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Social Media-Based Awareness Campaigns on Lung Cancer among Young Cigarette Smokers in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Social media-based awareness campaigns have become a universal means of health literacy among young people. Cigarette smoking is estimated to kill 5 million people each year worldwide, and this figure is projected to rise to 8 million globally from the year 2030 if swift actions are not taken. This study was designed to explore social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young cigarette smokers in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative research method, specifically a survey, to examine the opinions, thoughts, and knowledge of young cigarette smokers in Oyo State regarding social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer. Quantitative research involves the analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer relevant research questions. Findings revealed that carcinogenic mortality is a significant health effect of cigarette smoking among young smokers in Oyo State. Findings also showed that social media's effectiveness is reflected in its universal reach for lung-related awareness campaigns and that lung-related videos are the primary techniques employed for social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State. Therefore, it is recommended that social media-based awareness campaigns should be specifically designed to target current cigarette smokers for cessation and to deter prospective cigarette users from uptake. Advocates of anti-tobacco strategies should leverage the universality and widespread use of social media to globalise and localise the harmful effects of tobacco consumption among young people, given that cigarette smoking quitters are often replaced by new, young recruits.

Keywords: Social Media, Awareness Campaigns, Lung Cancer, Youths, Cigarette Smokers



Introduction

Social media has become a major source of trending news concerning health literacy, social events, and political matters. Social media records 1.06 billion active users monthly globally (Hesdorffer, 2013). The use of social media for the dissemination of healthcare information has been widely acknowledged. Social media has become one of the major sources of healthcare information among young people, with unprecedented potential to influence youths' perspectives with regard to behavioural modifications (Martini, *et al.*, 2016). Healthcare providers can use social media to easily reach and make available health-related information and create awareness about the importance of lung cancer screening and behavioural modifications (Stiles & Mynard, 2021). Cigarette smoking is estimated to kill 5 million people each year worldwide, and it is projected to kill 8 million people globally by the year 2030 if swift actions are not taken (Guo, *et al.*, 2021). Cigarette smoking poses a public health threat to smokers and non-smokers in enclosed places such as rooms, halls, and stores, where there is an absence of cross-ventilation. Both smokers and non-smokers are affected by lung cancer and other carcinogenic diseases arising from cigarette smoking. Cigarette smoking is currently one of the most serious public health problems globally, and it is one of the most preventable causes of death among young people (Al-Mousawi, *et al.*, 2020). Cigarette smoking is most pervasive in African societies and is injurious to human health (Munir, *et al.*, 2015). Cigarette smokers are prone to an increased risk of dying from lung cancer (Rogot & Murray, 2019). Cigarette smoking is a growing health concern among young adults in Nigeria (Lungova, *et al.*, 2019). When young adults take up cigarette smoking, they do not experience the high mortality rate associated with the behaviour until they reach middle age (Alwan, 2007). Men have higher rates of lung cancer incidence than women because of cigarette smoking habits among young men (Waldron & Johnson, 2006). Cigarette smoking is not only associated with lung cancer but also with smokers' general quality of life. Lung cancer is attributable to cigarette smoking among young adults. Cancer-induced death continues to rise among young adults as a result of addicted cigarette smoking.

Social media has been recognised as a patient-physician interface and platform (Stiles & Mynard, 2021). Social media has empowered patients to share experiences and useful health information irrespective of their geographical locations. The rapid growth of online health information about lung cancer has made health information about the disease generally more flexible and accessible to health information consumers (Zhao, *et al.*, 2019). The lung is the main tissue site for smoking and radiation-related cancer (Cucinotta, *et al.*, 2012). Recent data have shown that the incidence of tobacco use is higher among young people. Addiction to cigarette smoking is a serious health problem among young smokers in predominantly illiterate societies (Wozniak, *et al.*, 2012). Cigarette smoking is carcinogenic and causes all forms of cancer, including lung and heart-vascular cancer (Wozniak, *et al.*, 2012). There is a dearth of information about the smoking habits of youth and the number affected by the early uptake of cigarette smoking in Nigeria. Heavy smokers of cigarettes keep increasing in developing nations due to many socio-economic issues. Cigarette smoking is a common habit for those with chronic diseases. Cigarette smoking has been identified as the major cause of liver cancer and other cardiovascular diseases in developing nations (Raza, *et al.*, 2013). Habitual cigarette smokers expressed a greater risk of liver cirrhosis (T.-J., *et al.*, 2007). Cigarette smoking has been associated with a higher incidence of liver diseases and psychiatric illnesses (Dora & Bettina, 2006).



