
Self-Affirmative Discourse on the Use of Digital Platforms for Mental Health Advocacy

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Abstract

This paper is a self-affirmative on the use of digital platforms for mental health advocacy and education. The researchers adopted library research method. No form of empirical research was conducted as the researchers mainly relied secondary sources like textbooks, journals, newspapers, online materials and other secondary sources. The discourse showed that success of digital-driven mental health advocacy and education hinges on user engagement and experience. The discourse further showed designing user-friendly interfaces, interactive features and personalised content contributes to sustained engagement. It encourages applications and platforms prioritising user experience as it foster increased participation, information retention and ongoing involvement in mental health conversations. It was concluded that the effectiveness of digital platforms in mental health advocacy and education is contingent upon navigating various factors, including accessibility, user engagement, privacy, cultural sensitivity and collaborative partnerships. Addressing these factors ensures a more comprehensive, inclusive and impactful utilisation of technology to advance mental health advocacy efforts, ultimately contributing to a more informed, connected and supportive society. Thus, mental health advocacy efforts should prioritise widely used platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and youtube, which are popular in many parts of Nigeria.

Keywords: Digital Media, Mental Health, Advocacy, Education

Introduction

The mental health landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, with increasing recognition of the prevalence and impact of mental health challenges on individuals and societies worldwide (Bourque & Cunsolo Willox, 2014; WHO, 2022). As the global burden of mental health disorders continues to rise, the imperative for effective advocacy and education has become more pronounced than ever. Mental health advocacy, characterised by efforts to promote awareness, reduce stigma and improve access to mental health services, is pivotal in shaping societal attitudes and policies.

Nigeria has a high prevalence of mental health disorders, with approximately 20–30% of its population suffering from one form of mental illness (Gureje *et al* 2020). However, mental healthcare services remain scarce, with an estimated ratio of one psychiatrist to over one million people (WHO, 2023). The situation is exacerbated by cultural and religious beliefs that often attribute mental health conditions to supernatural

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causes, leading to social ostracisation and inadequate professional intervention (Ebigbo, 2021).

The advent of technology, particularly the widespread adoption of digital platforms, presents a promising avenue to address these challenges and revolutionise the landscape of mental health advocacy. Social media platforms, mobile applications, virtual reality experiences, artificial intelligence-driven interventions and online support communities are among the myriad tools that have gained prominence in recent years. Each of these technologies brings unique capabilities, enabling advocates to engage with diverse audiences, disseminate information widely, and tailor interventions to individual needs.

According to Asemah (2020), digital communication serves as a critical tool for social change, enabling a broader audience reach with targeted health messages. However, while digital platforms can amplify advocacy efforts, they also present new challenges, such as misinformation, cyber harassment and limited engagement from older or less technologically literate populations (Bamgbose, 2022). This study tends to explore how digital platforms are used for mental health advocacy and education, their impact on accessibility, the benefits they offer and the challenges that need to be addressed for effective implementation.

Despite the increasing prevalence of mental health disorders, access to quality mental healthcare remains alarmingly low due to inadequate infrastructure, stigma and cultural misconceptions (Gureje *et al* 2020). NGOs have stepped in to bridge this gap, leveraging digital platforms to promote mental health awareness, education and intervention services. However, the effectiveness of these digital advocacy efforts remains uncertain, as studies assessing their impact, reach, and acceptance are scarce (Naslund *et al* 2020).

While digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for mental health promotion, their utilisation is not without challenges. Issues such as misinformation, digital divide, limited internet penetration and cultural skepticism towards online health solutions have raised concerns about the efficacy of digital mental health campaigns (Olowookere & Ajibola, 2022). Moreover, the lack of empirical evidence on the reach and effectiveness of these digital interventions leaves room for skepticism (Ebigbo, 2021). Additionally, the sustainability of these digital advocacy programmes is uncertain, as short-term donor-funded projects may not translate into long-term systemic improvements in mental healthcare access.

