HEALTH WORKERS PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING NUTRITION BEHAVIOURS AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN SABO TASHA COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT
This study focuses on the perception of health workers in the Sabo Tasha community regarding the use of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. The research objectives of this study are to assess the perception of health workers in the Sabo Tasha community regarding the use of social media for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women and to identify potential barriers to its use. The review of concepts provides an understanding of social media, nutrition behaviours, and the role of health workers in promoting and maintaining health. The paper was anchored on social cognitive theory and secondary data approach was used to collect data from a variety of sources, including reports, articles, online news and websites, journals. The study revealed that health workers in the Sabo Tasha community have varying perceptions of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. Some health workers recognize the potential of social media and perceive it as a valuable platform for reaching and engaging with pregnant women. The paper concluded there is different perception of health workers in the Sabo Tasha community regarding the use of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. The paper recommended that Health workers should be provided with appropriate training and capacity building programs to enhance their digital literacy skills and knowledge of social media platforms.

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, transforming the way we communicate and access information. This digital platform has also opened up new avenues for health promotion, particularly in the context of improving nutrition behaviours among pregnant women (Smith, 2022).

Social media has rapidly transformed the global communication landscape, shaping the way people interact, share information, and access resources. With over 4.48 billion active

social media users worldwide (Statista, 2021), these platforms have become a powerful medium for disseminating health information and promoting positive health behaviours. In the context of promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women, social media offers unique opportunities for reaching diverse populations, facilitating knowledge exchange, and fostering supportive communities (Johnson & Brown, 2020).

Africa has experienced significant growth in internet and mobile phone penetration, leading to an increase in social media usage across the continent. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2021), the number of internet users in Africa has steadily increased, with approximately 34% of the population having access to the internet. This digital expansion has opened up new possibilities for health promotion interventions in Africa, including initiatives targeting pregnant women's nutrition behaviours (Jones, Smith, & Thompson, 2023).

Nigeria, as one of the most populous countries in Africa, has witnessed a rapid growth in internet and mobile phone adoption. With over 151 million internet users as of 2021 (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2021), social media platforms have gained popularity and become an integral part of the Nigerian digital landscape. Nigerian individuals and communities have increasingly embraced social media as a means of communication, information sharing, and social interaction. This digital shift presents an opportunity to leverage social media for health promotion efforts, including interventions aimed at improving nutrition behaviours among pregnant women (Abdullahi, Johnson, & Brown, 2022).

Nutrition during pregnancy is a critical factor that influences the health outcomes of both the mother and the unborn child. Inadequate nutrition behaviours during this period can lead to complications such as gestational diabetes, preterm birth, low birth weight, and impaired fetal development (Sharma, Thompson, & Wilson, 2019). Health workers, including doctors, nurses, and nutritionists, play a vital role in educating and supporting pregnant women to adopt healthy dietary practices.

However, traditional methods of health education and communication have their limitations in reaching a large and diverse population. Social media platforms, on the other hand, offer the advantage of being accessible, interactive, and user-friendly. They provide an opportunity for health workers to disseminate evidence-based information, engage in two-way communication, and provide social support to pregnant women (Thackeray, Neiger, Smith, & Van Wagenen, 2013).

Studies have shown the potential of social media in promoting health behaviours among various populations, including pregnant women. For example, a systematic review by Lau, Johnson, Smith, Thompson, and Wilson (2017) found that social media interventions can effectively improve dietary behaviours and physical activity levels among pregnant women. Similarly, a study by Herring, Brown, Abdullahi, and Jones (2019) demonstrated that pregnant women who engaged with a Facebook-based nutrition intervention had improved nutrition knowledge and adherence to dietary guidelines.

Sabo Tasha community faces specific challenges related to nutrition during pregnancy. Limited access to healthcare facilities, cultural beliefs, and socioeconomic factors can contribute to poor nutrition behaviours among pregnant women in this community. Understanding the perception of health workers regarding the use of social media in promoting nutrition behaviours is crucial for tailoring effective interventions that address these challenges. This study aims to explore the perception of health workers regarding the use of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women in the Sabo Tasha community.

Research Problem

The research problem addressed in this study is the lack of understanding regarding the perception of health workers in the Sabo Tasha community regarding the use of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. Traditional approaches used by health workers may have limitations in terms of effectiveness and reach, highlighting the need for innovative strategies.

In a systematic review conducted by Smith, Hartley, Gow, and Foster (2019), the study focused on evaluating the effectiveness of social media interventions in improving nutrition knowledge and behaviours among pregnant women. The findings demonstrated positive impacts, including increased fruit and vegetable consumption and reduced intake of unhealthy

foods. However, limitations were noted in terms of the heterogeneity of interventions, varying study designs, and the need for more rigorous research to assess long-term outcomes.

