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Level of Perception of Health Information on Social Media and Health Practices of Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Social media's ascent has a profound impact on how people, especially students, get and interact with health information. This descriptive-correlational study aimed to determine the significant relationship between the level of perception of Health Information on social media and the Health Practices of senior high school students. It aimed to address the issue faced by social media users, specifically the senior high school students, when encountering fake news that could impact their health practices, potentially leading to negative outcomes. It examined the relationship between the perception of health information on social media and the health practices of 311 senior high school students from a medical school in Davao City. The Shapiro-Wilk results ($W = 0.938$, $p < 0.001$) indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, Spearman's Rho was used. The results of Spearman's Rho also showed a significant Low Relationship ($r = 0.273$, $p < 0.01$) between the Level of Perception of Health Information on Social Media and the Health Practices of senior high school students at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. The findings suggest that among Senior High School Students, a positive perception of health information on social media can be attributed to the improvement of health practices among them. However, the findings demonstrated that the relationship between health information on social media and health practices is low.

INTRODUCTION

Our generation is completely engrossed with social media, and it has become part of our daily life. Social media has broadly assisted the community, especially in health-related concerns. Its wide array of tools influences how individuals produce, find, and share knowledge (Afful-Dadzie *et al.*, 2021). While social media users are rapidly increasing, fake news has also become a significant issue, particularly regarding health. The misinformation about health has been more common, especially during public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. Although social media posts with regard to health information frequently are meant to raise awareness of health issues, they may unintentionally feed an awful loop of false information that misleads users (Olan *et al.*, 2022). The impact of social media on the well-being of Filipino youth has become a critical and growing concern. Misinformation, particularly related to health, has spread rapidly, leading to harmful behaviors such as self-diagnosis and reliance on unverified medical advice (Lacsá, 2022). Filipino students who engage heavily with social media are significantly more likely to experience these adverse effects (Archivido *et al.*, 2019). In Davao City, Philippines, where the researchers are currently residing, observed that most of the students are utilizing the internet for their learning and are browsing online resources to deepen their understanding on certain topics and situations, specifically on health information. Davao City officials were struggling to quell panic over fake

news about a tsunami and another powerful earthquake that have continued to circulate in social media following the magnitude 6.3 tremor that struck parts of Mindanao on the 16th day of October 2019 (Sunstar News, 2019). Due to the prevalent use of the internet where it leads learners to being dependent on it makes them vulnerable to unverified and twisted information. Hence, the urgency of addressing students' perceptions of health information on social media is underscored by the compelling evidence highlighting the importance of examining their health practices. As evidenced by numerous studies that were previously discussed, the researchers of this study realized the impact of unreliable posts on social media—where it has the great chance to hinder the proper health practices of the students. Therefore, it is a critical need to resolve misinformation on social media to create effective health practices among every individual, especially students. By enhancing proper usage of posting on social media, and adding more reliable sources, it may significantly lessen the impacts of misinformation and fake news.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception on Health Information on Social Media

Internet was the most frequent initial source of health information to those who know how to utilize the internet (Ichikawa *et al.*, 2024). However, this does not imply that their ability to use the internet equates to social media literacy. Social media literacy is very important especially when it comes to crucial information, specifically, health

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information because that influences people's health behaviors online (Niu *et al.*, 2020). Social media is also emerging as an instrument of connecting with those in need and those most affected by barriers to health literacy. Nevertheless, the large number of users make individuals susceptible to false information explains why social media literacy is a must-have intelligence when it comes to utilizing the internet. Individuals with lower health literacy were more likely to believe information of health from non-professional sources than from healthcare professionals. Thus, proving the importance of social media health literacy is necessary to improve people's ability when checking information they found in social media (Southwell *et al.*, 2023).

