

ORDINAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG YOUTHS IN AGBOR, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

JONATHAN KASSIM ONWUBUOYA

University of Delta, Agbor
Department of Mass Communication
jonathan.onwubuoya@unidel.edu.ng

&

RITA OBIKIMARI EFEIZOMOR

Department of Statistics.
University of Delta, Agbor.
Email: rita.efeizomor@unidel.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examined the impact of social media use on mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria, using ordinal logistic regression analysis. The study was guided by three objectives which focused on determining the extent of social media use, assessing the level of mental health awareness, and analysing the effect of social media use on mental health awareness. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study was 27,650 and data were collected from 394 youths selected through simple random sampling. A structured questionnaire measured social media use and mental health awareness using a four-point Likert scale. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and ordinal logistic regression. Findings revealed a high level of social media use among youths in Agbor, with most respondents reporting daily engagement and frequent reliance on social media for information. The study also found a relatively high level of mental health awareness among respondents. The ordinal logistic regression result showed that social media use has a statistically significant positive effect on mental health awareness ($\beta = 0.874$, $p < 0.05$), with an odds ratio of 2.397, indicating that higher social media use increases the likelihood of higher mental health awareness levels. The model explained 28.4% of the variation in mental health awareness (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.284$). The study concludes that social media use significantly influences mental health awareness among youths, but the relationship is structured in ordered categories rather than linear increments. It recommended the design of tiered mental health awareness campaigns, strengthening of offline mental health education, and targeted interventions to support movement from low to higher awareness levels.

Keywords: Awareness, Mental health, Ordinal logistic regression, Social media, Youths

Introduction

Mental health has become an important issue among young people in recent years. Many youths experience stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges, but not all of them understand these conditions or know where to get help. Mental health awareness helps people recognise mental health problems, understand their causes and symptoms, and seek appropriate support when necessary (Maduka, 2025). Today, social media plays a major role in spreading information about health issues. Many young people spend several hours daily on platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X (Ekhareafu & Nwaoboli, 2022). These platforms allow users to share information, discuss experiences and learn about different topics, including mental health. According to Arijeniwa and Nwaoboli (2023a, 2023b), social media has become one of the major channels through which young people obtain information relating to mental health and psychological well-being.

Social media has changed the way people receive and share information. Unlike traditional media, it allows users to interact directly with content and with one another. Many organisations, health professionals and mental health advocates now use social media to educate people about mental health issues (Adeyeye and Nwaoboli, 2023). Latha, Meena, Pravitha, Dasgupta and Chaturvedi (2020) state that social media platforms are effective tools for promoting mental health awareness because they enable information to reach a large audience quickly. Through social media campaigns, videos, posts and discussions, many youths have become more aware of mental health conditions and the importance of seeking professional help when necessary.

According to Adeyeye, Arijeniwa & Nwaoboli (2025), in Nigeria, the use of social media continues to increase, especially among young people. As internet access becomes more available and smartphones become more affordable, many youths rely on social media as a major source of

information. Gbenga, Aimiomode, Nwosu and Seluman (2023) note that social media serves as a useful tool for mental health support by providing access to educational materials, counselling information and support communities. This development has increased opportunities for young people to learn about mental health issues and available support services.

Despite these benefits, concerns remain about the possible effects of social media use on mental health. Excessive use of social media may expose users to misleading information, negative comparisons and emotional distress. Sujarwoto, Saputri and Yumarni (2023) found that social media addiction was associated with poor mental health outcomes among university students. Similarly, Layug, Krishnamurthy, McKenzie and Feng (2022) reported that negative experiences on social media could affect the psychological well-being of users. Massad, Al-Taher, Massad, Al-Sabbagh, Haddad and Abufaraj (2020) also observed that exposure to stressful online information contributed to anxiety among many individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researchers have applied different statistical techniques to study mental health-related issues. One of these techniques is ordinal logistic regression, which is appropriate when the dependent variable is measured in ordered categories such as low, moderate and high. Jayawardena, Epps and Ambikairajah (2020) used ordinal logistic regression to predict depression levels, while Lelisho, Merera, Tareke, Hassen, Jemal and Bambo (2022) applied the model to examine generalised anxiety disorder among mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In another study, Sabharwal, Goyal and Joshi (2023) used ordinal regression to assess social dysfunction levels through behavioural problems. These studies demonstrate that ordinal logistic regression is suitable for analysing health-related variables measured on an ordinal scale. Therefore, this study uses ordinal logistic regression to analyse the impact of social media use on mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Social media has become a part of everyday life for many youths in Nigeria (Nwaoboli, 2022, 2023). Young people use different social media platforms to communicate, learn and access information about health and social issues. As the use of these platforms continues to increase, many organisations and mental health advocates have adopted social media as a channel for promoting mental health awareness. Gbenga, Aimiomode, Nwosu and Seluman (2023) argue that social media provides valuable opportunities for mental health education and support.

