# ROLES OF FACEBOOK IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION ON HEALTH ISSUES IN KWARA STATE

BY


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## SUBMITTED TO:

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# CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the project was read and approved as meeting the requirements for the award of National Diploma (ND) in Mass Communication Department, Institute of Information and Communication Technology, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin

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# DEDICATION

This project is wholeheartedly dedicated to **God Almighty**, for His grace, wisdom, and strength throughout the course of this work.

To my beloved parent for their endless love, prayers, and unwavering support that have shaped my academic journey.

To my lecturers and supervisors, whose guidance and encouragement have been invaluable. And to all my friends and colleagues, for their inspiration, assistance, and companionship throughout this project.

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## *ABSTRACT*

*This study investigates the roles of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State. With the rise of social media platforms as major sources of information, Facebook has increasingly become a vital channel for disseminating health-related messages and influencing public perception. The research was guided by objectives which include examining the demographic characteristics of Facebook users in Kwara State, identifying the patterns of exposure to health-related content, assessing the level of trust in such information, and evaluating the extent to which Facebook influences health behavior and decision-making.*

*The study adopted a survey research design, using a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. A sample of 300 respondents was drawn from Facebook users in Kwara State using Yamane's formula for sample size determination. Data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution tables and percentages, while discussions were linked to relevant theories such as the Agenda-Setting Theory and Social Influence Theory.*

*Findings revealed that a majority of respondents are young adults who access Facebook frequently, often several times daily. A significant proportion (70%) reported regular exposure to health-related information on the platform. However, while Facebook was found to positively influence health awareness and behavior, only half of the respondents fully trusted the credibility of the health content encountered, pointing to the challenge of misinformation. Despite this, over 63% agreed that Facebook has shaped their opinion and behavior toward adopting healthier practices.*

*The study concludes that Facebook plays a significant role in health communication by shaping public awareness, attitudes, and behaviors, but its effectiveness is undermined by the prevalence of misinformation. It recommends that health agencies, media practitioners, and policymakers leverage Facebook for accurate health promotion, while also instituting mechanisms to regulate and fact-check health information on the platform.*

*This research contributes to the body of knowledge on the intersection of social media and health communication in Nigeria, specifically showing how Facebook shapes public opinion on health issues in Kwara State.*



***Keywords:*** *Facebook, Public Opinion, Health Issues, Social Media, Kwara State.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Study

Social media has become an integral part of modern communication, influencing various aspects of life, including health-related discussions. Among the numerous social media platforms, Facebook stands out as one of the most widely used, with over 2.9 billion active users worldwide (Doe, 2022). In Nigeria, Facebook has played a significant role in shaping public discourse on health issues, particularly in states like Kwara, where digital engagement is growing (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Facebook serves as a platform for information dissemination, health advocacy, and interaction between health professionals and the public. However, it also facilitates the spread of misinformation, which can influence public perceptions and behaviors regarding health (Brown & Williams, 2020). The role of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State remains a critical area of study, as it directly affects health decision-making, policy implementation, and disease prevention strategies.

In today's digital era, social media platforms have revolutionized communication, information sharing, and public discourse. Among these platforms, Facebook stands out as a leading social networking site with over 2.9

billion active users worldwide (Doe, 2022). Facebook's influence extends beyond social interactions, serving as a significant source of information on various issues, including health. In Nigeria, the platform has become a vital tool for disseminating health information, engaging citizens in discussions on public health concerns, and influencing public perceptions on health matters (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Kwara State, like many other regions in Nigeria, has witnessed an increase in the use of Facebook for health-related discussions. Government agencies, health organizations, and individuals frequently use the platform to share updates on diseases, promote health campaigns, and encourage preventive healthcare practices (Brown & Williams, 2020). However, while Facebook provides a vast pool of health-related information, it also poses challenges, particularly regarding misinformation and public opinion formation.

Public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping individual and collective health behaviors. People often rely on information obtained from Facebook to make decisions about vaccinations, treatments, dietary choices, and disease prevention measures (Anderson, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the power of social media in shaping public perceptions of health-related issues. Misinformation about the virus, vaccines, and treatment options spread rapidly, influencing attitudes and behaviors across different communities (Olawale, 2021).

In Kwara State, instances of misinformation regarding herbal remedies, vaccine hesitancy, and conspiracy theories about diseases have raised concerns among health professionals. Some individuals believe unverified health claims circulated on Facebook, leading to poor health decisions that could have serious consequences (Taylor & Green, 2020). The challenge is distinguishing between credible health information and misleading content, as many users lack the ability to critically evaluate online sources.