Health Practices

As technology advances and grows, more individuals rely on it. However, this does not mean that everyone is dependent on it because there is something called the "digital divide". Young adults often spend significant time scrolling through Facebook newsfeeds, which frequently expose them to health-related content (Lim *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, participants stated they looked to social media influencers for health and lifestyle inspiration and judged the credibility of sources by appearance and instinct. Additionally, health status is one of the main things that are interconnected with health practices that affects social and economic factors; it is a factor that is affected by how well a person takes care of themselves (Tulchinsky *et al.*, 2023). People who are currently middle-aged or older are more prone to be vulnerable to illnesses. However, they are more prone to the lack of health information due to the digitalization of the current generation (Wen & Zhang, 2022). Although those factors that are mentioned earlier that influence health status are generally the most common areas in which health status is affected, some things do affect someone's health status, such as their attitudes and behaviors. It should also be emphasized that recognition of the effects of a health-promoting lifestyle on health at present and in the future highlights its importance to student development (Dacay *et al.*, 2024).

Theoretical Theories

This study was anchored on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura (1989). SCT is a theory that highlighted how individuals actively influence their learning by interpreting the outcomes of their actions (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Students in today's "digital generation" mostly gain knowledge through social media. Since people tend to imitate the actions of those around them and social media is becoming a primary source of information, this theory supports our findings. This theory is relevant to the study as it helps explain how students adopt health practices through observational learning on social media. Furthermore, feedback from their online peers can influence their health behaviors. This study is further anchored on the

Diffusion of Innovation Theory of Rogers (2003) which explained how health information spreads via social media. This theory proposed that information spread across a population over time. Health information and practices on social media can be seen as innovations, with influential users playing a key role in promoting them. Additionally, people's tendency to connect with those similar to them can influence their adoption of health behaviors. By applying the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, this study offers valuable insights into the factors that affect how health information and practices are shared and adopted on social media among senior high school students. Lastly, this study was also anchored on the Health Belief Model that was developed in the 1950s by social psychologists Hochbaum *et al.*, (1950). It was designed to understand and predict individuals' health behaviors by examining their perceptions of susceptibility to health issues, the seriousness of those issues, the benefits of preventive actions, and the barriers to that action (Boskey, 2024). By applying the HBM, the study assessed how different social media platforms affect students' perceptions of health information and their health practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a non-experimental, quantitative design with a descriptive-correlational approach to explore the relationship between senior high school students' perceptions of health information on social media and their health practices. The focus was not on determining causation but rather on understanding the connection between the two variables (Bhat, 2023). The research was conducted at a medical school in Davao City, Davao del Sur, Philippines. A total of 311 students from Grades 11 and 12 were selected out of the 1,618 enrolled students during the first semester of school year 2024–2025. The respondents were selected through simple random sampling to ensure fairness and equal opportunity for participation. The sample size was calculated based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Noor *et al.*, 2022). In the data collection process, the researchers used questionnaires that were modified from previous studies. The questions on social media perception were adapted from works by Kaeophanuek *et al.* (2017), Bidin *et al.* (2012), and Hussain *et al.* (2019). Meanwhile, the questions on health practices were based on studies by Houston and Allison (2002), Buntin *et al.* (2011), and Hussain *et al.* (2019). Each questionnaire had 15 items organized into three categories: social media literacy, recency, and fake news consumption for perception, and health status, health preferences, and health barriers for health practices. Responses were rated on a Likert scale, with options ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1) for perception, and from "Excellent" (5) to "Bad" (1) for health practices. The data collection process began with securing approval from the school principal. Online questionnaires were then distributed via Google Forms, which included a consent

form to ensure that participation was voluntary. Students were informed about the study's purpose, assured of their anonymity, and guaranteed that their responses would remain confidential, in compliance with Republic Act 10173, the Data Privacy Act of 2012. To maintain data security, all information was stored on password-protected devices and used solely for academic purposes. To analyze the data, the researchers calculated the mean and standard deviation to identify trends. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to check whether the data followed a normal distribution (Humaizi, 2024). Since the data did not meet normality requirements, the Spearman's Rank-

Order Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the strength and significance of the relationship between the variables. These methods ensured the study was conducted systematically and ethically, offering valuable insights into how social media impacts the health behaviors of senior high school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Presented in Table 1, where the data collected on the level of Students' Perception of Health Information on social media in terms of Social Media Literacy, Recency, and Fake News Consumption.

