

Social media and health information: The effectiveness of the “ask the paediatricians” Facebook group for childcare

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Abstract

This study assessed social media use for childcare information among members of the “Ask the Pediatricians” Facebook group. This study was anchored on Uses and Gratification and Media Dependency theories. Four objectives were explicitly raised for the study, they are: to find out the nature of childcare information questions raised on the ‘Ask the Pediatricians Facebook group; to assess the level of pediatricians’ responsiveness to information requests of members of the ‘ask the Pediatricians Facebook group; to assess the accuracy of responses given by the pediatricians on childcare questions raised by parents on the group; to find out the challenges associated with the use of the group for childcare consultations. A survey research method was employed for the study. Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire in Google form were sent to respondents online, and only 385 responded. Data were analyzed using a simple frequency table. Findings from the study revealed that members of the “Ask the Pediatricians” group on Facebook usually asked questions related to the health conditions of their children, and such questions, as revealed by the study, range from infant health, food introduction, teething, breastfeeding to child growth and development. The Pediatricians in the group responded to these questions well within the space of 10 to 20 minutes, and parents considered the doctors’ responses to be very accurate. Challenges associated with using the group for childcare consultations were also identified as a lack of social media confidentiality and a lack of internet and constant electricity. Therefore, health professionals and organizations should use social media groups to influence parents positively.

Keywords: Social media, health information, Facebook, childcare, Ask the Pediatricians.

Introduction

Nearly two-thirds of Nigerian adults use social media as a highly prevalent form of communication (Perrin, 2015). Duggan, Lenhart, Lampe, and Ellison (2015) noted that parents use social media at even higher rates than the general population to seek advice, share experiences, and receive social support on parenting-related issues. For mothers whose new role may limit free time, social media can be an essential and accessible means of communication and social support. In a study of Facebook use during the transition to new motherhood, most women logged into Facebook daily, and many women reported increasing their Facebook use after having a baby (Bartholomew, Schoppe-Sullivan, Glassman, Kamp Dush & Sullivan, 2012). In addition to using social media to connect with their existing networks, mothers of infants join social media groups on a variety of parenting topics, including breastfeeding (Asiodu, Waters, Dailey, Lee & Lyndon, 2015), prematurity (Thoren, Metze, Bühler & Garten, 2013) and new motherhood (Holtz, Smock & Reyes-Gastelum, 2015).

The growing use of smartphones has narrowed the “digital divide” of Internet access based on socioeconomic status (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). New mothers frequently use Internet sources, including social media sites (i.e., Facebook), to find health and parenting information during the newborn period. In addition, social media may be a beneficial source of information for mothers as they have more unmet health information needs in the newborn period (Sword & Watt, 2005).

Increasing evidence is emerging for the effectiveness of Internet-based interventions for improving outcomes in a range of areas, including mood disturbance (Mackinnon, Griffiths & Christensen, 2008), anxiety (Reger & Gahm, 2009), comorbid depression and chronic illness (Charova, Dorstyn, Tully & Mittag, 2015), posttraumatic stress disorder (Bolton & Dorstyn, 2015), eating disorders (Schlegl, Burger, Schmidt, Herbst & Voderholzer, 2015), and for child behavior problems and parenting (Nieuwboer, Fokink & Hermans, 2013).

However, comparatively less research has been conducted on using social media as a mechanism of social support in a parenting context and the extent to which it could be used to access potentially sizeable social support networks. Social media is used frequently by most people in childbearing age, with 75% of people aged 18–29 and 66% of people aged 30–39 using it daily or more frequently (Sensis, 2016). Given its high levels of use, social media has the potential to provide easy-to-access support for parents. Any

website that allows social interaction is considered a social media site (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Although social media typically involves some social interaction, the level of this interaction can vary from site to site, within a site, and even among users on the same site. For example, on Facebook, parents can post their concerns and receive likes or comments on their page. However, they can also join topic-specific parenting groups where a range of topics can be discussed simultaneously and where friendships can develop.