The majority of social media users are young people aged between 18 and 40 years, predominantly male. Social media creates a platform for patients, loved ones, and healthcare professionals to discuss issues of common health interest (Shakespeare, *et al.*, 2021). Cigarette smoking is cancer-causing and kills six million annually worldwide (Al-Mousawi, 2020). The risk of death among smokers is estimated by the number of cigarettes smoked daily, the degree of inhalation, and the age of cigarette smoking uptake (Al-Mousawi). The major cause of lung cancer is cigarette smoking, and people who have never smoked but have been exposed to nicotine can equally suffer from lung cancer (Nalewaj, *et al.*, 2018). The high incidence of lung cancer is associated with cigarette smoke inhaled during smoking. Cigarette smoking contributes to a high rate of cancer and mortality among young people. Pingping, *et al.*, (2016) conducted a study on malignant tumour mortality attributable to smoke exposure in residents aged 35 years and above and found that lung cancer had the highest population-attributable risk percentage associated with cigarette smoking.

The use of social media crosses socio-economic and political spectrums for health-related information systems and has been widely acknowledged. Social media is now used by the health industry, government agencies, and other health stakeholders (Modave, *et al.*, 2019). Social media has connected healthcare professionals, caregivers, patients, and other users of social media in a seamless communication system (Lu, *et al.*, 2017). Cigarette smoking is common in most developing societies, and it has been identified as very harmful to human health (Husain, *et al.*, 2001). The association between cigarette smoking and cancer-related deaths has been identified by several scholars (Wang, *et al.*, 2004). The proportion of cancer-induced deaths caused by cigarette smoking varies according to anti-tobacco policies enacted by governments of developing nations. While some developing nations have increased the tax regime against tobacco companies manufacturing cigarettes in their countries, other countries have failed to tighten the noose around the neck of the cigarette manufacturing companies operating in those countries. Taxation is one of the major means to dissuade recruits of cigarette use and encourage quitting among addicted cigarette smokers. Forty per cent (40%) of cancer deaths among men are caused by cigarette smoking (Lortet-Tieulent, *et al.*, 2016).

While healthcare consumers' use of social media for the exchange of health information has been widely acknowledged, health professionals' use of social media to interact with patients has been poor (Reid, *et al.*, 2015). Awareness campaigns for health-related information have often been poor on social media, with radio, television, and newspapers more commonly adopted for lung cancer campaigns in most developing African societies (McNamara, 2017). Social media has changed health-related information-sharing methods and is impacted by the lung cancer community in Nigeria (Sit, *et al.*, 2019). Cigarette smoking is attributed to cardiovascular and respiratory problems that result in most deaths among young people. Cigarette smokers are socially excluded from attending certain places and social gatherings where cigarette smoking is not allowed. As Tsopelas, *et al.*, (2008) aver, cigarette smoking puts a heavy economic burden on smokers because they are unable to meet other social and economic responsibilities in their immediate and extended environments. Cigarette smokers' children's education, family feeding, and other family responsibilities suffer as a result of addiction to cigarette smoking. Primary and secondary cigarette smoking contributes to the prevalence of diabetes among young people in Nigeria (Nathan & Friedman, 2019). Most youths prefer sourcing health-related information on



social media because it is flexible to access information there compared to other mass media. Smartphones remain the most convenient gateway to the world of health information and other forms of information among young people. Villard, *et al.*, (1998) maintain that cigarette smoking is a global health problem and the greatest risk factor for lung cancer among young cigarette smokers. Most young cigarette smokers are unaware of the long-term and short-term health effects of cigarette smoking. Consequently, this study is designed to explore social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young cigarette smokers in Oyo State. Thus, the objectives of the study are: to understand whether young cigarette smokers are aware of various health effects of cigarette smoking; to ascertain the effectiveness of social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young cigarette smokers in Oyo State; and to determine the techniques of social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State.

