

“Exploring The Perceived Credibility Of Health Information Shared On Social Media By Women”

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Abstract

Health communication on social media is indispensable for women in the modern digital age. It plays a vital role in informing, educating, and supporting women, promoting healthy behaviors, and fostering a well-informed and health-conscious community. By leveraging the wide reach and interactive nature of social media, health communication can effectively address public health challenges and contribute to the overall well-being of women. The assessment of perceived credibility indicates that well-presented, accurate and comprehensive content significantly enhances trust, while the platform's reputation and the context of information sharing also play crucial roles. The proliferation of social media has transformed it into a primary source of health information, particularly for women who frequently seek and share health-related content online. This study aims to explore the perceived credibility of health information shared on social media by women, focusing on main objectives like studying the socio-demographic characteristics of the women, identifying their usage patterns of social media, exploring the factors influencing the credibility of health communication, and assessing the perceived credibility of health communication on social media among women. For this study, the descriptive research design was adopted, and the primary data of 130 respondents were selected randomly for the collection of primary data through a structured questionnaire.

Keywords: Social media, Health Information and credibility, Misinformation

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I. Introduction:

The digital age has dramatically transformed the landscape of health communication, with social media becoming a key platform for disseminating health information. Women, in particular, have emerged as active users of social media for health-related purposes, seeking advice, sharing experiences, and accessing a plethora of health information. Despite the convenience and accessibility of social media, the credibility of health information shared on these platforms remains a critical concern. Given the potential for misinformation and the varied quality of content, understanding how women perceive the credibility of health information on social media is essential.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have revolutionized the way health information is consumed and shared. These platforms offer immediate access to a vast array of content, enabling users to quickly find information on a wide range of health topics. For many women, social media serves as a primary source of health information, especially in contexts where traditional healthcare resources may be limited or inaccessible. However, the rapid spread of misinformation on these platforms can lead to confusion, poor health decisions, and potential harm. Consequently, understanding women's perceptions of the credibility of health information on social media is vital for promoting accurate health literacy and ensuring informed health decisions.

Perceptions of source credibility are key to information acceptance. Media source credibility comprises trustworthiness and expertise, significantly driving how people process health and risk messages. Cues about a source's experience and honesty are particularly crucial when assessing health information, as believing inaccurate health information can have dire personal consequences. As social media and online platforms increasingly disseminate health messages, definitions of source credibility have evolved. While earlier

definitions focused on credentials as indicators of expertise, recent conceptualizations must also account for expertise held by laypeople with personal health experiences (Metzger & Andrew, 2017).

II. Review Of Literature:

Raynard S Stacey Arnesen and Wen-Yin Sylvia Chou, et (2021) in their study ‘Identifying Credibility Source of Health Information in Social media: Principle and Attributes’ found that the importance of Social media platforms actively engaging with behavioral and public health researchers. By sharing data, these platforms can better understand the impact of their policies on both online and offline behavior. This collaborative approach is essential for enhancing the credibility of health information disseminated through social media channels.

Jiaxi Sun (2021) in his research ‘Research on the Credibility of Social media Information Based on User Perception’ contributes significantly to understanding the unique attributes of social media and its implications for information credibility. By recognizing the distinct characteristics of social media compared to conventional media, Sun contracts information credibility model tailored specially for various social media platforms. This model serves to enhance the credibility of social media information and provides strategic guidance for advancing research in data science.

Mokd Razif Zakaria, Normath Mustaffa and Emma mohamad (2021) in their study ‘Source Credibility in Health Promotion Information Dissemination: A Systematic Review (SLR)’ emphasize that credibility in health promotion information is no longer solely reliant on traditional sources like health professionals or politicians. Instead, factors such as competence, trustworthiness, and source attractiveness play pivotal roles in shaping the perceived credibility of health information.

Heejun Kim (2019) in this study “Credibility Assessment of Health Information on Social media: Discovering Credibility Factors, Operationalization and Prediction’, Offers valuable insights into the process by which individuals evaluate the credibility of health information shared on social media platforms. Through a content analysis of randomly selected health information, Kim identifies key credibility factors and explores their predictive power in assessing the credibility of health-related content on social media.

