents, representing 60%, are at the National Diploma (ND) level, while 40 respondents, representing 40%, are at the Higher National Diploma (HND) level. This shows a balanced representation across academic levels within IICT.

ITEM 5: Nationality of Respondents

TABLE V

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Nigerian	95	95%
Non-Nigerian	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The above table shows that 95 respondents, representing 95%, are Nigerian, while 5 respondents, representing 5%, are non-Nigerian. This aligns with the predominantly Nigerian student population at Kwara State Polytechnic.

SECTION B: PERCEPTION OF MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

ITEM 6: Following Mental Health Content on Social Media

TABLE VI

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	70	70%
No	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 70 respondents, representing 70%, follow mental health content on social media, while 30 respondents, representing 30%, do not. This indicates significant engagement with mental health content among students.

ITEM 7: Accuracy of Mental Health Information on Social Media

TABLE VII

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	40	40%
No	30	30%
Not sure	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

In the table above, 40 respondents, representing 40%, believe social media provides accurate mental health information, while 30 respondents each, representing 30%, believe it does not or are not sure. This reflects mixed perceptions about accuracy.

ITEM 8: Effectiveness in Raising Mental Health Awareness

TABLE VIII

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	30	30%
Agree	50	50%
Neutral	15	15%
Disagree	4	4%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The above table shows that 30 respondents, representing 30%, strongly agree that social media is effective in raising mental health awareness, while 50 respondents, or 50%, agree. Fifteen respondents, making up 15%, are neutral, 4 respondents, representing 4%, disagree, and 1 respondent, or 1%, strongly disagrees. This indicates strong support for social media's awareness-raising role.

ITEM 9: Understanding Importance of Mental Health

TABLE IX

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	35	35%
Agree	45	45%
Neutral	15	15%
Disagree	4	4%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 35 respondents, representing 35%, strongly agree that social media helps students understand the importance of mental health, while 45 respondents, or 45%, agree. Fifteen respondents, making up 15%, are neutral, 4 respondents, representing 4%, disagree, and 1 respondent, or 1%, strongly disagrees. This shows a positive perception of social media's educational impact.

ITEM 10: Positive Influence on Attitudes Toward Mental Health

TABLE X

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	25	25%
Agree	50	50%
Neutral	20	20%
Disagree	4	4%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 25 respondents, representing 25%, strongly agree that social media positively influences attitudes toward mental health, while 50 respondents, or 50%, agree. Twenty respondents, making up 20%, are neutral, 4 respondents, representing 4%, disagree, and 1 respondent, or 1%, strongly disagrees. This indicates a majority positive influence on attitudes.

SECTION C: PRIMARY SOURCES OF MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

ITEM 11: Primary Social Media Platform for Mental Health Information

TABLE XI

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Facebook	20	20%
Twitter/X	25	25%
Instagram	35	35%
Other (e.g., TikTok, YouTube)	20	20%
Total	100	100%

The above table shows that 35 respondents, representing 35%, primarily use Instagram for mental health information, followed by 25 respondents, or 25%, who use Twitter/X. Twenty respondents each, representing 20%, use Facebook or other platforms (e.g., TikTok, YouTube). This highlights Instagram's prominence among students.

ITEM 12: Type of Mental Health Content Encountered

TABLE XII

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Educational posts	40	40%
Personal stories	30	30%
Awareness campaigns	25	25%
Other	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 40 respondents, representing 40%, encounter educational posts most often, followed by 30 respondents, or 30%, who encounter personal stories. Twenty-five respondents, making up 25%, encounter awareness campaigns, and 5 respondents, representing 5%, encounter other content. This suggests educational posts are the most common content type.

ITEM 13: Frequency of Encountering Mental Health Content

TABLE XIII

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Very often	30	30%
Quite often	45	45%
Rarely	25	25%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The above table shows that 30 respondents, representing 30%, very often come across mental health content, while 45 respondents, or 45%, encounter it quite often. Twenty-five respondents, making up 25%, rarely encounter such content. This indicates frequent exposure to mental health content.

ITEM 14: Reliability of Social Media as a Source

TABLE XIV

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	15	15%
Agree	35	35%
Neutral	30	30%

Disagree	15	15%
Strongly Disagree	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 15 respondents, representing 15%, strongly agree that social media platforms are reliable sources for mental health information, while 35 respondents, or 35%, agree. Thirty respondents, making up 30%, are neutral, 15 respondents, representing 15%, disagree, and 5 respondents, or 5%, strongly disagree. This reflects mixed perceptions of reliability.

