



BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN NIGERIA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Aisha Muhammad BELLO

University Library,
Baba Ahmad University, Kano
ayshambee@gmail.com

Ass. Prof. Kabiru Dahiru ABBAS

Department of Library and Information Sciences,
Bayero University, Kano
kdabbas.lis@buk.edu.ng

Dalhatu Usman MAIRIGA

Department of Library and Information Sciences,
Bayero University, Kano
dalmansarkee@gmail.com

Abstract

In the present information age, social media as a platform for knowledge sharing has become a vital component of organizational effectiveness and innovation, emphasizing the transition from traditional knowledge management methods to more dynamic, social media-enabled practices. This study aims to systematically review literature on the Benefits and challenges of Utilizing Social Media Platforms for Knowledge Sharing among Healthcare Professionals in Nigeria with a view of improving patient wellbeing. This paper highlighted the concept and significance of social media for knowledge sharing, it also examined the benefits of using social media for knowledge sharing among healthcare professional in healthcare centers. The study identified the challenges associated with the utilization of social media for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers in Nigeria. The study adopted the systematic literature review approach. The study found that disseminating health information and combat misinformation, health intervention, social mobilization and professional development where the major benefits of using social media for knowledge sharing among healthcare professional in healthcare centers. Similarly the review found that individual, organizational and technological factors where the major challenges associated with the utilization of social media platforms for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers. The paper concludes that the inclusion of social media as a tool for

knowledge sharing in healthcare centers in Nigeria presents a significant opportunity to transform the sector by improving communication, collaboration, and continuous learning among healthcare professionals thereby enhancing professional development and ultimately contributing to better patient care outcomes. Hence, the study recommends that healthcare centers should be sending health workers to trainings, workshops, seminars and conferences on social media related topics as this would positively reshape their mindset and slice away so many challenges.

Keywords: Benefits, Social media, Knowledge sharing, Healthcare professional and Nigeria,

Introduction

Social media has become an important information channel from the perspective of work organizations, as a tool for searching and sharing available information which evolves through collaboration between workplace personnel. The application of social media for knowledge sharing has been moved beyond personnel to organizational level. It has been increasingly adopted by organizations as tools for knowledge sharing and communication through myriad of different means (Kane, Alavi, Labianca & Borgatti, 2014; Lam, Yeung & Cheng, 2016). The social media is considered a tool for facilitating communication mechanisms, and bringing people together through sharing content, which is known as user generated communication. It allows individuals (healthcare personnel), organizations (healthcare centers) and communities to source, filter and share information, ideas, personal messages, images, and other contents and in some cases collaborates with other users in real time. Studies have shown the importance of knowledge sharing in organizations that seek to remain at a competitive advantage over their competitors, however there is paucity of literature on knowledge sharing among personnel in healthcare related organizations. These health related organizations have different groups of personnel ranging from accountants, lab technicians, surgeons, consultants, clerical staff etc that have to work hand-in-hand to ensure the effectiveness of the organization. As such, the only viable tool for communication and sharing knowledge among such employees in this 21st century is social media. Hence, the application of social media for knowledge sharing in healthcare centers in Nigeria will add more value and health knowledge-based assets, benefit health personnel in acquiring, educating and empowering them to know about health issues and use of medical terms associated with diagnoses.

Social media platforms offers healthcare centers the opportunity to improve effectively through enabling personnel to access, preserve and disseminate valid and reliable information that will improve their services. The use of social media for knowledge sharing is taken by many organizations to be a panacea for boosting innovation and improving productivity. Hence, the inability of healthcare personnel to understand, capture and utilize the roles of social media for knowledge sharing has been identified as one of the critical contributing factor for backwardness, wastage of intellectual capital and unproductivity within healthcare centers. Therefore, this study aims to review the benefits and challenges of utilizing social media platforms for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers in Nigeria with a view of improving medical services.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the benefits of using social media platforms for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers in Nigeria.
2. To identify the challenges associated with the application of social media platforms for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

For the purpose of this study, a number of related literature including books, articles, thesis, dissertations, monographs, database, e.t.c, relevant to the area of research were systematically reviewed to provide a theoretical body of knowledge related to the study. Hence, the review was structured as follows:

