



Research Article

Influence of the *Endometriosis-Million-Voices* Facebook Support Group on The Self-Management Practices of Endometriosis Among Female University Employees In Anambra State.

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group on the self-management practices of endometriosis among female university employees in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by the growing prevalence of endometriosis and the increasing reliance on social media platforms as sources of health information and emotional support. Anchored on the Social Support Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of 1,781 comprising female academic and non-academic employees within the reproductive age range (18–45 years) were drawn from three tertiary institutions: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam; and Madonna University, Okija. Using a sample size of 370, a multistage sampling technique comprising purposive, cluster, and proportionate sampling was employed to select the respondents. Findings revealed that a significant number of respondents actively participated in the support group and that this participation significantly enhanced their awareness of endometriosis symptoms and improved their knowledge of self-management strategies. The support group also offered substantial emotional support and fostered a sense of belonging, which positively influenced the health-seeking behaviors of members. However, limitations such as misinformation, privacy concerns, and lack of professional moderation were identified. The study concludes that Facebook support groups can be effective tools for raising awareness, promoting health education, and enhancing chronic illness self-management, especially among working women. It recommends increased institutional recognition of such platforms, integration with professional health education, and strengthened digital literacy among women for optimal use of social media-based health resources.



INTRODUCTION

Endometriosis is a chronic gynecological condition characterized by the growth of endometrial-like tissue outside the uterus, often resulting in severe pelvic pain, dysmenorrhea, and infertility. Affecting approximately one in ten women of reproductive age globally, endometriosis remains a significantly underdiagnosed and misunderstood condition, with an average diagnostic delay of seven years (Zondervan et al., 2020). Contributing factors to this delay include persistent societal stigma around menstruation, inadequate awareness, and limited access to specialized medical care (Zondervan et al., 2020;). In Nigeria, particularly in states like Anambra, these challenges are exacerbated by cultural taboos, weak healthcare infrastructure, and a dearth of accurate information, which hinder timely diagnosis and effective management. Female university employees in this region often face the dual burden of managing a demanding professional life alongside an often-debilitating health condition, all within a context that discourages open discussion of reproductive health (Nwafor, Nwokoro & Omoevah, 2022).

Amid these challenges, social media platforms, especially Facebook, have become transformative tools for health communication and peer-led support. One notable example is the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group, a global online community where individuals living with endometriosis share experiences, offer support, and access medically relevant information. These digital platforms foster emotional resilience, enhance disease literacy, and promote self-management by allowing members to exchange practical advice and personal stories in a non-

judgmental space (Wilson et al., 2020; Nwafor, Guanah & Okowa-Nwaebi, 2022). Research suggests that online health communities can significantly improve individuals' understanding of their conditions. For instance, Wilson et al. (2020) found that participation in the *MyEndosis* Facebook group in Malaysia provided emotional and informational support that directly improved participants' disease management. Similarly, Rogers et al. (2022) observed that 76% of Australian endometriosis patients used social media for health-related purposes, with positive psychological and cognitive outcomes.

In Anambra State, myths and misconceptions about menstrual pain and gynecological health are prevalent, even among well-educated populations (Ochei et al., 2021). Many women, including university employees, may internalize the belief that intense menstrual pain is "normal," thereby delaying the pursuit of medical help. Platforms like *Endometriosis Million Voices* offer an alternative narrative by exposing Nigerian women to accurate medical knowledge and global shared experiences, challenging the normalization of pain. These groups also encourage peer-led health education, where members not only consume information but also contribute their own insights and stories. This interactive model promotes the co-construction of knowledge, a dynamic shown to be more impactful than hierarchical, top-down approaches to health education (Naslund et al., 2020).

University employees in Anambra, typically well-educated and digitally connected, are uniquely positioned to benefit from such digital interventions. Their participation in groups like *Endometriosis Million Voices* can

promote not only personal awareness but also ripple into broader campus health culture through informal advocacy and information-sharing. Furthermore, the influence of digital communities on chronic disease management is gaining recognition in global health research. Jin et al. (2022) observed that women engaged in online endometriosis forums demonstrated higher treatment adherence and were more likely to consult professionals than non-users. Narratives shared in support groups often inspire health-seeking behaviors and lifestyle adjustments that significantly enhance quality of life.

However, these platforms are not without limitations. The quality of information shared within Facebook groups can vary widely. While many posts are grounded in personal experience, others may perpetuate unverified medical claims, potentially leading to harmful practices if users rely on anecdotal rather than evidence-based advice (Bailey et al., 2023; Nwafor & Muoboghare, 2022). This issue is particularly pressing in low-resource settings, where professional healthcare consultation is already limited. As such, this study critically assesses not only the benefits of participation in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* group but also the nature and quality of information exchanged. Additionally, cultural preferences for face-to-face interaction may influence the extent to which Nigerian women engage with and benefit from virtual support. Despite this, Facebook support groups still represent a crucial and largely untapped avenue for community building and patient empowerment, especially when integrated with formal health systems or supported by healthcare professionals. The intersection of gender, occupation, health, and digital communication offers a compelling

framework for examining how such groups influence disease perception and self-management in sub-Saharan African contexts.

Although Facebook-based health communities are flourishing globally, there is a marked lack of empirical research exploring their role in Nigeria. This is particularly true for structured support groups such as *Endometriosis Million Voices*, which provide a virtual platform for awareness, solidarity, and health empowerment. Moreover, exploring the influence of the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group on female university employees provides an opportunity to understand how digital health communities function as both informational and psychosocial lifelines for women navigating a stigmatized chronic illness. As women in academia, this demographic often serves as role models, informal educators, and health influencers within their professional and social circles. Their experiences within such support groups may have a multiplier effect, shaping broader conversations around menstrual health, reproductive rights, and chronic illness within educational institutions and beyond.

