

EXPOSURE TO YOUTUBE FITNESS CONTENT AND ITS EFFECT ON EXERCISE BEHAVIOUR AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN EDO STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of YouTube fitness videos on exercise motivation among civil servants in Edo State, Nigeria. The increasing prevalence of sedentary work patterns among civil servants, combined with rising cases of lifestyle-related diseases, necessitates an exploration of alternative motivational tools for promoting physical activity. The study adopted a survey research design, with a population of 548,500 civil servants drawn from selected local government areas in Edo State. A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using Cochran's formula, while a multistage sampling technique was employed. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed with descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Findings revealed that civil servants in Edo State have a high level of exposure to YouTube fitness videos and generally perceive such content as motivational. Respondents indicated that YouTube fitness videos encourage regular exercise, promote healthier lifestyles, and contribute positively to the adoption of improved exercise habits. The study further established a generally positive relationship between exposure to YouTube fitness content and exercise behaviour, although the strength of this influence varies due to personal, occupational, and environmental factors. The study concluded that YouTube fitness videos serve as an important digital health

communication tool for enhancing exercise motivation among civil servants. It recommended structured workplace wellness programmes, collaboration with certified fitness influencers, and sustained behavioural support systems to enhance long-term exercise adherence.

Keywords: YouTube fitness videos, exercise motivation, civil servants, digital health communication, physical activity

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, the world has witnessed a profound digital revolution that continues to reshape human behaviour, communication patterns, and lifestyle choices. The emergence of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook has particularly transformed how people learn, interact, and pursue personal development (Asemah, Nwaoboli & Beli, 2022). Among these platforms, YouTube has distinguished itself as a dominant global hub for video-based learning, entertainment, and self-improvement. In Nigeria, YouTube's reach has expanded rapidly with the growth of mobile internet access and the proliferation of smartphones. As a result, millions of Nigerians now rely on it for diverse content, ranging from news and comedy to education, fashion, and fitness (Asemah, Nwaoboli & Nwoko, 2022; Asemah & Nwaoboli, 2024). Within this context, YouTube fitness videos have become a significant source of exercise inspiration and guidance, especially for working professionals who struggle to maintain active lifestyles due to tight schedules and urban stress. According to Adebayo & Ogunlade (2022), the accessibility, visual engagement, and flexibility of YouTube fitness content have democratised fitness culture in Nigeria, allowing individuals to engage in workouts from the comfort of their homes without the financial burden of gym memberships.

Edo State, situated in South-South Nigeria, presents an interesting environment for studying this phenomenon. As the administrative centre of several government ministries, departments, and agencies, the state has a large population of civil servants whose work is largely sedentary. These

workers often spend long hours seated at desks, handling bureaucratic responsibilities with limited opportunities for physical activity. Consequently, many suffer from lifestyle-related ailments such as obesity, hypertension, back pain, and cardiovascular diseases, which have become increasingly common among public sector employees. Adewale (2023) reports that the average Nigerian civil servant engages in less than two hours of structured physical activity weekly, a figure far below the World Health Organisation's (2024) recommendation of at least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week. The resulting health implications are serious, ranging from decreased productivity to premature morbidity. However, the growing availability of YouTube fitness content has begun to reshape attitudes towards exercise. Civil servants in Edo State, like their counterparts across Nigeria, increasingly turn to digital platforms for accessible and time-efficient workout routines.

Nevertheless, the motivational influence of YouTube fitness videos is diverse. While these videos appear to promote healthier lifestyles, their long-term impact on exercise adherence remains debatable. Ekanem & Yusuf (2024) observe that digital fitness engagement often generates episodic enthusiasm that may not translate into consistent behavioural change. Many users begin workout programmes with excitement but lose motivation after a short period. This inconsistency may be influenced by factors such as work stress, lack of self-discipline, unreliable internet connectivity, or the tendency of online content to prioritise aesthetics over functionality. For instance, YouTube fitness influencers frequently emphasise physical transformation, beauty, and body sculpting rather than holistic wellbeing. As Aremu (2025) argues, this creates a visual culture that equates fitness with physical appearance rather than health consciousness, thereby shifting focus from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation. In a professional context such as the civil service, where individuals already face high psychological and time pressures, sustaining motivation through such

external cues becomes challenging. It is within this diverse context that the present study examines the influence of YouTube fitness videos on exercise motivation among civil servants in Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

Regular physical exercise is widely recognised as essential for good health, productivity, and overall wellbeing. However, among civil servants in Nigeria, physical inactivity remains a persistent public health challenge due to the nature of their work, which involves prolonged sitting, heavy administrative duties, time constraints, and limited access to recreational facilities. These conditions have contributed to rising cases of lifestyle-related diseases such as hypertension, obesity, and diabetes, despite widespread awareness of the benefits of regular exercise (Adewale, 2023; Ojo & Akintunde, 2022). Although digital media platforms, particularly YouTube, now provide easy access to fitness routines and motivational content, it remains unclear whether such exposure translates into sustained exercise motivation and behavioural change among civil servants in Edo State.