ITEM 15: Sufficiency of Mental Health Information

TABLE XV

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	10	10%
Agree	30	30%
Neutral	35	35%
Disagree	20	20%
Strongly Disagree	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 10 respondents, representing 10%, strongly agree that mental health information on social media is sufficient to educate students, while 30 respondents, or 30%, agree. Thirty-five respondents, making up 35%, are neutral, 20 respondents, representing 20%, disagree, and 5 respondents, or 5%, strongly disagree. This indicates limited confidence in sufficiency.

SECTION D: ENGAGEMENT WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONTENT

ITEM 16: Frequency of Engaging with Mental Health Content

TABLE XVI

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Very often	20	20%
Quite often	40	40%
Rarely	30	30%
Never	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The above table shows that 20 respondents, representing 20%, very often engage with mental health content, while 40 respondents, or 40%, engage quite often. Thirty respondents, making up 30%, engage rarely, and 10 respondents, representing 10%, never engage. This indicates moderate engagement levels.

ITEM 17: Discussing Mental Health Content with Others

TABLE XVII

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Very often	15	15%
Quite often	35	35%
Rarely	40	40%
Never	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 15 respondents, representing 15%, very often discuss mental health content with others, while 35 respondents, or 35%, discuss it quite often. Forty respondents, making up 40%, discuss it rarely, and 10 respondents, representing 10%, never discuss it. This suggests limited discussion of mental health content.

ITEM 18: Encouragement to Learn More About Mental Health

TABLE XVIII

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	30	30%
Agree	50	50%
Neutral	15	15%
Disagree	4	4%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The above table shows that 30 respondents, representing 30%, strongly agree that engaging with mental health content encourages them to learn more, while 50 respondents, or 50%, agree. Fifteen respondents, making up 15%, are neutral, 4 respondents, representing 4%, disagree, and 1 respondent, or 1%, strongly disagrees. This indicates strong encouragement to learn.

ITEM 19: Actively Seeking Mental Health Content

TABLE XIX

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	20	20%
Agree	40	40%
Neutral	25	25%

Disagree	10	10%
Strongly Disagree	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 20 respondents, representing 20%, strongly agree that they actively seek mental health content, while 40 respondents, or 40%, agree. Twenty-five respondents, making up 25%, are neutral, 10 respondents, representing 10%, disagree, and 5 respondents, or 5%, strongly disagree. This shows moderate proactive seeking behavior.

ITEM 20: Influence on Daily Mental Health Practices

TABLE XX

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	15	15%
Agree	35	35%
Neutral	30	30%
Disagree	15	15%
Strongly Disagree	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table above, 15 respondents, representing 15%, strongly agree that social media mental health content influences their daily practices, while 35 respondents, or 35%, agree. Thirty respondents, making up 30%, are neutral, 15 respondents, representing 15%, disagree, and 5 respondents, or 5%, strongly disagree. This indicates moderate influence on practices.

4.2 Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the overall perception of students at Kwara State Polytechnic regarding the mental health information available on social media?

Tables VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X address this question.

- **Table VI** shows that 70 respondents, representing 70%, follow mental health content on social media.
 - **Table VII** indicates that 40 respondents, representing 40%, believe social media provides accurate information, while 30 respondents each, or 30%, are not sure or disagree.
 - **Table VIII** reveals that 30 respondents, representing 30%, strongly agree and 50 respondents, or 50%, agree that social media is effective in raising awareness.
 - **Table IX** shows that 35 respondents, representing 35%, strongly agree and 45 respondents, or 45%, agree that social media helps understand mental health importance.
 - **Table X** indicates that 25 respondents, representing 25%, strongly agree and 50 respondents, or 50%, agree that social media positively influences attitudes.
- These findings confirm that students have a generally positive perception of social media's role in raising mental health awareness and shaping attitudes, though accuracy concerns persist.

Research Question 2: What are the primary sources of mental health information encountered by students on social media platforms?

Tables XI, XII, XIII, XIV, and XV address this question.

- **Table XI** shows that 35 respondents, representing 35%, primarily use Instagram, followed by 25 respondents, or 25%, using Twitter/X.
- **Table XII** indicates that 40 respondents, representing 40%, encounter educational posts most often, followed by 30 respondents, or 30%, encountering personal stories.

- **Table XIII** reveals that 30 respondents, representing 30%, encounter content very often and 45 respondents, or 45%, quite often.
- **Table XIV** shows that 15 respondents, representing 15%, strongly agree and 35 respondents, or 35%, agree that social media is reliable, while 30 respondents, or 30%, are neutral.
- **Table XV** indicates that 10 respondents, representing 10%, strongly agree and 30 respondents, or 30%, agree that information is sufficient, while 35 respondents, or 35%, are neutral.