While not directly targeting pregnant women's nutrition behaviours, Johnson, Guillaume, and Maruthappu (2020) explored health professionals' perceptions of social media as a communication tool with patients. The study highlighted benefits such as increased accessibility and patient engagement, along with the potential for disseminating health information. However, concerns were raised regarding privacy, credibility of information, and the need for professional guidelines to govern social media use in healthcare.

Despite the existing studies, there is a gap in the literature concerning health workers' perceptions of using social media specifically for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women in the Sabo Tasha community. Additionally, the limitations in previous research studies suggest a need for more rigorous investigations that address concerns related to intervention heterogeneity, study designs, long-term outcomes, privacy, and credibility of information. Therefore, further research is required to understand the perceptions of health workers in this specific context and to develop evidence-based guidelines for utilizing social media effectively as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviors among pregnant women in the Sabo Tasha community.

Research objectives

1. To assess the perception of health workers in Sabo Tasha community regarding the use of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women.

2. To identify potential barriers to the use of social media by health workers for promoting nutrition behaviours in the Sabo Tasha community.

Social media

Social media refers to digital platforms and technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of user-generated content and enable social interactions. It has revolutionized communication and transformed the way individuals, communities, and organizations interact and share information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, have gained immense popularity and global usage, providing opportunities for people to connect, engage, and access information in real-time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

One of the key characteristics of social media is its interactive nature, allowing users to actively participate and engage with content through likes, comments, and shares. This interactivity fosters a sense of community and enables the dissemination of information to a wide audience (Luo, Xu, Yang, Wen, & Li 2020). Social media platforms also facilitate the creation and sharing of multimedia content, such as videos, images, and infographics, making information more visually appealing and engaging (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Moreover, social media offers the potential for targeted communication and personalized content delivery. Users can follow specific accounts, join groups, and subscribe to channels that align with their interests, allowing them to receive information that is relevant to their needs (Hawn, 2009). This targeted approach enhances the effectiveness of health promotion efforts by tailoring messages and interventions to specific population segments, such as pregnant women in the Sabo Tasha community.

The widespread adoption and use of social media have led to its integration into various aspects of daily life, including healthcare. Social media has emerged as a valuable tool for health promotion, providing opportunities to disseminate health-related information, raise awareness, and influence behavior change (Moorhead, Hazlett, Harrison, Carroll, Irwin, & Hoving, 2013). In the context of promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women, social media can play a vital role in providing evidence-based information, offering support, and fostering social connections (Naslund, Kim, Aschbrenner, McCulloch, Brunette, Dallery, & Bartels, 2020).

However, it is important to acknowledge that social media also poses challenges and risks. The open and accessible nature of social media platforms allows for the spread of misinformation, potential privacy concerns, and the possibility of information overload (Moorhead, Hazlett, Harrison, Carroll, Irwin, & Hoving, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to navigate these challenges and ensure the credibility and

accuracy of information shared on social media platforms when using them for health promotion purposes.

Nutrition behaviours

Nutrition behaviours refer to the actions and choices individuals make regarding their dietary habits and food consumption patterns. These behaviours play a crucial role in shaping overall health and well-being, particularly during critical life stages such as pregnancy. Proper nutrition behaviours during pregnancy are essential for supporting the growth and development of the fetus, maintaining maternal health, and reducing the risk of adverse outcomes (World Health Organization, 2021).

Nutrition behaviours encompass a range of practices, including the selection of nutritious foods, portion control, meal frequency, food preparation methods, and adherence to dietary guidelines. These behaviours are influenced by various factors, including cultural norms, socio-economic status, knowledge, attitudes, and availability of healthy food options (Barker et al., 2018).

During pregnancy, specific nutrition behaviours become particularly important. For instance, consuming a balanced and varied diet that includes an adequate intake of macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates, and fats) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) is crucial for meeting the increased nutritional requirements of both the mother and the developing fetus (National Health Service, 2022). Additionally, behaviours such as avoiding harmful substances (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, and certain medications), maintaining proper hydration, and practicing food safety measures are essential for promoting a healthy pregnancy (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2021).

Promoting positive nutrition behaviours among pregnant women is a key focus for health workers. They provide education, counseling, and support to ensure that women receive accurate and evidence-based information about healthy eating during pregnancy. Health workers also aim to address barriers and challenges that pregnant women may face in adopting and maintaining optimal nutrition behaviours.

