



**ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS
& PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA
BOOK SERIES**



ENGAGING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR HEALTH COMMUNICATION IN AFRICA

Adebayo Fayoyin

Abstract:

Advancements in digital media and communications technology have generated considerable optimism on the role of social media in achieving developmental and public health outcomes globally. The unprecedented availability of digital devices and platforms has also prompted different development institutions to design and implement a range of social media interventions for social and behaviour change. This paper examines how social media are transforming health communication in Africa. Our study demonstrates the existence of an avalanche of interventions using different mobile devices and mobilization approaches in addressing multiple health issues. The interventions target different population groups, and not limited to young people who are considered as the major users and consumers of social media content. However, the study cautions against “new media utopianism” or “social media-centricism” because technology is a tool of development not an end in itself. Within the context of development effectiveness discourse, the study identifies programmatic implications for effective deployment of social media in health communication. These include applying a theory of change model, creative integration of multimedia platforms and meaningful participation of all actors to generate a new development narrative. Finally, the paper identifies implications for communications theory, practice, policy, research and training.

Keywords: *social media, health, communication*