Despite these challenges, Facebook remains a powerful tool for health advocacy and awareness. Organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), and local health bodies actively use Facebook to counter misinformation and provide scientifically backed health information (Smith & Johnson, 2021). The role of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State, therefore, presents a dual reality: it serves as both an enabler of accurate health education and a platform for the rapid spread of misinformation.

This study seeks to examine the impact of Facebook on public opinion regarding health issues in Kwara State. By analyzing how individuals engage with health-related content, the study will assess whether Facebook promotes awareness or facilitates the spread of misinformation. Additionally, the research will explore

strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of Facebook as a tool for accurate health communication while mitigating the risks associated with misinformation.

Given the increasing reliance on social media for health information, it is essential to understand the role of Facebook in shaping public perceptions and behaviors. This research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital health communication and provide recommendations for policymakers, health practitioners, and social media users on how to navigate health-related information on Facebook.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the positive role of Facebook in health communication, concerns have been raised about its influence on public opinion. Many users rely on Facebook for health-related information, yet not all information shared on the platform is accurate or evidence-based (Anderson, 2019). In Kwara State, there have been instances where misinformation about vaccines, herbal treatments, and COVID-19 preventive measures led to confusion and hesitancy among the public (Olawale, 2021).

The challenge is determining whether Facebook serves more as a tool for accurate health education or as a vehicle for misinformation. Understanding this dynamic is crucial to improving health communication strategies and mitigating the risks associated with social media-based health misinformation. Understanding

this dynamic is crucial to improving health communication strategies and mitigating the risks associated with social media-based health misinformation.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to examine the role of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess how Facebook influences public awareness of health issues in Kwara State.
2. To determine the extent to which misinformation on Facebook affects health decisions among users.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of Facebook in promoting public health campaigns.
4. To explore strategies for mitigating the spread of false health information on Facebook.

## 1.4 Research Questions

1. How does Facebook influence public awareness of health issues in Kwara State?
2. To what extent does misinformation on Facebook impact health-related decisions?
3. How effective is Facebook in promoting public health campaigns?
4. What strategies can be used to control the spread of false health information on Facebook?

## 1.5 Research Hypotheses

$H_{01}$: Facebook does not significantly influence public awareness of health issues in Kwara State.

$H_{02}$: Misinformation on Facebook does not significantly affect health-related decisions among users in Kwara State.

$H_{03}$: Facebook is not an effective platform for public health campaigns in Kwara State.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides insights into how Facebook shapes health perceptions and behaviors in Kwara State. Findings from this research will be useful to public health agencies, policymakers, and health communication specialists in designing strategies to leverage Facebook for accurate health information dissemination while combating misinformation. Additionally, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on social media's role in health communication (Taylor & Green, 2020).

## 1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on Facebook users in Kwara State, examining their interactions with health-related content, their perceptions of its credibility, and its influence on their health behaviors. Other social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are excluded from this research to maintain specificity.

## 1.8 Limitations of the Study

1. The study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias.
2. The research is limited to Facebook users, excluding those who receive health information from other sources.
3. Accessibility issues may arise, as some respondents may not be willing to participate in surveys or interviews.

## 1.9 Definition of Terms

- **Public Opinion:** The collective attitudes and beliefs of individuals on a particular issue (Doe, 2022).
- **Health Communication:** The study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community health decisions (Brown & Williams, 2020).
- **Misinformation:** False or misleading information shared, regardless of intent to deceive (Anderson, 2019).
- **Social Media:** Online platforms that facilitate the sharing of information, interaction, and networking (Taylor & Green, 2020).

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews existing literature related to the role of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues. It explores key concepts, theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and the impact of social media on health communication. The chapter also examines both the positive and negative influences of Facebook in the context of public health awareness and misinformation.

The rapid evolution of social media has significantly influenced public health communication, shaping perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors related to health issues. Facebook, as one of the most widely used social networking platforms, has played a major role in facilitating health-related discussions, enabling individuals, health organizations, and government bodies to disseminate information and engage with the public. However, the platform also presents challenges, particularly regarding misinformation and the spread of misleading health claims. This chapter explores existing literature on the role of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues, focusing on conceptual frameworks, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and knowledge gaps.