Concept of Social Media

Over the past decade, social media has evolved beyond just a tool for connecting with friends and family. It now serves as a platform for news dissemination, entertainment, commerce, politics, security update and even health related information thereby becoming a significant part of both personal lives and business operations. Social media refers to a platform where people gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media such as Facebook, platform X, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, e.t.c. (Fotis, 2015). It also refers to websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. People use social media to stay in touch and interact with various communities, health related organizations, schools security agencies e.t.c. to follow trends, and stay informed. In the medical world, health

personnel use social media platforms as a key tool for knowledge sharing, health promotion, effective communication with patient, creating awareness on disease outbreak, patient engagement and gathering feedback. Today, nearly all business-to-consumer, teachers-to-students, officers-to-civilians, doctors-to-patients and even politicians-to-masses platforms have social components, such as comment fields or social sharing buttons that make engagement easy.

Significance of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

Social media has undoubtedly become a vibrant and strong source of information retrieval and dissemination. It is increasingly being used for many purposes such as crowdsourcing, sharing knowledge, marketing, politics, education, e.t.c. to gather ideas, knowledge, professional update, or trends from a broader community such as employees, patients, customers, and even the general public. This can be invaluable for service improvement or development. Hence, social media platforms gives the advantage of making knowledge available to others by exchanging knowledge among members in order for them to collaborate on tasks, solve problems or implement ideas. It is about effectively easing conversion and transfer of specific knowledge held by a member to other members via media platforms in a form that can be understood absorbed and used by those who need it to engage in a certain activity or in solving problems (Flinchbaugh, Li, Luth & Chadwick 2016). When knowledge is made available for employees within organizations, the quality of work and efficiency improves thereby enhancing learning and understanding (Brown 2013).

As organizations world-wide thrive on modern technology, the use of social media for knowledge sharing becomes mandatory for the removal of space and time constraints that are inherent in traditional methods of sharing knowledge, online tools that enable one to share multimedia content, and easy to use interfaces that enable even non-specialists to share and connect (Fotis, 2015). Hence, the dramatic developments of this media form revolutionized how people share their knowledge, communicate and collaborate with each other while engaging in conversations in the workplace in a timely manner (Filo 2015; Li & Sakamoto, 2014). The adoption of knowledge sharing practices in organizations has becomes a necessity which brings great impacts on the organization's intellectual capital, efficacy, innovation and even the organization's survival, as such it has become compulsory for employees to learn and adopt the utilization of sound and reliable social media platforms for their organizational

success (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). In the present information explosion era, society has increasingly used social media as a method of communicating and sharing knowledge and information for example through Face book, WhatsApp, platform X, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other social media platforms which facilitates sharing ideas, pictures, comments and other forms of knowledge and information (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010). Social media platforms allow researchers around the world to communicate and share their knowledge swiftly (Panahi, 2016). For example, people can learn what was discussed at any conference without traveling long distances. In addition, researchers use social media as a channel for visibly presenting themselves and their outputs to those who share the same interests.

Benefits of Using Social Media platforms for Knowledge Sharing among Healthcare Professionals in Healthcare Centers

The merger of social media platforms into healthcare settings in Nigeria has the potential to significantly enhance knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals, thereby improving patient care and medical education. Despite the widespread, advantages, and affordances use of social media platforms, their use for knowledge sharing in service organization has not been encouraging, especially in service organizations in developing countries such as Nigeria. Healthcare professionals are using social media as a platform for communication and a channel for visibly presenting themselves and their outputs to those who share the same. Social media has transformed communication and interaction of health workers around the world as its use has become daily practice in their lives (Jain, 2013; Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2018). It offers opportunities for user interaction, communication and sharing of information and knowledge among health workers worldwide easily and quickly. It also provides online platform where they can create and share contents with other people of different profession irrespective of how they are or where they are instantly.

Healthcare organizations, including hospitals, health systems, professional societies, pharmaceutical companies, patient advocacy groups, and pharmacy benefit companies, are using social media for many purposes such as communicating with the community and patients; enhancing organizational visibility; marketing products and services; establishing a venue for acquiring news about activities, promotions, and fund-raising, providing a channel for patient resources and education, and providing customer service and support. It has been estimated that 70% of U.S. health care organizations use social media platforms such as Facebook, Platform X, and YouTube being the most popular. Similarly, blogs are also used by many