The study is hinged on the knowledge gap theory. Knowledge-gap theory provides information about the unequal distribution of health knowledge among young cigarette smokers in Oyo State. As Aina (2003) posits, information is knowledge and has diverse effects on decisions regarding people's health. Mass media are incapable of informing all interests, classes, and segments of society. The major reasons for the mass media's ineffectiveness in informing society are the level of education and the economic status of its people (Ozgen, *et al.*, 2023). Cigarette smokers are young people in the lower rung of society, and thus, differences exist in the acquisition of and exposure to health information between those in the lower and higher strata of society. People of higher economic status enjoy smooth and unhindered access to and exposure to information about health and healthy living, prompting them to make the best decisions concerning their health. Knowledge-gap theory assumes that inequalities exist in information acquisition and exposure between the privileged and ordinary members of society (Aina, 2003). People of higher socio-economic status are faster to acquire and are more exposed to health information than those at the grassroots. The knowledge gap between the two classes continues to expand rather than shrink as a result of factors, chief among which are literacy level, access to communication media, social relationships, educational level, and level of income, among others (Zeng, 2011).

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a quantitative research method. A survey method was adopted to examine the opinions, thoughts, and knowledge of social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young cigarette smokers in Oyo State. Quantitative research involves the analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer relevant research questions (Apuke, 2017). It explains the methods of describing an issue or phenomenon through gathering and analysing data in numerical form (Apuke, 2017). Oyo State has three Senatorial Districts: Oyo North, Oyo South, and Oyo Central Senatorial Districts. Consequently, a multi-stage sampling method was used to select samples from each of the clusters in Oyo State. A multi-stage sampling technique is used in survey research because a sampling frame of elements may be unavailable due to cost implications, especially when data collection involves face-to-face interviews (Chen, *et al.*, 2022).

Purposive sampling was adopted to select one local government area from each of the three Senatorial Districts. In purposive sampling, members of the population are selected based on the



researcher's knowledge, expertise, and experience. Purposive sampling is a form of sampling whose features or characteristics are defined or explained for a purpose that is relevant to the study under investigation (Andrade, 2021). Furthermore, the three senatorial districts were further subdivided into local government areas. Thus, local government areas with an urban makeup were selected for this study. Adopting simple random sampling, the researcher further selected wards and areas in the chosen local government areas presumed to have a predominance of motor parks, hotels, nightclubs, and beer parlours, where a large number of young people gather to smoke cigarettes and drink. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants due to certain desired characteristics or qualities such participants possess. Wards and areas that have a predominance of hotels, motor parks, nightclubs, and beer parlours were selected to ensure that respondents were not oblivious to social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among cigarette smokers in Oyo State. A simple random sample is a subset of the population in which each member of the subset has an equal chance of being selected. A simple random sample is very effective when the population of research interest is similar, homogeneous, and uniformly selected (Noor, *et al.*, 2022). Wards and areas that were sampled included Ojoo in Akinyele Local Government, Taaki in Ogbomosho South Local Government Area, and Sango in Saki West Local Government Area. The convenience sampling method was later adopted to select the participants or respondents for the study. In convenience sampling, as Leiner (2016) maintains, elements of the population are already accessible or available to the researchers. Access to all participants in each of the selected wards and areas was impossible, and as a result, respondents were chosen based on their availability, accessibility, and awareness of social media-based campaigns on lung cancer among young people in Nigeria in the areas and wards selected for the study. Four hundred (400) respondents were selected in the chosen wards and areas of the selected local government areas, depending on the population of the area. In Akinyele Local Government Area, 150 respondents were selected to fill out the questionnaire; in Ogbomosho South Local Government Area, 150 respondents were selected to fill out the questionnaire; while in Saki West Local Government Area, 100 respondents were selected to participate in the study. However, 391 copies of the questionnaire were returned and found useful. A questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. Data gathered were analysed using frequency and percentage.

Results

Table 1: The various health effects of cigarette smoking among young cigarette smokers

Results

Table 1: The various health effects of cigarette smoking among young cigarette smokers

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Burdens on Health Care System	89	23%
Psychiatric Illnesses	13	3%
Poor quality of life	32	8%
Carcinogenic Mortality	249	64%
Poor Mental Health	8	2%
Total	391	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024



Table 1 indicates that 89 respondents, representing 23%, identified a burden on the healthcare system as a health effect of cigarette smoking among young smokers in Oyo State. Thirteen respondents, representing 3%, affirmed that psychiatric illness is a health effect of cigarette smoking among young smokers in Oyo State. Thirty-two respondents, representing 8%, averred that poor quality of life is a health effect of cigarette smoking among young people in Oyo State. The majority, 249 respondents, representing 64%, maintained that carcinogenic mortality is a health effect of cigarette smoking among young smokers in Oyo State, while 8 respondents, representing 2%, posited that poor mental health is an effect of cigarette smoking among young people in Oyo State.