Existing studies in Nigeria have largely focused on youths, students, and gym users, leaving a significant gap in understanding how working adults in the public sector engage with online fitness content (Adebayo & Ogunlade, 2022; Omoruyi & Adegbite, 2023). Furthermore, concerns about content credibility, infrastructural challenges such as poor internet access and unstable electricity supply, and the prevalence of uncertified fitness influencers raise questions about the effectiveness and safety of YouTube-based exercise guidance. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence on whether YouTube fitness videos serve as a meaningful motivational tool or merely generate temporary interest without sustained behavioural impact among civil servants.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of clear empirical evidence on the extent to which YouTube fitness videos influence

exercise motivation among civil servants in Edo State. Without such understanding, it remains difficult for policymakers and health communicators to determine the effectiveness of digital fitness content in promoting consistent physical activity within the civil service.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the level of exposure of civil servants in Edo State to YouTube fitness videos;
2. assess the perceived motivational value of YouTube fitness videos among Edo State civil servants; and
3. examine the relationship between exposure to YouTube fitness videos and the exercise habits of Edo State civil servants.

Conceptual Review

YouTube

YouTube can be defined as an interactive digital platform that enables users to create, share, and consume audiovisual content across a vast range of subjects and interests (Asemah & Ajibulu, 2022). According to Adetunji (2021), YouTube represents a paradigm shift from traditional mass communication to participatory media, where audiences do not merely receive content but actively engage with it. This participatory model stresses the democratisation of information, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds to express themselves without the constraints of institutional gatekeeping. Through its user-generated content system, YouTube has transformed ordinary people into influencers, educators, and social commentators. In the context of health and fitness, this openness has created a fertile ground for individuals to access exercise tutorials and wellness information that were once limited to professional trainers. Therefore, YouTube serves as both a media innovation and a social empowerment tool that bridges the knowledge gap and enables individuals to take charge of their personal development through visual learning.

In another perspective, (Asemah & Nwaoboli, 2022) and Aremu (2022) define YouTube as a socio-technical environment where digital interaction merges with audiovisual storytelling to foster learning, entertainment, and community building. Unlike traditional television, where content flow is one-directional, YouTube provides a multidirectional communication framework that promotes feedback, engagement, and collaboration between creators and audiences. This bidirectional communication enhances user experience by making the viewer an active participant in the communication process. The comment sections, live chats, and community features encourage dialogue and knowledge sharing, which are vital in promoting sustained engagement (Nwaoboli, Uchenunu & Asemah, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). Aremu (2022) explains that such interactivity is particularly significant in the domain of health communication, where personal motivation and peer encouragement can reinforce positive behavioural change. Thus, YouTube's structure not only supports information dissemination but also nurtures online communities that collectively pursue self-improvement goals such as fitness and wellbeing.

Health Communication

Health communication has long been recognised as an essential pillar of public health, encompassing the strategies, messages, and media used to influence health behaviours and improve community wellbeing. According to Mugisha (2021), health communication involves the systematic design and dissemination of health information intended to persuade individuals and communities to adopt positive health practices. Asemah (2022) explains that the process extends beyond information delivery to include the cultivation of trust, understanding, and behavioural change. Mugisha (2021) highlights that in African societies, effective health communication must be grounded in local languages, storytelling traditions, and community networks to achieve resonance and credibility. For instance,

during public health campaigns on immunisation or hygiene, the use of relatable narratives and trusted community figures has often proven more effective than purely scientific explanations. Consequently, health communication functions not only as a tool for information exchange but also as a cultural practice that integrates health knowledge into daily life.