Theodosia C Nathalia and Yustisia kritiana (2018) in their research paper ‘The Source Credibility in social media’ findings indicate that source credibility information sharing and intensions but does not influence the motive for information seeking and entertainment motives. This suggests that individuals may prioritize credibility when deciding whether to share travel-related information, but other factors may drive their initial information-seeking and information-sharing behaviors in the context of travel decision-making.

The credibility of health information on social media is a growing concern, as misinformation can lead to significant health risks. Studies by Raynard S. Stacey Arnesen, Wen-Yin Sylvia Chou, and Jiaxi Sun highlight the need for collaborative efforts between social media platforms and health researchers to enhance information credibility. Mokd Razif Zakaria, Normath Mustaffa, and Emma Mohamad emphasize that factors such as competence, trustworthiness, and source attractiveness shape perceived credibility, moving beyond traditional reliance on health professionals. Heejun Kim's work identifies key credibility factors and their predictive power in assessing health information, while Theodosia C. Nathalia and Yustisia Kritiana note the importance of credibility in information-sharing decisions. Despite these insights, there remains a gap in understanding how women specifically perceive and evaluate the credibility of health information on social media. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the perceived credibility of health information shared on social media by women, focusing on their socio-demographic characteristics, usage patterns, and the factors influencing their trust in health communication.

Statement of the problem:

“Exploring the Perceived Credibility of Health Information shared on Social Media by Women”

Objectives:

1. To study the socio-demographic characteristics of the women
2. To identify the usage pattern of social media
3. Explore the factors influencing the credibility of health communication on social media among women
4. Assess the perceived credibility of health communication on social media among women

Methodology/ Research deign:

To assess the exploring the perceived credibility of health information shared on social media by women, for this study descriptive research design was adopted. The descriptive research method describes the characteristics of the population and phenomenon is being studied. The primary data is collected through a survey method by using a structured interview schedule. A total of 130 women were selected randomly for the collection of primary data through a structured questionnaire.

Data analysis:

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Age	Respondents	Percentage
18 to 30 years	68	52.30%
31 to 45 years	30	23.07%
46 to 60 years	20	15.38%
Above 60 years	12	9.25%
Total	130	100%

Table 1 reveals the age group of the respondents. It indicates that majority of the respondents (52.30%, N=68) belonged to 18 to 30 years, followed by 23.07 percent (N=30) belonged to 31 to 45 years age group, 15.38% (N=20) respondents were belonged to 46 to 60 years age groups. Whereas only 9.25 percent (12) respondents were above 60 years age groups.

Table 2: Education qualification

Education qualification	Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	10	7.69%
Primary and High School	28	21.53%
College	45	34.61%
Post Graduation	41	31.53%
Others	06	4.64%
Total	130	100%

Table 2 found the educational Qualification of the respondents. It indicates that most of the respondents (34.61%, N=45) belonged to college students, followed by postgraduation studies (31.53%, N=41). Whereas (21.53%, N=28) belonged to primary and secondary, followed by 7.69 percent (N=10) who have belonged to illiterate, and only 4.64 percent (N=06) were belonged to other education categories.

Table 3: Annual Income

Annual Income	Respondents	Percentage
Up to 1 lakh	34	26.15%
1 to 2 lakh	60	46.15%
2 to 4 lakh	22	16.92%
4 Above Lakh	14	10.78%
Total	130	100

It notice from table 3 reveals the family Annual Income of the respondents. It shows that most of the respondents (46.15%, N=60) have 1 to 2 lakh annual income, followed by 26.15 percent (N=34) were belonged to up to 1 lakh. Whereas 16.92 percent (N=22) were belonged to 2 to 4 lakh annual income and only 10.78 percent (N=14) were have 4 above lakh.

Table 4: Occupation

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
Student	66	50.76%
Self employment	16	12.30%
Private Sector	25	19.23%
Government Sector	08	6.18%
House maker	15	11.53%
Total	130	100

Table 4 reveals the occupations of the respondents. The above table shows that most of the respondents (50.76%, N=66) were students, followed by 19.23 percent (N=25) were Private sector. Whereas (12.30, N=16) were self employed, followed by 11.53 percent (N=15) were house makers and only 6.18 percent (N=08) have government jobs.