medical centers and hospitals. Health care organizations have adopted the internal use of social media tools for knowledge sharing, facilitating the efficient flow of work-related information within and between teams (Li, 2016; Yan, 2016). Social media networking tools in healthcare centers enhances new knowledge, increase employee skills, promote a knowledge sharing culture, foster effective communication and increase employee involvement in research activities. Muhammad, Tehreem, Usman and Syed (2019) investigate the benefits of social media to enhance knowledge sharing in the healthcare settings along with identification of challenges and possible solutions in Pakistan. The study elaborated the orientation of doctors about social media applications and in-role and extra-role knowledge sharing in their work settings. Fifteen semi-structured and non-directive interviews with the doctors in healthcare institutions operating in Southern Punjab, Pakistan were carried out under constructionism perspective. The interviews resulted in five major themes. The social media applications were found to advance knowledge sharing by promoting job related information transfer and voluntary sharing of tacit knowledge and experiences among doctors. However, Korda and Bautista (2021) highlighted the major benefits of using social media platforms for knowledge sharing among health professional to include:

- **Disseminating Health Information and Combat Misinformation:-** With the ability to disseminate information quickly and widely, social media can be used by health institutions to post health information and share information with the public. Health institutions can inform the public about common health topics such as healthy living, immunization, and smoking, communicate the risk of disease outbreaks, quickly provide instructions about prevention behaviors to a broad audience during disease outbreaks, share the latest news and inform the public of the government's handling of disease outbreaks.
- **Health Intervention:-** Social media has been widely integrated into health interventions and can perform multiple functions such as offering health resources including delivering health information to audiences, motivating participation in health-related events, and directing campaign audiences and intervention participants to other health resources. Also social media can be used to support interaction with audience including engaging campaign audiences in 2-way communication with the institutions and health professionals and providing platforms for peer support group discussion.

- **Social Mobilization:-** Since social media can reach varied stakeholders and a wide audience in society, nongovernmental health organizations can use social media to mobilize social resources. Studies found that these organizations leveraged social media to advocate for change in public policies related to health issues such as HIV/AIDS and mental health, raise funds for individual medical care and health-related research, and raise awareness and promote actions to address health problems such as medical equipment shortages.
- **Facilitate Health-Related Research:-** Social media can facilitate health-related research through providing additional data to learn about patients' disease experience and recruit research participants. By analyzing patients' conversations on social media, researchers can gauge patients' understanding of the disease and their coping strategies, identify their concerns about the disease, understand their barriers to health behavior change, identify symptoms related to the disease, and assess patients' experience after recovery. Because patient self-reported illness experience is not routinely reported to and recorded by physicians, analyzing patient discussions on social media may enhance health researchers' and professionals' understanding of patient experiences beyond what can be learned from traditional sources of health data.
- **Professional Development:-** Health professionals and researchers may use social media for their own professional development such as learning, collaboration, and career advancement. Social media can be used to collaborate on research projects and practices, access and share trending research findings and medical knowledge, broaden their exposure to funders and publishers, conduct a job search, follow medical conferences remotely, market their team and services, and discuss interesting or difficult cases with colleagues.
- **Facilitate Doctor-Patient Communication and Offline Health Services:-** Health professionals use social media for doctor-patient communication including responding to questions posted by patients, offering online consultation, and proactively providing advice and health information to social media followers. In addition, social media can be used to support offline health services. Health professionals can use social media to inform patients of the results of their examination, encourage compliance with medication, receive feedback from patients about their health services, and collect information from patients after discharge to inform future practices.

- **Seek and Share Health-Related Information:-** Seeking and sharing health related information is the most common use by the public. The public uses social media to follow and share news about trending health issues such as flu and COVID-19, find information on daily health behaviors such as fitness and healthy food choices, search for health advice for their own health concern such as pregnancy-related information, request a crowd diagnosis or second opinion after seeing a health care professional about their illness, access health care law, follow social media accounts of health organizations and professionals, and learn about physicians and hospitals to inform their choices.
- **Exchange Social Support in Online Communities:-** Social support includes informational support, emotional support, esteem support, network support, and tangible support. Except for tangible support, other types of social support were widely found in interactions in the online health community. People with certain health concerns can receive and provide informational support content. They may read the experience of others diagnosed with the same illness, share details of their own medication and diagnosis, share and access medical knowledge such as treatment options and self-care activities, learn about health laws, and solicit recommendations of doctors and hospitals. They may also proactively request health information and advice and validate health information with others.
- **Track and Share Health Statuses or Activities:-** Social media enables users to track and share their health statuses or activities and view those of others in the community. The public can document and share their illness experiences such as a breast cancer journey or experience with chronic disease, achievements in health behavior change, and fitness activities such as cycling and walking. By self-tracking and sharing their physical activities, patients can build networks with other users and discuss their activity performances. Writing about and sharing their illness experiences may help patients cope with illness and achieve health goals.