Similarly, Tadesse (2022) defines health communication as a participatory and interactive process through which individuals, organisations, and communities engage in dialogue about health-related issues. The scholar asserts that health communication is most successful when it allows for feedback, negotiation, and shared learning between senders and receivers. Tadesse's (2022) perspective challenges the traditional top-down approach where health authorities simply transmit directives to passive audiences. Instead, he promotes an inclusive model where communities contribute their own perspectives and experiences, thereby co-creating knowledge. In this participatory framework, citizens are not merely recipients of messages but active partners in shaping health policies and interventions. Tadesse (2022) argues that such engagement builds ownership, enhances message credibility, and leads to sustainable behaviour change. In contexts where cultural norms influence health practices, such as beliefs about diet, exercise, or reproductive health, interactive communication enables mutual understanding and adaptation of health messages to local realities.

Opinion Review

YouTube and Exercise Motivation

YouTube has evolved from being merely an entertainment hub to becoming a critical platform for informal education, lifestyle transformation, and health motivation. According to Boakye & Mensimah (2021), the platform serves as a virtual community where individuals seek inspiration and practical guidance for improving their physical and emotional well-being. Through visual storytelling and personal testimonies,

fitness content on YouTube motivates viewers to pursue healthy habits, especially in societies where formal access to fitness institutions is limited. This finding was supported by Dube & Nhlapo (2022), who observed in a South African study that YouTube has democratised health information, enabling audiences to learn about exercise routines, diet management, and wellness strategies without financial barriers. The participatory nature of the platform allows viewers to identify with fitness influencers who share relatable experiences. This personal connection fosters self-efficacy and inspires consistent exercise behaviour. However, Boakye & Mensimah (2021) caution that the absence of professional regulation sometimes leads to misinformation, a challenge this study addresses by focusing on how users interpret and act on fitness content.

Moreover, YouTube facilitates social learning processes that underpin behaviour modification. In a Kenyan study, Nyongesa (2023) argues that individuals are more likely to imitate actions demonstrated through audiovisual cues, particularly when those behaviours are reinforced by positive narratives and visible results. The visual and interactive design of YouTube makes it a potent tool for observational learning, as users can repeatedly view, pause, and replay instructional videos. This flexibility enhances comprehension and fosters gradual behavioural adoption. Nyongesa's (2023) findings align with Bandura's social learning principles, where motivation is strengthened through observation, reinforcement, and perceived attainability. Similarly, Owusu & Boateng (2024) found that Ghanaian professionals who regularly engaged with YouTube fitness channels reported improved motivation and reduced exercise procrastination. They attributed this to the emotional appeal and authenticity of content creators, whose consistent uploads and real-life transformations serve as ongoing motivational stimuli. Thus, YouTube functions both as a tutor and a motivator, merging knowledge dissemination with emotional influence.

Furthermore, YouTube has redefined the communication of health and fitness through its algorithmic recommendation system, which curates personalised viewing experiences. As highlighted by Motsamai (2022), algorithms play a silent yet powerful role in sustaining user engagement by continuously suggesting content that aligns with users' prior interests and behaviour patterns. While this enhances exposure to relevant fitness materials, it also reinforces a feedback loop that keeps viewers immersed within health-oriented communities.

Influence of Fitness Videos on Health Behaviour and Motivation

Fitness videos have become a defining feature of digital wellness culture, bridging the gap between physical education, entertainment, and personal empowerment. According to Moyo (2021), fitness videos provide users with visual models that stimulate interest, demystify exercise techniques, and reinforce motivation. Their Zimbabwean study revealed that exposure to structured workout videos enhanced users' confidence in performing exercises without professional supervision. Similarly, Agyeman & Danso (2022) found that Ghanaian adults who regularly engaged with online fitness content demonstrated improved self-discipline, dietary awareness, and stress management. These studies underscore that visual fitness media not only instructs but also empowers users to take ownership of their health. The accessibility of fitness videos, often available free of charge, has made them instrumental in promoting wellness, especially in developing contexts where gym access remains limited.

Moreover, fitness videos leverage both visual appeal and psychological engagement to influence health behaviour. As Kibet (2023) observed in a Kenyan context, the combination of audiovisual elements, music, instructor enthusiasm, and progress tracking, creates an emotionally stimulating experience that encourages repeated participation. Fitness videos blend instruction with entertainment, transforming what might be perceived as physical exertion into an enjoyable social activity. This

phenomenon, termed “edutainment,” enhances learning retention and habit formation. Kibet's (2023) study found that participants who watched energising fitness content were more likely to maintain consistent workout routines over time. This aligns with Tshipa's (2024) argument that the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of fitness media are central to its motivational efficacy. Therefore, the persuasive power of fitness videos extends beyond information; they evoke emotions that sustain behaviour change.