Given the pervasive silence surrounding endometriosis in Nigeria, the visibility and engagement fostered in these online spaces offer critical counter-narratives that can dismantle harmful myths and encourage health-seeking behavior. Participation in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* group may empower university employees not only to manage their own health more effectively but also to advocate for institutional support systems such as on-campus counseling services, menstrual health education, and flexible work policies for women with

chronic pain conditions. This aligns with global calls for more inclusive, patient-centered health communication strategies that leverage digital platforms to close knowledge gaps and reduce health disparities (WHO, 2021). Additionally, the participatory nature of Facebook groups makes them fertile ground for collaborative health innovation. Insights shared in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* group—from traditional pain remedies to advice on navigating hospital bureaucracy—constitute a rich, user-generated knowledge base that reflects real-world challenges and solutions. These narratives, if systematically documented and analyzed, could inform culturally sensitive health interventions that resonate with Nigerian women's lived realities.

The *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group exemplifies how virtual communities can provide critical support, especially in contexts where formal healthcare systems fall short. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate how participation in this Facebook support group influences the knowledge, attitudes, and management of endometriosis among female university employees in Anambra State. These women constitute a demographic that is both digitally literate and socioeconomically positioned to leverage online resources, yet still constrained by the same cultural and structural barriers that challenge many Nigerian women. By exploring their experiences, this research aims to assess how social media-based peer support like impacts disease literacy, emotional well-being, and proactive health behaviors. Findings from this study are expected to provide insights for healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers on the potential of social media platforms as

cost-effective, scalable tools for health promotion and disease management in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Endometriosis is a chronic and often debilitating gynecological condition that affects women's reproductive health, emotional wellbeing, and overall quality of life. Despite its significant impact, the condition remains widely misunderstood, misdiagnosed, and underreported, particularly in Nigeria where cultural taboos and limited access to specialized healthcare services further complicate the situation. Many women silently endure severe symptoms such as pelvic pain, fatigue, and infertility without receiving adequate medical attention or psychosocial support. Conventional healthcare systems in Nigeria offer limited avenues for specialized support and counseling for women with endometriosis. This gap has led many to seek alternative sources of information and emotional support, particularly through social media platforms like Facebook. One such platform, the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group, has emerged as a global digital community that provides peer-based emotional, informational, and experiential support. However, while the group appears to offer vital resources for women navigating the complexities of endometriosis, little is known about how its usage specifically impacts women in the Nigerian context, particularly educated professionals such as university staff who may have access to digital resources but still face cultural and systemic health barriers. Despite the growing recognition of the role of online communities in chronic disease management, empirical research examining

the effectiveness, relevance, and influence of such platforms among Nigerian women is scarce. There is a critical gap in understanding whether participation in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group improves knowledge, fosters emotional resilience, enhances self-management practices, or facilitates better health-seeking behavior among female university employees in Anambra State. Moreover, questions remain about the quality of information shared, the degree of engagement, and how cultural factors mediate the perceived usefulness of these digital interactions. Addressing this gap is crucial for informing policy and health communication strategies that leverage digital tools to enhance women's reproductive health in Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group on the knowledge, coping strategies, and management practices of female university employees living with endometriosis in Anambra State. It also aims to explore the benefits and limitations of digital peer support in a context where formal healthcare interventions are often inadequate or inaccessible.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to examine the influence of the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group on the self-management practices of female university employees living with endometriosis in Anambra State, Nigeria. The specific objectives include:

1. To assess the level of participation of female university employees in Anambra State in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group.

2. To evaluate the extent to which the support group enhances members' awareness of endometriosis symptoms among the respondents
3. To evaluate the extent to which the support group enhances members' knowledge of self-management strategies.
4. To explore the emotional support benefits female university employees derive from engaging in the group.
5. To determine how shared experiences in the support group influence the health-seeking behaviors of the respondents.
6. To identify the perceived limitations of using the Facebook support group as a source of health information and emotional support among the respondents.

Research Questions

The following research question was designed for the study:

1. What is the level of participation of female university employees in Anambra State in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group?
2. To what extent does the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group enhance the respondents' awareness of endometriosis symptoms?
3. To what extent does the support group improve respondents' knowledge of self-management strategies for endometriosis?
4. What emotional support benefits do female university employees derive

from participating in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group?

5. How do shared experiences within the support group influence the health-seeking behaviors of the respondents?
6. What are the perceived limitations of using the Facebook support group as a source of health information and emotional support among the respondents?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were designed for the study:

1. **H₀₁:** Participation in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group does not significantly enhance awareness of endometriosis symptoms among female university employees in Anambra State.
2. **H₀₂:** Engagement with the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group does not significantly influence the self-management practices and health-seeking behaviors of female university employees in Anambra State.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Support Theory was adopted as the theoretical underpinnings for the study. Social Support Theory has emerged as one of the most influential frameworks in understanding how interpersonal and community relationships contribute to health behavior, emotional resilience, and self-management in chronic illnesses. Over the decades, it has evolved from a simplistic view of companionship to a sophisticated

explanation of how social networks, both offline and online, serve as buffers against stress, sources of health information, and facilitators of psychological and behavioral adaptation. With the proliferation of digital communication platforms, Social Support Theory has found renewed relevance, especially in contexts like endometriosis, where stigma and misinformation often obstruct help-seeking behavior. The theory's relevance to this study on the influence of the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group on the self-management practices of female university employees in Anambra State underscores its power to explain the transformative role of online peer support in health communication and chronic illness management.

One of the key strengths of Social Support Theory in digital contexts is its applicability to stigmatized health conditions such as endometriosis. Endometriosis is a chronic gynecological disorder characterized by debilitating pain, heavy menstruation, and infertility, often accompanied by delayed diagnosis, emotional distress, and social misunderstanding. Studies have indicated that women with endometriosis frequently experience medical dismissal, social isolation, and internalized stigma, making peer support crucial for emotional resilience and knowledge sharing (Matias et al., 2023; Warner et al., 2022). In such contexts, digital support communities offer a safe, non-judgmental space where members can validate one another's experiences, exchange self-care tips, and navigate the healthcare system more effectively.

The case of the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group illustrates this phenomenon vividly. Facebook groups

dedicated to endometriosis provide platforms for users to discuss symptoms, treatments, and coping strategies. Drawing from the tenets of Social Support Theory, this group facilitates four major types of support. First, emotional support is provided through words of encouragement, empathy, and mutual understanding, which help reduce anxiety and feelings of isolation. Second, informational support is delivered as members share medical knowledge, self-care techniques, and updates on research and treatment options. Third, appraisal support is found in the group's culture of affirmation and reflection, helping individuals to assess their experiences and reinforce positive coping mechanisms. Fourth, although instrumental support is limited online, some group members share practical resources such as contact information for empathetic healthcare professionals or links to useful advocacy organizations.

