

Impact of Social Media Usage on the Mental Health of Academic Librarians at Bayero University, Kano

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media (SM) has become essential for academic librarians. It facilitates professional networking, information sharing, and career development. However, excessive engagement may lead to stress, anxiety, and work-life imbalance. This study examines the patterns, benefits, and challenges of SM use among academic librarians at Bayero University, Kano (BUK).

Method: A quantitative research design was employed, using a structured questionnaire distributed to 41 academic librarians across BUK. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS to determine SM usage patterns, perceived benefits, challenges, and emotional impact.

Results: Findings revealed that WhatsApp (78.0%) and Facebook (53.7%) were the most commonly used SM platforms for professional development. A majority of respondents (75.6%) engaged SM daily, primarily for information sharing (87.8%) and networking (78.0%). While 73.2% reported a positive impact on work-life balance, some librarians experienced stress due to social comparison (31.7%) and institutional support gaps (41.5%). Additionally, 68.3% expressed interest in training on managing the emotional effects of SM use.

Conclusion: Although SM offers substantial professional benefits, its prolonged use can contribute to emotional strain. The study recommends institutional policies on digital well-being, structured training sessions, and enhanced organizational support for optimal SA engagements. These measures can help academic librarians leverage SM effectively while minimizing psychological effects.

Keywords: Social Media, Mental Health, Academic Librarians, Bayero University, Professional Development, Digital Well-being

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Introduction

Over the past decade, academic librarians in Nigeria have witnessed a paradigm shift in their roles. The traditional image of librarians as gatekeepers of physical resources has given way to a more dynamic and tech-savvy profession. Librarians are now expected to be adept at navigating digital landscapes, staying abreast of emerging technologies, and engaging with the academic community through various online platforms, including social media. Social media, according to Abubakar (2019), is a potential platform for engaging with library users. Harrison et al. (2017) agree that academic librarians believe social media empowers them to engage with stakeholder groups. This implies that social media platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and ResearchGate have become integral tools for academic librarians to connect with peers, share resources, and participate in professional discussions. Additionally, academic libraries often use social media to promote events, disseminate information, and enhance their visibility within the academic community.

Academic librarians rely on social media for professional development opportunities and networking. Online communities and groups provide platforms for librarians to exchange ideas, seek advice, and collaborate on projects. While SM offers many benefits, it also introduces stress. Librarians often face pressures to maintain active online profiles, promptly respond to inquiries, and navigate an ever-changing digital landscape. These demands can impact mental well-being, leading to stress and burnout (Schonning et al., 2020). Studies in other domains highlight the adverse effects of

excessive SM use, including anxiety and feelings of inadequacy (Mogale & Bopape, 2023). However, the specific context of academic librarianship in Nigeria remains underexplored. This study aims to bridge that gap by investigating the implications of SM usage for mental health among academic librarians.

The intersection of the use of social media and mental health is a growing concern globally. Research in various professional domains has highlighted the potential effects of excessive social media use, including increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy (Mogale & Bopape, 2023). Understanding how these issues manifest in the context of librarianship is crucial for fostering a supportive and sustainable work environment. Despite the increasing reliance on social media in academic librarianship, there is a notable gap in understanding its impact on the mental health of librarians in Nigeria. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive examination of the relationship between social media usage and the mental well-being of academic librarians, considering both the positive and negative aspects of their online engagement.

Statement of the Problem

The field of academic librarianship in Nigeria is undergoing significant transformations, with professionals increasingly relying on social media for networking, collaboration, and professional development. While social media has brought numerous benefits, it has also raised concerns about its potential impact on the mental health of academic librarians. The dynamic nature of social media engagement, coupled with the evolving roles and expectations within the profession, necessitates an in-depth examination of the intersection between the use of social media and the mental well-being of academic librarians.