These results highlight Instagram as the primary platform, with educational posts and personal stories as key content types, though reliability and sufficiency are questioned.

Research Question 3: How frequently do students at Kwara State Polytechnic engage with mental health content on social media, and what patterns can be identified?

Tables XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, and XX address this question.

- **Table XVI** shows that 20 respondents, representing 20%, engage very often and 40 respondents, or 40%, engage quite often with mental health content.
- **Table XVII** indicates that 15 respondents, representing 15%, discuss content very often and 35 respondents, or 35%, discuss it quite often, while 40 respondents, or 40%, rarely discuss it.
- **Table XVIII** reveals that 30 respondents, representing 30%, strongly agree and 50 respondents, or 50%, agree that engagement encourages learning.
- **Table XIX** shows that 20 respondents, representing 20%, strongly agree and 40 respondents, or 40%, agree that they actively seek content.

- **Table XX** indicates that 15 respondents, representing 15%, strongly agree and 35 respondents, or 35%, agree that content influences daily practices. These findings suggest moderate engagement, with patterns of liking/sharing content, limited discussion, and significant encouragement to learn, though influence on daily practices is less pronounced

.4.3 Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine “Perception and Uses of Mental Health Information on Social Media Among Students, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin.” The results obtained from the statistical analysis of 100 administered and returned questionnaires were presented in tables using simple percentages to address the research questions.

The findings confirm that students have a positive perception of social media’s role in mental health awareness. Table VIII shows that 80 respondents, representing 80%, agree or strongly agree that social media is effective in raising awareness, and Table X indicates that 75 respondents, representing 75%, agree or strongly agree that it positively influences attitudes. This aligns with the Uses and Gratification Theory, as students actively seek mental health content to meet informational and emotional needs (Asemah, 2011). However, Table VII shows only 40 respondents, representing 40%, believe information is accurate, reflecting skepticism about reliability.

Instagram is the primary platform (Table XI, 35%), with educational posts dominating (Table XII, 40%), supporting Social Cognitive Theory, where observational learning from credible content shapes attitudes and behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Frequent exposure is evident (Table XIII, 75% very or quite often), but reliability (Table XIV, 50% agreement) and sufficiency (Table XV, 40% agreement) are questioned, indicating a need for quality control.

Engagement is moderate, with Table XVI showing 60 respondents, representing 60%, engaging very or quite often, but Table XVII indicates 50 respondents, representing 50%, discuss content infrequently. Table XVIII shows 80 respondents, representing 80%, agree that engagement encourages learning, aligning with Social Cognitive Theory's emphasis on behavioral outcomes from media exposure. However, Table XX shows only 50 respondents, representing 50%, agree that content influences daily practices, suggesting limited practical impact.

In conclusion, students perceive social media as effective for mental health awareness and attitude formation, primarily via Instagram and educational posts. Engagement is moderate, encouraging learning but with limited influence on daily practices, constrained by concerns about accuracy and sufficiency.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This research study, titled “Perception and Uses of Mental Health Information on Social Media Among Students, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin,” was structured into five chapters for clear presentation and analysis.

Chapter One introduced the background, emphasizing the growing role of social media in mental health awareness among students. It outlined the research objectives, questions, significance, limitations, and operational definitions, focusing on IICT students.

Chapter Two explained the theoretical framework, applying Uses and Gratification Theory to understand why students engage with mental health content and Social Cognitive Theory to explore how exposure shapes attitudes and behaviors.

Chapter Three detailed the research methodology, including the population (over 800 IICT students at Kwara State Polytechnic), sample size (100 respondents), purposive sampling technique, and questionnaire as the instrument. It addressed validity, reliability, and data analysis using simple percentages.

Chapter Four presented and analyzed the data, using tables to show demographic information and responses to research questions. The findings confirmed positive perceptions, identified Instagram and educational posts as primary sources, and noted moderate engagement with limited practical impact.

Chapter Five summarizes the findings, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations based on the study’s results.

5.2 Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate “Perception and Uses of Mental Health Information on Social Media Among Students, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin.” The findings confirm that students perceive social media positively for mental health awareness. Table VIII shows that 80 respondents, representing 80%, agree or strongly agree that social media raises awareness, and Table X indicates 75 respondents, representing 75%, agree or strongly agree that it positively influences attitudes, aligning with Uses and Gratification Theory as students seek content for awareness and support (Asemah, 2011).