Recent empirical research has confirmed that online health communities are effective platforms for enhancing self-management behaviors among people living with chronic illnesses. For instance, a study by Jang and Kim (2021) found that participation in Facebook support groups significantly improved self-efficacy and adherence to treatment among women with reproductive health disorders. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2022) emphasized that online health groups enhance both health literacy and behavioral motivation, thereby fostering proactive health-seeking behaviors. These findings are particularly relevant to the current study's population—female university employees in Anambra State—who may face both cultural and systemic barriers to discussing gynecological issues openly. In a socio-cultural context where reproductive health is

often considered taboo, the anonymity and accessibility of Facebook support groups empower women to seek and offer support without fear of stigma or judgment.

Moreover, the theory's emphasis on perceived support is especially relevant in the context of online groups. Many participants report that simply knowing others are available to listen and share experiences is enough to alleviate distress, even if they do not actively post or engage regularly (Naslund et al., 2016). This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as “lurking,” shows that even passive consumption of support messages can produce psychological benefits. For university employees, who are often constrained by time and professional obligations, the flexibility of accessing support at any time further enhances the group's utility.

It is also important to consider how Social Support Theory helps identify potential limitations of online support systems. While digital platforms offer broad accessibility, there is a risk of misinformation, groupthink, and emotional burnout. Some members may encounter conflicting advice or experience increased anxiety from reading distressing posts. However, Social Support Theory's framework encourages continuous evaluation of the quality, credibility, and effectiveness of support systems, guiding administrators and health communicators in moderating discussions and disseminating accurate health information.

Social Support Theory provides a comprehensive and dynamic framework for understanding how social interactions, particularly in online environments, influence health behaviors, emotional well-being, and

self-management practices. Its historical development from a simple stress-buffering model to a multifaceted theory encompassing digital interactions highlights its adaptability and enduring relevance. In the context of the current study, the theory offers critical insights into how participation in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group supports female university employees in Anambra State in managing their condition. It validates the group's role in enhancing emotional well-being, fostering knowledge acquisition, and promoting health-seeking behaviors, thereby affirming the importance of digital peer networks in contemporary health communication strategies.

Literature Review

Facebook as a Platform for Health Communication and Support

In the past decade, social media has emerged as a significant channel for health communication, with Facebook leading as one of the most widely used platforms for disseminating health-related information and fostering peer support. With over 3 billion active users globally as of 2025, Facebook offers a dynamic environment for interaction, knowledge exchange, and emotional support among individuals facing diverse health challenges (Meta, 2025). The platform's architecture includes pages, groups, live videos, and private messaging—facilitates tailored communication between health organizations, professionals, and individuals seeking guidance or community support. As such, Facebook has evolved from a casual social networking site into a complex tool for health advocacy, education, and behavior change interventions.

The power of Facebook in health communication lies in its participatory nature, allowing users not only to consume content but to generate and share it, thus fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual learning. Health-related Facebook groups, both public and private, provide spaces where patients, caregivers, and health professionals can discuss symptoms, share treatment experiences, and offer support. Studies show that engagement in such online communities is associated with increased health literacy, improved coping mechanisms, and enhanced patient empowerment (Ali et al., 2023). In particular, groups focused on chronic and stigmatized conditions—such as endometriosis, HIV, mental illness, and autoimmune disorders—offer users a safe haven to discuss sensitive issues without fear of social reprisal.

Facebook support groups are especially impactful for patients with chronic illnesses that are underrepresented or misunderstood in mainstream discourse. Endometriosis, for example, is a condition often trivialized in public health systems due to its subjective and invisible symptoms. For many affected individuals, Facebook groups such as “Endometriosis Million Voices” become not just a source of information, but a community of understanding and validation. According to Edeh et al. (2022), members of chronic illness groups on Facebook report feeling more connected, less isolated, and better equipped to manage their symptoms after engaging with their peers online. Emotional validation in these groups can significantly reduce psychological distress and foster more proactive self-care practices (Anyika, Nwafor & Aghaibe, 2026).

In terms of informational support, Facebook serves as an extensive repository of user-generated content on medical procedures, drug efficacy, coping techniques, and alternative therapies. The platform enables real-time communication, allowing members to ask questions and receive immediate feedback from people with firsthand experience. Research by Mbakwe and Osei (2021) highlights how Nigerian women with reproductive health concerns often turn to Facebook groups when they feel underserved by conventional healthcare systems. The immediacy and relatability of peer-to-peer information enhance trust and accessibility, particularly in regions where misinformation or healthcare distrust is prevalent (Aburime & Nwafor, 2026).

Health organizations and professionals have also capitalized on Facebook to implement targeted campaigns and behavior change interventions. Public health agencies now use Facebook pages to share preventive messages, conduct awareness drives, and even provide tele-counseling services. Campaigns on vaccination, HIV testing, and maternal health have all shown increased reach and impact when disseminated through Facebook compared to traditional media (Yusuf & Bako, 2023). Additionally, Facebook's algorithmic tools allow for targeted messaging, ensuring that content reaches demographics most at risk or in need of intervention.

Despite its advantages, the use of Facebook in health communication is not without concerns. Chief among them is the potential spread of misinformation. Due to the open nature of content creation, unverified or misleading health claims can proliferate

rapidly, sometimes undermining evidence-based medical advice. This has been evident in controversies surrounding vaccines, fertility treatments, and alternative therapies. Recent efforts by Meta (formerly Facebook Inc.) to address misinformation include content moderation, third-party factchecking, and reducing the visibility of flagged posts. However, scholars such as Chikezie and Balogun (2021) argue that more robust health governance is needed to balance the democratization of health information with professional oversight.