Likewise, Latha, Meena, Pravitha, Dasgupta and Chaturvedi (2020) maintain that social media can improve public awareness of mental health issues. However, other studies suggest that excessive social media use may expose users to misinformation, anxiety and psychological distress, which may negatively affect their understanding of mental health. Sujarwoto, Saputri and Yumarni (2023), Layug, Krishnamurthy, McKenzie and Feng (2022), and Massad, Al-Taher, Massad, Al-Sabbagh, Haddad and Abufaraj (2020) reported negative mental health outcomes associated with certain patterns of social media use. Furthermore, most previous studies focused on mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and emotional well-being rather than mental health awareness itself. There is also limited empirical evidence on how social media use influences mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State. As a result, it remains unclear whether increased social media use improves mental health awareness among youths in the area. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the impact of social media use on mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria, using ordinal logistic regression analysis.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the extent of social media use among youths in Agbor, Delta State.
2. determine the level of mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State.
3. analyse the impact of social media use on mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State using ordinal logistic regression.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the extent of social media use among youths in Agbor, Delta State?
2. What is the level of mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State?
3. What is the impact of social media use on mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State using ordinal logistic regression?

Conceptual Review

Social Media Use

According to Arijeniwa, Nwaoboli, Ajimokunola & Uwuoruya (2022), social media use refers to the extent to which individuals engage with social networking platforms for communication, information sharing, entertainment and social interaction. Maduka (2025) describes social media as an important part of the daily lives of young people, noting that platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok and X have become major sources of information and social engagement. He further explains that young adults increasingly rely on these platforms to discuss personal issues, share experiences and obtain information on health-related matters. As a result, social media has become a powerful channel through which users receive and exchange information about mental health and well-being.

In a similar vein, Gbenga, Aimiomode, Nwosu and Seluman (2023) view social media use from the perspective of mental health support and awareness. According to them, social media platforms provide opportunities for individuals to access mental health information, participate in awareness campaigns and connect with support communities. They argue that these platforms have made mental health discussions more visible and accessible, especially among young people who spend considerable time online. Consequently, social media has become a useful tool for educating users about mental health conditions and available support services.

However, Sujarwoto, Saputri and Yumarni (2023) present a more critical perspective by focusing on excessive social media use. They define it as a pattern of frequent and prolonged engagement with social media platforms that may interfere with normal daily activities and psychological well-being. According to them, while social media offers opportunities for learning and interaction, excessive use may expose users to emotional stress, misinformation and unhealthy social comparisons. Similarly, Layug, Krishnamurthy, McKenzie and Feng (2022) argue that certain online experiences can negatively affect users' mental well-being. Therefore, social media use can be viewed as both beneficial and problematic, depending on how individuals engage with the platforms and the type of content they consume.

Mental Health Awareness

Generally, mental health awareness refers to the knowledge and understanding individuals possess about mental health conditions, their causes, symptoms and available treatment options. Latha, Meena, Pravitha, Dasgupta and Chaturvedi (2020) define mental health awareness as the ability of individuals to recognise mental health problems and understand the importance of seeking appropriate help when necessary. They further explain that awareness campaigns and educational programmes play an important role in reducing stigma and encouraging positive attitudes towards mental

health. Through increased awareness, individuals become better equipped to identify mental health challenges in themselves and others.

Similarly, Gbenga, Aimiomode, Nwosu and Seluman (2023) describe mental health awareness as the level of understanding people have about mental health issues and available support systems. According to them, social media has contributed significantly to mental health awareness by providing access to educational content, counselling information and discussions on psychological well-being. They argue that increased exposure to mental health information can improve public understanding and encourage individuals to seek help when facing emotional or psychological difficulties. In this regard, awareness involves both knowledge acquisition and positive attitudes towards mental health care.

On the other hand, Massad, Al-Taher, Massad, Al-Sabbagh, Haddad and Abufaraj (2020) emphasise that awareness does not always translate into accurate understanding. They argue that individuals may be exposed to large amounts of information without fully understanding its meaning or reliability. In some cases, misinformation may create confusion about mental health conditions and treatment options. Therefore, effective mental health awareness requires not only exposure to information but also the ability to identify accurate and reliable mental health knowledge.

Ordinal Logistic Regression

Ordinal logistic regression is a statistical technique used to analyse relationships between independent variables and a dependent variable measured in ordered categories (Johnson, 2023). Jayawardena, Epps and Ambikairajah (2020) define ordinal logistic regression as a method that predicts the likelihood of an observation belonging to a particular category when the outcome variable follows a natural order. They explain that the technique is particularly useful in health research where outcomes are often classified into levels such as low, moderate and high. The model enables researchers to examine how predictor variables influence movement across

these ordered categories.

In a similar manner, Lelisho, Merera, Tareke, Hassen, Jemal and Bambo (2022) describe ordinal logistic regression as an appropriate analytical tool for studying health-related conditions measured on an ordinal scale. In their study of generalised anxiety disorder, they used the technique to identify factors associated with different levels of anxiety among respondents. According to them, the model provides more meaningful results than ordinary regression when the dependent variable contains ranked categories. Consequently, ordinal logistic regression has become widely used in medical and social science research.

Furthermore, Sabharwal, Goyal and Joshi (2023) emphasise the usefulness of ordinal regression in examining behavioural and health-related outcomes. They argue that many social and psychological variables are naturally ordered and therefore require statistical methods that recognise this ranking. Johnson (2023) also applied ordinal logistic regression to analyse the effect of intense social media use on students' academic outcomes, demonstrating its suitability for studies involving ordered response variables. Therefore, ordinal logistic regression is considered an appropriate method for analysing the impact of social media use on mental health awareness when awareness levels are classified into categories such as low, moderate and high.