Table 1: Level of Students' Perception of Health Information on Social Media

Level of the Senior High School Students' and of Health Information on Social Media	Mean	Standard Deviation	Perceived level of effects
Social Media Literacy	4.34	0.68	High
Recency	4.26	0.66	High
Fake News Consumption	4.03	0.55	High
Overall	4.21	0.56	High

As presented in Table 1, where the data collected on the level of students' perception of health information on social media obtained an overall mean of 4.21 (SD = 0.56), indicating a high positive impact. Aligned with the study of Okeke *et al.* (2022) where it stated that people tend to perceive social media health messages as credible enough for them to keep themselves informed on issues. With this evidence, this research study further supported the beliefs of people that perception on health information on social media could be factored by the student's social media literacy, recency of the news, and how the students consume the fake news on the internet. Olan *et al.* (2022) also stated that social media messages seek to encourage others, but reposting tries to increase messages through the process of multiplication, raising doubts about information credibility, quality, and verification. Specifically, among the three indicators of level of students' perception of health information on social media, the mean score for Social Media Literacy was 4.34 (SD = 0.68), which was the highest of all the indicators indicating that perception of users was proven to be highly influenced by their literacy level. It is significant to know the level of perception of senior high school students because their social media literacy influences the way they interpret or receive the information they gain on the internet. As stated by Niu *et al.*, (2020), Social media literacy is very important especially when it comes to crucial information, specifically, health information

because that may influence people's health behaviors online.

The study's second-highest indicator was the Recency with a mean score of 4.26 (SD = 0.66), which was described as high. This indicated that the level of students' perception of health information on social media effectively keeps them up to date. Students who keep up to date the health information on social media likely have better understanding of health compared to those who did not. According to Li *et al.* (2022), information timeliness is positively related to individuals' behavior because the recency of information is a critical factor that draws their attention. Keeping up to date information when researching information shows that the recency of the updates or news matters.

Among the three indicators, the mean score for fake news consumption was 4.03 (SD = 0.55), which was also categorized as high. This suggested that the students found consumption of fake news influenced them to confirm first on what they saw on social media and as they are more likely to believe and share news that aligns with their beliefs or emotions. To detect fake news, users must check several media to compare the information; and knowing that profiteering and attracting audiences' attention were the most important reasons for the existence of fake news (Nazari *et al.*, 2022). If individuals perceived the health information's integrity, it would affect their practices and behavior towards the circumstances.

Table 2: Level of Health Practices of Senior High School Students

Level of the Senior High School Students' Health Practices	Mean	Standard Deviation	Perceived level of effects
Health Status	3.73	0.72	High
Health Benefits	3.81	0.78	High
Health Preferences	3.56	0.89	High
Overall	3.70	0.70	High

Presented on Table 2 are the results for the level of health practices among the senior high school students. With a total of three-hundred-eleven (311) respondents from the survey phase, the overall result got a Mean of 3.70 (SD = 0.70), which is implied as 'High.' This indicates that the health practices of senior high school students are strongly influenced by their perception of health information obtained through social media. Consequently, the high level of their health practices suggests that they are actively and consciously seeking health-related knowledge to improve their own healthcare.

Among those of the three indicators, Health Benefits got the overall highest score from the survey with a Mean of 3.81 (SD = 0.78). With the statement "I associate the benefit I could gain based on the effectiveness of practice recommended or instructed on health information through social media" having the highest score among the five questions in the given questionnaire with a Mean of 3.88 (SD = 0.87). With its result, it indicates that most of the senior high school students have already set a purpose to get health information for them to learn on social media platforms. It aligns with the study of Anderson *et al.* (2023) showing the growing improvement of healthcare in their country with the implementation of health practice programs in their school institutions. Therefore, supports that with the help of healthcare knowledge, the overall

The mean score for Health Status was 3.73 (SD = 0.72), which was categorized as high. With the statement "I learn something new with regards to my health status with the help of social media regularly" having the highest score among the five questions in the given questionnaire with a Mean of 3.98 (SD = 0.86). It emphasizes that the health

practices that were influenced by the student's perception still depend on their health status. Knowing that some illnesses could actually not be cured or treated just by searching up on the internet, this proves that health status is highly important when following the practices found in social media. Wen and Zhang (2022), states that people who are currently middle-aged or older are more prone to be vulnerable to illnesses. Due to the lack of utilization of the internet among older individuals, awareness of being good or bad to their health lacks the practice to do the right thing. This corresponds to the result that health practices of students could also be dependent on their health status.