Challenges Associated With the Utilization of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing among Healthcare Professionals in Healthcare Centers.

Applying social media for knowledge sharing in healthcare centers offers great potential to healthcare workers. However, there are varieties of challenges which hinder the smooth application of social media for knowledge sharing such as: privacy, security, organizational

settings, poor funding, technical knowhow, culture and illiteracy. Hence, barriers for the utilization of social media platforms for knowledge sharing in healthcare centers have been basically categorized into three : environmental factor which include absence of regulatory framework, organizational factor such as scarcity of financial resources, lack of employees' skills and knowledge, lack of a clear strategy, lack of incentives, lack of clarity about the costs and benefits of new innovative technologies, management and leadership engagement, organization culture, poor organization structure and the low readiness for innovation, and technological factor such as security, risk and privacy, lack of skilled staff to use social media platforms for knowledge sharing and lack of technological infrastructure, (Hujran, Al-Debei & Alhawsawi, 2021).

Results and Discussion of Study findings

Benefits of Using Social Media platforms for Knowledge Sharing among Healthcare Professionals in Healthcare Centers

Literature reviewed on the benefits of using social media platforms for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers show that majority of the authors cited that the benefits of using social media platforms for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers are for: disseminating health information and combat misinformation, health intervention, social mobilization, facilitate health-related research, professional development, facilitate doctor-patient communication and offline health services, seek and share health-related information, exchange social support in online communities, track and share health statuses or activities. Hence, this study is in agreement with the study of Ahmed (2018) on the current state of research regarding social media use for knowledge sharing in healthcare centers in Nigeria who found that social media platforms are used for knowledge sharing among health workers to include knowledge seeking, knowledge contributing, social interactivity, professional development and facilitating doctor-patient communication.

Challenges Associated with the Utilization of Social Media platforms for Knowledge Sharing among Healthcare Professionals in Healthcare Centers.

Literature reviewed on the challenges associated with the utilization of social media platforms for knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in healthcare centers indicates that majority of the authors cited that: individual, organizational and technological factors such as: privacy, security, organizational settings, poor funding, technical knowhow, culture and

illiteracy, poor communication skills, lack of skilled staff to use social media platforms for knowledge sharing, lack of technological infrastructure and poor organization structure were the major inhibitors. Hence, this study is in agreement with the findings of Jain (2020) in public healthcare centers in Taiwan who ascertained that constant budget decline impacted on everything including an absence of reward system and lack of incentives were found to be the critical issues and challenges among healthcare professional that were investigated.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the systematic literature review methodology. It is a type of review that uses repeatable methods which has been used in scholarly papers or a section of a scholarly work such as books or articles to find, select, and synthesize all available evidences to clearly answer a formulated research question and explicitly state the methods used to arrive at the answer (Turney, 2023).

Conclusion

The use of social media platforms has become nearly ubiquitous. Social media applications are widely available, free or of low cost, and not limited by geographic or temporal boundaries. The inclusion of social media platform as a tool for knowledge sharing in healthcare centers in Nigeria presents a significant opportunity to transform the sector by improving communication, collaboration, and continuous learning among healthcare professionals. Hence, as social media platforms continue to evolve, it enhances professional development and ultimately contributing to better patient care outcomes. It has the potential to transform how knowledge is shared in Nigerian healthcare centers. It can help doctors, nurses, and health workers connect, learn from each other, and stay updated on medical information. As such, When used wisely and prudently, social media can serve as an effective tool for managing and disseminating health-related knowledge, ultimately improving service delivery and patient care in Nigerian healthcare settings.

Recommendations

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

1. The study recommends that there should be standard wireless network and a well-equipped ICT unit within healthcare centers with qualified staff to orient healthcare personnel on the importance and benefit of exploring social media for knowledge sharing.

2. The study recommends that healthcare centers should be sending health workers to trainings, workshops, seminars and conferences on social media related topics as this would positively reshape their mindset and slice away so many challenges.

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