Academic librarians face the dual challenge of meeting the demands of an ever-connected digital landscape while fulfilling their traditional responsibilities. The continuous use of social media for professional purposes may introduce stress, disrupt work-life balance, and expose librarians to

negative online experiences. Moreover, the pressure to maintain an active online presence, engage with diverse online communities, and stay current with technological advancements may contribute to heightened levels of stress and potential adverse effects on mental health (Hussain & Sani, 2022).

As the academic librarian community navigates this digital transition, there is a critical gap in our understanding of how social media practices impact the mental health of professionals in Nigeria. While studies from other fields suggest potential risks associated with social media use, the unique context of academic librarianship, with its emphasis on information dissemination and user engagement, requires specific attention.

Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the social media usage patterns among academic librarians at Bayero University, Kano (BUK), for professional development?
2. What are the perceived benefits of social media use for networking, information sharing, and professional growth among academic librarians?
3. What challenges and stress do academic librarians face with their social media use, particularly regarding work-life balance, social comparison, and institutional support?
4. To what extent do academic librarians perceive institutional support and intervention strategies as effective in mitigating the effects of social media use on their emotional well-being?
5. What is the level of interest among academic librarians in participating in training or workshops focused on managing the emotional impact of social media use?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the patterns and frequency of social media use among academic librarians at Bayero University, Kano (BUK).
2. Identify the key benefits of social media use in professional development, networking, and knowledge sharing among academic librarians.
3. Assess the challenges and stress-related factors associated with prolonged social media engagement among academic librarians.
4. Investigate the extent of institutional support available to help librarians manage the emotional aspects of social media use.
5. Determine the willingness of academic librarians to participate in training or workshops designed to address the emotional impact of social media use.

Literature Review

Social media has recently become part of people's daily activities; many spend hours each day searching for information for various purposes. Bartosik et al. (2017), note that the number of social media users worldwide was 3.484 billion in 2019, up 9% year-on-year. With the rapid increase of smartphones, more than 66% of people in the world have access to social media. Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (2020) says that internet users increased 1.3% from 87.4% in 2018, and the highest place of access to the internet was the home, which accounted for 70.5%. The top five online activities were for text communication (98.1%), social media (93.3%), watching videos (87.3%), voice/video communication (81.1%), and getting information (74.3%). The top five social networking applications recorded by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (2020) were Facebook (91.7%), YouTube (80.6%), and Instagram (63.1%).

Social media is a potential platform for engaging with library users. Librarians have adapted it as an online communication tool to generate creative

content, spread information, and get feedback from users. Oche (2022) notes that social media presents an opportunity for libraries to provide user-centric innovative services. The widespread and diverse use of social media tools in libraries has a huge impact on social interactions among individuals, communities, and societies of all ages (Akeriwa et al., 2015), mainly among college and university students. These tools include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest, Vine, Google Plus, and Flickr. Previous studies by Sahabi and Ogunbote (2021), Clark and Bacon (2018), Howard et al. (2018), and Bharucha (2018) showed that social media platforms are widely used to achieve the goals of libraries in the digital age. Adetayo (2022) suggests that the use of social media among librarians can improve their research results. Likewise, Chiparausha (2024) states that academic librarians in Zimbabwe perceive social media tools to be useful and easy to use in the provision of services. The use of social media in academic libraries has been trending since the dawn of the new millennium (Shah & Khan, 2019). There has been a swift uptake of social media, especially by the younger generation, due to the increasing affordability of information and communication technology (ICT) devices (Dewing, 2012). Academic librarians have taken advantage of social media to easily interact with library patrons (Gmiterek, 2021).

Research on social media has grown rapidly, even though Magoi et al. (2019) report that very few studies provide hard evidence on the usefulness of social media and the challenges associated with the use of social media by academic librarians in developing countries with the potential association of social media use and mental health and well-being becoming a polarized and much-studied subject. Mental health is a state of well-being in which people understand their abilities, solve everyday problems, work well, and make significant contributions to the lives of members of their communities (World Health Report, 2022). Research has shown that social media use has both positive and negative impacts on mental health. Social networking is a crucial element in protecting our mental health. The quantity and quality of