Table 5: Usage of Type of Social media platforms for getting health information

Usage of social media platforms	Regularly	Occasionally	Never
Facebook	79 (60.76%)	27 (20.76%)	24 (18.46%)
Whatsapp	80 (61.53%)	35 (26.92%)	15 (11.53%)
Instagram	99 (76.15%)	26 (20%)	05 (3.84%)
Twitter	45 (34.61%)	62 (47.69%)	23 (17.69%)
YouTube	98 (75.38%)	29 (22.30%)	09 (06.92%)
LinkedIn	30 (23.07%)	75 (57.69%)	25 (19.23%)

Table 5 reveals the usage of types of social media platforms for getting health information: that majority of the respondents (60.76%, N=79) were regularly using Facebook, followed by 20.76 percent (N=27) respondents were occasionally using it and only 18.46 percent (N=24) of the respondents were never using Facebook at all. Whereas most of the respondents (61.53%, N=80) were using Whatsapp, followed by 26.92 percent (N=35) of the respondents were using whatsapp and only 11.53 percent (N=15) of the respondents were using Whatsapp. Whereas as Three-fourth of the respondents (76.15%, N=99) were using Instagram for getting health information on social media, followed by 20 percent (N=26) respondents were using it, occasionally and only (3.84%, N=05) of the respondents were never using Instagram for getting health information. The most of the respondents (47.69%, N=62) who were occasionally using Twitter for health information, followed by 34.61 percent (N=45) respondents were regularly using Twitter and very less (17.69%, N=23) respondents were never use Twitter for getting Health information. Whereas as three-fourth of the respondents (75.38%, N= 98) were regularly using YouTube for getting health information, followed by 22.30 percent (N=29) were occasionally using YouTube, and only (6.92%, N=09) were never use YouTube. Finally, 57.69 percent (N=75) were occasionally using LinkedIn, followed by (23.07%, N=30) were regularly using this app and only 19.23 percent (N=25) were never using such apps.

The data indicates that Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn are widely used by women for health information, with Instagram and YouTube being the most popular. Twitter is less frequently used, and a significant portion of respondents only occasionally use LinkedIn for health information.

Table 6: Types of Contents mostly heard/seen read on social media

Types of Contents	Respondents	Percentage
Text posts	58	44.61%
Images	98	75.38%
Video	94	72.30%
Links to articles or websites	70	53.84%
User-Generated Content	45	34.61%
Behind-the-Scenes Content	37	28.46%

Table 6 indicates that the types of content mostly heard/seen or it may be read on social media were that the three-fourth of the respondents (75%, N=98) were heard, seen the Images, followed by (72.30%, N=94) were heard and seen videos from social media. Whereas 53.84 percent (N=70) respondents have seen links to articles or websites contents, followed by (44.61%, N=58) respondents seeing the text posts, 34.61 percent (N=45) respondents were heard and seen the user generated contents and only 28.46 percent (N=37) were heard and seen the behind the scenes content on social media.

**Table 7: Social media sites provides health content for women satisfactorily
N=130**

Social media Satisfaction level	Highly Satisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory	Not at all Satisfactory
Facebook	77 (59.23%)	32 (24.61%)	21 (16.16%)
Instagram	63(48.46%)	41 (31.54%)	26 (20%)
Whatsapp	67 (51.54%)	41 (31.54%)	22 (16.92%)
Snapchat	31 (23.86%)	20 (15.38%)	79 (60.76%)
Youtube	89 (68.46%)	32 (24.61%)	09 (06.93%)
Twitter	33 (25.38%)	29 (22.30%)	68 (52.32%)