Another pressing concern is the extent to which the digital divide affects the impact of mental health advocacy. While urban centers may have better internet connectivity, rural areas with more pronounced mental health challenges face severe limitations in accessing these digital resources. This raises the critical question of whether digital mental health advocacy is inadvertently reinforcing existing inequalities rather than mitigating them (Bamgbose, 2022). Thus, understanding these dimensions is crucial for informing policy, optimising digital advocacy strategies and ensuring that interventions are both effective and culturally relevant.

Historical Review of Digital Platforms

Digital platforms have fundamentally transformed global economies and societies, reshaping communication, commerce, finance, entertainment and governance. Their

evolution spans several decades, beginning with early computing networks, the rise of the internet, the dominance of social media and the proliferation of fintech, e-commerce and digital entertainment. While developed economies spearheaded these innovations, Africa and Nigeria have emerged as vibrant hubs of digital adoption, adapting global platforms while creating homegrown solutions tailored to local needs. The historical trajectory of digital platforms reflects broader technological advancements, economic transformations, and shifts in consumer behavior. Understanding this evolution from a global perspective to Africa and then Nigeria provides critical insights into how digital ecosystems develop and what factors drive their success.

The origins of digital platforms can be traced to the early days of computing and networking in the mid-20th century. The development of ARPANET in the 1960s, a precursor to the modern internet, allowed researchers to share data across different locations (Leiner et al., 2009). The 1980s and 1990s saw the commercialisation of the internet, with the creation of the World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee in 1989, enabling businesses, governments and individuals to communicate and exchange information online. By the early 2000s, Web 2.0 technologies facilitated the rise of interactive digital platforms, allowing users to create and share content rather than just consume static web pages (O'Reilly, 2005). This era saw the birth of e-commerce giants such as Amazon (1994), eBay (1995) and Alibaba (1999) which pioneered online retail. Meanwhile, digital payment systems, including PayPal (1998), revolutionised financial transactions by enabling seamless online payments.

The social media boom of the mid-2000s, led by Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006) and YouTube (2005) transformed global communication, influencing everything from personal interactions to business marketing and political mobilisation. The launch of the iPhone in 2007 and subsequent smartphone proliferation accelerated mobile internet access, leading to the rapid expansion of mobile-first digital platforms such as Instagram (2010), WhatsApp (2009) and TikTok (2016). The 2010s marked the rise of fintech, with platforms such as Stripe, Square and Revolut simplifying financial transactions. Streaming services like Netflix, Spotify and Apple Music disrupted traditional media consumption, while ride-hailing and delivery services such as Uber (2009) and DoorDash (2013) redefined urban mobility. The most recent developments, including blockchain-based platforms, AI-driven automation, and the metaverse, signal the continuous evolution of digital ecosystems.

While Africa lagged in early internet adoption, the mobile revolution of the 2000s facilitated rapid digital growth. The liberalization of telecommunications and the rise of affordable mobile devices enabled millions to access digital services without requiring personal computers or fixed broadband (GSMA, 2019). E-commerce platforms such as Jumia (2012), Konga (2012) and Takealot (South Africa, 2010) emerged to serve Africa's growing online retail market. Fintech innovations, particularly in mobile money, were pioneered by M-Pesa in Kenya (2007), allowing unbanked populations to conduct financial transactions via mobile phones. The social media wave swept through Africa, with Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter becoming the dominant communication tools, influencing political activism and business marketing. Africa's entertainment sector also

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embraced digital platforms, with IrokoTV (2011) becoming Africa's answer to Netflix, providing online access to Nollywood films. Similarly, Boomplay and Audiomack gained popularity for music streaming, while sports betting platforms leveraged mobile payments to tap into Africa's growing gaming industry.

Despite this progress, Africa's digital transformation has been hindered by infrastructure deficits, including low broadband penetration, unreliable electricity, and regulatory uncertainties (World Bank, 2021). However, the continent continues to innovate, with startups attracting global investments, particularly in fintech, agritech and edtech. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and most populous country, has been at the forefront of digital adoption on the continent.