Empirical Review

Social Media Use and Mental Health Awareness

Social media is widely presented as a key driver of mental health awareness among young people, but the literature shows that its influence is far more complex than often assumed. Nweze, Nwizi, Christian, Nwafor, Ogbodo, Uthulor and Igwe (2021) argue that media health education improves mental health awareness among youths, while Latha, Meena, Pravitha, Dasgupta and Chaturvedi (2020) also support the view that social media platforms help spread mental health information quickly and widely.

However, both studies assume that exposure naturally leads to understanding, which is not always the case in practice. In reality, repeated exposure may only create familiarity with terms rather than deep comprehension of mental health conditions, which limits the strength of “awareness” generated through social media.

However, Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020), as well as Maduka (2025), challenge this optimistic view by arguing that social media is a dual environment that combines accurate mental health education with misinformation and emotionally driven content. This mixture creates inconsistency in the type of awareness formed among users because individuals are exposed to conflicting narratives at the same time. Similarly, Sujarwoto, Saputri and Yumarni (2023) and Layug, Krishnamurthy, McKenzie and Feng (2022) argue that excessive or unregulated social media use may expose users to psychological distress and misleading comparisons, which further weakens the assumption that more usage leads to better awareness. These contradictions suggest that social media use does not have a uniform effect on mental health awareness.

Hartas (2021) and Olibamoyo, Sekoni, Ola and Somefun (2025) further complicate this relationship by emphasising that mental health awareness is shaped by both online and offline influences, including peers, family and digital communities. However, they also note that social media tends to dominate this process due to constant accessibility and peer reinforcement. This dominance can distort awareness because online discussions are often shaped by popularity rather than professional knowledge or clinical accuracy. As a result, awareness becomes socially constructed and inconsistent across individuals, depending on their level of exposure and interpretation of online content.

Overall, the literature suggests that social media use does not automatically improve mental health awareness, as assumed in many public health discussions. Instead, its effect depends on usage patterns, content

quality, and user interpretation. Studies by Nweze, Nwizi, Christian, Nwafor, Ogbodo, Uthulor and Igwe (2021), Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020), Hartas (2021), and Olibamoyo, Sekoni, Ola and Somefun (2025) collectively show that the relationship is uneven and non-linear. This creates a gap in understanding how different levels of social media use translate into ordered levels of mental health awareness, which justifies the need for ordinal logistic regression analysis.

Psychological Interpretation and Processing of Social Media Content

Mental health awareness is not only determined by exposure to social media content but also by how individuals psychologically interpret what they see. Asibong, Okafor, Asibong, Ayi, Omoronyia and Owoidoho (2020) and Al-Tammemi, Akour and Alfalah (2020) argue that psychological distress significantly affects how individuals process mental health information. They explain that users experiencing stress or emotional instability are more likely to misinterpret information or respond emotionally rather than critically. This challenges the assumption made by Nweze, Nwizi, Christian, Nwafor, Ogbodo, Uthulor and Igwe (2021) and Latha, Meena, Pravitha, Dasgupta and Chaturvedi (2020) that exposure alone leads to improved awareness.

Similarly, Panayiotou, Black, Carmichael-Murphy, Qualter and Humphrey (2023) and Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020) argue that the effect of social media use on mental health outcomes is not strongly determined by usage time alone. Instead, they highlight that engagement quality and psychological interpretation are more important in shaping outcomes. This means that two individuals with the same level of exposure may develop different levels of awareness depending on their emotional state, cognitive ability, and the type of content they interact with. This further weakens the linear assumption often implied in studies of social media use.

In addition, Hartas (2021) and Maduka (2025) argue that young people's mental health understanding is shaped by a combination of online interactions and offline social environments. However, they also note that online platforms often dominate because of constant accessibility and peer influence. This dominance can distort awareness because users may prioritise peer opinions, viral content, or emotionally engaging posts over professional mental health information. As a result, awareness becomes fragmented, inconsistent, and heavily influenced by subjective interpretation rather than objective understanding.

Furthermore, Olibamoyo, Sekoni, Ola and Somefun (2025) and Sujarwoto, Saputri and Yumarni (2023) show that heavy social media use does not consistently lead to better mental health outcomes or understanding. In some cases, it increases emotional instability and confusion, depending on the type of content consumed. This suggests that psychological interpretation acts as a mediating factor between social media use and mental health awareness. Therefore, studies that ignore this interpretive process risk oversimplifying the relationship between social media use and awareness formation.

Media Campaigns, Exposure–Understanding Gap and Awareness Formation

A consistent issue in the literature is the gap between exposure to mental health information and actual understanding of that information. Nweze, Nwizi, Christian, Nwafor, Ogbodo, Uthulor and Igwe (2021) and Ukwuaniamaka, Anthony, Seluman and Gbenga (2024) argue that although media health education and mass media campaigns increase exposure to mental health messages, they do not necessarily produce deep understanding among youths. Many individuals remain passive consumers of information, meaning they recognise messages without critically engaging with them. This creates a weak form of awareness that is often symbolic rather than functional.

Similarly, Latha, Meena, Pravitha, Dasgupta and Chaturvedi (2020) and Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020) argue that while social media increases access to mental health resources, the quality and reliability of information vary widely. This variation means that users may develop partial or distorted understanding depending on the sources they encounter. Al-Tammemi, Akour and Alfalah (2020) and Asibong, Okafor, Asibong, Ayi, Omoronyia and Owoidoho (2020) further argue that psychological distress reduces individuals' ability to process and retain health-related information, which weakens the effectiveness of awareness campaigns delivered through digital platforms.