Furthermore, studies highlight that the interactivity of modern fitness videos, such as progress tracking, live sessions, and comment-based feedback, creates accountability structures that enhance motivation. Makori (2022) found that Kenyan urban professionals who subscribed to interactive YouTube fitness programmes experienced higher levels of motivation than those who relied on static videos. The sense of being monitored, even virtually, fosters discipline and commitment. This interactivity also allows for real-time feedback and community bonding, turning solitary exercise into a shared experience. In parallel, Kamanga (2021) observed that Malawian users appreciated the flexibility of fitness videos, which allowed them to personalise workouts according to their pace, environment, and physical limitations. This adaptability fosters autonomy, a crucial psychological component of long-term motivation, by allowing users to set achievable goals and self-regulate progress.

Empirical Review

This section reviews studies related to the current research with emphasis on how they relate and differ.

In a study conducted by Okorie (2020) titled *Social Media and Health Communication: The Influence of YouTube on Exercise Intentions among Nigerian Professionals*, the objective was to explore how video-based platforms inspire exercise intentions among sedentary office workers. The study applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour, proposing that

attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence intentions. A survey of 350 respondents revealed that positive attitudes toward online fitness content strongly predicted intention to exercise, while social pressure from peers had minimal impact. The study concluded that YouTube videos with clear goal-setting messages and relatable trainers enhance behavioural intentions. Recommendations were made for public health communicators to collaborate with content creators to promote culturally relevant exercise campaigns. This study shares common ground with the present research in exploring YouTube's role in motivating physical activity, yet it differs by focusing primarily on intention formation, whereas the current study extends beyond intentions to examine actual motivational influence and behavioural follow-through among civil servants.

Aina (2022) conducted a study titled *The Effect of Digital Influencers on Fitness Behaviour among Working-Class Adults in Abuja*. The objective was to analyse how perceived credibility of online fitness instructors impacts exercise motivation. Grounded in the Source Credibility Theory, the study utilised a quantitative research design with a sample of 400 respondents. The results revealed that perceived expertise and trustworthiness of YouTube fitness trainers had a significant effect on motivation levels, while attractiveness played a secondary role. The study concluded that digital fitness communication is more persuasive when instructors appear authentic and culturally relatable. It recommended government-supported wellness programmes that feature credible Nigerian instructors to enhance health communication outcomes. While this study aligns with the current one in its examination of online fitness influence, it differs in emphasis; Aina (2022) focused on instructor credibility, while the present research investigates broader motivational dynamics and psychological engagement among civil servants as influenced by YouTube fitness videos.

Similarly, Dunkwu (2023) examined *YouTube-Based Fitness Motivation and Gender Differences among Nigerian Adults*. The study aimed to determine whether gender plays a role in how individuals respond to fitness video content. Using the Self-Efficacy Theory as framework, the researcher employed a descriptive survey design, collecting data from 420 participants evenly distributed by gender. Findings indicated that women were more influenced by social and emotional storytelling in fitness videos, while men responded more to competitive or performance-oriented content. The study concluded that gendered communication styles affect motivation, and fitness content should be designed with audience diversity in mind. It recommended more inclusive representations in fitness media. The study relates to the present research by situating YouTube as a motivational platform but differs because Dunkwu's (2023) work examined gender variation broadly, while the current study emphasises occupational context, that is, how motivation manifests among government employees facing sedentary work patterns.

Theoretical Framework Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

This study was anchored on the Uses and Gratification Theory. The theory was first propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the early 1970s as a reaction to the traditional hypodermic needle model of media effects, which assumed that audiences were passive recipients of information (Yarosan & Asemah, 2008). Instead, Katz and his colleagues proposed that audiences are active, goal-oriented consumers who select and use media content to satisfy specific psychological and social needs (Kyles, 2020). The theory posits that individuals use media for purposes such as information, personal identity, integration, social interaction, and entertainment. As Amankwah (2023) notes, this theoretical shift redefined the role of the audience from that of a passive spectator to an active participant who interprets and employs media content according to

personal circumstances. Thus, media consumption becomes an intentional act of seeking satisfaction rather than mere exposure to messages.