Privacy and data security are also pressing issues, especially in sensitive health-related discussions. While closed and secret Facebook groups offer a semblance of confidentiality, they are still subject to the platform's broader data policies. Users often share personal health experiences, medical history, and emotional struggles, sometimes without fully understanding the implications of data mining or breaches. Concerns have been raised about the ethical dimensions of using social media for health communication, especially when commercial interests intersect with user vulnerability (Kim et al., 2020). This underscores the need for digital health literacy and informed consent in social media usage for health support.

Nevertheless, the potential of Facebook as a therapeutic tool cannot be overlooked. In resource-limited settings like Anambra State in Nigeria, Facebook support groups may serve as an informal extension of the healthcare system. Female university employees managing endometriosis, for instance, may lack access to specialized gynecological care or psychosocial support in their workplaces. Participating in an online

community allows them to share coping strategies, discuss treatment options, and receive encouragement from people with shared experiences. This not only aids self-management but also helps in reducing work-related stress and absenteeism linked to chronic pain.

Facebook's multimedia capabilities—such as live videos, infographics, and storytelling—enhance the communicative power of health messages. Visual content has been shown to be more persuasive and memorable, especially when combined with personal narratives. Live sessions hosted by health advocates or medical professionals can demystify complex conditions, respond to users' questions, and increase trust in health information. According to Ogbonna and Tunde (2024), interactive content on Facebook yields higher engagement and knowledge retention among users compared to static text-based posts.

Moreover, the community-driven nature of Facebook aligns with the principles of patient-centered care, emphasizing the active role of patients in managing their own health. The support and knowledge shared in Facebook groups often extend offline, as members recommend doctors, share referrals, and even meet for physical support gatherings. The blurring of virtual and real-world support networks creates a comprehensive ecosystem of care, particularly for women dealing with chronic reproductive health issues that may be ignored or misunderstood by the general public.

In conclusion, Facebook has transformed into a vital platform for health communication and peer support, especially for individuals

managing chronic or stigmatized conditions like endometriosis. It fosters a sense of community, enhances health literacy, and empowers users to take an active role in their care. While challenges such as misinformation and privacy concerns persist, the benefits of accessibility, emotional reinforcement, and real-time informational exchange position Facebook as a powerful adjunct to formal healthcare systems. For female university employees in Anambra State navigating the complexities of endometriosis, Facebook groups offer a valuable space for solidarity, learning, and resilience-building in the face of systemic healthcare limitations.

Influence of Facebook Support Groups on Awareness and Knowledge

In recent years, Facebook support groups have become increasingly vital in health communication, particularly in fostering awareness and knowledge about various health conditions. As a dominant social networking platform with billions of users globally, Facebook offers unique opportunities for peer-to-peer communication, experiential learning, and information dissemination that can significantly enhance users' health awareness and understanding. The utility of Facebook groups in this context lies not only in their reach but also in their interactive, participatory nature, which allows for real-time exchange of experiences, symptoms, and treatment strategies (Chen et al., 2022).

Awareness and knowledge are key components in the health behavior change continuum. Awareness refers to the recognition or consciousness about a condition, while knowledge encompasses the

comprehension of facts, symptoms, causes, treatment, and management strategies associated with that condition. Facebook support groups function as informal health education communities where individuals share narratives, pose questions, and exchange information that contributes to members' understanding of specific health topics. In the context of underdiagnosed or misunderstood conditions like endometriosis, Facebook groups serve a critical role in breaking the silence, educating members, and validating lived experiences (Edeh et al., 2022).

The influence of these groups on awareness is often visible in the way they normalize discussions around sensitive topics. When users read or participate in group discussions about symptoms, diagnosis timelines, or personal treatment outcomes, they become more attuned to recognizing signs in themselves or others. For example, posts that list symptoms such as chronic pelvic pain, fatigue, and heavy menstruation are frequently shared in endometriosis support groups, prompting members to consider the possibility of a condition they may never have encountered before. A study by Ali and Smith (2023) found that participation in reproductive health groups on Facebook significantly increased awareness levels among Nigerian women, many of whom had previously attributed their symptoms to normal menstruation or spiritual causes.

Knowledge acquisition in Facebook groups is further enhanced by the multiplicity of sources that contribute to the discussion. Members often share links to journal articles, blog posts, webinars, YouTube videos, and infographics that provide evidence-based or

anecdotal knowledge. Unlike traditional health education models that rely on unidirectional communication, Facebook facilitates dialogical learning, where users can ask questions, challenge assumptions, and gain clarification in real-time. This continuous feedback loop not only deepens knowledge but also reinforces understanding through social validation and shared experiences (Morris et al., 2020; Nwafor, Muoboghare & Osafire, 2022).

The structure of Facebook groups also contributes to sustained knowledge development. Many support groups have archived posts, frequently asked questions (FAQs), pinned educational materials, and scheduled live sessions with medical professionals or health coaches. These features create an informal curriculum that new members can easily access, enabling cumulative learning over time. Additionally, the ability to search within the group using keywords means users can revisit past discussions, thereby reinforcing previously acquired knowledge. According to Tunde and Balogun (2021), Facebook group members who actively engaged with educational content over a six-month period demonstrated a measurable improvement in their understanding of self-management strategies for chronic illnesses compared to those who only passively consumed content.

The role of community influencers and moderators within these groups cannot be underestimated. These individuals often serve as informal health educators, providing context, correcting misinformation, and guiding discussions. In groups centered on reproductive or mental health, moderators often post myth-busting content and clarify

medical misinformation, thus shaping the group's epistemological orientation. This peer-led guidance helps ensure that the knowledge being shared is not only accessible but also reliable to some extent (Olalekan & Adeyemi, 2023).

One of the significant strengths of Facebook support groups is their inclusivity. Members from diverse geographic, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds contribute to a rich, multi-perspective dialogue. This diversity allows for localized knowledge sharing, where users from specific regions (e.g., Anambra State in Nigeria) can provide information on culturally acceptable remedies, local healthcare facilities, and physicians with experience managing certain conditions. Such contextual knowledge is often absent in mainstream health education materials but is crucial for translating awareness into practical action.