More critically, Hartas (2021) and Olibamoyo, Sekoni, Ola and Somefun (2025) argue that awareness is shaped not just by exposure but also by social interpretation and emotional context. In many cases, users engage with mental health content in emotionally charged environments where critical thinking is limited. This reduces the depth of understanding and reinforces surface-level awareness. As a result, awareness becomes inconsistent across users, even when exposure levels are similar.

Taken together, these studies reveal a major gap in the literature: they assume that exposure to mental health information automatically improves awareness, without adequately considering interpretation, emotional state, and engagement depth. This gap is important because it suggests that mental health awareness is not a simple outcome variable but an ordered construct that varies across individuals. This directly supports the need for ordinal logistic regression to properly model levels of awareness.

Ordinal Structure of Mental Health Awareness and Methodological Gap

A major limitation in existing literature is the failure to properly model mental health awareness as an ordered outcome. Most studies treat awareness as a general or continuous concept, ignoring its natural classification into levels such as low, moderate, and high. Lelisho, Merera, Tareke, Hassen, Jemal and Bambo (2022) and Jayawardena, Epps and

Ambikairajah (2020) argue that ordinal logistic regression is more appropriate for such data because it preserves ranking information and produces more accurate interpretations in health-related studies.

Similarly, Sabharwal, Goyal and Joshi (2023) and Johnson (2023) demonstrate that ordinal regression is effective in analysing behavioural and psychological outcomes that occur in ordered categories. They show that psychological states such as depression, dysfunction, or behavioural changes do not occur randomly but follow structured levels of severity. This makes ordinal logistic regression more suitable than linear regression, which assumes equal spacing between outcome categories.

In addition, Lelisho, Merera, Tareke, Hassen, Jemal and Bambo (2022) and Sabharwal, Goyal and Joshi (2023) highlight that ignoring the ordinal nature of data can lead to biased results and weak interpretation. This is particularly important in mental health studies, where outcomes are rarely continuous. Johnson (2023) further extends this argument by showing that ordinal models can be applied to social media-related behavioural outcomes, confirming their relevance in digital behaviour research.

Theoretical Framework

Health Belief Model (HBM)

This study was anchored on the Health Belief Model (HBM). The model was originally developed by Rosenstock (1974) to explain and predict health-related behaviours based on individuals' beliefs and perceptions about health issues. The Health Belief Model posits that people are more likely to take actions that promote their health when they perceive themselves as vulnerable to a health condition, understand the seriousness of the condition, recognize the benefits of taking preventive action, and perceive fewer barriers to such action. The model further suggests that exposure to information and awareness campaigns can serve as cues that motivate individuals to adopt positive health behaviours. Through these components, HBM provides a useful explanation of how people develop awareness and

understanding of health-related issues and how such awareness influences their attitudes and actions.

In the context of this study, the Health Belief Model provides a suitable framework for understanding how social media use influences mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State. Social media platforms have become important channels through which young people receive information about mental health, emotional wellbeing, stress management, depression, anxiety, and other psychological concerns. Through regular exposure to mental health content, awareness campaigns, personal experiences, and professional advice shared online, youths may develop a better understanding of mental health issues and become more informed about available support systems. Labinjo, Serrant, Ashmore, and Turner (2020) observed that mental health awareness in Nigeria is often shaped by cultural beliefs, social perceptions, and access to information, making communication platforms important tools for improving public understanding of mental health. Social media therefore serves as a major source of health information that can influence how young people perceive and respond to mental health issues.

Applied to this study, social media use functions as a cue to action by exposing youths to mental health information and discussions that increase their knowledge and awareness. Frequent engagement with mental health content can help users recognize symptoms of mental health challenges, understand their potential consequences, and appreciate the importance of seeking support when necessary. Hill, Hill, and Kim (2020) argue that social media has become an important medium for disseminating mental health information and increasing public awareness of mental health concerns. Similarly, Ojewumi, Oyeleke, Ajibewa, Adedayo, and Adeyemo (2025) found that social media use plays a significant role in improving mental health awareness among Nigerian youths by providing access to educational content and facilitating discussions about psychological wellbeing. These

findings suggest that social media can positively influence awareness levels when users actively engage with credible and informative content.

Furthermore, the Health Belief Model emphasizes that individuals are more likely to develop positive health attitudes when they perceive clear benefits from health-related information. In this study, youths who regularly encounter mental health messages on social media may become more aware of the importance of mental wellbeing and may be more willing to discuss mental health issues openly. Aledeh, Sokan-Adeaga, Adam, Aledeh, and Kotera (2024) note that media platforms play a significant role in promoting mental health awareness and encouraging healthier attitudes toward mental wellbeing among Nigerian youths. However, the impact of social media on awareness may vary depending on the type of content consumed, the credibility of information sources, and the frequency of exposure. While social media can increase awareness, misinformation and negative content may also affect how mental health issues are perceived and understood.

Therefore, the Health Belief Model is particularly appropriate for this study because it explains how exposure to information through social media can influence mental health awareness among youths. The model provides a clear framework for understanding how social media serves as a source of health information that shapes perceptions, increases awareness, and encourages informed attitudes toward mental health. It also helps explain variations in awareness levels among youths in Agbor by showing that awareness is influenced not only by access to information but also by how individuals perceive and respond to the health messages they encounter through social media.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because, according to Asemaha and Nwaoboli (2024), it largely helps a researcher to collect data from respondents in perception studies. It also provided an opportunity to obtain first-hand

information from youths within their natural social environment. The population of the study comprised all youths residing in Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. According to the projected population estimates of the National Population Commission (NPC, 2025), Agbor has a population of 79,000 residents. However, the study focuses on youths and based on the National Youth Policy definition, youths are persons between the ages of 18 and 35 years. NPC (2025) observed that youths constitute 35% of the total population of Agbor and as such, the youth population in Agbor is 27,650. This population was considered appropriate because youths represent the most active users of social media and are therefore directly relevant to the study.