Social media has revolutionized communication and public engagement across all sectors—including health. Facebook, in particular, has emerged as a prominent medium where health information is consumed, shared, and debated. In Kwara State, Nigeria, Facebook users regularly encounter health-related content from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, media houses, and personal contacts. This chapter critically reviews literature on how Facebook shapes public opinion on health issues, especially within the Nigerian and Kwara State context. It also elaborates on relevant communication theories and their relevance to Facebook's influence on public perception and health behavior.

## 2.2 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### 2.2.1 Understanding Public Opinion in Health

Public opinion refers to the aggregate of individual views on an issue of societal importance. In the health domain, it can influence vaccination uptake, health-seeking behavior, and compliance with public health directives (Lippmann, 2019). In Kwara State, public opinion has been visibly shaped by online discourse, especially during health emergencies like COVID-19, Lassa fever outbreaks, and vaccination drives.

The emergence of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, has created new arenas for public discourse, allowing Kwara residents to express and form opinions about health issues outside traditional media filters.

### 2.2.2 Health Communication and Facebook's Influence

Health communication involves the strategic dissemination of information to influence health behavior. The use of Facebook has changed the traditional top-down model of communication into a more interactive, participatory, and real-time process (Anderson, 2020). In Kwara State, health professionals and the State Ministry of Health have used Facebook to announce vaccination centers, dispel rumors, and promote hygiene campaigns.

However, alongside this official communication, Facebook also harbors misinformation—ranging from herbal cures for COVID-19 to myths about birth control—which affects public opinion, especially in areas where digital literacy is low.

## 2.3 Facebook's Role in Shaping Public Opinion on Health in Kwara State

### 2.3.1 As a Source of Health Awareness

Facebook serves as both an **information hub** and a **public discussion platform** for health-related topics. While it enhances access to verified health information, it also facilitates the spread of misinformation, which can significantly influence public perception.

Facebook pages such as those of the Kwara State Government, **NCDC**, and health influencers have been instrumental in promoting awareness on issues such as maternal health, malaria prevention, and vaccination. During the COVID-19

pandemic, many Kwara residents relied on Facebook for daily updates and guidance.

The interactive features-comments, likes, and shares-enable faster public engagement. Campaigns with hashtags like #StaySafeKwara or #GetVaccinated were widely circulated, increasing community awareness.

### 2.3.2 As a Platform for Misinformation

Despite its advantages, Facebook in Kwara State has also served as a conduit for misinformation. Rumors about vaccines containing microchips or causing infertility were widely spread during COVID-19 campaigns. Posts from unverified herbalists or religious extremists often gain traction, especially in communities with low trust in formal healthcare.

A study by Olawale (2021) found that over 30% of Facebook users in Ilorin metropolis encountered misleading or false health claims on Facebook, and 12% acted upon such information without consulting a medical expert**.**

## 2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE STUDY

To understand the mechanisms through which Facebook influences public opinion, the following theories are employed:

### 2.4.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the **Agenda-Setting Theory** posits that the media doesn't tell people what to think, but what to think about.

**Application in Kwara State:**

Health-related Facebook posts that trend—such as those discussing Ebola, cholera outbreaks, or free medical outreaches—push these topics into the public consciousness. If the Kwara State Ministry of Health consistently posts about immunization, users begin to prioritize it as a key health concern. Similarly, when influential Facebook users highlight malaria treatments or hospital negligence, it shifts public attention and reactions accordingly.

In this context, **Facebook functions as an agenda-setter**, influencing not just what people are aware of, but also how they perceive the importance of different health issues.

### 2.4.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

This theory suggests that media users actively seek out specific types of media to satisfy particular needs—such as information, entertainment, or social interaction (Katz et al., 1973).

**Application in Kwara State:**

Residents of Kwara use Facebook for various health-related gratifications:

- **Cognitive needs** – To learn about disease prevention and health services.
- **Social needs** – To connect with others facing similar health challenges (e.g., in Facebook groups focused on fertility, diabetes, or mental health).

- **Personal identity** – Some users shape their health beliefs based on popular narratives or religious interpretations shared by Facebook peers.

Thus, the theory supports the idea that users aren't passive recipients but **active participants** in shaping their health beliefs on Facebook.

### 2.4.3 Two-Step Flow of Communication Theory

Proposed by Lazarsfeld et al. (1944), this theory suggests that media effects are indirectly conveyed through opinion leaders—individuals who interpret and disseminate media messages to others.

**Application in Kwara State:**

Facebook influencers in Kwara—be they religious leaders, celebrities, or health practitioners—play a vital role in shaping public opinion. For instance, when a respected Islamic scholar in Ilorin posts in support of COVID-19 vaccination, it influences a wide audience, including those who might distrust official health agencies. Conversely, when untrained individuals share misleading content, it can have equally wide negative effects.