Finally, parents can “lurk,” that is, follow multiple pages and gather information or reassurance from reading posts but not post anything or interact with others. Additionally, many different sites include both interactive and non-interactive pages. For example, formal parenting websites such as the Raising Children Network (www.raisingchildren.net), sponsored by the Australian government, often include text and video-based information and interactive forums where parents can discuss topics of interest with other readers. The “mommy blog” is also increasing in popularity. Parents can use blog posts to share their own experiences or give advice. Readers of blog posts can respond interactively to posts by leaving comments or interacting with other parents in the comments section or by endorsing posts with “plus ones” or “likes” to indicate agreement or approval with particular posts. Parents’ interactions with these sites may vary, depending on their personality factors, current needs, or desired level of anonymity. Moreover, parents may feel supported simply by reading the experiences of others, even if they do not post or interact.

Therefore, there are potential variations in interactivity levels across individuals and different social media sites. In this paper, the term ‘social media’ is used to indicate any online platform where interactivity is possible. There is increasing evidence of the effectiveness of online parenting interventions within the parenting domain. Research shows that, online programs are efficacious for parents of infants (Feil, Baggett, Davis, Sheeber, Landry, Carta & Buzhardt, 2008), parents of children with behavior problems (e.g., Enebrink, Hogstrom, Forster & Ghaderi, 2012; Sanders, Baker & Turner, 2012), and for parents of children with traumatic brain injury (Wade, Carey & Wolfe, 2006) or other health conditions (Ingersoll, Wainer, Berger, Pickard & Bonter, 2016). Additionally, online parenting interventions are efficacious with parents who suffer from mental health issues such as bipolar disorder (e.g., Jones, Wainwright, Jovanoska, Vincent, Diggie, Calam & Lobban, 2015). Consumer-focused research also indicates that parents endorse

Internet-based parenting interventions as a preferred method of receiving parenting support (Metzler, Sanders, Rusby & Crowley, 2012; Sanders, Markie-Dadds & Turner, 2011).

Although online parenting programs are effective, they typically do not involve a social component to provide social support, which may enhance intervention outcomes. In one pivotal study, Love, Sanders, Turner, Maurange, Knott, Prinz, and Ainsworth (2016) found that providing parents with a purpose-built social network to facilitate communication resulted in high utilization levels and positive intervention effects for parents who completed the program. The social network allowed participants to communicate and allowed parents to earn badges to recognize their achievements (e.g., completing an intervention module). The advantage of such technological platforms designed explicitly around an existing intervention is that they can be targeted to the needs of a specific population to increase support and engagement.

However, they are also costly and only sometimes feasible. Additionally, some families may still benefit from online social support, even if a formal intervention is not required. Jang and Dworkin (2014) surveyed 665 parents who use social media at least weekly. They found that social network activities contributed to bonding social capital (i.e., relationships with friends and family that strengthen an individual's coping resources), suggesting parents may use social media sites to feel connected.

With the exceptions of those listed, surprisingly few studies have specifically investigated parents' use of social media for parenting-related support. The numerous protective functions social support can provide to parents are well-known (Zwaanswijk, Verhaak, Bensing, van der Ende & Verhulst, 2003), and teaching parents to access social support is a recognized coping strategy in many parenting interventions (e.g., Sanders, Markie-Dadds, & Turner 1999; Haslam, Sanders & Sofronoff, 2013). Research indicates that parents are more likely to seek support from other parents than from their spouses or family members because other parents who have experienced (or are experiencing) similar situations as themselves are seen as being able to provide more congruent support to their needs (Gundersen, 2011; Kingsnorth, Gall, Beayni & Rigby 2011). New mothers, for example, may perceive the traditional sources of support, such as informational support from their spouses, as invalid as their spouses are also new parents and have no experience raising a child (Haslam, Pakenham & Smith, 2006). Compared to traditional forms of support such as family and friends, social media is well placed to

provide parents with informational and emotional support from perceived experts (i.e., other parents) in a time-efficient manner.

Parenting needs also change over time, concomitant with children's maturation. The online parenting community can serve as an ongoing source of support relevant to parents' needs at different developmental stages (Rothbaum, Martland & Janssen, 2008; Young, Davis, Schoen & Parker, 1998). For example, a father struggling to get his daughter to sleep in her bed could access social media for practical advice. If strategies obtained from online support are proven effective, he may be more likely to turn to online sources of information for additional challenges, such as the transition to school. Social media also has the potential to provide ongoing emotional support that helps validate parents' sense of insecurity and guilt (Lee & Sullivan-Bolyai, 2011). For example, working mothers who feel guilty may benefit from knowing that other parents experience similar feelings (Haslam et al., 2006). Parents may also gain emotional support and validation of their use of positive parenting strategies from praise and encouragement from other parents online.