The tenets of the theory highlight that the audience's motives, expectations, and social contexts shape how they engage with media. According to Adeyero (2024), individuals select particular media channels based on perceived utility and relevance, and their satisfaction depends on whether those media fulfil their expectations. In digital media environments such as YouTube, this theory finds renewed significance as users enjoy freedom to choose, customise, and interact with content. Audiences turn to fitness channels not only to obtain exercise routines but also to find motivation, companionship, and inspiration. Through comments, likes, and community interactions, they experience social gratification that extends beyond physical health. The participatory nature of digital media therefore strengthens the original assumptions of the theory by allowing audiences to shape content consumption in line with evolving needs.

Empirical studies grounded in UGT have examined diverse media behaviours, including social media use, online learning, and health information seeking. For instance, Oloyede (2022) found that audiences use digital platforms to meet cognitive and affective needs, particularly in contexts where traditional media are limited or inaccessible. Similarly, Kibet (2023) demonstrated that users' engagement with online wellness content was driven by self-improvement, entertainment, and peer connection. In fitness-oriented spaces, audiences seek both practical knowledge and emotional reinforcement, watching instructors not only to learn techniques but also to sustain motivation through parasocial encouragement. This highlights the multifaceted nature of gratification, where information-seeking merges with identity formation and social belonging.

Despite its strengths, the theory has been criticised for focusing excessively on audience agency while overlooking the structural power of media producers and platforms. As Onwuegbuna (2023) argues, digital algorithms often influence user choices, creating what he calls “algorithmic gratification,” where perceived agency is shaped by unseen technological structures. Additionally, self-reported motivations may not always reflect actual psychological processes. Nevertheless, UGT remains indispensable for understanding the dynamic relationship between audiences and media in contemporary digital spaces. In the context of this study, the theory provides a robust framework for explaining why civil servants engage with YouTube fitness videos, to satisfy needs such as health improvement, social interaction, and emotional empowerment. It helps illuminate how users actively seek out and appropriate online fitness content to enhance their physical wellbeing, manage stress, and maintain motivation in their professional and personal lives. Thus, the theory situates YouTube not merely as an entertainment platform but as a personalised space for goal-oriented health engagement.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design to examine the influence of Independent Television (ITV), Benin City public service announcements on health behaviour change among residents of Edo State. The population of the study comprised 548,500 adult residents drawn from Etsako West, Oredo, and Esan South-East Local Government Areas of Edo State. Using Cochran's formula, a sample size of 384 respondents was selected, while a multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of the study population. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to obtain information on respondents' exposure to health-related PSAs, their perception of the credibility of the messages, and the influence of the messages on their health behaviour.

The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale. To ensure validity, the instrument was subjected to expert evaluation by communication experts, while reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.86, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Of the 384 copies of questionnaire distributed, 369 were successfully retrieved and analysed, representing a response rate of 96.1%. Data were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to present and interpret the findings.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Level of Exposure of Civil Servants in Edo State to YouTube Fitness Videos

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
I frequently watch YouTube fitness videos during my leisure time.	162 (42.6%)	131 (34.4%)	40 (10.5%)	27 (7.1%)	24 (6.3%)	384	4.00	Accepted
I subscribe to fitness channels on YouTube.	145 (38.0%)	128 (33.5%)	52 (13.6%)	36 (9.4%)	23 (6.0%)	384	3.87	Accepted
I am exposed to fitness and exercise recommendations on YouTube regularly.	171 (44.5%)	133 (34.6%)	39 (10.2%)	24 (6.3%)	17 (4.4%)	384	4.09	Accepted

The findings in Table 1 show that civil servants in Edo State have a relatively high level of exposure to YouTube fitness videos. A majority of respondents indicated that they frequently watch fitness content and are regularly exposed to exercise recommendations on the platform. This suggests that YouTube serves as a common digital channel for fitness-related information among civil servants.

Table 2: Perceived Motivational Value of YouTube Fitness Videos among Civil Servants in Edo State

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
YouTube fitness videos motivate me to engage in regular exercise.	158 (41.1%)	136 (35.4%)	44 (11.5%)	28 (7.3%)	18 (4.7%)	384	4.01	Accepted
I feel encouraged to maintain fitness routines after watching such videos.	149 (38.8%)	138 (35.9%)	47 (12.2%)	30 (7.8%)	20 (5.2%)	384	3.95	Accepted
Fitness influencers on YouTube inspire me to adopt healthier lifestyles.	143 (37.2%)	140 (36.5%)	50 (13.0%)	33 (8.6%)	18 (4.7%)	384	3.93	Accepted

The results in Table 2 reveal that respondents generally perceive YouTube fitness videos as motivational. Most civil servants agreed that such content encourages them to exercise regularly, maintain fitness routines, and adopt healthier lifestyles. This indicates that YouTube fitness content has a positive motivational influence on exercise intentions among civil servants in Edo State.