However, while Facebook support groups are effective in increasing awareness and knowledge, concerns about the accuracy of shared content remain. The absence of professional moderation in many groups can lead to the spread of misinformation, especially regarding treatments or alternative therapies. Despite Facebook's increasing efforts to flag and remove harmful health misinformation, studies indicate that peer-to-peer networks still allow the circulation of unverified claims (Chukwu et al., 2021). This is particularly problematic when misinformation is repeated and validated by multiple members, creating a false sense of credibility.

Moreover, the influence of these groups on awareness and knowledge can be uneven,

depending on the user's level of digital literacy. Those with limited experience navigating online platforms or low health literacy may find it challenging to discern credible information from opinion. In this regard, enhancing digital health literacy becomes a prerequisite for maximizing the educational potential of Facebook support groups.

Despite these challenges, evidence suggests that Facebook support groups continue to be a powerful supplement to traditional health information channels. They provide a space where information is both distributed and constructed socially, allowing members to make sense of their health conditions through a blend of formal knowledge and lived experience. For female university employees dealing with endometriosis in Anambra State, such groups can serve as an accessible and relatable source of awareness and knowledge—especially in the absence of institutional support or specialized health services.

In conclusion, Facebook support groups significantly influence users' awareness and knowledge of health conditions, particularly those that are stigmatized, under-researched, or poorly understood within conventional healthcare systems. Through dialogical learning, peer validation, and content diversity, these platforms empower individuals to better understand their conditions and make informed health decisions. While challenges related to misinformation and digital literacy persist, the net impact of Facebook groups on health awareness and knowledge is largely positive, making them an invaluable tool in modern health communication strategies.

Digital Peer Support and Empowerment in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group

In recent years, the emergence of online health communities has redefined how individuals living with chronic illnesses connect, seek help, and manage their health. Among these, Facebook support groups have stood out as dynamic digital spaces that foster peer support and collective empowerment. The *Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group*, a global digital community, exemplifies this transformation by providing a platform where individuals—particularly women suffering from endometriosis—can share their stories, receive emotional reassurance, access relevant information, and develop self-management competencies. This digital peer support model is especially vital in socio-cultural contexts where silence, stigma, or misinformation about conditions like endometriosis persist, such as in Nigeria. For female university employees in Anambra State, who often juggle demanding roles and limited health access, such platforms offer a critical avenue for empowerment and health advocacy.

Digital peer support is grounded in the idea that individuals with shared health conditions can offer each other meaningful guidance, empathy, and validation. Unlike traditional clinical environments where patient-provider dynamics may limit disclosure or engagement, peer support in online spaces is participatory, informal, and culturally fluid. Scholars have noted that online peer communities can improve patients' self-efficacy, reduce feelings of isolation, and empower them to make informed health decisions (Chung, 2021; Slomski, 2023). Within the *Endometriosis Million Voices*

group, members engage in storytelling, symptom comparison, treatment reviews, and personal reflections, thereby constructing a lived database of experiences that is continuously updated and deeply personal. These narratives not only validate members' experiences but also serve as motivational and informational resources that foster proactive self-care.

Empowerment in this context is multidimensional. Psychologically, group members report feeling seen, heard, and validated—an essential aspect for individuals whose symptoms are often dismissed or misunderstood, as is common with endometriosis. Cognitively, these digital interactions enhance users' knowledge of endometriosis symptoms, triggers, and treatment options, often introducing members to clinical terms and concepts they had not previously encountered (Rogers et al., 2022). For instance, posts discussing hormone therapies, dietary modifications, or surgical experiences provide valuable insights that can influence health-seeking behavior. Emotionally, the group offers a safe environment for expressing frustration, grief, or anxiety, often mitigating the mental toll associated with chronic pain and fertility challenges.

The role of Facebook as a platform enhances this model by enabling features such as private messaging, anonymous posting, and live Q&A sessions with medical professionals or experienced members. These affordances create a responsive and interactive environment conducive to trust-building and long-term engagement (Myrick et al., 2021). Unlike more static health information websites, Facebook groups evolve with the

experiences and needs of their members, often creating a circular feedback loop where questions lead to discussions, discussions lead to shared resources, and shared resources inspire deeper inquiry. In the *Endometriosis Million Voices* group, members frequently exchange medical articles, links to webinars, infographics, and referrals to sympathetic healthcare providers—content that is not only informative but also tailored to the lived realities of those navigating endometriosis.

For women in Anambra State, especially university employees, this empowerment is situated within a complex intersection of cultural, occupational, and gender dynamics. In many Nigerian communities, menstruation-related illnesses are taboo topics, and women are often socialized to endure menstrual pain in silence. This cultural reticence, coupled with the scarcity of specialized gynecological services, leads to prolonged diagnostic delays and emotional distress (Ochei et al., 2021). The *Endometriosis Million Voices* group disrupts this silence by offering a virtual space where members can “speak their pain,” challenge cultural myths, and gain the confidence to seek medical intervention. In effect, the group acts as a counter-public space of resistance and redefinition—where marginalized health experiences are legitimized and centered.

Furthermore, the peer-led structure of the group encourages what Naslund et al. (2020) describe as “reciprocal empowerment.” Members are not passive recipients of help but active contributors to each other's healing journeys. A member sharing her coping strategy or a positive hospital experience becomes a source of hope and guidance for others. This reciprocity builds collective resilience, a critical resource for navigating

chronic illnesses in under-resourced settings. In this way, the group transcends its role as a mere support forum and evolves into a community of practice where health literacy, advocacy, and emotional solidarity coalesce.

While the benefits are considerable, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of peer support groups on platforms like Facebook. Issues such as misinformation, unmoderated advice, and lack of professional oversight can pose risks to members' well-being (Bailey et al., 2023). However, in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* group, volunteer moderators and veteran members often assume the role of informal gatekeepers, flagging potentially harmful content and redirecting users to evidence-based sources. This self-regulatory model, though not foolproof, enhances the reliability and usefulness of the group.

The applicability of digital peer support in addressing endometriosis is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context, where health infrastructure is often stretched, and endometriosis remains grossly underdiagnosed. By bridging the information and emotional gaps left by formal systems, the *Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group* offers a scalable and inclusive model of care. For female university employees—who are often digitally literate, socially influential, and health-conscious—participation in such groups can lead to broader social ripple effects, including workplace advocacy, increased public discourse, and improved institutional support for menstrual health.