This reinforcement may enhance parents' efficacy and encourage them to follow through even when implementing strategies is difficult. Such support and knowledge could be acquired online via social media. Research indicates that normalizing challenging parenting experiences is reassuring for parents of children with behavior problems (Lewis, Petch, Wilson, Fox & Craig, 2015). Social media increases the immediacy with which parents can receive reassurance, and the amount of validation they obtain from social media may be highly reinforcing. Given the potential benefits of social media as a support mechanism, more research is needed to examine how parents use it for parenting support and the extent to which it is perceived as effective. Little research has empirically examined how or why parents use social media for parenting support.

The role of existing support structures, or traditional forms of social support, is also essential. Parents with low levels of real-life support may be more likely to turn to online sources to meet their support needs. Parents with low support might be more motivated to seek social support online via non-traditional methods like social media (Cummings, Sproull & Kiesler, 2002; Turner, Grube & Meyers, 2001).

Research has found that when support received from traditional face-to-face sources is viewed as incongruent, parents are more likely to seek help in online

communities to meet their support needs (Finn & Kerman, 2005; O'Connor & Madge, 2004). This suggests that parents can augment traditional sources of support with online support if needed. With a large circle of parents available online at any given time, parents may find it easier to seek advice from others online who have successfully navigated similar parenting challenges, and those parents may be in a better position to provide congruent support. For example, Baum (2004) investigated the effectiveness of an Internet support group among parents of children with special health care needs. The study found that parents sought their traditional support group first, followed by support given by others online when real-life support was insufficient. However, little research has examined whether parents of typically developing children engage with online sources similarly.

Finally, parents with low parental efficacy or parents of children with behavior difficulties may be more likely to access online support. Some researchers have found that parents with high parental self-efficacy are more likely to seek help from their traditional social network to manage their child's maladjustment compared with those with low efficacy (Ortega, 2002; Suzuki, Holloway, Mindnich & Yamamoto, 2009). It may be that parents who have low parental self-efficacy feel uncomfortable seeking support for fear that they may be ostracized or stigmatized by their face-to-face support networks. If this is the case, the opportunity to be anonymous may motivate them to access social media for parenting support online.

This study examines the content of health and infant care information shared in a social media parenting group, 'Ask the Paediatricians Facebook Group.' After the birth of a baby, mothers often face new pressures as they adapt to their role and acquire new skills. Social media groups offer a unique window into the lives of mothers. They observe how pediatricians' guidelines may or may not be discussed or practiced in the community. These observations may help pediatricians offer mothers more practical and actionable guidance and support during this transition phase. 'Ask the Paediatricians' is a Facebook discussion platform where health professionals provide accessible health education and answers to various health questions posed by parents as regards childcare information. The group is expected to have offered important health guidelines to parents who demanded it. Whether these guidelines are comprehensive and accurate enough to meet the information needs of parents is still subject to investigation. Based on this background, this study aims to evaluate the content and quality of parenting and health

information shared on social media parenting groups, specifically 'Ask the paediatricians'. The research focuses on the nature, accuracy, level of responsiveness, and effectiveness of pediatric health information requested from the group. By determining the nature of childcare information, assessing the level of pediatricians' responsiveness to information requests, assessing the accuracy of responses given by pediatricians on childcare questions raised by parents, and identifying challenges associated with using the group for childcare consultations. To best assess these problems, the study poses the following questions:

1. What is the nature of childcare information questions raised on the "Ask the Paediatricians" Facebook group'?
2. What are the levels of Paediatricians' responsiveness to information requests of members of the "Ask the Pediatricians" Facebook group'?
3. How accurately do the Paediatricians give the responses to childcare questions raised by parents in the group?
4. What are the challenges associated with using the group for childcare consultations?