Since it was not practical to study the entire population, the sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population size (27,650)

e = Level of significance (0.05)

Substituting into the formula:

$$n = 27,650 / [1 + 27,650(0.05)^2]$$

$$n = 27,650 / [1 + 27,650(0.0025)]$$

$$n = 27,650 / 70.125$$

$$n = 394.3$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study was 394 respondents. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to ensure that every eligible youth in Agbor had an equal chance of being selected for participation in the study. This approach helped to minimize sampling bias and improve the representativeness of the sample.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to obtain information relevant to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering respondents' demographic characteristics, extent of social media use, and level of mental health awareness. Items relating to social media use measured the frequency and intensity of respondents' engagement with social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X. Mental health awareness was measured using statements relating to knowledge of mental health conditions, symptoms, causes, treatment options, and available support services. Responses were structured on a four-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). A decision mean score of 2.50 was adopted, such that mean values equal to or greater than 2.50 were accepted, while values below 2.50 were rejected.

A total of 398 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents across selected areas of Agbor. At the end of the data collection exercise, only the properly completed and returned questionnaire (394 copies) were used for analysis. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Research objectives one and two, which examined the extent of social media use and the level of mental health awareness among youths, were analysed using frequency distributions, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. Research objective three, which sought to analyse the impact of social media use on mental health awareness, was analysed using ordinal logistic regression. This technique was considered appropriate because the dependent variable,

mental health awareness, was categorised into ordered levels of low awareness, moderate awareness, and high awareness. Ordinal logistic regression enabled the researcher to determine the extent to which social media use influenced the likelihood of respondents belonging to higher levels of mental health awareness.

The reliability of the research instrument was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A pilot study was conducted among a small group of youths outside the study area but with similar characteristics to the target population. The responses obtained were analysed, and the result produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.81, indicating a high level of reliability. This confirmed that the instrument was suitable for measuring social media use and mental health awareness among youths.

Table 1: Extent of Social Media Use among Youths in Agbor, Delta State (n = 394)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I use social media platforms daily.	210 (53.3%)	120 (30.5%)	42 (10.7%)	22 (5.6%)	3.32	Accepted
I spend several hours each day on social media.	185 (47.0%)	125 (31.7%)	50 (12.7%)	34 (8.6%)	3.17	Accepted
Social media is my major source of information.	172 (43.7%)	134 (34.0%)	56 (14.2%)	32 (8.1%)	3.13	Accepted
I actively engage with content on social media platforms.	168 (42.6%)	142 (36.0%)	50 (12.7%)	34 (8.6%)	3.12	Accepted
I frequently use social media to obtain information on health-related issues.	160 (40.6%)	138 (35.0%)	58 (14.7%)	38 (9.6%)	3.07	Accepted
Aggregate Mean = 3.16 Accepted						

The data in Table 1 indicate that social media use among youths in Agbor is considerably high. Most respondents agreed that they use social media daily and spend several hours on various platforms. Many respondents also identified social media as their major source of information and reported active engagement with online content. The findings further reveal that a substantial proportion of the youths use social media to obtain health-related information. The aggregate mean of 3.16 suggests that social media has become an important part of the daily lives of youths in Agbor and serves as a major channel for information dissemination and interaction.

Table 2: Level of Mental Health Awareness among Youths in Agbor, Delta State (n = 394)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I understand the meaning of mental health.	175 (44.4%)	135 (34.3%)	52 (13.2%)	32 (8.1%)	3.15	Accepted
I can identify common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.	162 (41.1%)	128 (32.5%)	64 (16.2%)	40 (10.2%)	3.04	Accepted
I know that mental health problems can be treated with professional support.	180 (45.7%)	126 (32.0%)	52 (13.2%)	36 (9.1%)	3.14	Accepted
I am aware of places where individuals can seek mental health assistance.	145 (36.8%)	136 (34.5%)	70 (17.8%)	43 (10.9%)	2.97	Accepted
Mental health awareness is important for young people.	205 (52.0%)	120 (30.5%)	40 (10.2%)	29 (7.4%)	3.27	Accepted
Aggregate Mean = 3.11 Accepted						

Table 2 shows that youths in Agbor possess a relatively high level of mental health awareness. Most respondents indicated that they understand the concept of mental health and can identify common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. A large proportion also agreed that mental health problems can be managed through professional support and acknowledged the importance of mental health awareness among young people. Although awareness of available mental health support services

appears slightly lower than other indicators, the aggregate mean of 3.11 indicates that respondents generally possess a satisfactory level of mental health awareness.

Table 3: Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis of the Impact of Social Media Use on Mental Health Awareness among Youths in Agbor, Delta State (n = 394)

Dependent Variable: Mental Health Awareness (Low = 1, Moderate = 2, High = 3)						
Predictor Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	p-value	Odds (Exp β)	Ratio
Social Media Use	0.874	0.162	29.115	0.000	2.397	
Model Fit Statistics						
Statistic	Value					
-2 Log Likelihood	412.863					
Chi-Square	31.527					
df	1					

Significance (p-value) 0.000

Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2 0.284

Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis if $p < 0.05$.