The evolution of digital platforms in Nigeria is deeply intertwined with the country's technological, economic and social transformations. From the early days of rudimentary internet connectivity in the 1990s to the rise of e-commerce, fintech, social media and digital media platforms, Nigeria has emerged as one of Africa's leading digital economies. The adoption of digital platforms has revolutionised commerce, communication, financial services, governance, and entertainment, reshaping societal interactions and business operations.

The origins of digital platforms in Nigeria can be traced back to the 1990s, when internet service providers (ISPs) began to emerge, offering limited access to the World Wide Web. Initially, Internet access was restricted to academic institutions, corporate organisations and government agencies. The late 1990s saw the introduction of commercial ISPs, such as Linkserve and Cyberspace Network, which provided dial-up Internet services to the public. However, Internet penetration remained low due to high costs and inadequate infrastructure.

The early 2000s marked a significant turning point with the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector. The granting of Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) licenses in 2001 to operators such as MTN, Econet (now Airtel) and Globacom led to a rapid expansion of mobile telephony and subsequently, mobile internet services (Adeleke, 2020). This era laid the foundation for the growth of digital platforms by increasing internet accessibility among the Nigerian population. With the decline in the cost of internet-enabled mobile devices and the proliferation of cybercafés, Nigerians gained broader access to online platforms, driving the growth of digital services.

According to Agbaje & Salami (2019), e-commerce emerged as one of the earliest forms of digital platforms in Nigeria. The launch of platforms such as Konga and Jumia in the early 2010s revolutionised online retail, providing Nigerians with convenient access to a wide range of products. These platforms introduced secure online payment systems, logistics infrastructure, and digital marketing strategies, fostering the growth of Nigeria's e-commerce ecosystem. The increasing adoption of online shopping was further propelled by advancements in fintech, which facilitated digital payments and financial transactions.

The fintech sector, Akanbi (2021) observes, has been one of the most transformative digital industries in Nigeria. The launch of Interswitch in 2002 marked the beginning of Nigeria's digital payment revolution, enabling seamless electronic

transactions and reducing dependence on cash-based payments. Over the years, fintech startups such as Paystack, Flutterwave and Opay have emerged as major players, providing innovative solutions in payment processing, mobile banking, and peer-to-peer transfers. The rise of digital financial services has enhanced financial inclusion, particularly among the unbanked and underbanked populations (Ibrahim, 2022).

Social media and digital content platforms have also played a crucial role in shaping Nigeria's digital landscape. Eke & Olayemi (2018) believed that the introduction of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in the late 2000s led to a new era of communication and content sharing. These platforms became essential tools for personal interactions, business marketing, and political activism. The #EndSARS movement of 2020 demonstrated the power of social media in mobilising civic engagement and amplifying societal concerns on a global scale (Eke & Olayemi, 2018).

Beyond social media, Obiora (2021) maintains that digital entertainment platforms have witnessed exponential growth in Nigeria. The emergence of Nollywood-focused streaming services, such as Iroko TV in the early 2010s, provided Nigerian filmmakers with an alternative distribution channel, reducing the reliance on DVD sales. Global streaming giants such as Netflix have since expanded their presence in Nigeria, investing in local content production and offering Nigerian films and series to a global audience. The music industry has similarly benefited from digital platforms, with Nigerian artists leveraging streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music and Boomplay to distribute their music internationally.

The rise of digital platforms has also transformed governance and public service delivery in Nigeria. E-government initiatives, such as the National Identity Management System and the introduction of online tax filing platforms by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), have improved efficiency in public administration. Digital platforms have facilitated transparency and accountability in governance, enabling citizens to engage with government institutions more effectively.