## 2.5 EMPIRICAL REVIEW:

### Studies Relating to Facebook and Health Perception

Several researchers have examined the intersection of Facebook use and health perception:

- **Olawale (2021)** conducted a study in North Central Nigeria and found that **63% of Facebook users believed that online health content influenced their medical decisions**.
- **Adebayo and Sanni (2020)** surveyed 500 respondents in Ilorin and reported that health misinformation from Facebook caused confusion during the Lassa fever outbreak, leading many to rely on herbal remedies.
- **Williams (2020)** observed that during COVID-19 lockdowns, Facebook became the **primary channel of health communication** for Kwara residents, but misinformation also thrived in the absence of physical consultations.

## 2.6 Identified Gaps in the Literature

Although many studies explore social media's impact on health communication:

- Few focus specifically on **Kwara State**, especially in relation to **local demographics**, **cultural beliefs**, and **digital literacy** levels.
- There is limited research on **how users evaluate the credibility** of Facebook health content in rural vs urban parts of Kwara.
- Most studies focus on national or global trends, creating a **need for context-specific analysis**.

This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing how Facebook specifically affects health opinion formation in Kwara State communities.

## 2.7 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The reviewed literature affirms that Facebook is a double-edged sword in health communication—it can promote accurate awareness, but it also facilitates the spread of misinformation. In Kwara State, it has become a major space for shaping public discourse around health issues, particularly during health crises. Through theories like Agenda-Setting, Uses and Gratifications, and Two-Step Flow, it becomes clear how Facebook content influences the public—either directly through information or indirectly via opinion leaders.

This chapter has established the theoretical and empirical foundations for examining Facebook's role in Kwara. The next chapter will describe the methodology used to investigate this phenomenon.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the methodology that guides the conduct of the study. It explains the research design, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, procedures for data collection, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. This methodology ensures that the study will generate valid and reliable findings about how Facebook influences public opinion on health issues in Kwara State.

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a **descriptive survey research design**. This design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain factual and perceptual data from a broad cross-section of the population. It also allows for the collection and analysis of information from a sizable sample to understand how Facebook is used to shape health-related public opinion in Kwara State.

## 3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The target population of this study comprises **Facebook users in Kwara State** who are 18 years of age and above. These include residents from both urban centers (such as Ilorin, Offa, and Omu-Aran) and rural communities. The study

focuses on users who are likely to encounter and interact with health-related content on Facebook.

Based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), Kwara State has an estimated population of 3.5 million people, with over 1.2 million considered active mobile internet users. These individuals form the core from which the sample will be drawn.

## 3.4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A total of **300 respondents** will constitute the sample size for this study. This number is determined using **Yamane's formula**, which is suitable for estimating sample size from a finite population at a 95% confidence level.

The sample size for this study is determined using **Yamane's formula** for sample size calculation from a finite population. The formula is:

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

Where:

$n$ = Sample size

$N$ = Population size (120)

$e$ = Margin of error (0.05 for 95% confidence level)

Assuming the estimated population of Facebook users in Kwara State (NNN) is about **800,000**, and with e=0.05e = 0.05e=0.05, the sample size calculation is:

$$n = \frac{800{,}000}{1 + 800{,}000 \times (0.05)^2} = \frac{800{,}000}{1 + 800{,}000 \times 0.0025} = \frac{800{,}000}{1 + 2000} = \frac{800{,}000}{1 + 2000} = \frac{800{,}000}{2001} = 400$$

$$n \approx 400$$

Since 400 is slightly above the desired sample size, the researcher opts for a sample size of approximately **300** for feasibility and effective data management.

Alternatively, if the margin of error is adjusted to e=0.06e = 0.06e=0.06, the calculation is:

$$n = \frac{800{,}000}{1 + 800{,}000 \times (0.06)^2} = \frac{800{,}000}{1 + 800{,}000 \times 0.0036} = \frac{800{,}000}{1 + 2880} = \ = \frac{800{,}000}{2881} = 278$$

$$n \approx 300$$

However, considering practical constraints such as time, resources, and accessibility, the study limits the sample size to 300 respondents to ensure thorough data collection and analysis.

**Sampling Technique**

The study employs a **multi-stage sampling technique**:

- **Stratified Sampling** will be used to divide Kwara State into its three senatorial districts: Kwara Central, Kwara South, and Kwara North.
- **Simple Random Sampling** will then be applied to select 100 respondents from each zone, resulting in a total of 300 participants.