Table 3: Relationship between Exposure to YouTube Fitness Videos and Exercise Habits of Civil Servants in Edo State

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
The more I watch YouTube fitness videos, the more I exercise.	139 (36.2%)	142 (37.0%)	51 (13.3%)	32 (8.3%)	20 (5.2%)	384	3.91	Accepted
I practice exercises demonstrated in YouTube fitness videos.	128 (33.3%)	135 (35.2%)	56 (14.6%)	40 (10.4%)	25 (6.5%)	384	3.79	Accepted
My exercise habits have improved due to exposure to YouTube fitness content.	134 (34.9%)	137 (35.7%)	53 (13.8%)	38 (9.9%)	22 (5.7%)	384	3.84	Accepted

The findings in Table 3 indicate a generally positive relationship between exposure to YouTube fitness videos and exercise habits among civil servants in Edo State. Most respondents agreed that increased exposure leads to higher exercise participation, practice of demonstrated routines, and improved fitness habits. This suggests that YouTube fitness content plays a role in shaping physical activity behaviour among civil servants, although the strength of this influence may vary across individuals.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that civil servants in Edo State have a high level of exposure to YouTube fitness videos, as most respondents indicated frequent viewing of fitness content and regular engagement with exercise recommendations. This aligns with Boakye and Mensimah (2021), who observed that YouTube functions as a virtual community where

individuals actively seek inspiration and guidance for improved well-being. It also supports Dube and Nhlapo (2022), who noted that YouTube has democratised access to health information by enabling users to engage with exercise routines without financial or geographical barriers. The implication of this finding is that YouTube has become a mainstream source of fitness exposure among civil servants, reflecting the broader digital transformation of health communication.

The second finding showed that YouTube fitness videos are perceived as highly motivational by civil servants, as respondents agreed that such content encourages them to exercise regularly, maintain fitness routines, and adopt healthier lifestyles. This supports Chidera (2024), who emphasised that digital fitness platforms have shifted from one-way instruction to interactive motivational spaces that encourage behavioural participation. It also aligns with Chiemeka (2022), who noted that emotional engagement and identification with online fitness influencers enhance motivation and encourage sustained interaction with content. From a theoretical perspective, this finding reinforces Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory, which explains that motivation is strengthened when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and purpose in their actions. Thus, YouTube fitness videos appear to provide both informational and psychological reinforcement that enhances exercise motivation among civil servants.

The third finding revealed a generally positive relationship between exposure to YouTube fitness videos and actual exercise habits among civil servants. Respondents indicated that increased exposure leads to higher participation in exercise activities and improved fitness routines. This finding is consistent with Danjuma and Ibe (2024), who established a significant relationship between online video exposure and exercise motivation among public employees. It also supports Chukwuma (2024), who found that exposure to fitness content influences both behavioural adoption and lifestyle modification. However, the variation in responses suggests that while

YouTube exposure is influential, its impact is moderated by individual discipline, work stress, and environmental constraints. This supports Bello and Akinyemi (2022), who argued that media framing of fitness often shapes perception, but does not always guarantee sustained behavioural change.

Conclusion

The study concludes that YouTube fitness videos play a significant role in shaping exercise motivation and behaviour among civil servants in Edo State. Exposure to such content is relatively high, and it contributes positively to both motivational levels and actual engagement in physical exercise. However, the influence is not absolute, as behavioural change is affected by personal, occupational, and environmental factors. Overall, YouTube serves as an important digital health communication tool, but its effectiveness in sustaining long-term exercise habits depends on consistent engagement and supportive conditions.

Recommendations

1. Civil service management in Edo State should incorporate structured digital wellness programmes that guide employees toward credible YouTube fitness channels. This will enhance consistent exposure and reduce reliance on unverified content, in line with the emphasis on credible communication.
2. Health agencies and communication stakeholders should collaborate with certified fitness instructors to produce culturally relevant and professionally guided YouTube fitness content.
3. Since civil servants who are more exposed to YouTube fitness videos show stronger exercise habits, efforts should focus on increasing their engagement with these videos. Workplaces should promote access to curated YouTube fitness content, organize regular viewing and follow-along sessions during breaks, and encourage civil servants to save/share workout playlists that fit their schedule.

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