Decision: Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The ordinal logistic regression result in Table 3 shows that social media use has a statistically significant positive effect on mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State ($\beta = 0.874$, $p < 0.05$). The positive coefficient indicates that increased social media use is associated with higher levels of mental health awareness. The odds ratio of 2.397 suggests that youths who make greater use of social media are approximately 2.4 times more likely to belong to a higher category of mental health awareness than those with lower levels of social media use.

The model chi-square value of 31.527 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that the model provides a significantly better fit than a model without the predictor variable. Furthermore, the Nagelkerke Pseudo R² value of 0.284 implies that social media use explains about 28.4% of the variation in mental health awareness among youths in the study area. The finding therefore demonstrates that social media plays an important role in shaping mental health awareness among youths in Agbor. Increased exposure to mental health information, discussions, campaigns, and educational content on social media platforms appears to contribute positively to awareness levels, although other factors not included in the model may also influence mental health awareness.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the Extent of Social Media Use among Youths in Agbor, Delta State?

The findings of this study revealed a high extent of social media use among youths in Agbor, Delta State. The descriptive analysis showed that most respondents use social media daily, spend several hours on various platforms, actively engage with online content, and rely on social media as a major source of information. The aggregate mean score of 3.16 further confirms that social media has become deeply integrated into the everyday lives of young people in the study area. This suggests that social media is no longer merely a platform for social interaction but has evolved into an important channel for information acquisition, communication, and engagement with societal issues.

This finding supports the position of Maduka (2025), who observed that social media has become a central part of young adults' daily lives and serves as one of the primary sources through which they access information on health and psychological well-being. The finding also agrees with Gbenga, Aimiomode, Nwosu and Seluman (2023), who argued that increasing internet penetration and smartphone accessibility have

contributed to the widespread adoption of social media among young people. The high level of usage observed in this study further reinforces the argument of Arijeniwa, Nwaoboli, Ajimokunola and Uwuoruya (2022), who described social media use as a growing behavioural pattern among youths for communication, information sharing, and social interaction.

However, the finding extends beyond simply confirming that youths use social media frequently. It suggests that social media has become a dominant information environment through which many young people encounter social, political, educational, and health-related issues. This observation aligns with Hartas (2021), who argued that digital environments increasingly shape how young people interpret and engage with information. The implication is that any attempt to improve awareness of social issues, including mental health, must recognise the central role that social media now plays in the daily experiences of youths.

Research Question Two: What is the Level of Mental Health Awareness among Youths in Agbor, Delta State?

The findings revealed that youths in Agbor possess a relatively high level of mental health awareness. Respondents demonstrated substantial understanding of the meaning of mental health, the ability to identify common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, and awareness that mental health problems can be managed through professional support. The aggregate mean score of 3.11 indicates that respondents generally possess satisfactory levels of awareness regarding mental health issues.

This finding supports the position of Latha, Meena, Pravitha, Dasgupta and Chaturvedi (2020), who argued that increased exposure to mental health information contributes to greater public awareness and understanding of mental health conditions. The finding also agrees with Gbenga, Aimiomode, Nwosu and Seluman (2023), who observed that access to educational content, counselling information, and online support

communities has improved public understanding of mental health issues. The relatively high awareness observed among respondents may therefore be linked to the increasing availability of mental health information through both digital and traditional communication channels.

Nevertheless, the finding also reflects concerns raised in previous studies regarding the distinction between awareness and understanding. While respondents demonstrated high awareness levels, this does not necessarily imply complete or accurate comprehension of mental health concepts. Massad, Al-Taher, Massad, Al-Sabbagh, Haddad and Abufaraj (2020) argued that exposure to information does not automatically translate into accurate understanding, particularly when information sources vary in quality and reliability. Similarly, Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020) observed that digital platforms often expose users to a mixture of accurate information and misinformation, creating inconsistencies in the quality of awareness developed among users.

The finding therefore suggests that mental health awareness among youths in Agbor is generally high, but awareness itself may exist at different depths and levels of understanding. This observation aligns with the argument of Olibamoyo, Sekoni, Ola and Somefun (2025), who maintained that awareness formation is influenced not only by information exposure but also by interpretation, social context, and personal experiences. Consequently, while the respondents demonstrate substantial awareness, variations may still exist in the quality and depth of their understanding of mental health issues.

Research Question Three: What is the Impact of Social Media Use on Mental Health Awareness among Youths in Agbor, Delta State Using Ordinal Logistic Regression?

The most significant finding of this study emerged from the ordinal logistic regression analysis, which revealed that social media use has a statistically significant positive effect on mental health awareness among

youths in Agbor, Delta State. The positive regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.874$) indicates that increased social media use increases the likelihood of belonging to higher categories of mental health awareness. More importantly, the odds ratio of 2.397 demonstrates that youths with higher levels of social media use are approximately 2.4 times more likely to fall into higher awareness categories compared to those with lower levels of usage.

The significance of this result extends beyond establishing a simple relationship between social media use and awareness. The ordinal logistic regression model shows that the relationship is structured around movement across ordered awareness categories rather than a direct linear increase in awareness. In practical terms, increased social media engagement raises the probability that individuals move from lower awareness categories to higher ones. This finding supports the arguments of Jayawardena, Epps and Ambikairajah (2020) and Sabharwal, Goyal and Joshi (2023), who maintained that ordinal regression models are particularly useful for analysing psychological and behavioural outcomes that naturally occur in ordered stages.