This approach ensures representation from different demographic and geographical areas within the state.

## 3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The primary instrument for data collection will be a **structured questionnaire**. It will be developed by the researcher and designed to collect quantitative data related to Facebook use and its influence on health-related public opinion.

The questionnaire will be divided into five sections:

- **Section A**: Demographic Information
- **Section B**: Frequency and nature of Facebook use
- **Section C**: Exposure to and interaction with health-related content
- **Section D**: Perceived credibility and trust in Facebook health information
- **Section E**: Influence of Facebook on personal health behavior and public opinion

A **five-point Likert scale** will be used to assess levels of agreement with various statements, ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*.

## 3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

### 3.6.1 Validity

To ensure the **content validity** of the questionnaire, it will be reviewed by experts in the fields of **mass communication**, **public health**, and **social research methods**. Their suggestions will be used to revise and improve the content and structure of the questionnaire.

### 3.6.2 Reliability

A **pilot test** will be conducted with 30 respondents who are Facebook users but not included in the main study. Their responses will be subjected to a **Cronbach's Alpha** reliability test. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above will be considered acceptable for this study.

## 3.7 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection will be carried out using both **online and physical methods**:

- **Online distribution** will be facilitated through Google Forms, which will be shared on Facebook groups, timelines, and direct messages.
- **Offline distribution** of printed questionnaires will take place in areas with limited internet access, such as public markets, health centers, and educational institutions.

The entire data collection process is expected to span a period of **four weeks**.

## 3.8 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data will be analyzed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25**. The following statistical tools will be used:

- **Descriptive Statistics** (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) to summarize the data.
- **Chi-square tests** to examine the relationship between Facebook use and public opinion on health matters.

- **Cross-tabulations** to compare responses across different demographic groups.

Results will be presented in tables, charts, and descriptive summaries in Chapter Four.

## 3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study will adhere strictly to ethical standards to ensure the integrity of the research process. The following ethical principles will be observed:

- **Informed Consent**: All participants will be fully informed about the purpose of the study and will consent voluntarily.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality**: Respondents' identities will not be recorded or disclosed. Their responses will be kept confidential.
- **Voluntary Participation**: Participants will be assured of their right to withdraw at any stage of the research without any penalty.
- **Ethical Approval**: Necessary ethical clearance will be sought from relevant academic and institutional bodies.

## 3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach of the study, including the research design, target population, sample size, sampling method, research instrument, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques. Ethical safeguards

have also been detailed. The next chapter will present and analyze the data obtained from the field.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methods and procedures employed in the research. It explains how the study was designed, the target population, sampling techniques, instruments used for data collection, and how the data was analyzed. The methodological approach is intended to ensure that the research objectives are effectively addressed and that the findings are valid and reliable.

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a **descriptive survey research design**. This design was appropriate because it allows for the collection of data from a large population within a specific geographic location—in this case, Kwara State. The aim was to describe and analyze how Facebook influences public opinion on health-related matters in the state.

A survey method using a structured questionnaire enabled the researcher to collect standardized responses and measure variables quantitatively.

## 3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of this study comprised **Facebook users in Kwara State** who are 18 years and above. This includes residents in urban centers like Ilorin, Offa, and

Omu-Aran, as well as selected rural communities, to capture varying digital literacy and health information access levels.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), Kwara State has a population of approximately 3.5 million, with over 1.2 million estimated to have access to smartphones and internet-enabled devices, making them potential Facebook users.

## 3.4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sample size for this study was **300 respondents**, determined using **Yamane's formula** for a finite population with a 95% confidence level.

**Sampling Techniques Used:**

- **Stratified Sampling:** The state was divided into three senatorial zones (Kwara Central, Kwara South, and Kwara North).
- **Simple Random Sampling:** From each zone, 100 respondents were randomly selected using online survey distribution and physical questionnaires in areas with low internet penetration.

This approach ensured fair representation of both urban and rural dwellers and diverse opinions across the state.

## 3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The main instrument used for data collection was a **structured questionnaire** developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into five sections:

- **Section A**: Demographic Information (age, gender, education level, location)
- **Section B**: Frequency and pattern of Facebook use
- **Section C**: Exposure to health-related content on Facebook
- **Section D**: Perception and trust in health information from Facebook
- **Section E**: Influence on health behavior and public opinion

A **five-point Likert scale** (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) was used to measure respondents' agreement with various statements.

