



The Impact of Social Media on Public Health Awareness and Education

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ABSTRACT

Objective; This study is about the phenomenon of using social media as a means of disseminating health information. Social media has great potential in increasing public health awareness and education, but also faces challenges such as the spread of hoaxes and the low digital literacy of the community. **Method;** This study used qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the potential, challenges, and strategies for optimising social media in the context of health education. The aim of the study was to identify opportunities and barriers and formulate efforts that can be made to maximise the benefits of social media as a health education tool. **Result;** showed that social media can be an effective and inclusive tool in delivering health information if managed with the right strategies. Key challenges such as the spread of inaccurate information, inequality of access, and the need to improve digital literacy can be addressed through cross-sector collaboration, development of evidence-based content, and strengthening regulations. Thus, social media has the potential to have a significant positive impact on public health awareness and education. **Conclusion;** Thus, social media has the potential to have a significant positive impact on public health awareness and education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an important part of people's lives in the rapidly evolving digital era. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok are not only used to interact and entertain, but also to widely disseminate information. Social media influences public health awareness and education.

Social media allows for quick and easy dissemination of health information to a wide range of people, from teenagers to adults [1]. Health messages can be effectively delivered through infographics, videos and online campaigns that have interactive features and engaging visuals. Social media also allows organisations, communities and health workers to share knowledge, answer questions and support healthy behaviours [2].

Social media have benefits, but also problems; for example, they can spread hoaxes or incorrect health information, which can mislead the public. Therefore, it is important to understand how social media impacts public health awareness and education and how to make the most of it.

An important part of creating a healthy community is public health awareness and education. Health awareness involves people understanding the importance of staying healthy, recognising signs of illness, and taking preventative measures [3]. On the other hand, health education aims to provide people with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their own health. However, issues such as limited access, cost and time constraints make it difficult for people to get health information quickly and easily.

Some of these problems can be solved with social media. Social media provides a great opportunity to increase public health awareness because it has features that allow information to spread within seconds. With health content packaged in the form of interactive live broadcasts, videos, articles and infographics, complex information can be conveyed in an engaging and easy-to-understand way [4]. Social media also allows individuals, communities and health professionals to share experiences and knowledge, fostering trust and closeness with audiences.

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This research examines the influence of social media on public health awareness and education, both from the positive and negative sides, to support efforts to improve people's quality of life by providing accurate information.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the influence of social media on public health awareness and education using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research methods used included in-depth interviews and surveys. The survey was conducted to collect quantitative data on social media usage, the type of health information accessed and how this affects people's behaviour. Age, education level, and frequency of social media use were the criteria used to randomly select respondents. Questionnaires are survey instruments intended to measure awareness, understanding and changes in people's health behaviour.

Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain a better understanding of people's experiences with accessing health information through social media. The interviewees consisted of health workers, health content creators, and active social media users. The data obtained from these interviews was analysed to understand people's challenges, benefits and perspectives on accessing health information through social media. This research will then be used to make suggestions on how governments, health organisations and social media platforms can use social media to increase public health awareness and education.

3. RESULT & DISCUSSION

3.1. Social Media as a Health Tool

Social media can be a great tool for teaching health. Health professionals, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations can deliver evidence-based information through these platforms. To illustrate, social media was widely used to disseminate information on health protocols, vaccinations, and other preventive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media allows information to reach communities that were previously difficult to access through conventional media such as television or newspapers[5].

Social media also has the ability to build two-way interaction. Users can share their experiences directly, ask questions, or give responses. This creates a constructive dialogue between the information giver and the information receiver, which in turn increases public understanding and

awareness of health issues[6]. For example, discussions about the importance of healthy eating or exercise can be triggered through online comments or forums, which then provide impetus for positive behaviour change.

Health campaigns are also more creative and engaging thanks to social media[7]. Campaigns on Instagram, such as sports challenges on TikTok, or fundraisers to help patients suffering from certain diseases, can reach a larger audience, especially the younger generation who use social media more often as a primary source of information. Health messages can be delivered in a creative and engaging way without appearing boring or patronising.