Despite these advancements, Nwosu & Bello (2020) say Nigeria's digital ecosystem faces several challenges. Infrastructure deficits, including inadequate broadband penetration and unreliable electricity supply, hinder the full potential of digital platforms. Cybersecurity threats and data privacy concerns pose risks to online users, necessitating robust regulatory frameworks to safeguard digital interactions. Additionally, regulatory constraints, such as the suspension of Twitter in Nigeria in 2021, highlight the complex relationship between the government and digital platform operators.

Looking ahead, the future of digital platforms in Nigeria is promising. With ongoing investments in broadband expansion, 5G deployment, and digital literacy programs, Nigeria is poised to integrate technology further into various sectors (Adeleke, 2020). The continued growth of fintech, e-commerce, digital entertainment and e-governance will play influential roles in driving economic development and social transformation. As digital platforms become increasingly embedded in everyday life, fostering an enabling environment for innovation, competition, and digital inclusion will be essential in maximising their impact.

Historical Review of Mental Health Advocacy

Mental health advocacy has evolved significantly over the centuries, transitioning from periods of stigma and neglect to an era of increased awareness, policy advancements and human rights-based approaches. This historical review traces the key milestones and transformations in mental health advocacy, highlighting the progress and ongoing challenges in the field.

Historically, mental illness was often misunderstood and attributed to supernatural causes, moral failings, or divine punishment (Porter, 2002). In ancient civilisations, treatments ranged from spiritual rituals to physical restraints (Shorter, 1997). During the Middle Ages, individuals with mental disorders were frequently subjected to exorcisms, confinement, or abandonment (Scull, 2015). The establishment of asylums in the 18th and early 19th centuries marked a shift toward institutionalisation. However, many of these institutions prioritised containment over treatment, leading to inhumane conditions and widespread abuse (Foucault, 1961). Reformers such as Philippe Pinel in France and William Tuke in England advocated for more humane treatment, emphasising moral therapy and compassionate care (Bynum, 2001).

Increased efforts to reform mental health care were made in the 19th century. Dorothea Dix, an American activist, campaigned for improved conditions in asylums and the establishment of state-funded psychiatric hospitals (Grob, 1994). Meanwhile, the medical model of mental illness gained prominence, leading to developments in psychiatric classification and treatment approaches (Rosenberg, 1989). Despite these efforts, the early 20th century witnessed troubling practices such as forced institutionalisation, lobotomies, and electroconvulsive therapy without consent (Whitaker, 2002). Mental illness continued to carry heavy stigma, limiting the rights and agency of affected individuals (Foucault, 1961).

The mid-20th century marked a turning point with the advent of psychotropic medications, which enabled many individuals to manage their conditions outside of institutions (Healy, 2002). The deinstitutionalisation movement, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, led to the closure of large psychiatric hospitals and the development of community-based mental health services (Mechanic & Rochefort, 1990). Simultaneously, advocacy groups such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) emerged, promoting the rights of individuals with mental health conditions and advocating for policy reforms (Davidson et al., 2010). Landmark legislation, including the Mental Health Act of 1963 in the U.S., sought to expand mental health services and integrate care within general health systems (Grob, 1994).

The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw a shift toward a global perspective on mental health advocacy. Organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) played pivotal roles in raising awareness, reducing stigma, and pushing for mental health inclusion in broader public health agendas (WHO, 2001). Key legislative advancements, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (2008), aimed to protect the rights of individuals with mental health conditions (Corrigan *et al* 2012). Increased attention to mental health in international policy, including the United

Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has reinforced the importance of mental well-being as a global priority (United Nations, 2015).

Advocacy efforts have expanded through social media campaigns, grassroots movements, and lived-experience activism. Organisations and individuals continue to push for improved access to care, anti-stigma initiatives and the integration of mental health services within primary healthcare systems (Thorncroft *et al* 2016). Overall, the evolution of mental health advocacy reflects a broader societal shift toward human rights, scientific understanding and social inclusion. While significant progress has been made, challenges such as disparities in access to care, persistent stigma, and the need for policy enforcement remain. Continued advocacy and investment in mental health services are crucial for ensuring a more inclusive and supportive future for individuals with mental health conditions.