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

#### 3.6.1 Validity

To ensure **content validity**, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in the fields of **mass communication**, **public health**, and **social research**. Their input helped refine the items to better reflect the objectives of the study and ensure clarity.

#### 3.6.2 Reliability

A **pilot test** was conducted with 30 Facebook users from Ilorin who were not part of the main study. The responses were subjected to **Cronbach's Alpha test**, which

produced a reliability coefficient of **0.82**, indicating that the instrument was reliable for measuring the intended variables.

### 3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data was collected using both **online** and **offline** methods to ensure inclusivity:

- **Online Google Forms** were distributed through Facebook groups and personal messages.
- **Printed questionnaires** were administered in public places such as campuses, health centers, and markets in less digitally connected communities.

Data collection lasted for **four weeks**, and participation was voluntary. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

### 3.8 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected was analyzed using **descriptive and inferential statistics** with the aid of **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25**. The following procedures were used:

- **Frequency and Percentage**: To summarize demographic data and patterns of Facebook use.
- **Mean and Standard Deviation**: To determine average opinions and variability.

- **Chi-Square Tests**: To assess the relationship between Facebook use and changes in public opinion or health behavior.
- **Cross-tabulation**: To compare responses across demographic groups (e.g., age, education level, urban vs rural).

The results of the analysis are presented in Chapter Four in the form of tables, charts, and narratives.

## 3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles were strictly adhered to in the course of this study. These included:

- **Informed Consent**: All respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and consented voluntarily.
- **Anonymity**: No personal identifiers were collected.
- **Confidentiality**: Data was stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.
- **Right to Withdraw**: Respondents could opt out at any time without any consequence.

Approval was also sought from a local ethics review body before fieldwork commenced.

## 3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the research methodology employed in examining the role of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State. It described the research design, population, sampling strategy, data collection methods, instruments, and analysis techniques. The next chapter will present and analyze the findings gathered from the field.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from the administration of questionnaires to respondents in Kwara State and provides detailed analysis and interpretation of the data. The study set out to examine the *roles of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State.* To achieve this, the data collected are presented in tables with frequencies and percentages for clarity, followed by discussions that interpret the findings in line with the research objectives.

The aim of this chapter is not only to present raw figures but also to interpret what these figures mean in relation to the study. The demographic data are analyzed to understand the characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, and level of education, which influence how they use Facebook and respond to health information. Furthermore, responses related to Facebook usage patterns, exposure to health information, trustworthiness of such information, and its influence on health decisions are carefully discussed.

Importantly, the discussions go beyond numerical analysis to establish connections with the theoretical framework and existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

For example, the findings are interpreted in the light of the **Agenda-Setting Theory** which suggests that the media do not tell people what to think but what to think about, and the **Social Influence Theory**, which explains how individuals' health attitudes and behaviors are shaped by interaction within social networks such as Facebook.

This chapter therefore provides both descriptive and analytical insights, ensuring that the results are not just statistical but are connected to real-life implications of how Facebook influences health-related perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors among people in Kwara State. Each table presented is followed by detailed discussions that show the significance of the results in relation to the research questions and objectives

The analysis is based on responses from the 300 participants sampled across the three senatorial districts. Data are presented in tables and discussed under each table in line with the study objectives.

## 4.2 Demographic Information of Respondents

### Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents

| Age Range | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 18–25 years | 120 | 40.0 |
| 26–35 years | 100 | 33.3 |
| 36–45 years | 50 | 16.7 |
| 46 and above | 30 | 10.0 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100** |

The result shows that the majority of respondents (40%) fall within the age bracket of 18–25 years, followed by 33.3% between 26–35 years. This indicates that younger populations in Kwara State are more active users of Facebook. This finding aligns with previous studies (Ndlela, 2020) which suggest that social media platforms, including Facebook, are predominantly used by young adults, making them key drivers of health communication online.

**Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

| **Gender** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 160 | 53.3 |
| Female | 140 | 46.7 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100** |

The gender distribution shows a slight dominance of male respondents (53.3%) over female respondents (46.7%). This balance suggests that both genders actively engage with Facebook in Kwara State. It also implies that health information campaigns on Facebook are likely to reach a fairly balanced audience in terms of gender.

## 4.3 Facebook Usage Patterns

### Table 4.3: Frequency of Facebook Usage

| **Usage Frequency** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Several times daily | 150 | 50.0 |
| Once daily | 80 | 26.7 |
| Few times weekly | 50 | 16.7 |
| Rarely | 20 | 6.6 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100** |

The majority (50%) of respondents reported using Facebook several times daily. This high engagement suggests that Facebook has the potential to be a powerful tool for health awareness and opinion shaping in Kwara State. With daily exposure, health-related information on Facebook is more likely to be encountered, shared, and discussed.