social relationships affect mental health, health behaviour, physical health, and mortality risk (Martinsen, 2008). Studies consistently highlight that use of social media, heavy use, and prolonged time spent on social media platforms appear to contribute to increased risk for a variety of mental health symptoms and poor well-being, especially among young people. This assertion has been confirmed by Displaced Behavior Theory, which explained that people who spend more time in sedentary behaviors such as social media use have less time for face-to-face social interaction, both of which have been proven to be protective against mental disorders (Coyne et al., 2020; Escobar-Viera et al., 2018). On the other hand, social theories found that social media use affects mental health by influencing how people view, maintain, and interact with their social network (Sultan et al., 2013). Prolonged use of SM platforms may be related to negative signs and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Berryman et al., 2018; O'Reilly et al., 2018).

Furthermore, social media can create a lot of pressure and stereotypes that others want to see, and yet be popular like others. Rideout and Fox (2018) reported negative effects of social media use on the mental health of young people, including social comparison pressure with others and a greater feeling of social isolation after being rejected by others on social media. The actual number of platforms accessed also appears to contribute to risk, as reflected in another national survey of young adults, where the use of a large number of social media platforms was associated with a negative impact on mental health (Primack et al., 2017).

Methods

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire to collect numerical data on social media usage patterns, perceived benefits, challenges, and emotional impact among academic librarians at Bayero University, Kano (BUK). The study population consisted of all 41 academic librarians across the main campus and branch libraries of BUK. Given the

manageable population size, a census approach was used, meaning all 41 librarians were included in the study without the need for sampling. A structured questionnaire was developed to capture relevant data. The questionnaire was designed using a closed-ended question format, ensuring that responses could be quantitatively analysed. The instrument included demographic information, social media usage patterns, perceived benefits of social media, challenges, emotional impact, and interest in training programs. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and distributed electronically via email and professional networking platforms such as WhatsApp groups and institutional mailing lists, and participants were given one week to complete it. To maximize response rates, follow-up reminders were sent through WhatsApp and email. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean scores) to summarize the responses. Tables and charts were used to present the results. The analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26. Ethical approval was obtained from the research ethics committee of BUK, and participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection.

Results

Table 1: Academic Institution and Years of Experience of Respondents

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Less than 5 years</i>	11	26.8%
<i>5-10 years</i>	11	26.8%
<i>11-15 years</i>	13	31.7%
<i>More than 15 years</i>	6	14.7%
Total	41	100%

The majority of respondents (31.7%) had 11-15 years of experience (Table 1), suggesting that they possess sufficient professional knowledge to engage with social media for career development.

As shown in Table 2, however, WhatsApp was the most widely used platform (78%), indicating a preference for instant messaging and informal

networking over professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn (43.9%) and Twitter (46.3%).

Table 2: Social Media Use Pattern for Professional Development

Social Media Platform	Yes (%)	No (%)
<i>WhatsApp</i>	32 (78.0%)	9 (22.0%)
<i>Facebook</i>	22 (53.7%)	19 (46.3%)
<i>Instagram</i>	22 (53.7%)	19 (46.3%)
<i>Twitter</i>	19 (46.3%)	22 (53.7%)
<i>LinkedIn</i>	18 (43.9%)	23 (56.1%)

Table 3: Frequency of Social Media Use for Professional Development

Frequency of Use	Yes (%)	No (%)
<i>Daily</i>	31 (75.6%)	10 (24.4%)
<i>3-4 times a week</i>	8 (19.5%)	33 (80.5%)
<i>Weekly</i>	3 (7.3%)	38 (92.7%)
<i>Less than once a week</i>	1 (2.4%)	40 (97.6%)
<i>Rarely</i>	1 (2.4%)	40 (97.6%)

Further findings revealed that the majority (75.6%) used social media daily for professional development (Table 3), suggesting strong digital engagement. However, occasional users (less than once a week or rarely) were minimal (2.4%).