Literature Review

About "Ask the Paediatrician Facebook Group"

Ask the Pediatricians Foundation started as an online group on July 20, 2015, with Dr. Gbemisola Boyede, Consultant Pediatrician, formerly at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, Idiara, Lagos. What started as one woman's passion to educate mothers and other caregivers on child health issues has now metamorphosed into a full-fledged non-governmental organization registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria in July 2017. The vision of "Ask the Pediatricians Foundation" is to promote children's good health and well-being globally, especially in Nigeria and Africa, which aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 3. The foundation carries out this vision through evidence-based health education, information, training, and community medical outreaches. Ask The Pediatricians Foundations has four significant focus areas: (i) Online health education through the Facebook group, page, and website. (ii) Community medical outreaches, (iii) Health seminars and training workshops for healthcare professionals and parents, and (iv) Support of orphans and vulnerable children.

The online forum, where professionals provide accessible health education and answers to various health questions posed by parents, currently has over half a million members who have testified about the significant impact on their children and families. In addition to educating parents, they also have training and seminars for our medical and non-medical volunteers. In February 2018, due to popular demand and the fact that a healthy parent is needed to ensure the health and safety of a child, a new baby called Ask the Physicians Family was conceived to cater to the needs of the older members of the ATP family. The groups have organized and partnered with other institutions to hold several medical outreaches in various states in Nigeria, support an annual Christmas lunch for underprivileged children, and renovate a dilapidated school building in Kwara state. Ask The Paediatricians Foundation is impacting the lives of thousands of children and families globally by promoting child health intelligence (APF Facebook page).

The group is moderated by pediatricians who serve as administrators, providing expert medical advice and overseeing discussions to maintain the credibility of the information shared. Their presence distinguishes verified medical responses from general peer advice, which is crucial for analyzing how expert contributions influence healthcare-seeking behavior on social media. This structure not only enhances the reliability of the data but also strengthens the study's validity by ensuring that the findings are based on interactions within a controlled yet naturally occurring digital environment where expert input is readily available.

Empirical Review

Divna, Amelia, and Sabine (2017) explored parents' use of different social media sources and examined potential factors that motivate parents' use of social media for parenting support. A total of 523 parents completed the Australia-wide online survey. Results indicated that parents endorsed Facebook, parenting websites, and blogs as the most frequently used social media sources. Getting specific information and advice were the top-ranked reasons parents accessed social media for parenting purposes. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to investigate predictors of social media use (Model 1) and parents' perceived level of online social support (Model 2). Analyses of Model 1 revealed that after controlling for demographic variables, parents' social media use was predicted by internet self-efficacy, perceptions towards social media, and online support.

Analyses of Model 2 revealed that after controlling for demographic variables, parents' perceptions toward social media and their use of social media predicted levels of online social support, such that the more parents used social media, the greater the online support they reported receiving. All health questions posted by mothers were coded thematically; answers to questions from the group were assessed for consistency with American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines related to infant feeding, sleep, screen time, and safety. Additionally, all unique posts that contained practices inconsistent with these AAP guidelines were thematically coded. In total, 215 posts were coded. Participants posted 61 questions related to infant health, most commonly solid food introduction (8/61), teething (8/61), and breastfeeding (7/61). Of the 77 answers given by peers, 6 contradicted guidelines. Separately, mothers had 73 posts demonstrating practices inconsistent with AAP guidelines [safe sleep (43/73) and screen time (21/73)]. Mothers' Facebook group interactions in the context of an infant care intervention revealed that when mothers posed direct questions regarding infant health, their peers generally gave answers that did not contradict AAP guidelines. In contrast, mothers' posts simply describe sleep and screen time practices commonly contradicted guidelines. The studies are related in focus but differ in approach. While the reviewed study is qualitative in nature, this study is quantitative in nature.

Another study by Rachel, Moon, Mathews, Oden, and Carlin (2019) uses qualitative methods to explore parental perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of the internet and social media as sources of parenting and health information regarding their infant. A total of 28 mothers participated in focus groups or individual interviews. Probing questions concerning parenting and health information sources were asked. Themes were developed in an iterative manner from coded data. The central themes were (i) reasons that mothers turn to the internet for parenting and health information, (ii) cautionary advice about the internet, and (iii) reasons that mothers turn to social media for parenting and health information. Mothers appreciated the ability to gather unlimited information and multiple opinions quickly and anonymously but recognized the need to use reputable sources of information. Mothers also appreciated the immediacy of affirmation, support, and tailored information available through social media.