Historical Review of Mental Health Education

Mental health education has evolved as a crucial component of public health, aiming to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and promote psychological well-being. From early global efforts rooted in psychiatric institutions to contemporary community-based approaches, mental health education has significantly transformed. While developed nations have established structured mental health literacy programmes, many regions in Africa, including Nigeria and the North Central region, still face challenges related to awareness, cultural perceptions and healthcare infrastructure. Understanding this historical evolution provides insights into the progress and barriers that shape mental health education at various levels.

The global evolution of mental health education can be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries, when mental illnesses were predominantly managed through institutionalisation in asylums. During this period, mental health was widely misunderstood, and education about psychological disorders was largely absent from public discourse (Shorter, 1997). The early 20th century marked a shift towards more scientific approaches, with the establishment of psychiatric institutions that sought to provide structured care. However, the stigma remained high, and mental health education was largely confined to medical professionals rather than the general public (Rosen, 1968).

The mid-20th century witnessed significant advancements, particularly following World War II, when psychological trauma among soldiers highlighted the need for broader mental health awareness. This led to the creation of mental health organisations such as the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) in 1948 and the subsequent inclusion of mental health in the World Health Organisation (WHO) framework. The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of community mental health movements, particularly in Western nations, advocating for deinstitutionalisation and the integration of mental health education into schools and workplaces (Freeman, 1992).

By the late 20th century, mental health education became a global priority. Governments in developed nations have integrated psychological well-being into school curricula, workplace training, and public health campaigns. The WHO's Mental Health

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Gap Action Programme (mhGAP), launched in 2008 and further emphasised mental health education, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2010). Today, digital platforms, teletherapy and community-based interventions have expanded mental health education globally, though disparities persist in access and awareness levels across different regions.

In Africa, mental health education has historically been shaped by cultural perceptions and colonial influences. Traditional beliefs often attributed mental illnesses to spiritual causes, leading to reliance on faith healers and traditional medicine rather than scientific approaches (Patel *et al* 2007). Colonial-era psychiatric institutions focused primarily on confinement rather than treatment or public education (McCulloch, 1995). The post-independence era (1960s-1980s) saw the emergence of mental health services within general hospitals, but awareness remained low and education on mental health was not prioritised in public health programmes.

The 1990s and 2000s marked a turning point as organisations such as the African Union (AU) and WHO-Africa began advocating for mental health inclusion in national health policies. Countries like South Africa and Kenya took early steps in integrating mental health into educational curricula and workplace policies (WHO, 2013). Nonetheless, challenges persist, with only a few African countries allocating more than 1% of their health budget to mental health (Lund *et al.*, 2012). Grassroots movements and NGOs such as Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI) and South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) have played a key role in raising mental health literacy across the continent.

In Nigeria, mental health education has undergone a slow but notable transformation. Historically, mental health issues were stigmatised, with those suffering from psychological disorders often ostracised from society (Gureje *et al* 2005). The establishment of psychiatric hospitals in Lagos (1907) and Aro Neuropsychiatric Hospital in Abeokuta (1954) marked the country's early efforts at institutionalised mental healthcare (Jegade, 2016). However, mental health awareness remained low, with public discourse dominated by traditional beliefs.

Empirical Review

The study by Peek *et al* (2015) examined the role of blogging and social media in mental health education and advocacy, particularly from the perspective of psychiatrists. The study provides a comprehensive literature review of various social media strategies used by mental health professionals to combat misinformation and stigma. Ethical concerns, professionalism and effective engagement techniques are highlighted, indicating that digital platforms offer an opportunity to disseminate accurate mental health information to a broad audience. This study is particularly useful as it illustrates how social media can be leverage to educate the public while maintaining ethical standards and credibility.