Table 4: Purpose of Social Media Use in Professional Roles

Purpose	Yes (%)	No (%)
<i>Information sharing</i>	36 (87.8%)	5 (12.2%)
<i>Networking with colleagues</i>	32 (78.0%)	9 (22.0%)
<i>Professional development</i>	30 (73.1%)	11 (26.8%)
<i>Promoting library events/resources</i>	28 (68.2%)	13 (31.7%)
<i>Collaborative projects</i>	20 (48.8%)	21 (51.2%)

The findings also revealed, as shown in Table 4, that the primary use of social media was for information sharing (87.8%) and networking (78%), while fewer respondents (48.8%) used it for collaborative

projects, highlighting untapped potential in research partnerships.

Table 5: Emotional Impact of Social Media on Work-Life Balance

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Positive Impact</i>	30	73.2%
<i>Neutral</i>	11	26.8%
<i>Negative Impact</i>	0	0%
<i>Total</i>	41	100%

In Table 5, the study revealed that a significant proportion (73.2%) reported a positive emotional impact, while 26.8% remained neutral. Notably, no respondents reported a negative impact, indicating a generally optimistic perception of social media's role in work-life balance.

Table 6: Perceived Effect of Social Comparison on Emotional Well-being

Level of Impact	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Not at all</i>	12	29.3
<i>To a small extent</i>	13	31.7
<i>To a moderate extent</i>	7	17.1
<i>To a large extent</i>	6	14.6
<i>Extremely</i>	3	7.3
<i>Total</i>	41	100.0

Furthermore, the findings revealed that 29.3% were not affected at all emotionally; a combined 39% (14.6% + 7.3% + 17.1%) experienced moderate to extreme emotional distress due to social comparisons, indicating a potential mental health risk among a minority of respondents.

Table 7: Institutional Support for Managing Emotional Aspects of Social Media Use

Support Level	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Yes</i>	19	46.3
<i>No</i>	17	41.5
<i>Not sure</i>	5	12.2
<i>Total</i>	41	100.0

The findings further revealed that 46.3% reported institutional support (Table 7), and 41.5% felt unsupported by their institution, highlighting a gap

in mental health support for academic librarians and showing a divide in perceptions of workplace mental health initiatives.

Table 8: Interest in Training on Managing Social Media’s Emotional Impact

<i>Interest Level</i>	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Yes</i>	28	68.3%
<i>No</i>	5	12.2%
<i>Maybe</i>	8	19.5%
<i>Total</i>	41	100%

As shown in Table 8, the study revealed further that the majority (68.3%) expressed interest in training programs, highlighting a demand for institutional workshops on managing digital stress.

Discussion of Findings

The study findings reveal that academic librarians at Bayero University Kano (BUK) actively engage with social media for professional purposes. Specifically, 75.6% of respondents reported daily usage, while 19.5% indicated using social media multiple times a week. The most frequently utilized platform was WhatsApp (78.0%), followed by Facebook (53.7%) and Instagram (53.7%), with LinkedIn (43.9%) and Twitter (46.3%) having comparatively lower engagement. These findings are consistent with previous studies, such as Hussain and Sani (2022), which demonstrated that instant messaging and social networking platforms are preferred for professional engagement due to their ease of use and accessibility.

Moreover, Williams (2020) highlighted that usability significantly influences the behavioural intention of librarians to engage with social media, supporting the reported high usage rates in Nigeria. Bichi (2021) similarly found that the frequency of social media use among academic librarians is substantially high, with a majority engaging multiple times daily. The preference for WhatsApp over LinkedIn and Twitter aligns with the report by Statista (2023), which noted that WhatsApp remains widely utilized for messaging and informal networking. While LinkedIn and Twitter are

recognized as formal professional networking platforms, their lower engagement rates may be attributed to inadequate training and digital literacy (William, 2020).

The study found that social media serves as a key tool for information sharing (87.8%), networking with colleagues (78.0%), and professional development (73.1%). Additionally, 68.2% of respondents use social media to promote library events and resources, underscoring its role in enhancing visibility and engagement within the academic community. These findings align with Bichi (2021), who emphasized that social media facilitates knowledge dissemination and professional networking opportunities for librarians.