Ante-Contreras (2016), on his part, sought to determine whether there was a correlation between the number of hours a parent uses social media and any parental qualities. Surveys were distributed to parents in various parenting groups and online

chatting boards regarding social media usage, the number of hours on their devices, and parenting styles. Other questions asked were whether their child had ever been injured due to their social media usage and whether a parent showed a generally solid bond with their child. Results from the survey concluded there to be only one statistically significant relationship between any of the social media usage variables and the parenting variables: a positive relationship between hours of social media usage and a high score on authoritarian parenting techniques. Overall, however, parents identified more often with a balanced parenting style. Implications of other demographic characteristics are further explored. The reviewed study and this study are different in focus, objectives, and scope but similar in methodology.

Derya (2019) investigated maternity roles and how women who assume this role participate in digital communication processes, thus understanding cultural transformation, a by-product of digital communication. In line with this objective, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with 16 mothers who adopted two different mothering roles (gendered talent/conscious collaboration). Consequently, the study found that the age range of children determines how mothers use digital communication tools, and women who adopt mothering as collaboration use their social media accounts and mobile applications more actively than women who assume the other mothering role. This study is thought to carry significance in evaluating women's practices, which are categorized as 'motherhood models,' based on the duties and responsibilities shouldered within the family, over involvement in and utilization of digital communication settings. The reviewed study and this study are similar in that they both evaluate digital media usage for motherhood among women.

Theoretical Framework: Media Dependency Theory & Social Media

As Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) proposed, the theory posits an understanding of how the public relates to the media (Kasirye, 2021). The theory combines several perspectives, such as psycho-analytics and social system theory, a systematic and casual approach, and elements based on the uses and gratification theory, but it focuses less on effects. MDT provides a framework for understanding how individuals rely on media for information, particularly in healthcare contexts where traditional sources may be inaccessible or less convenient. The theory is among the first to regard the audience as an active part of the communication process where there is an

internal link between the media, its audience, and an extensive social system. An extension of this supports how people increasingly turn to digital platforms for medical guidance, shaping their perceptions and behaviors. In the case of social media, its immediacy, accessibility, and interactive nature create an environment where users become dependent on online sources for healthcare advice. Extensive use of media generates a dependent relationship with the audience. Also, the Media uses this approach to create a dependent relationship with targeted audiences to achieve their goals while using its media power (Salman, 2024).

This reliance influences how they evaluate medical information, often prioritizing convenience and peer discussions over conventional professional consultations. MDT is particularly relevant in explaining the role of social media in shaping healthcare-seeking behavior (Wall et al., 2023). As individuals rely more on digital platforms for medical information, the traditional boundaries between expert and lay knowledge blur. This shift alters trust dynamics as people weigh online discussions and experiences against professional healthcare advice (Jia et al., 2021). The theory highlights how media consumption patterns influence decision-making, with many individuals engaging with social media groups and online discussions rather than seeking immediate professional medical guidance. This change highlights the growing role of digital health communication in everyday decision-making.

An increasing dependency on social media for healthcare information has significant implications. While digital platforms provide broader access to medical insights, they also pose risks of misinformation and self-diagnosis (Garett & Young, 2021). MDT helps explain why individuals may trust social media content and adapt their behaviors accordingly, sometimes at the expense of professional medical advice.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was employed as the primary research tool, targeting the group's members, numbered 694,000 as of September 30th, 2021. Using Taro Yamane's (1967) sample size formula, a sample size of 400 respondents was determined, and purposive sampling was used to select participants who were willing to complete the online questionnaire. The data collected were organized and presented in a tabular format, utilizing simple frequency distributions and percentages to ensure clarity and ease of interpretation. This approach allowed the researchers to systematically analyze the

responses and effectively address the study's research questions. Before the study, the researchers had joined the "Ask the Pediatricians" Facebook group to ensure seamless integration into the community and observe natural interactions among members. By maintaining membership, the researchers could engage in ongoing discussions without disrupting the group's dynamics, which helped preserve the authenticity of the data collected. This methodological choice ensured that the study captured genuine behaviors and interactions, reflecting how parents seek and receive childcare advice in a real-world social media setting. The data gathered online were presented orderly and self-explanatory; the presentation was tabular, using simple frequency distribution and percentages to ensure clarity and straightforward interpretation of data. Percentage analysis was adopted to discuss the study's findings, and the findings were used to answer the research questions