Overall, social media has the potential to be an effective and inclusive health education tool. With their various features, they can be used to reach more people, deliver relevant messages and encourage positive behaviours in the community. However, to utilise social media for health education successfully, various parties, including the government, must work together.

3.1. Challenges in Using Social Media for Health Education

Using social media for health education has a lot of potential, but it also has many problems. One of the biggest problems is the spread of invalid information or hoaxes. Inaccurate information about health can mislead people and potentially harm their health[8]. For example, rumours about the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine circulating widely on social media have caused some groups of people to become sceptical and refuse to be vaccinated.

In addition, social media algorithms usually prioritise sensational or controversial content to attract users. This may result in less attention being paid to evidence-based health information compared to information that is interesting but inaccurate. As a result, people are more likely to be exposed to unnecessary or even harmful information.

Reliance on public figures or influencers as deliverers of health information is an additional challenge. Influencers do not all have sufficient experience or knowledge in health, even though they have a wide audience. Influencers may deliver biased or even false content, especially if driven by business objectives. Therefore, it is important for influencers involved in health education campaigns to liaise with health professionals and understand the information being delivered.

The use of social media for health education also faces privacy and data security concerns as people who share their personal information or

health history are at risk of privacy breaches. In addition, data collected by social media platforms may be used by companies for purposes that do not comply with the law[9].

As a result, there needs to be an ongoing plan to ensure that health information continues to be communicated in a consistent and relevant manner. Social media can be optimally utilised to increase public health awareness and education by identifying and addressing these issues[10]. Governments, health institutions, social media platforms, and the public must work together to create a safe, reliable, and inclusive information ecosystem.

3.3. Efforts to Overcome the Challenges of Social Media Use

Strategic efforts are needed to overcome the obstacles to using social media as a health education tool. Firstly, governments and health organisations should work together on social media to prevent the spread of misinformation. This can be achieved through content verification, restrictions on algorithms that promote hoaxes, and removal of misleading content[11]. For example, websites such as Facebook and YouTube have started to provide warnings or links to trusted sources for content containing information that is harmful to health.

Second, the public must be more technologically literate. Digital literacy education programmes should be created in a way that helps people know what is right and what is wrong. These digital literacy campaigns can reach various groups of people by involving schools, local communities and non-governmental organisations. With increased digital literacy, people can become more critical in filtering the information they encounter on social media[12].

Thirdly, to increase the relevance and appeal of information on social media, it is crucial to create engaging and evidence-based health content[13]. Health professionals can work with influencers or content creators to deliver health messages in innovative ways, such as short stories, animated videos or infographics. Therefore, health information is not only interesting to learn but also fun to access.

Fourth, strict policies should be implemented to protect the privacy and security of user data on social media. This will prevent data misuse and ensure that data shared by users is not used for harmful purposes. In addition, it is important to promote digital privacy.

Continuous health education programmes on social media should be a top priority. A long-term strategy for health campaigns should be created, which involves regular monitoring and

evaluation[14]. Reports on campaign results can be used to improve efficiency and develop methods that better suit the needs of the community. Social media can be a better and safer tool to raise awareness and educate people about public health in these ways. To achieve the full potential of social media in supporting public health, it is crucial to work together with various parties, including governments, health professionals, content creators, and the general public.

4. CONCLUSION

Social media can be an effective tool to increase public health awareness and education. Social media can help people become more health-conscious as it can reach a wide audience, provide interactive content and facilitate interaction between users. However, to harness this potential, issues such as hoaxes, low digital literacy and inequality of access must be addressed through collaboration between various organisations, including governments, health institutions and communities. Social media can be an effective tool to encourage positive behaviour and a source of health information if used correctly. It is the responsibility of all parties to continue to innovate, maintain the credibility of information, and strengthen regulations that support social media as a health education tool.

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