Lastly, the mean score for Health Preferences was 3.56 (SD = 0.89), which was described as high. This suggests that the health practices of students less likely depend on their preferences of medium when receiving information through social media or traditional media. Just as what the indicator Health Preferences who got the highest mean score with 3.96 (SD = 0.96) "I prefer to read/watch/listen to the health information from social media that is relevant to my life regularly" they are more likely to read, watch, listen, and follow a content whether it is through social media or traditional media as long as it is relevant to them. The results align with the study by Farsi (2021) stating that striking the right balance between digital and traditional health care is important. Social media and traditional media have significance in receiving information. It could depend on what health information the students are looking for. It also concludes that the preferred medium of students when receiving health information does not actually indicate their health practices.

Table 3: Test of Relationship between the Level of Perception of Health Information on Social Media and the Health Practices of the Senior High School Students

Variables	Mean/ Standard Deviation	Shapiro Wilk	Spearman's Rho	R ²	Degree of Relationship	p-value	Decisions at 0.5 significance level
Level of Perceptions of Health Information	4.21 (0.58)	0.918 (<0.001)	0.273	0.075	Low Relationship	<0.01	Significant (Rejected <i>H₀</i>)
Health Practices	3.70 (0.70)						

The results of the relationship between the Level of Perception of Health Information on social media and Health Practices of Senior High School Students are shown in table 3. The Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality and Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient was used to test the relationship between the level of perception of health information on social media and health practices of senior high school students at a 0.05 level of significance. The Shapiro-Wilk was used to determine the pairwise normality of the data, and if the data follows a normal distribution. The results (0.938, $p < 0.001$) show that the data were not normally distributed, thus the Spearman Rho was used. The results of the Spearman's Rho show

that there is a significantly low relationship (0.273, $p < 0.01$) between the level of perception of health information on social media and the health practices of the senior high school students at a 0.05 level of significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which states, "there is no significant relationship between the Level of Perception of Health Information on Social Media and The Health Practices of the Senior High School Students" is rejected at a 0.05 level of significance. Moreover, the results show that 7.5 % ($R^2 : 0.075$) of the variance or changes in the level of health practices can be attributed to the variance or changes in the level of perception of health information on social media.

Lastly, the results implied that having a positive perception on health information on social media can be attributed to the improvement of health practices among Senior High School Students. However, the relationship of health information on social media to the health practices is low. Therefore, other factors that are not investigated in this study might have a greater relationship on the improvement of health practices among Senior High School students.

It aligns in the study by Al-Dmour *et al.* (2020), where they stated in their study that the use of social media platforms can positively influence awareness of public health behavioral changes and public protection during the pandemic of COVID-19. The variables of the study– Public Awareness and Public Behavioral Changes correlate with the variables in this study– Students’ Perception and Health Practices. The findings implied that having a positive perception on health information on social media can be attributed to the improvement of health practices among Senior High School Students. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the level of perception of health information on social media and the health practices of the senior high school students.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to address the issues faced by social media users when encountering fake news that could impact their health practices, potentially leading to negative outcomes. The study’s results showed a “high” overall mean score of the level of both the students’ perception of health information on social media and the health practices senior high school students. On the other hand, as measured by health status, health benefits, and health preferences, the overall mean score also indicated a high level of overall level of practice. The Shapiro-Wilk result of (0.938, $p < 0.001$) showed that the data were not normally distributed, thus the Spearman Rho was used. The results of the Spearman’s Rho show that there is a significant Low Relationship (0.273, $p < 0.01$) between the Level of Perception of Health Information on social media and the health practices of the students at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Additionally, the findings suggest that among senior high school students, positive perception of health information on social media can be attributed to the improvement of health practices of the students. Students are also encouraged to critically analyze health information available on social media. They should practice critical thinking skills, including the ability to interpret, evaluate, and analyze facts, before accepting health practices shared on these platforms.

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