RESULTS

A total number of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were given out to respondents. Three hundred and eighty-six (385) respondents, representing 96.3%, responded (15), representing 3.7% did not respond. The analysis done in this chapter is, therefore, based on the 385 responses received. The following is the analysis:

Table 1: Extent to which parents asked childcare questions on "Ask the Paediatricians" Facebook Group

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Likert Score
To a very large extent	304	79.0	5
To a large extent	61	15.8	4
To some extent	15	3.9	3
To a low extent	5	1.3	2
To no extent	0	0.0	1
Total	385	100	

$$\text{Mean} = (304 \times 5 + 61 \times 4 + 15 \times 3 + 5 \times 2 + 0 \times 1) / 385 = 4.72$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation} \approx 0.61$$

The mean of 4.72 indicates a very high frequency of childcare-related questions asked by parents in the group, with a low deviation showing consistent responses among participants.

Table 2: How long it takes to get responses from Paediatricians

Response Time	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Likert Score
Less than 10 minutes	108	28.1	6
10–20 minutes	231	60.0	5
21–30 minutes	7	1.8	4
31–40 minutes	13	3.4	3
41–50 minutes	6	1.6	2
More than 1 hour	12	3.1	1
Total	385	100	

$$\text{Mean} = (108 \times 6 + 231 \times 5 + 7 \times 4 + 13 \times 3 + 6 \times 2 + 12 \times 1) / 385 \approx 5.04$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation} \approx 1.02$$

A mean of **5.04** shows that responses are generally **very prompt**, mostly within 10–20 minutes. The SD reflects slightly more varied response times.

Table 3: Perceived accuracy of doctors' responses

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Likert Score
Very accurate	302	78.4	3
Accurate	80	20.8	2
Not accurate	3	0.8	1
Total	385	100	

$$\text{Mean} = (302 \times 3 + 80 \times 2 + 3 \times 1) / 385 = 2.78$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation} \approx 0.45$$

A mean of 2.78 (out of 3) implies that respondents view the responses as very accurate, with minimal deviation among participants' opinions.

Table 4: Respondents' experience of challenges using the Group for childcare information

Challenge	% Yes	Likert Score
Lack of confidentiality	53.2	3
Lack of active participation	30.6	2
Lack of trust	9.9	1
Finding time	24.9	2
Lack of internet & electricity (Others)	79.5	4

Mean = (3 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 4) / 5 = 2.4

Standard Deviation \approx 1.02

The most significant challenge was infrastructure-related (internet and power) with a Likert score of 4. Overall, the mean of 2.4 suggests moderate levels of challenges, with variance across different types.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

RQ1: What is the nature of childcare information questions raised on the “Ask the Paediatricians” facebook group?

Research question one sought to find out the nature of childcare information usually asked by parents on the “Ask the Paediatricians” Facebook group. Table 1 revealed that parents usually asked questions that concerned their children in the “Ask the Paediatrician” Facebook group to a large extent. It was further revealed that the nature of questions usually asked by parents in the “Ask the Paediatrician” Facebook group concerning their children are questions related to the health of their children, food introduction, teething, breastfeeding, and questions related to child growth and development. Findings, therefore, revealed that parents who are members of the “Ask the Paediatricians” Facebook group usually asked questions concerning their children, which was to a very large extent. The nature questions usually asked were questions related to the health of their children, food introduction, teething, and breastfeeding, as well as questions related to child growth and development, and the most common information request among the members was that of infant health. This finding is similar to that of Divna, Amelia, and Sabine (2017), who revealed that parents use social media for parenting purposes and can serve as a type of social support. Similarly, Lupton (2016) noted that mothers use digital information to establish and maintain social connections and intimate relationships with other mothers.

RQ2: What are the levels of Paediatricians' responsiveness to information requests from the "Ask the Paediatricians" Facebook group?

Research question two sought to determine the level of Paediatricians' responsiveness to information requests of members of the "Ask the Paediatricians" facebook group. Table 2 revealed that paediatricians in the group usually respond to members' information requests on time. The table shows that it takes the Paediatricians in the group only 10-20 minutes to respond to members' information requests. Findings, therefore, revealed that Paediatricians in the "Ask the Paediatricians" Facebook group were very responsive to the information needs of parents in the group on time, and it takes just 10-20 minutes to respond to information requests of members.