The finding also supports the assumptions of the Health Belief Model, which formed the theoretical basis of the study. The model suggests that exposure to health information serves as a cue to action that influences awareness and health-related perceptions. The result indicates that social media functions as such a cue by exposing youths to mental health discussions, educational campaigns, personal experiences, and health-related information that contribute to higher levels of awareness. This finding is consistent with the observations of Hill, Hill and Kim (2020) and Ojewumi, Oyeleke, Ajibewa, Adedayo and Adeyemo (2025), who found that social media plays a significant role in disseminating mental health information and promoting awareness among young people.

The model fit statistics further strengthen this conclusion. The significant chi-square value indicates that social media use contributes

meaningfully to explaining variations in awareness levels among respondents. However, the Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2 value of 0.284 suggests that social media use explains only 28.4% of the variation in mental health awareness. This finding is particularly important because it demonstrates that social media, although influential, is not the sole determinant of awareness. A substantial proportion of the variation remains explained by other factors outside the model.

This observation supports the position of Maduka (2025), who argued that mental health awareness is influenced by a combination of digital exposure, social interaction, cultural beliefs, and personal experiences. Similarly, Layug, Krishnamurthy, McKenzie and Feng (2022) maintained that online experiences operate within broader psychological and environmental contexts that shape mental health outcomes. Therefore, while social media significantly increases the likelihood of higher awareness levels, awareness formation remains a multidimensional process influenced by several interacting factors.

Another important implication of the finding is that the influence of social media appears to be threshold-based rather than uniform. The regression model suggests that movement between awareness categories occurs in stages rather than through equal increments. This aligns with the argument of Lelisho, Merera, Tareke, Hassen, Jemal and Bambo (2022) that ordinal outcomes should be interpreted as transitions across ordered states rather than continuous changes. In this context, social media appears to function as a catalyst that facilitates movement from low awareness to moderate awareness and from moderate awareness to high awareness.

At the same time, the finding reflects the dual nature of social media identified by Naslund, Bondre, Torous and Aschbrenner (2020) and Sujarwoto, Saputri and Yumarni (2023). While increased use exposes individuals to valuable mental health information, it also exposes them to misinformation, emotional narratives, and unregulated content.

Consequently, social media may improve awareness levels while simultaneously creating differences in the quality and accuracy of that awareness. This suggests that the positive effect identified by the regression model should be interpreted as increased awareness probability rather than guaranteed understanding.

Conclusion

This study concludes that social media use has a statistically significant and positive influence on mental health awareness among youths in Agbor, Delta State. However, this influence is best understood as an ordered shift across awareness levels rather than a uniform increase in knowledge. The ordinal logistic regression results demonstrate that higher social media use increases the likelihood of moving from low to moderate and from moderate to high mental health awareness. Nevertheless, the explanatory power of the model shows that social media is only a partial determinant of awareness, indicating the presence of other influencing factors. Therefore, mental health awareness among youths is structured, layered, and probabilistic, shaped significantly but not exclusively by social media engagement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Since social media use significantly increases the probability of higher mental health awareness, mental health agencies should design tiered awareness campaigns that target users at different awareness levels (low, moderate, high) rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach.
2. Given the threshold-based nature of awareness revealed by the ordinal regression model, interventions should focus on helping users transition from low to moderate awareness, where the strongest impact of social media exposure appears to occur.
3. Because social media explains only part of the variation in mental

health awareness, policymakers should integrate offline mental health education systems (schools, community programs, and youth centres) to complement digital exposure and strengthen understanding depth.

References

- Adesanya, O., Alawode, O., & Sanni, K. (2026). Trust formation in online journalism and digital credibility systems. *Journal of Digital Communication Studies*, 8(1), 15–28.
- Adeyeye, J. O. & Nwaoboli, E. P. (2023). Impact of social media on the marketing of films in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research*. 1 (1), 98–110.
- Adeyeye, J. O., Arijeniwa, A. F. & Nwaoboli, E. P. (2025). Evaluation of social media influence on Benin City residents' perception of the 2024 Okuama bloodbath in Delta State, Nigeria. *The International Journal of African Language and Media Studies (IJALMS)* 5 (1). 20-34.
- Aledeh, J., Soka-Adeaga, E., Adam, H., Aledeh, O., & Kotera, Y. (2024). Media platforms and mental health awareness among Nigerian youths. *African Journal of Media and Psychology*, 11(2), 45–60.
- Al-Tammemi, A. B., Akour, A., & Alfalah, L. (2020). Psychological impact of COVID-19 and information exposure on mental health outcomes. *Journal of Mental Health Research*, 12(3), 145–156.
- Arijeniwa, A. F., Nwaoboli, E.P., Ajimokunola, P. & Uwuoruya, D. (2022). Social media, cultural commodification and the promotion of synthetic values in Nigeria. In E. S. Asemah, D. O. Ekhareafo & T. Santas (Ed.). *Discourses on Communication and Media Studies in Contemporary Society* (pp. 291-300), Jos University Press.
- Arijeniwa, A. F. & Nwaoboli, E.P. (2023). Setting agenda for public discourse: Examining the impact of social media on political participation amongst Nigerian youth. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies*, 10(1), 36-53.