However, despite the recognized benefits, studies such as that by Makeri et al. (2024) indicate that librarians face challenges in effectively utilizing social media due to insufficient training and institutional support. This suggests that while librarians acknowledge the value of social media for professional growth, gaps in knowledge and resources may limit its full potential. Therefore, institutions must bridge this gap by providing targeted training programs that enhance librarians’ ability to leverage social media effectively.

Despite its professional benefits, prolonged social media use presents mental health challenges for academic librarians. The study found that 31.7% of respondents experience social comparison stress, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy, while 41.5% feel unsupported by their institution in managing the emotional effects of social media engagement. Although 73.2% perceive social media as positively impacting work-life balance, 26.8% remain neutral, indicating underlying concerns regarding digital stress and over-engagement. These findings reflect broader concerns about the psychological effects of social media usage. Singh and Tripathi (2024) found that excessive social media engagement correlates with heightened social comparison, leading to increased stress levels. Additionally, Nesi and Prinstein (2015) emphasized that social comparison via social media is a major contributor to psychological distress.

Their study suggests that individuals who frequently compare themselves to others online are at a higher risk of experiencing negative emotional states, reinforcing the findings that librarians may also face similar challenges.

Findings indicate that while some librarians employ coping mechanisms to manage social media-related stress, institutional support remains inadequate. The study found that 46.3% of respondents feel supported, whereas 41.5% feel unsupported, highlighting a significant gap in formal intervention programs. Furthermore, 68.3% of respondents expressed interest in workshops or training programs aimed at managing the emotional effects of social media use. This underscores the need for structured institutional support systems to address digital stress among academic librarians. Adenekan (2024) discusses the impact of techno-stress on academic librarians, emphasizing the necessity for institutional support to mitigate technology-related stressors. Without adequate resources and training, librarians may struggle to manage the emotional demands of social media engagement effectively. Similarly, Bakare et al. (2018) recommend that library management should implement training programs and provide essential resources to help librarians navigate social media challenges. These findings collectively suggest that institutions must take proactive measures in implementing well-being programs and digital literacy initiatives to support librarians' mental health.

The study found that 68.3% of librarians expressed willingness to participate in mental health-focused workshops. This reflects an increasing awareness of the psychological impact of social media and a demand for structured training to mitigate its negative effects. Shahzad et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of mental health concerns among university librarians, highlighting a growing interest in addressing these challenges through training and policy reforms. Similarly, Miesner (2020) discussed various training programs, such as Mental Health First Aid, which have gained significant traction among librarians. The reported interest in such initiatives suggests that academic

librarians recognize the importance of mental health literacy and seek institutional support to enhance their well-being. Therefore, universities should prioritize mental health interventions by implementing policies that support social media literacy, stress management, and work-life balance strategies.

Conclusion and Implications

The study provides critical insights into the social media usage patterns, perceived benefits, psychological challenges, and institutional support mechanisms available to academic librarians at BUK. While social media plays a crucial role in professional development, excessive engagement presents significant mental health challenges among academic librarians at BUK. The findings emphasize the need for BUK and other similar universities to implement structured training programs, digital literacy initiatives, and institutional policies that support the well-being of academic librarians. By addressing these issues, institutions can ensure that librarians maximize the benefits of social media while minimizing its adverse effects on mental health and professional productivity.

Recommendations

1. Establish institutional policies on social media use by developing guidelines for social media engagement to help librarians maintain a healthy work-life balance and encourage scheduled breaks from social media to reduce digital fatigue.
2. Introduce counselling and psychological support programs for academic librarians experiencing stress from social media engagement as well as conduct awareness campaigns on digital well-being and stress management.
3. Train librarians on time management strategies to prevent excessive social media use and courses on effective online communication and digital professionalism.
4. Subsidize subscriptions to premium professional networking sites like LinkedIn Learning, ResearchGate, and online library networks.

Implementing these recommendations will enhance the positive effects of social media while reducing its negative impact on mental health.

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