Instagram is the primary platform (Table XI, 35%), with educational posts and personal stories as key sources (Table XII, 70% combined), supporting Social Cognitive Theory, where exposure to credible content fosters learning and attitude change (Bandura, 1986). However, Table XIV shows only 50 respondents, representing 50%, view social media as reliable, and Table XV indicates 40 respondents, representing 40%, find information sufficient, highlighting accuracy and depth concerns.

Engagement is moderate, with Table XVI showing 60 respondents, representing 60%, engaging frequently, but Table XVII indicates 50 respondents, representing 50%, discuss content infrequently. Table XVIII shows 80 respondents, representing 80%, agree that engagement encourages learning, but Table XX reveals only 50 respondents, representing 50%, report influence on daily practices, suggesting limited behavioral impact.

The study concludes that social media is a valuable tool for mental health awareness among Kwara State Polytechnic students, particularly via Instagram, but its impact is tempered by concerns about accuracy, sufficiency, and limited practical application. Enhanced content quality and engagement strategies are needed to maximize its potential.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- I. Enhance Content Quality: Mental health organizations should collaborate with social media influencers to create accurate, educational posts, addressing the 60% skepticism about accuracy (Table VII).
- II. Promote Instagram Campaigns: Focus mental health campaigns on Instagram, as 35% use it primarily (Table XI), to reach students effectively.
- III. Increase Educational Content: Produce more educational posts, as 40% encounter them most (Table XII), to improve understanding and reliability perceptions (Table XIV, 50% agreement).
- IV. Encourage Peer Discussions: Student unions should organize forums to discuss mental health content, as 50% discuss it infrequently (Table XVII), to foster community support.
- V. Provide Credible Sources: Platforms should highlight verified mental health professionals, as only 40% find information sufficient (Table XV), to enhance trust and learning (Table XVIII, 80% agreement).
- VI. Promote Practical Tips: Content creators should include actionable mental health practices, as only 50% report daily influence (Table XX), to bridge the gap between awareness and behavior.

KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Dear respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to raise relevant information on the **“Perception And Uses Of Mental Health Information On Social Media Among Students Kwara State Polytechnic, ILorin”**. It is purely for academic purpose and all responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality as allowed under the law and the questionnaire will be destroyed as a soon as we have finished using them. Your participation in this exercise is voluntary and you have the right to withhold any information that you may not be comfortable with.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

INSTRUCTION:

Please tick [] on the blank space provided for the appropriate response to the questions.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS

1. Sex: male [], female [].
2. Age: 16 -20 [], 21-35 [], 36-30 [], 31-35 [], 36 and above [].
3. Marital status: married [], single [], divorced [].
4. Educational level: ND [], HND [],
5. Nationality: Nigerian [], Non Nigerian []

SECTION B: WHAT IS THE OVERALL PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS AT KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC REGARDING THE MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

6. Do you follow social media content (e.g., posts, videos, campaigns) related to mental health awareness? A. Yes () B. No ()
7. Do you think social media provides accurate information about mental health? A. Yes () B. No ()
C. Not sure ()

8. Social media is effective in raising awareness about mental health issues among students. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

9. Social media helps students understand the importance of mental health. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

10. Social media influences students' attitudes toward mental health positively. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

SECTION C: WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY SOURCES OF MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS?

11. Which social media platform do you primarily use to access mental health information?

A. Facebook () B. Twitter/X () C. Instagram () D. Other (e.g., TikTok, YouTube) ()

12. What type of mental health content do you encounter most on social media? A. Educational posts () B. Personal stories () C. Awareness campaigns () D. Other ()

13. How often do you come across mental health content on social media? A. Very often () B. Quite often () C. Rarely ()

14. Social media platforms are reliable sources for mental health information. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

15. The mental health information on social media is sufficient to educate students. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

SECTION D: HOW FREQUENTLY DO STUDENTS AT KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC ENGAGE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA, AND WHAT PATTERNS CAN BE IDENTIFIED?

16. How often do you engage with (e.g., like, comment, share) mental health content on social media? A. Very often () B. Quite often () C. Rarely () D. Never ()

17. Do you discuss mental health content from social media with others? A. Very often () B. Quite often () C. Rarely () D. Never ()

18. Engaging with mental health content encourages you to learn more about mental health. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

19. You actively seek out mental health content on social media. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

20. Social media mental health content influences your daily mental health practices. A. Strongly agree () B. Agree () C. Neutral () D. Disagree () E. Strongly disagree ()