Table 2: Effectiveness of social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young cigarette smokers in Oyo State

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Universal Reach for Lung-Related Awareness Campaigns	198	51%
Enhanced Young People's Engagement	14	3%
It is Cost-Effective for Lung-Related Awareness Campaigns	27	7%
Its interactive nature of Lung-related Awareness Campaigns	135	35%
Targeted Lung-Related Awareness Campaigns	17	4%
Total	391	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that 198 respondents, representing 51%, averred that social media's effectiveness is reflected in its universal reach for lung-related awareness campaigns. Fourteen respondents, representing 3%, posited that social media's effectiveness is reflected in enhanced engagement among young people. Twenty-seven respondents, representing 7%, maintained that social media's effectiveness is reflected in its cost-effective nature for lung-related awareness campaigns. One hundred and thirty-five respondents, representing 35%, averred that social media's effectiveness is reflected in the interactive nature of lung-related awareness campaigns, while 17 respondents, representing 4%, stated that social media's effectiveness is reflected in its targeted lung-related awareness campaigns.

Table 3: Techniques of social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media Influencers	34	9%
Lung-Related Videos	175	45%
Lung-Related Blogging	32	8%
Lung-Related Sponsorships	8	2%
Lung-Related Podcasting	142	36%
Total	391	100

Source: Filed Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that 34 respondents, representing 9%, maintained that social media influencers are a technique employed for social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State. One hundred and seventy-five respondents, representing 45%, said that



lung-related videos are the techniques employed for social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State. Thirty-two respondents, representing 8%, averred that lung-related blogging is a technique employed for social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State. Eight respondents, representing 2%, affirmed that lung-related sponsorship is a technique employed for social media-based awareness campaigns among young smokers in Oyo State, while 142 respondents, representing 36%, posited that lung-related podcasting is a technique employed for social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State.

Discussions

Carcinogenic mortality is a significant health effect of cigarette smoking among young smokers in Oyo State. Supporting these findings, Brapatre, *et al.*, (2024) averred that cigarette smoking kills more than three million people globally each year and is the major cause of various cancers, including lung cancer.

Social media's effectiveness is reflected in its universal reach for lung-related awareness campaigns. Corroborating these findings, Leyfman, *et al.*, (2023) maintained that social media has enabled global access to medical education and helped combat healthcare inequalities.

Lung-related videos are the primary techniques employed for social media-based awareness campaigns on lung cancer among young smokers in Oyo State. Supporting these findings, Vandormael, *et al.*, (2020) averred that social media videos are a rapid means of communicating information about any issues, such as health, politics, and social matters, to global audiences. Additionally, Yueqin and Teo (2023) stated that social media videos are the most popular medium for health awareness campaigns worldwide.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media-based awareness campaigns against cigarette smoking are an important tool to curtail the rising cases of cigarette smoking among young smokers in Oyo State. Therefore, no effort should be spared to address the growing issue of death-causing lung cancer among young cigarette smokers. Social media-based awareness campaigns should be specifically designed to encourage current cigarette smokers to quit and to deter prospective users from taking up cigarette smoking. Although many countries have banned overt advertisements of cigarette and tobacco products, many tobacco companies still engage in tobacco advertisements through corporate social responsibility activities. When classrooms are donated to communities, roads are tarred, boreholes are dug, or public toilets are constructed, the name of the tobacco manufacturing companies gets mentioned, which serves as a reminder advertisement to either quitters or recruits and current smokers. Heavy taxation on cigarette products and the refusal of corporate social responsibility activities from tobacco companies are part of the measures to deter young people from starting cigarette smoking.

Advocates of anti-tobacco strategies should leverage the universality and widespread use of social media to globalise and localise the harmful effects of tobacco consumption among young people, especially since cigarette smoking quitters are often replaced by new, young recruits. Preventive strategies are the most effective means to deal with issues of cigarette smoking among young adults.



Healthy lung-related videos should be included in health literacy awareness campaigns about the harmful health effects of cigarette smoking. Targeted lung literacy videos are more effective and achieve health literacy communication objectives than the arbitrary dissemination of health literacy videos about cigarette smoking. Thus, lung literacy videos about cigarette smoking should be specifically targeted at motor parks, clubs, beer parlours, and hotels in Oyo State. Funding anti-tobacco programmes, implementing various anti-tobacco strategies, and strengthening anti-tobacco control policies at the grassroots level will encourage smoking cessation, discourage initiation, and effect a reduction in the rising cases of lung cancer associated with cigarette smoking.



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