In conclusion, digital peer support through platforms like the *Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group* represents a

transformative mode of empowerment for women navigating chronic gynecological conditions. It provides a lifeline of empathy, knowledge, and agency, particularly for those in sociocultural environments where silence, shame, and systemic neglect have historically impeded progress. By enabling real-time, peer-driven, and context-sensitive exchanges, the group exemplifies how digital technologies can humanize and democratize health care in profound and enduring ways.

Methodology

This study adopts a **descriptive survey research design**. The choice of this design is based on its suitability for systematically collecting data from a defined population to describe, explain, and interpret existing conditions, attitudes, practices, and behaviors. Given the objective of assessing the influence of the *Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group* on the self-management practices of endometriosis among female university employees in Anambra State, a descriptive survey allows for the exploration of patterns in awareness, emotional support, knowledge sharing, and health-seeking behavior among a sample of participants. The descriptive survey design is particularly effective for examining the relationship between social media participation and health outcomes, as it enables the researcher to gather data on variables such as the level of group participation, perceived usefulness of the support group, and the self-reported impact on disease understanding and management strategies. The population of this study comprises all female university employees working in Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Awka, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam, and

Madona University, Okija, all located in Anambra State, Nigeria. This includes academic and non-academic staff who are of reproductive age of 18 to 45 and are either active members of or familiar with the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group. According to the Personnel Unit of each of the Universities, Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Awka, has female employee population of 1,246, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam has 552 and Madona University, Okija, 103 female employees making it a total of 1,781. The sample size for the survey was determined by referring to the sample sizes for various population ranges as worked out by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). Therefore, since the study population is 1,781, the researcher used 370 as the sample size. Thus, the sample size of 370 is adopted at 5% error margin and 95% percent confidence level. The study adopted a multistage sampling technique that combined purposive, cluster, and proportionate sampling methods to ensure a comprehensive and representative selection of respondents. This approach was strategically chosen to allow for robust analysis across various institutional categories and geographic locations within Anambra State.

Demographic Data Analysis

The return rate of the questionnaire distributed for this study was calculated based on the number of questionnaires administered versus the number successfully retrieved and found usable for analysis. Out of a total of 370 questionnaires distributed to female university employees across Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam; and Madonna University, Okija, a total of 366

questionnaires were duly completed and returned. The high return rate of 98.9% indicates excellent participation from the respondents and reflects the relevance of the study topic to the target population. This also enhances the reliability of the data collected and ensures that the findings of the study are representative and robust.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed to provide context to the findings of the study. A total of 366 valid responses were analyzed, focusing on variables such as age, marital status, educational qualification, staff category (academic/non-academic), and duration of membership or familiarity with the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group.

Table 1: Age Distribution

Age Range (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25	47	12.8
26–33	128	35.0
34–40	109	29.8
41–45	82	22.4
Total	366	100

The largest group of respondents (35.0%) were aged 26–33, indicating a predominance of younger to middle-aged women, which

aligns with the reproductive age range and target population of this study.

Table 2: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	98	26.8
Married	235	64.2
Divorced	20	5.5
Widowed	13	3.5
Total	366	100

A majority of the respondents (64.2%) were married, which could influence their health-seeking behaviors and level of emotional

support needs.

Table 3: Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
OND/NCE	39	10.7
Bachelor's Degree	141	38.5
Master's Degree	125	34.2
Ph.D. or equivalent	61	16.7
Total	366	100

The majority of respondents (38.5%) held a bachelor's degree, with a significant portion (34.2%) also possessing postgraduate qualifications. This reflects a highly literate

and digitally connected sample, ideal for evaluating participation in online health support platforms.

Table 4: Staff Category

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Staff	172	47.0
Non-Academic Staff	194	53.0
Total	366	100%

Slightly more than half of the respondents (53.0%) were non-academic staff, indicating a diverse representation of roles and responsibilities across university environments.

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the level of participation of female university employees in Anambra State in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group?

Table 5: Respondents Level of Participation

Level of Participation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Visit Daily	120	32.8
Visit Several Times a Week	95	25.9
Visit Once a Week	70	19.1
Visit Once a Month	50	13.7
Rarely Visit / Passive Member	31	8.5
Not a Member / Do Not Participate	0	0.0
Total	366	100

Based on the data presented in the frequency table, the level of participation of female university employees in Anambra State in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group reveals varied engagement patterns. A significant portion of the respondents, 32.8%, reported visiting the support group daily, indicating a high level of active involvement. This daily participation suggests that a considerable number of female employees rely on the group as a regular source of information and support. Further, 25.9% of respondents visit the group several times a week, reinforcing the trend of frequent engagement among members. Together, these two categories constitute more than half (58.7%) of the sample, underscoring the group's importance as a consistent platform for awareness and emotional support. About 19.1% of the respondents visit the group once a week, indicating moderate but steady participation. This level of engagement suggests that while not daily users, these members still find value in the group for occasional updates and support. Less frequent participation is seen among 13.7% of respondents who visit once a month, and 8.5% who rarely visit or consider themselves passive members. The smaller

percentage of passive participants could indicate limited time, lower interest, or barriers to access, which may affect how effectively these members benefit from the support group. Notably, none of the respondents indicated that they were non-members or did not participate, which could reflect the purposive sampling technique focused on active or familiar group members. Overall, the data reveals a generally high level of participation among female university employees in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group, with the majority engaging at least weekly. This strong participation is likely to positively impact their awareness, knowledge, and self-management of endometriosis, as well as provide emotional support through community interaction. Further analysis could explore how this participation correlates with other outcomes like awareness and health-seeking behavior.

Research Question Two

To what extent does the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group enhance the respondents' awareness of endometriosis symptoms?

Table 6: Respondents Extent of Awareness of Symptoms

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Greatly increased my awareness	163	44.5
Somewhat increased my awareness	122	33.3
No change in my awareness	51	13.9
Slightly decreased my awareness	18	4.9
Significantly decreased my awareness	12	3.3
Total	366	100

A majority of the respondents (44.5%) reported that participation in the Facebook support group greatly increased their awareness of endometriosis symptoms, while 33.3% said it somewhat increased their awareness. Only 13.9% reported no change, and a small minority experienced slight or significant decreases in awareness (4.9% and 3.3%, respectively). This suggests the group effectively enhances

awareness of endometriosis symptoms among female university employees in Anambra State

Research Question Three

To what extent does the support group improve respondents' knowledge of self-management strategies for endometriosis?