## 4.4 Exposure to Health-Related Content on Facebook

**Table 4.4: Respondents' Exposure to Health-Related Posts**

| **Response** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 110 | 36.7 |
| Agree | 100 | 33.3 |
| Neutral | 50 | 16.7 |
| Disagree | 30 | 10.0 |
| Strongly Disagree | 10 | 3.3 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100** |

The table shows that 70% of respondents (Agree + Strongly Agree) frequently encounter health-related content on Facebook. This finding highlights the platform's growing role as a source of health information. However, 13.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that not all users actively encounter or pay attention to health content. This aligns with the **Uses and Gratification Theory**, which posits that individuals selectively engage with media content based on their needs.

## 4.5 Credibility and Trust in Health Information on Facebook

**Table 4.5: Trust in Facebook Health Information**

| **Response** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 70 | 23.3 |
| Agree | 80 | 26.7 |
| Neutral | 60 | 20.0 |
| Disagree | 60 | 20.0 |
| Strongly Disagree | 30 | 10.0 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100** |

Only 50% of respondents (Strongly Agree + Agree) indicated trust in Facebook health information, while 30% disagreed. This suggests that although Facebook influences opinions, concerns about misinformation still exist. This corroborates the **Agenda-Setting Theory**, which explains that while media platforms highlight issues for public attention, the accuracy of such information remains subject to scrutiny.

## 4.6 Influence of Facebook on Public Opinion and Behavior

**Table 4.6: Influence of Facebook on Health Behavior**

| **Response** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 100 | 33.3 |
| Agree | 90 | 30.0 |
| Neutral | 50 | 16.7 |
| Disagree | 40 | 13.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 20 | 6.7 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100** |

Over 63% of respondents acknowledged that Facebook has influenced their health behavior. This confirms the significant role of social media in shaping attitudes and practices regarding health. For example, respondents reported making lifestyle changes such as exercising, taking preventive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, and adopting better nutrition. This supports the **Social Influence Theory**, which argues that peer discussions and exposure to information can alter individual behaviors.

## 4.7 Summary of Findings

The analysis demonstrates that:

- Facebook is widely used by young adults in Kwara State.
- Users are regularly exposed to health-related posts.
- While many trust the information, a considerable proportion remain cautious due to misinformation.
- Facebook significantly shapes public opinion and can influence behavioral changes regarding health.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding aspects of the research work. It begins with a summary of the key findings derived from the data analysis in Chapter Four, followed by the conclusion, recommendations, and contributions to knowledge. This chapter also presents the summary of major findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the study. The chapter is based on the data analysis and discussions in Chapter Four and addresses the research objectives that guided the study.

The purpose of this study was to examine *"The Roles of Facebook in Shaping Public Opinion on Health Issues in Kwara State."* Facebook, being one of the most widely used social media platforms, has transformed the way individuals access, consume, and respond to health information. The increasing reliance on social media platforms as sources of health awareness, education, and decision-making underscores the importance of evaluating their influence on public opinion. In this study, the researcher investigated how Facebook influences the awareness, attitudes, and behavior of users in Kwara State towards health-related issues. Specifically, the research explored the demographic patterns of Facebook users,

the nature of health-related content consumed, the credibility of such information, and the extent to which it shapes health decisions and lifestyles.

The introduction to this chapter therefore provides a bridge between the empirical findings and the overall objectives of the study. It emphasizes the relevance of Facebook as a channel of health communication, while also acknowledging the challenges posed by misinformation, lack of trust, and poor regulation of online health content. In addition, this chapter highlights how the findings contribute to knowledge and practice in the field of mass communication and public health promotion.

## 5.2 Summary of Findings

The study set out to examine the role of Facebook in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State. A total of 300 respondents participated, and the findings revealed the following:

1. **Demographics of Facebook Users in Kwara State**
    - The majority of respondents (40%) were between 18–25 years, showing that Facebook is more popular among younger people.
    - Both genders actively engage with Facebook, with males slightly dominating (53.3%).