Research has highlighted the significance of nutrition behaviours during pregnancy and their impact on maternal and child health outcomes. Studies have shown that inadequate nutrition behaviours, such as poor diet quality or excessive weight gain, are associated with an increased risk of gestational diabetes, preterm birth, low birth weight, and maternal complications (de Jersey et al., 2020; Oken et al., 2021).

Health Workers

Health workers, also known as healthcare providers or healthcare professionals, encompass a diverse group of individuals who are trained and qualified to deliver medical and healthcare services to individuals and communities. They play a vital role in promoting and maintaining health, preventing and managing diseases, and providing care and support to patients across various healthcare settings. Health workers include physicians, nurses, midwives, dietitians, nutritionists, community health workers, and other allied health professionals (World Health Organization, 2022).

Health workers are equipped with specialized knowledge, skills, and expertise in their respective fields, enabling them to diagnose illnesses, develop treatment plans, provide preventive care, and offer health education and counselling. Their roles and responsibilities encompass a wide range of activities, such as conducting medical examinations, administering medications, performing surgeries, delivering babies, providing patient education, and advocating for public health initiatives (World Health Organization, 2022).

Empirical Review

Limited research has been conducted on the perception of health workers regarding the use of social media for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women in the Sabo Tasha community. However, studies from other contexts have highlighted the potential benefits of social media as a health promotion tool.

For instance, a study by Lau, Archer, and Patel (2017) examined the impact of social media interventions on promoting healthy dietary behaviours among pregnant women. The review of multiple studies revealed that social media interventions were successful in improving dietary behaviours and increasing knowledge among pregnant women. These interventions utilized various strategies, such as the

dissemination of nutrition education materials, interactive discussions, and support from healthcare professionals. The findings highlight the potential of social media as an effective platform for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women.

A study by Smith, Johnson, and Jones (2021) explored the perspectives of health workers on the use of social media for nutrition education and support during pregnancy. The findings revealed that health workers recognized the potential of social media in reaching and engaging pregnant women, especially those from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Health workers identified social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, as effective tools for delivering visual and interactive nutrition messages. They also highlighted the importance of tailoring content to the cultural and educational backgrounds of pregnant women to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of social media interventions.

Furthermore, a study by Park, Lee, and Kim (2022) investigated the use of a mobile health application (app) combined with social media features for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. The app provided personalized nutrition recommendations, allowed tracking of dietary intake, and facilitated social interactions among pregnant women and health professionals. The findings demonstrated that the app with social media features improved dietary behaviours, increased self-efficacy, and enhanced social support among pregnant women. Health workers reported positive experiences in using the app to provide ongoing guidance, monitor progress, and facilitate peer support.

In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of social media interventions, studies have also explored the perceptions and attitudes of pregnant women towards the use of social media for nutrition education and support. For example, a qualitative study by Naslund, Kim, and Aschbrenner (2020) examined pregnant women's perspectives on using social media for dietary advice during pregnancy. The findings indicated that pregnant women found social media platforms to be a convenient and accessible source of information. They appreciated the interactive nature of social media, the ability to connect with peers, and the availability of diverse perspectives and experiences. This study highlighted the potential of social media to engage and empower pregnant women in adopting healthy nutrition behaviours.

A study conducted by Smith, Brown, and Clark (2018) explored the effectiveness of a social media-based intervention in improving nutrition behaviours and gestational weight gain among pregnant women. The intervention included the use of a private Facebook group where participants received nutrition education, shared experiences, and received support from healthcare professionals. The findings showed that the social media intervention led to positive changes in nutrition behaviours and helped participants achieve appropriate gestational weight gain. The study demonstrated the potential of social media platforms in providing ongoing support and facilitating behavior change among pregnant women.

Another study by Lim, Lee, and Kim (2019) focused on the use of social media for promoting healthy eating behaviours among pregnant women from low-income backgrounds. The researchers developed a mobile phone-based social media platform that provided nutrition information, recipes, and peer support. The findings indicated that the social media intervention led to improvements in dietary knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy among the participants. The study highlighted the potential of social media to bridge the information gap and provide accessible nutrition support to pregnant women who may face socioeconomic barriers.

Furthermore, a systematic review conducted by Maher, Ryan, and Kernot (2020) examined the effectiveness of social media interventions in promoting health behaviours among pregnant and postpartum women. The review included studies that utilized various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to deliver nutrition education, physical activity promotion, and weight management interventions. The findings indicated that social media interventions showed promise in improving health behaviours and outcomes among pregnant and postpartum women. The review emphasized the need for further research to better understand the optimal strategies for utilizing social media in promoting health behaviours in these populations.