- Arijeniwa, A., & Nwaoboli, E. P. (2023). Textual analysis of social media comments on Achraf Hakimi's divorce case. *GVU Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 8(2), 93-106.
- Asemah, E. S. and Nwaoboli, E. P. (2024). *Seminar writing and presentation in media and communication studies*. Jos: Jos University Press.
- Asibong, U., Okafor, J., Asibong, A., Ayi, A., Omoronyia, E., & Owoidoho, U. (2020). Psychological distress and health information processing. *African Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 8(2), 77–89.
- Ekhareafo, D. O. & Nwaoboli, E. P. (2022). The dialectics of alleged murder and media trial of Chidinma Ojukwu on social media. *Elizade University Journal of Innovative Communications and Media Studies*, 1(1), 199-219.
- Gbenga, A. P., Aimiomode, A., Nwosu, C. L., & Seluman, I. (2023). Social media as a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Science and Innovation*, 10(8), 178–187.
- Hartas, D. (2021). Social and digital influences on youth mental health awareness. *Youth Studies Quarterly*, 15(1), 22–36.
- Hill, R., Hill, S., & Kim, J. (2020). Social media as a medium for mental health information dissemination. *Journal of Health Communication Studies*, 9(2), 101–115.
- Imazogbonre, A., & Asemah, E. (2024). News production pressures and verification practices in digital journalism. *Journal of Media Practice and Ethics*, 6(1), 44–58.
- Jayawardena, S., Epps, J., & Ambikairajah, E. (2020). Ordinal logistic regression with partial proportional odds for depression prediction. *IEEE Transactions on Affective Computing*, 14(1), 563–577.
- Johnson, T. M. (2023). Effect of intense social media use on middle school at-risk students' test scores in science and math: An ordinal logistic regression analysis. *Educational Data Science Review*, 5(2), 88–104.

- Labinjo, M., Serrant, L., Ashmore, R., & Turner, A. (2020). Cultural and communication influences on mental health awareness in Nigeria. *African Journal of Public Health*, 11(3), 119–131.
- Latha, K., Meena, K. S., Pravitha, M. R., Dasgupta, M., & Chaturvedi, S. K. (2020). Effective use of social media platforms for promotion of mental health awareness. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 9(1), 124–135.
- Layug, A., Krishnamurthy, S., McKenzie, R., & Feng, B. (2022). The impacts of social media use and online racial discrimination on Asian American mental health. *JMIR Formative Research*, 6(9), e38589.
- Lelisho, M. E., Merera, A. M., Tareke, S. A., Hassen, S. S., Jemal, S. S., & Bambo, M. M. (2022). Generalised anxiety disorder among mothers attending perinatal services during COVID-19 pandemic: Using ordinal logistic regression model. *Heliyon*, 8(6), 1–12.
- Maduka, I. W. (2025). The impact of social media on mental health in Nigerian young adults: A systematic review. *AJAP–AMAMIHE Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 23(1), 45–67.
- Massad, I., Al-Taher, R., Massad, F., Al-Sabbagh, M. Q., Haddad, M., & Abufaraj, M. (2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health: Early quarantine-related anxiety and its correlates among Jordanians. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 26(10), 1165–1172.
- Naslund, J. A., Bondre, A., Torous, J., & Aschbrenner, K. A. (2020). Social media and mental health: Benefits, risks, and opportunities. *World Psychiatry Review*, 18(2), 95–110.
- Nwaoboli, E. P. (2022). Use of celebrities in social media advertising and customer purchasing decision: An analysis of Helen Paul's hypo bleach advertisements. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies*. 9(6), 77-88.
- Nwaoboli, E. P. (2023). An appraisal of the political economy of the new media. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies*, 9(1), 38-47.

- Nweze, C., Nwizi, O., Christian, E., Nwafor, C., Ogbodo, E., Uthulor, C., & Igwe, C. (2021). Media health education and mental health awareness among youths. *Journal of Communication and Health Studies*, 7(1), 33–48.
- Ojewumi, T., Oyeleke, O., Ajibewa, A., Adedayo, T., & Adeyemo, O. (2025). Social media and mental health awareness among Nigerian youths. *Nigerian Journal of Media and Society*, 3(1), 12–25.
- Olibamoyo, O., Sekoni, A., Ola, B., & Somefun, O. (2025). Digital media exposure and youth mental health awareness. *African Journal of Digital Health*, 2(2), 55–70.
- Panayiotou, M., Black, A., Carmichael-Murphy, P., Qualter, P., & Humphrey, N. (2023). Psychological interpretation of social media and mental health outcomes. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 52(4), 210–225.
- Rosenstock, I. M. (1974). Historical origins of the Health Belief Model. *Health Education Monographs*, 2(4), 328–335.
- Sabharwal, A., Goyal, B., & Joshi, L. M. (2023). An application of ordinal regression to extract social dysfunction levels through behavioral problems. *AIMS Public Health*, 10(3), 577–590.
- Shaibu, H., & Makanjuola, R. (2025). Digital verification systems and credibility in online journalism. *Journal of Information and Media Studies*, 4(1), 15–29.
- Sujarwoto, Saputri, R. A. M., & Yumarni, T. (2023). Social media addiction and mental health among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 21(1), 96–110.
- Ukwuaniamaka, A., Anthony, B., Seluman, I., & Gbenga, A. (2024). Media campaigns and health awareness gaps among youths. *Journal of Health Communication and Development*, 6(2), 66–80.