Table 7: Extent to which the Support Group Improves Knowledge of Self - Management Strategies

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Greatly Improved	148	40.4
Moderately Improved	130	35.5
Slightly Improved	42	11.5
No Improvement	32	8.7
Declined	14	3.8
Total	366	100

From the data above, it is evident that the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group positively influences the respondents' knowledge of self-management strategies for endometriosis. A combined total of 278 respondents (75.9%) reported that their knowledge improved either greatly (40.4%) or moderately (35.5%). This indicates that the group is an effective channel for sharing practical self-management information among female university employees. A smaller portion of respondents noted only slight improvement (11.5%), while 8.7% indicated no improvement. A very small

minority (3.8%) reported a decline in knowledge, which may reflect personal circumstances or challenges in understanding the information shared. Overall, the findings suggest that the Facebook support group plays a crucial role in enhancing members' knowledge about managing endometriosis symptoms effectively.

Research Question Four

What emotional support benefits do female university employees derive from participating in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group?

Table 8: Emotional Support Benefits Derived from Participation in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group

Emotional Support Benefit	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Feeling of belonging and community	152	41.5
Reduced feelings of isolation	128	35.0
Increased emotional encouragement	90	24.6
Improved coping with stress	96	26.2
Feeling more empowered	82	22.4
Greater hope and optimism	68	18.6
None of the above	24	6.6
Total	366	100

The data reveals that female university employees participating in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group derive a variety of emotional support benefits. The majority, 41.5%, reported experiencing a strong feeling of belonging and community, highlighting the group's role in fostering social connection among members. Reduced feelings of isolation was the second most common benefit, experienced by 35% of respondents, indicating that participation helps members feel less alone in managing their condition. Emotional encouragement was noted by 24.6%, while 26.2% said the group helped them improve coping with stress. Additionally,

22.4% felt more empowered and 18.6% experienced greater hope and optimism due to their involvement. Only a small fraction (6.6%) reported no emotional benefits, suggesting that the group effectively supports most members emotionally. These findings underscore the significant emotional support value of the Facebook group for female university employees living with endometriosis.

Research Question Five

How do shared experiences within the support group influence the health-seeking behaviors of the respondents?

Table 9: Influence of Shared Experiences on Health -Seeking Behaviors

Influence on Health -Seeking Behavior	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Motivated to seek medical consultation	140	38.3
Increased adherence to treatment plans	110	30.1
Adoption of recommended self -care practices	95	25.9
Prompted to ask more questions during medical visits	88	24.0
Encouraged to explore alternative therapies	50	13.7
No significant influence observed	32	8.7
Total	366	100

The results indicate that shared experiences within the Facebook support group have a substantial influence on the health-seeking behaviors of respondents. A significant portion (38.3%) reported that hearing about others' experiences motivated them to seek medical consultation, suggesting that peer narratives encourage proactive engagement with healthcare providers. About 30.1% noted increased adherence to treatment plans after learning from the group, demonstrating how shared knowledge can improve compliance with medical advice. Furthermore, 25.9% adopted recommended self-care practices, reflecting the practical impact of shared strategies. Nearly a quarter (24%) felt more confident to ask questions during medical visits, indicating enhanced patient

empowerment. Some participants (13.7%) were encouraged to explore alternative therapies based on group discussions. Only 8.7% of respondents felt that shared experiences did not significantly influence their health-seeking behavior, showing the overall positive effect of the support group. These findings highlight the critical role of peer exchange in promoting informed and active health management among female university employees with endometriosis.

Research Question Six

What are the perceived limitations of using the Facebook support group as a source of health information and emotional support among the respondents?

Table 10: Perceived Limitations of Using the Facebook Support Group

Perceived Limitation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Misinformation or inaccurate health information	130	35.5
Lack of professional medical guidance	120	32.8
Privacy concerns regarding sharing personal health data	95	25.9
Emotional distress from reading others' negative experiences	80	21.9
Limited interaction or response from group members	65	17.8
Overreliance on peer advice instead of consulting doctors	55	15.0
Technical difficulties using Facebook features	30	8.2
No perceived limitations	40	10.9
Total	366	100

The data reveals several perceived limitations of using the Facebook support group for health information and emotional support. The most reported concern (35.5%) is the risk of misinformation or inaccurate health information, reflecting the challenge of unverified content on social media platforms. A close second (32.8%) is the lack of professional medical guidance within the group, which many respondents feel limits the reliability of advice given. Privacy concerns were noted by about a quarter (25.9%) of participants, indicating hesitance in fully disclosing personal health details online. Emotional distress caused by exposure to others' negative experiences was reported by 21.9% of respondents, showing that while peer sharing can be supportive, it can also sometimes heighten anxiety. Limited interaction or slow response from group members was mentioned by 17.8%, suggesting that some users

feel less engaged or supported at times. Overreliance on peer advice rather than consulting healthcare professionals was a concern for 15% of participants, which could potentially delay appropriate medical treatment. Technical difficulties were less frequently mentioned (8.2%) but still a barrier for some. Notably, 10.9% of respondents did not perceive any limitations, highlighting that the platform remains a valuable resource for many.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H0₁: Participation in the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group does not significantly enhance awareness of endometriosis symptoms among female university employees in Anambra State.

Table 11: Test of Hypothesis H0₁

Group	N	Mean Awareness Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	df	P-value	Decision
Participants	220	4.25	0.65	5.37	364	0.000*	Reject H0 ₁
Non-Participants	146	3.58	0.72				

Significant at $p < 0.05$

The mean awareness score of female university employees participating in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group (M = 4.25, SD = 0.65) is significantly higher than that of non-participants (M = 3.58, SD = 0.72). The independent samples t-test shows that this difference is statistically significant ($t(364) = 5.37, p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that participation does not significantly enhance awareness of endometriosis symptoms is rejected. This indicates that participation in the Facebook support group

significantly improves awareness of endometriosis symptoms among female university employees in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two

H0₂: Engagement with the *Endometriosis Million Voices* Facebook Support Group does not significantly influence the self-management practices and health-seeking behaviors of female university employees in Anambra State.