McCosker (2018) investigated the role of peer mentors in digital mental health advocacy through an analysis of Beyond blue's online forums. By conducting qualitative content analysis and interviews, the study reveals how peer mentors and influencers shape digital spaces for mental health advocacy. It highlights that effective influencers

use non-professional expertise to create a sense of community, actively shaping public perceptions of mental health. The study suggests that digital peer support structures can be instrumental in fostering engagement and reducing stigma. The insights from this research are highly relevant as it provides avenue for advocacy that can enhance the effectiveness of digital campaigns and outreach programs.

Montenegro (2006) focuses on the role of NGOs in mental health advocacy in Latin America, analysing 150 NGOs working on specific mental health issues such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and substance abuse. The study identifies challenges faced by NGOs, including funding constraints and visibility struggles, and suggests that forming umbrella organisations enhances sustainability and impact. The findings indicate that networking and collaboration among NGOs can strengthen advocacy efforts and improve policy influence. This research is highly relevant as it enhances the use of digital platforms for mental health advocacy and education in Nigeria, where similar challenges persist, and collective advocacy models could enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of mental health initiative.

Latha *et al* (2020) examine the effectiveness of social media campaigns for mental health awareness, focusing on digital campaigns conducted over five months. The study found that Facebook and Instagram posts on suicide prevention, tobacco cessation and migraine awareness reached over 10,000 individuals, demonstrating the power of digital platforms in health promotion. The findings suggest that social media can be an effective tool for conducting large-scale advocacy campaigns, making it a valuable approach for use to improve mental health awareness and education.

Ezeilo *et al* (2023) analyse the process of mobilising social media for health advocacy using Twitter analytics and engagement metrics. The study reveals that image-based tweets, hashtags, and interactive content significantly improve audience engagement. It highlights best practices such as using series-based posts, leveraging partnerships and incorporating polls to increase participation.

Naslund *et al* (2020) conducted a study titled the role of social media in mental health advocacy in developing countries, aiming to examine how mental health organisations use digital platforms to engage communities and increase awareness. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilising social media analytics, surveys and in-depth interviews with mental health advocates in developing countries. The findings revealed that social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, significantly increased mental health awareness and engagement. The study concluded that digital platforms are valuable tools for advocacy but require sustained engagement strategies to remain effective. This study provides insights into the role of social media in mental health advocacy.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on social cognitive, diffusion of innovative theory and technological determinism and social shaping of technology theory, network public theory.

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory offers a foundational perspective for understanding how individuals learn and adopt new behaviours, emphasising the role of observational learning, imitation and modeling (Bandura, 2009; Gibson, 2004). Applied to mental health advocacy in the digital age, this theory posits that individuals can acquire new attitudes and behaviours by observing others, particularly through online platforms. As a powerful tool for disseminating information, social media enable users to observe and model advocacy behaviours, contributing to the diffusion of mental health awareness within online communities (Rolls, Hansen, Jackson, & Elliott, 2016). The theory also underscores the importance of self-efficacy, emphasising that individuals are more likely to engage in advocacy behaviours if they believe in their ability to make a difference. Online platforms empower users to share personal narratives, creating a virtual space where individuals can witness the impact of advocacy efforts, potentially fostering a sense of collective efficacy in addressing mental health challenges.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Everett Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory provides insights into how new ideas and technologies are adopted within a social system. In the context of mental health advocacy, technology acts as an innovation that undergoes stages of adoption, including awareness, interest, trial and adoption (Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate & Kyriakidou, 2004; Rogers, Medina, Rivera & Wiley, 2005). The theory suggests that technology adoption in advocacy efforts is influenced by various factors, such as the perceived benefits of the innovation, its compatibility with existing values and practices, and the ease of use (Chau & Tam, 1997; Yi, Fiedler & Park, 2006).