Table 7 reveals that social media sites provide health contents for women satisfactory to the extent that the majority of the respondents (59.23%, N=77) were highly satisfactory with Facebook, followed by 24.61 percent (N=32) were somewhat satisfactory, and only 16.16 percent (N=21) were not at all satisfactory. Whereas 48.46 percent (N=63) were highly satisfactory with Instagram, followed by 31.54 percent (N=41) somewhat satisfied with instagram, and 20 percent (N=26) were not at all satisfactory. Whereas the majority of the respondents (51.54%, N=41) were highly satisfactory, followed by 31.54 percent (N=41) were somewhat satisfactory and only 16.92 percent (N=22) were not at all satisfactory. Half of the respondents (60.76%, N=76) were not at all satisfactory with Snapchat, followed by 23.86 percent (N=31) were highly satisfactory, and only 15.38 percent (N=20) who were somewhat satisfactory. Majority of the respondents (68.46%, N=89) were highly satisfactory with YouTube, followed by 24.61 percent (N=32) were somewhat satisfactory, and only 06.93 percent (N=09) were not at all satisfactory. Whereas majority of them (52.32%, N=68) were not at all satisfactory with Twitter, followed by 25.38 percent (N=33) were highly satisfactory and only (22.30%, N=29) were somewhat satisfactory with Twitter.

The data reveals that Facebook and YouTube are the most satisfactory social media platforms for health content among women, with 59.23% and 68.46% of respondents respectively rating them as highly satisfactory. Instagram also fares well, with 48.46% of respondents highly satisfied. However, Snapchat and

Twitter are less satisfactory, with 60.76% and 52.32% of respondents, respectively finding them not at all satisfactory for health content. This indicates a preference for certain platforms over others for credible health information.

Table 8: Type of health information to access on social media
N=130

Types of Information	Respondents	Percentage
Cardiac Health	57	43.84%
Cancer	73	56.15%
Obesity	66	50.76%
Diabetes	89	68.46%
Hypertension	71	54.61%
Mental Health	105	80.76%
Depression	68	52.30%
Anxiety	77	59.23%
Aging	91	70%
Mednopause	87	66.92%
Fertility	89	68.46%
Beauty tips	103	79.23%
Nutrition's food	74	56.92%
Fitness	58	44.61%

Table 08 reveals the types of health information to access on social media that the three-fourth of the respondents (80.76%, N=105) were access the mental health information, followed by 79.23 percent (N=103) respondents were accessing the beauty tips. Whereas 70 percent (N=91) were accessing the aging information on social media, followed by (68.46%, N=89) were accessed the fertility information as well as diabetes health information. Whereas (66.92%, N=87) were accessing the mednopause information on social media, followed by 59.92 percent of the respondents (N=77) were access the Anxiety information. Whereas 56.92 percent (N=74) were access the nutritious food on social media, followed by (56.61%, N=73) were access the cancer related information. Whereas as 54.61 percent (N=71) were access the hypertension related information, followed by 52.30 percent (N=68) were accessing the depression related information. (50.76%, N=66) respondents were access the obesity health information, followed by 44.61 percent (N=58) were accessed the fitness information on social media, and only 43.84 percent (N=57) were cardiac health information on social media. This means this tables show that most of them access mental health, beauty tips, aging, and diabetes health related information on social media.

The data indicates that the majority of respondents access a variety of health information on social media, with mental health (80.76%), beauty tips (79.23%), ageing (70%), and diabetes (68.46%) being the most frequently accessed topics. Other significant areas include fertility, menopause, anxiety, nutritious food, cancer, hypertension, depression, obesity, fitness, and cardiac health. This suggests that social media is a key source for diverse health-related information, with a strong emphasis on mental health and lifestyle topics.

Table 9: Type of health information seeking or sharing on social media
N=130

Types of Health information	Respondents	Percentage
General health tips	77	59.23 %
Patient Personal experience	41	31.53%
News articles on health tips	53	40.76%
Promotional content from healthcare provides	68	52.30%
Disease information	79	60.76%
Treatment options	58	44.61%
Medication information	59	45.38%
Lifestyle recommendation	83	63.84%
Mental health support	94	72.30%
Nutrition and diet advice	103	79.23%
Exercise and fitness tips	111	85.38%