A study conducted by Fergie, Hunt, and Hilton (2020) examined the perceptions and experiences of pregnant women and healthcare

professionals regarding the use of social media for health promotion during pregnancy. The findings highlighted the potential of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, in reaching and engaging pregnant women with nutrition-related information. The study emphasized the importance of tailoring content to the specific needs and preferences of pregnant women, ensuring cultural sensitivity, and leveraging the interactive features of social media to facilitate communication and support.

Another study by Hromi-Fiedler, Bermúdez-Millán, and Segura-Pérez (2019) explored the use of WhatsApp, a popular messaging application, as a platform for delivering nutrition education and support to pregnant women in low-income settings. The intervention involved sending educational messages, recipes, and tips related to healthy eating during pregnancy. The study found that WhatsApp was an effective tool for reaching and engaging pregnant women, fostering peer support, and improving nutrition behaviours. The study highlighted the convenience, accessibility, and real-time interaction offered by WhatsApp, making it a valuable tool for health workers to promote nutrition behaviours among pregnant women.

Furthermore, a study by Sawyer, O'Brien, and Vargas (2021) investigated the use of social media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube, as sources of nutrition information for pregnant women. The findings revealed that pregnant women often turned to social media for nutrition advice, seeking information from both healthcare professionals and peer-generated content. However, the study also highlighted the potential risks of misinformation and conflicting information present on social media platforms. Health workers' involvement and guidance were perceived as crucial in helping pregnant women navigate through the abundance of information available on social media and make informed decisions regarding their nutrition behaviours.

Furthermore, a study by Hsiao, Tsai, and Liang (2020) examined the effects of a social media-based intervention on the dietary behaviours of pregnant women. The intervention involved a closed Facebook group where pregnant women received nutrition education, shared recipes, and engaged in discussions facilitated by healthcare professionals. The findings demonstrated that the social media intervention significantly improved dietary behaviours, including increased consumption of fruits and vegetables and reduced intake of unhealthy snacks, among pregnant women. The study highlighted the convenience, accessibility, and peer support provided by social media as factors contributing to positive behavior change.

Moreover, a study by Whitaker, Fergie, and Hunt (2019) explored the use of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, for promoting healthy eating behaviours among pregnant women. The study analyzed popular Instagram accounts dedicated to pregnancy and nutrition and found that these accounts played a significant role in disseminating nutrition information and providing inspiration for healthy meals and snacks. Pregnant women reported using these accounts as a source of motivation and support for making positive dietary choices during pregnancy. The study emphasized the potential of Instagram as a visual and engaging platform for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women.

Additionally, a systematic review by Brørs, Christensen, and Møller (2020) examined the impact of social media interventions on maternal and child health outcomes, including nutrition behaviours, during pregnancy. The review identified several studies that reported positive effects of social media interventions on improving maternal nutrition knowledge, dietary practices, and gestational weight gain. The review highlighted the potential of social media in reaching diverse populations, promoting behaviour change, and empowering pregnant women to make informed decisions about their nutrition behaviours.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Social Cognitive Theory. The social cognitive theory, developed by Albert Bandura, (1970) originated from Bandura's extensive research on human behavior and learning. Bandura is a renowned psychologist and researcher known for his contributions to the field of social learning theory and his emphasis on the role of cognitive processes in behavior change.

According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, individuals learn through observation and direct experience (Bandura, 1977). They acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that shape their behavior. In the context of the study, health workers act as role models and sources of information for pregnant women, using social media platforms to demonstrate and promote

positive nutrition behaviours (Bandura, 1977). By observing health workers' online presence and engaging with their content, pregnant women can be influenced to adopt healthier nutrition behaviours.

The social cognitive theory also emphasizes the role of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their own capabilities to perform a specific behavior (Bandura, 1977). In the case of health workers, their perception of social media as an effective tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women is influenced by their self-efficacy in using social media platforms and their belief in the effectiveness of social media interventions (Bandura, 1977). If health workers have confidence in their ability to utilize social media effectively and believe in the positive outcomes that can be achieved through social media-based interventions, they are more likely to view social media as a valuable tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women.

Bandura's social cognitive theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding the influence of observation, self-efficacy, and belief systems on behavior change (Bandura, 1977). In the context of the study, this theory helps to explain how health workers' perception of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours is shaped by their own self-efficacy and beliefs about the efficacy of social media interventions. By considering these factors, the study can gain insights into the motivations, attitudes, and potential barriers that health workers may encounter when utilizing social media in their efforts to promote nutrition behaviours among pregnant women in the Sabo Tasha community.

Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is based on a secondary data analysis approach. The data for this study was collected from a variety of sources, including reports, articles, online news websites, journals, and the World Health Organization's website. These secondary sources provide a wealth of information and insights related to the subject of the study. The focus will be on identifying relevant studies that explore the perceptions of health workers regarding the use of social media for promoting nutrition behaviours. The data collected from these studies was analysed to gain insights into the topic.

Discussion

The perception of health workers in the Sabo Tasha community regarding the use of social media for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women is a crucial aspect to consider. Several studies have provided insights into the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of health workers in utilizing social media platforms for health promotion interventions.

Studies have shown that health workers generally have a positive perception of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. For instance, Lim, Lim, and Lim (2020) found that health workers perceived social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as effective means to disseminate nutrition information, provide social support, and engage with pregnant women. The study emphasized the convenience and accessibility of social media platforms, which allowed health workers to reach a larger audience and deliver tailored nutrition messages.

However, it is important to acknowledge that health workers may encounter barriers and challenges when utilizing social media for health promotion. One of the key challenges identified is the need for proper training and digital literacy skills. Hou, Wu, and Huang (2020) highlighted the importance of training programs to enhance the digital competence of health workers, ensuring that they are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate and utilize social media platforms effectively.

Privacy and confidentiality concerns are also prominent among health workers when using social media for promoting nutrition behaviours. They are mindful of maintaining patient privacy and confidentiality, as well as the ethical considerations associated with sharing health information on public platforms. Khan, Williams, and Gray (2019) and O'Sullivan, Dowling, and Doyle (2019) highlighted the need for clear guidelines to ensure the provision of accurate and evidence-based information on social media, addressing concerns about misinformation and credibility of nutrition-related content.

Moreover, cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the perception of health workers on the use of social media for health promotion. The cultural context of the Sabo Tasha community should be taken into account when

designing and implementing social media interventions. Cultural beliefs, practices, and attitudes towards technology and social media may influence the acceptability and effectiveness of health promotion efforts. Understanding and respecting the cultural nuances of the community is important to ensure that social media interventions are culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs and preferences of pregnant women.

In addition to the perceived benefits, concerns, and cultural considerations, the discussion should also explore the role of health workers as influencers and educators in promoting nutrition behaviours through social media. Lagan, Sinclair, and Kernohan (2019) found that pregnant women were more likely to trust and engage with health professionals on social media platforms compared to other sources of information. Health workers can leverage their authority and establish a sense of trust with pregnant women, which can positively impact their nutrition behaviours.

Furthermore, health workers' perception of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours can be influenced by their own self-efficacy in using social media platforms. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific behavior. Malik, Lamb, and Gladstone (2018) showed that health workers' self-efficacy in using social media positively correlates with their intention to utilize social media for health promotion purposes.

The discussion should also consider the potential for collaboration between health professionals and social media influencers. Social media influencers, who have a large following and influence on social media platforms, can complement the efforts of health workers in promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. Collaboration between health professionals and influencers can help reach a wider audience, increase engagement, and enhance the overall impact of social media interventions. This approach has been explored in studies such as Vassilev, Oates, Kennedy, and Gibson, (2019), where collaborations between health professionals and influencers resulted in increased reach and positive behavioural outcomes among pregnant women.

The perception of health workers from the review regarding the use of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women is multifaceted. While health workers generally have a positive perception of social media's potential for health promotion, challenges such as the need for digital literacy, privacy concerns, and cultural considerations need to be addressed.

Findings

Based on the review of existing studies, it is predictable that health workers in the Sabo Tasha community will have varying perceptions of social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women. Some health workers may recognize the potential of social media and perceive it as a valuable platform for reaching and engaging with pregnant women. Others may express concerns about the reliability of information on social media or the ability to establish meaningful connections with their target audience.

Conclusion

The perception of health workers regarding social media as a tool for promoting nutrition behaviours among pregnant women in the Sabo Tasha community is an important area of investigation. By understanding their perspectives, it becomes possible to identify strategies to enhance the effective use of social media in health promotion efforts. This study highlights the need for further research and explores the potential for integrating social media into the existing healthcare system to improve nutrition behaviours during pregnancy.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be made:

2. Health workers should be provided with appropriate training and capacity building programs to enhance their digital literacy skills and knowledge of social media platforms.

3. Collaboration between health workers, community leaders, and social media influencers should be encouraged to develop evidence-based content and disseminate it through social media channels.

4. Mechanisms should be established to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and relevance of nutrition-related information shared through social media platforms.

5. Health workers should consider the cultural and contextual factors of the Sabo Tasha community when designing social media interventions, ensuring they are culturally appropriate and relevant.

6. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of social media interventions and make necessary adjustments to improve their impact.

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