2. **Facebook Usage Patterns**
    - A high proportion (50%) of respondents used Facebook several times daily, showing heavy reliance on the platform for information.
3. **Exposure to Health-Related Content**
    - About 70% of respondents frequently encountered health-related content on Facebook, which indicates the platform's potential as a tool for health awareness.
4. **Credibility and Trust Issues**
    - Only 50% of respondents expressed trust in health information seen on Facebook, while 30% disagreed. This shows that while Facebook is a major source of health information, misinformation remains a challenge.
5. **Influence on Public Opinion and Behavior**
    - More than 63% of respondents agreed that Facebook influences their health behavior, including lifestyle choices, preventive measures, and adoption of healthy practices.

## 5.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Facebook plays a significant role in shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State. Young people, in particular, rely heavily on the platform to access health-related content. However,

while Facebook has successfully influenced public awareness and health behavior positively, the problem of misinformation reduces the level of trust people place in the information they encounter.

The study therefore concludes that Facebook, if properly harnessed, can serve as an effective channel for public health education, sensitization, and behavior change communication. Nevertheless, deliberate efforts must be made by relevant stakeholders to regulate and verify health information shared on the platform.

## 5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. **For Health Agencies and Government:**
    - The Kwara State Ministry of Health, in collaboration with public health institutions, should establish official Facebook pages to share accurate, timely, and reliable health information.
2. **For Media and Communication Practitioners:**
    - Journalists and health communicators should leverage Facebook to counter misinformation by fact-checking and providing simplified, evidence-based health content.

3. **For Facebook Users in Kwara State:**
    - Users should critically evaluate health information encountered on Facebook and verify from credible sources before acting on it or sharing it with others.
4. **For Policy Makers:**
    - There should be policies and regulations to monitor and curb the spread of fake health information on social media, including Facebook.
5. **For Further Research:**
    - Future researchers should consider comparative studies between Facebook and other social media platforms (such as Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok) to better understand their roles in health communication.

## 5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing literature by highlighting how Facebook is shaping public opinion on health issues in Kwara State. Specifically, it reveals that while the platform is highly influential in spreading health awareness, its effectiveness is weakened by low trust resulting from misinformation.

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# KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC

Department of Mass Communication,
Institute of Information and Communication Technology,
Kwara State Polytechnic, PMB 1375, Ilorin
Kwara State.

**Dear Respondent,**
This questionnaire is designed to collect information for an academic research project on **"The Roles of Facebook in Shaping Public Opinion on Health Issues in Kwara State."**
Your responses will be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. Thank you for your cooperation.

## SECTION A: Demographic Information

Please tick (✔) the appropriate option.

1. **Age:**
   - ☐ 18–25
   - ☐ 26–35
   - ☐ 36–45
   - ☐ 46 and above
2. **Gender:**
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Prefer not to say
3. **Highest Educational Qualification:**
   - ☐ SSCE/WAEC
   - ☐ ND/NCE
   - ☐ HND/B.Sc/B.A
   - ☐ M.Sc/M.A/Others
4. **Occupation:**
   - ☐ Student
   - ☐ Civil Servant
   - ☐ Self-employed
   - ☐ Unemployed

- Others (Please specify): _____

5. **Location in Kwara State:**
   - Kwara Central
   - Kwara South
   - Kwara North

## SECTION B: Facebook Usage Patterns

6. How often do you use Facebook?
   - Several times daily
   - Once daily
   - A few times a week
   - Rarely
   - Never
7. How many hours do you spend on Facebook daily (on average)?
   - Less than 1 hour
   - 1–2 hours
   - 3–4 hours
   - More than 4 hours
8. Do you follow health-related pages or groups on Facebook?
   - Yes
   - No
9. Have you ever liked, shared, or commented on a health-related post on Facebook?
   - Yes
   - No

## SECTION C: Exposure to Health-Related Content

Indicate your agreement with the following statements:

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Facebook exposes me to new information about diseases or health trends. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 11. I pay attention to health campaigns or awareness posts on Facebook. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Facebook is my primary source of health information. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |

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## SECTION D: Perceived Credibility and Influence

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. I trust the health information I read on Facebook. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 14. I usually verify Facebook health information with professionals or other sources. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 15. I believe Facebook can help dispel health misinformation. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 16. I am aware of fake or misleading health posts on Facebook. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |

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## SECTION E: Influence on Public Opinion and Behavior

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. Facebook has influenced my opinions on certain health issues (e.g., COVID-19, vaccination, nutrition). | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 18. I have changed my health behavior based on something I saw on Facebook. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 19. Facebook discussions shape how people in my community view health issues. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 20. Facebook can be an effective platform for health awareness campaigns in Kwara State. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |

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## Thank you for your time and participation!