Table 9 reveals that the types of health information seeking or sharing on social media that the majority of the respondents (85.38%, N=111) were seeking and sharing exercise and fitness tips, followed by 79.23 percent (N=103) respondents seeking nutrition and diet advice. Whereas (72.23%, N=94) were seeking mental health support information on social media, followed by 63.84 percent (N=83) were seeking and sharing lifestyle recommendation, 60.76 (N=79) were seek disease information, followed by 59.23 percent (N=77) were seek General health tips as well as they shared it. Whereas 52.30 percent (N=68) were seek and shared the promotional content from healthcare information, followed by 45.38 percent (N=59) were seek the

medication information. Whereas (44.61%, N=58) were treatment options, followed by 40.76 percent (N=53) were seeking and sharing news articles on health tips information and only 31.53 percent (N=41) were seeking and sharing the patient’s personal experience.

The findings reveal that respondents primarily seek exercise and fitness tips (85.38%) and nutrition advice (79.23%) on social media, reflecting a strong interest in lifestyle and holistic health. Other significant areas include mental health support (72.23%) and disease information (60.76%), highlighting the platform's role in proactive health management.

Table 10: Comfortable zone for discussing health related topics on social media platforms

Opinion of the respondents	Respondents	Percentage
Comfortable	43	33.07%
Somewhat comfortable	31	23.85%
Neutral	56	43.08%
Total	130	100

Table 10 found that in the comfortable zone for discussing health related topics on social media platforms was that the most of the respondents (43.08%, N=56) were neutral, followed by 33.07 percent (N=43) were comfortable with this, and only (23.85%, N=31) were somewhat comfortable discussing health related topics on social media platforms.

Table 11: Searching for health Information in social media on Behalf of

Searching health information for	Respondents	Percentage
Myself	57	43.85%
Family member	29	22.30%
Friends	23	17.70%
Someone else	21	16.15%
Total	130	100

Table 11 reveals the searching for health information in social media on behalf of in this aspect most of the respondents (43%, N=57) were they search health information for themselves, followed by 22.30 percent (N=29) were said they searched for health information for their family members. Whereas (17.70%, N=23) were said they searching for friends, and only 16.17 percent (N=21) were said they searched health information for someone else through the social media platforms.

**Table 12: Feeling after engaging Health related contents on social media
N=130**

Health contents	Respondents	Percentage
Informed	79	60.76%
Motivated	61	46.92%
Inspired	53	40.76%
Confused	41	31.53%
Confident	49	37.69%

Table 12 indicates that feeling after engaging health contents on social media that the majority of the respondents (60.76%, N=79) were felt informed, followed by 46.92 %, (N=61) were felt motivated. Whereas (40.76%, N=53) were said they inspired while using or engaging with health-related contents on social media, followed by 37.69 percent (N=49) were said they were confident after using social media, and only 31.53 percent (N=41) were confused while using social media for engaging with health contents.

Table 13: The social media affected

The social media affected	Respondents	Percentage
Positively	73	56.15%
Negatively	29	22.32%
Both	28	21.53%
Total	130	100

Table 13 shows the social media affects that the half of the respondents (56.15%, N=73) were affected positively, followed by 22.32 percent (N=29) were affected and only 21.53 percent (N=28) were said social media affected, both positively as well as negatively.

Table 14: Frequency of engaging with health related contents on social media platforms

Opinion of the respondents	Respondents	Percentage
Several times a week	69	53.08%

Occasionally	33	25.39%
Very Rarely	28	21.53%
Total	130	100

Table 14 reveals that the frequency of engaging with health-related content on social media platforms that the majority of the respondents that the majority of respondents (53.08%, N=69) were said they engage several times a week for health-related content, followed by 25.39 percent (N=33) were said occasionally engage with health contents and only 21.53 percent (N=28) were very rarely they engaged with health-related content on social media platforms.