No wonder scholars like Lupton and Pedersen (2016), Madge and O'Connor (2006), and Morris (2014) posited that today, individuals use social media sites for several different purposes within the framework of parenting practices, such as information exchange, getting support for various problems they encounter or providing support to others, having an exchange of ideas with other parents going through the same problems or with experts, and sharing information and developments related to their children.

RQ3: How accurately do the Paediatricians give the responses to childcare questions raised by parents in the group?

Research question three seeks to find out how accurately the Paediatricians gave the responses to childcare questions raised by parents in the group. Table 3 revealed that members of the "Ask the Paediatricians" Facebook group considered the responses of the doctors in the group to their information requests to be very accurate. Table 5 shows that most respondents noted that it worked for them after doing what the doctors asked them to do. Also, respondents who had not consulted the pediatricians in the group noted that reviews from other members say the doctors' responses/diagnoses worked for them. This implies that doctors' responses to questions asked in the "Ask the Paediatricians" Facebook group were considered very accurate by group members, and they noted that after doing what the doctors asked them to do, it worked for them.

Also, respondents who had not consulted the pediatricians in the group noted that reviews from other members say the doctors' responses/diagnoses worked for them. Divna, Amelia, and Sabine (2017), in a related study on Mothers' Facebook group interactions in the context of an infant care intervention, revealed that when mothers

posed direct questions regarding infant health, their peers generally gave answers that did not contradict the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines.

RQ4: What are the challenges associated with using the group for childcare consultations?

The fourth research question seeks to discover the challenges of using social media for childcare consultations. Table 4 revealed that the challenges associated with using social media for childcare consultations are lack of confidentiality as well as lack of internet and constant electricity. This implies that there were challenges associated with the use of “Ask the Paedetrician group” for childcare consultations, and these challenges included a lack of social media confidentiality and lack of internet and constant electricity.

In a related research on social media in healthcare, Muralidharan et al. (2019) highlighted the dangers of data security and confidentiality breaches. If appropriate data protection procedures aren't followed, using platforms like "Ask the Paediatrician" may unintentionally raise the danger of unauthorised access to private data (Muralidharan, P., & Dhaliwal, S., 2019). Many social media networks lack secure messaging protocols or encryption, which exacerbates these problems. In the same vein, a research on technology hurdles to health care in sub-Saharan Africa by Tshand et al. (2018) also revealed that frequent power outages are a major obstacle to the effectiveness of digital health efforts. This result is consistent with the study question, which focusses on how problems like unstable electrical supplies interfere with online consultations, particularly for underserved groups who could already be dealing with infrastructure issues.

CONCLUSION

This study has established that social media is crucial in providing childcare information for parents, as evidenced by the engagement within the “Ask the Paediatricians” Facebook group. From the study, parents frequently sought advice on topics related to infant health, such as (i) food introduction (weening), (ii) teething, (iii) breastfeeding, (iv) skin problems, and (v) child development, with pediatricians responding within a 10 to 20 minutes period. The study found that parents generally perceived these responses as highly accurate, reinforcing the credibility of social media as a health information resource. However, challenges such as concerns over

confidentiality, limited internet access, and inconsistent electricity supply were identified as barriers to fully utilizing this platform. Despite these challenges, the study concludes that social media, particularly the "Ask the Paediatricians" Facebook group, is a viable and effective medium for accessing reliable childcare information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the effectiveness of the "Ask the Paediatricians" group, expanding and sustaining this initiative should be a priority. Other health organizations could replicate this model to support parents across different regions, especially in underserved areas. Publicizing the group more widely would help maximize its reach, ensuring more parents benefit from its valuable services.

Additionally, partnerships with government agencies and philanthropic individuals could enhance the group's sustainability and impact by improving access to child health education. Addressing infrastructure challenges like internet access and electricity would further strengthen the platform's role in promoting informed childcare practices. These efforts would contribute to the overall well-being of Nigerian children by ensuring continued access to high-quality, timely health information for parents.

Further studies should explore how engagement with such groups influences parental decision-making and child health outcomes over time.

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