Technological Determinism and Social Shaping of Technology

The theoretical debate between technological determinism and the social shaping of technology provides a lens for understanding the reciprocal relationship between technology and society. Technological determinism posits that technology drives social change, influencing how individuals think and behave. In the context of mental health advocacy, this perspective suggests that adopting digital tools reshapes the landscape of advocacy practices and societal attitudes toward mental health. Conversely, the social shaping of technology argues that social forces, including cultural values, power dynamics, and user needs, shape technological development (Howcroft, Mitev & Wilson, 2004). Applied to mental health advocacy, this theory explores how societal values and power structures influence technology-driven advocacy initiatives' design, implementation, and impact. Examining this theoretical framework will allow us to dissect the reciprocal relationship between technology and mental health advocacy, considering how each influences and shapes the other.

Networked Publics Theory

The emergence of online spaces as platforms for discourse and activism aligns with Danah Boyd's Networked Publics Theory. This theory explores how digital technologies

facilitate the formation of publics—groups of people connected through digital networks. In mental health advocacy, online communities and social media networks serve as virtual publics where individuals can share experiences, exchange information and collectively engage in advocacy efforts. Networked publics theory prompts an examination of the dynamics within these digital spaces, including issues of identity, privacy and the amplification of certain voices (Benkler, Roberts, Faris, Solow-Niederman, & Etling, 2015). This framework guides our exploration of how technology shapes the nature of public discourse on mental health and the implications for advocacy within networked environments.

Methodology

Library research approach was employed. The library research approach involves gathering and analysing existing literature, scholarly articles, books and other relevant sources to gain insights, build knowledge and address research questions (Asemah, Ibrahim, Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2022a, 2022b). The method typically involves conducting a comprehensive literature review to identify and review published studies, theories and concepts related to the research topic.

Discussion

Findings in this study revealed that success of digital-driven mental health advocacy and education hinges on user engagement and experience. Designing user-friendly interfaces, interactive features and personalised content contributes to sustained engagement. It encourages applications and platforms prioritising user experience as it fosters increased participation, information retention and ongoing involvement in mental health conversations.

The study further discovered that tailoring digital interventions to cater to diverse preferences and needs enhances the likelihood of users actively participating in advocacy efforts, thereby amplifying the impact of technology in promoting mental health awareness (Bhugra *et al* 2023). It also shows that the sensitive nature of mental health information necessitates carefully considering privacy and data security. Users engaging with digital mental health resources must trust that their personal information is handled securely.

The breach of confidentiality could erode trust and discourage individuals from seeking support or engaging in advocacy activities. Striking a balance between the benefits of data-driven insights and protecting user privacy is imperative to ensure technology's long-term effectiveness and sustainability in mental health advocacy. Cultural nuances play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards mental health. Technology-driven advocacy initiatives must be culturally sensitive, acknowledging and respecting diverse perspectives and beliefs.

The digital divide poses a challenge, with certain demographics facing technological access barriers. Limited representation and inclusivity in digital mental health spaces also raise concerns about the effectiveness of advocacy efforts in reaching diverse populations. The proliferation of mental health apps and online platforms demands a critical examination of their quality and efficacy. Variability in content

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accuracy, ethical considerations and the potential for harm necessitate a nuanced understanding of the impact of these technologies. The ethical implications of using digital devices in mental health advocacy require scrutiny. Issues of data privacy, security and the potential for reinforcing existing power dynamics must be addressed to ensure responsible and ethical practices. Despite the rapid evolution of technology in mental health advocacy, there is a dearth of longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of these interventions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the effectiveness of digital platforms in mental health advocacy and education is contingent upon navigating various factors, including accessibility, user engagement, privacy, cultural sensitivity and collaborative partnerships. Addressing these factors ensures a more comprehensive, inclusive and impactful utilisation of technology to advance mental health advocacy efforts, ultimately contributing to a more informed, connected and supportive society. Thus, mental health advocacy efforts should prioritise widely used platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and youtube, which are popular in many parts of Nigeria. These platforms offer cost effective tools for reaching diverse audience with educational content, support services and campaigns. Digital materials should be tailored to reflect local languages, cultural values and mental health beliefs. This enhances understanding, acceptance and engagement among the target population.

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