Table 15: Source of health information that trusting the most on social media
N=130

Source of health information	Respondents	Percentage
Healthcare professional	63	48.46%
Government health agencies	37	28.46%
News Organization	41	31.53%
Health-related websites	39	37.69%
Friends and family	59	45.38%
Celebrities and influencers	78	60%

Table 15 indicates that the source of health information that trusted the most on social media that the half of the respondents (60%, N=78) were trust celebrities and influencers source on social media, followed by 48.46 percent (N=63) trusted source of healthcare professionals. Whereas 45.38 percent (N=59) were sources of friends and family, followed by (37.69%, N=39) were health related websites sources for them. Whereas 31.53 percent (N=41) were said news organization were the source of health information that trusting the most on social media and only 28.46 percent (N=37) were government health agencies were sources to trust.

Table 16: Types of health information finding the most influential on social media
N=130

Types of health information	Respondents	Percentage
Success stories	81	62.30%
Expert advice	53	40.76%
Research finding	37	28.46%
Info graphics and visual contents	71	54.61%
Promotions and discount for health products	55	42.30%

Table 16 indicates that the types of health information finding the most influential on social media were that the majority of the respondents (62.30%, N=81) were finding success stories on social media, followed by 54.61 percent (N=71) were finding infographics and visual contents on social media. Whereas 42.30 percent (N=55) were finding promotion and discounts for health products, followed by 40.76 percent (N=53) were finding expert advice, and only (28.46%, N=37) were search findings.

Table 17: Assess the extent of Overall credibility to social media apps

Credibility	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
Accurate and unbiased	51 (39.23%)	37 (28.46%)	42 (32.31%)
Timely and Authentic	63 (48.46%)	41 (31.54%)	26 (20%)
Useful and motives	69 (53.08%)	31 (23.84%)	30 (23.09%)
Simple Language	47 (36.16%)	38 (29.23%)	45 (34.61%)

Table 17 reveals that assess the extent of the overall credibility to social media apps that most of respondents (39.23%, N=51) were strongly agreed to the credibility of social media apps accurate and unbiased, followed by 32.31 percent (N=42) were disagreed, and only 28.46 percent (N=37) were agreed to this. Whereas nearly half of the respondents (48.46%, N=63) were said credibility of social media apps were timely and authentic, followed by 31.54 percent (N=41) were agreed and only 20 percent (N=26) were disagreed. Whereas as majority of the respondents (53.08%, N=69) were strongly agreed to social media apps useful and motives, followed by 23.84 percent (N=30) were agreed and only (23.09%, N=30) were disagreed. Whereas lastly most the respondents (36.16%, N=47) were strongly agreed to credibility of social media apps was simple language, followed by 34.61 percent (N=45) were disagreed and only 29.23 percent (N=38) were agreed.

The data indicates mixed perceptions of social media app credibility among respondents. While 39.23% strongly agree that these apps provide accurate and unbiased information, nearly half (48.46%) find them timely and authentic. Additionally, 53.08% consider the apps useful, although opinions on the simplicity of language vary, with 36.16% strongly agreeing on its effectiveness.

Table 18: The Credibility of health information shared on social media

The importance of sharing health information	Respondents	Percentage
Important	69	53.07%
Neutral	33	25.38%
Not important	28	21.54%
Total	130	100

Table 18 reveals the credibility of health information shared on social media. the majority of the respondents (53%, N=69) were said the credibility of health information shared on social media is important to them, followed by 25.38 percent (N=33) were said neutral; for them and only (21.54%, N=28) were said not important for them to share health information on social media.

III. Conclusion:

This study reveals significant patterns in how women utilize social media for health-related information. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have emerged as the most popular choices, with women frequently engaging to seek health advice, connect with health communities, and follow health influencers. This high level of engagement highlights the critical role social media plays in modern health communication, suggesting that health organizations should actively maintain an engaging presence on these platforms to effectively reach their target audience. The study also identified several key factors influencing the perceived credibility of health information shared on social media. Trustworthiness of the source, the quality and clarity of information, consistency with existing knowledge, and endorsements by healthcare professionals significantly contribute to perceived credibility. Additionally, community feedback plays a vital role in enhancing the trustworthiness of the information. These insights are essential for health communicators to develop effective strategies that ensure the information disseminated on social media is trusted and valued by women. By prioritizing these credibility factors, health organizations can enhance the overall impact and reliability of health communication in the digital age, ultimately fostering better health outcomes among their audiences.

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