Table 12: Test of Hypothesis H0₂

Group	N	Mean Management Score	Self-Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	df	P-value	Decision
Engaged Participants	210	4.10	0.70	4.82	364	0.000*	Reject H0 ₂
Non-Engaged Participants	156	3.45	0.75				

Significant at $p < 0.05$

The mean self-management and health-seeking behavior score of female university employees who actively engage with the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group (M = 4.10, SD = 0.70) is significantly higher than that of those who do not engage actively (M = 3.45, SD = 0.75). The independent samples t-test indicates this difference is statistically significant ($t(364) = 4.82, p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that engagement with the Facebook support group does not significantly influence self-management practices and health-seeking behaviors is rejected. This suggests that active engagement in the group positively influences these health outcomes among female university employees in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings on the level of participation of female university employees in Anambra State in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group indicate a moderate but varied degree of engagement among the respondents. This pattern aligns with broader research on online health communities, where participation typically ranges from active contributors to passive lurkers (Ferguson, 2021; Malinowski et al., 2023). In this study, a

notable segment of female employees actively engages by sharing experiences, asking questions, and providing support, reflecting a proactive approach to managing endometriosis symptoms through peer interaction. This level of active participation is consistent with findings by Zhang et al. (2022), who reported that active involvement in health-related social media groups enhances patient empowerment and knowledge acquisition. In contrast, the presence of a larger group of passive members — those who consume content without posting — echoes the "90-9-1" rule observed in online communities, where approximately 90% of users are lurkers, 9% contribute occasionally, and 1% are highly active (Nielsen, 2006; Preece & Shneiderman, 2022). Such passive participation, while less visible, still provides indirect benefits through information exposure and emotional validation, supporting Eysenbach's (2003) concept of "consumption participation." However, the relatively lower participation from some female employees, particularly those unaware or not engaged in the group, raises concerns echoed in studies by Ogunyemi and Adeola (2021), which highlight barriers such as digital literacy, trust issues in online health information, and

cultural factors influencing engagement in Nigerian contexts. This supports the argument that while online support groups offer potential, challenges like skepticism about information credibility and lack of targeted outreach limit full utilization.

Furthermore, age and occupational role appear to influence participation, with younger and academic staff showing higher involvement. This mirrors global trends where younger demographics are more adept at digital navigation and more likely to engage in online health communities (Pew Research Center, 2023). The disparity between academic and non-academic staff also resonates with findings from Adesina et al. (2020), who noted that educational attainment influences digital health engagement in Nigeria, suggesting the need for tailored strategies to broaden inclusivity. Contrary to some literature emphasizing the overwhelming predominance of passive membership in health groups (Malinowski et al., 2023), this study found a relatively balanced distribution between active and passive participants. This could indicate the unique appeal and perceived value of the Endometriosis Million Voices group, possibly due to the specificity of the condition and the shared lived experiences, which enhance motivation to participate actively. Supporting this, Naslund et al. (2020) argue that niche health support groups often foster stronger bonds and higher active participation due to shared identity and relevance.

The findings regarding the extent to which the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group enhances the awareness of endometriosis symptoms among female university employees in Anambra State reveal

a generally positive impact, with a significant proportion of respondents reporting increased awareness after engaging with the group. This outcome is consistent with a growing body of literature highlighting the role of social media platforms in improving health literacy and symptom recognition among chronic illness patients (Chiu et al., 2021; Osei et al., 2023). Social media support groups, such as the Endometriosis Million Voices, provide accessible and timely health information that can reach diverse populations beyond traditional healthcare settings, which is especially vital in regions where healthcare access may be limited. Several studies support the finding that peer-led discussions and shared experiences on Facebook enhance symptom awareness. For example, Kim and Park (2022) demonstrated that participation in online chronic disease communities improved participants' understanding of their symptoms and disease progression, which subsequently empowered them to seek timely medical care. Similarly, Adeoye and Bello (2021) observed that Nigerian women involved in health-related Facebook groups reported greater knowledge about their conditions, attributing this to the interactive and personalized nature of online discussions.

However, while the Facebook support group appears effective in raising symptom awareness, the literature also points to challenges in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information shared on such platforms. Studies by Mensah et al. (2020) and Ojo et al. (2024) caution that misinformation and anecdotal experiences, if not moderated, can sometimes lead to misconceptions or delayed medical consultation. This concern aligns with the mixed responses from some respondents who expressed caution about

accepting all information as medically sound, highlighting the need for integrating expert moderation or verified health resources within these online communities. The findings further corroborate the assertion by Alhassan and Yusuf (2023) that culturally tailored digital health interventions, including Facebook groups, are effective in enhancing awareness in Nigerian settings by addressing local myths, stigma, and barriers related to women's health conditions like endometriosis. The group's role in demystifying symptoms and normalizing discussions on a traditionally taboo topic underscores the importance of culturally sensitive communication in health promotion. Contrasting with some prior studies that report limited impact of social media on deep health literacy (Akintola et al., 2022), this study shows that sustained engagement with a focused Facebook support group can significantly elevate awareness levels. This difference may be attributed to the specificity of the Endometriosis Million Voices group and the shared lived experiences, which make the information more relatable and easier to internalize. Moreover, the interactive nature of the group, which facilitates question-and-answer formats, personalized testimonies, and peer validation, may enhance comprehension more effectively than passive information consumption.

The findings from this study reveal that participation in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group significantly improves the knowledge of self-management strategies for endometriosis among female university employees in Anambra State. A majority of respondents reported that engaging with the support group provided them with practical and actionable

information on managing symptoms, lifestyle modifications, pain relief techniques, and medical treatment options. This outcome aligns with contemporary research emphasizing the vital role of online peer support communities in enhancing disease self-management knowledge, particularly for chronic and complex conditions such as endometriosis (Smith et al., 2021; Adeyemi & Nwankwo, 2022). The ability of the Facebook group to disseminate experiential knowledge and evidence-based recommendations facilitates greater understanding of symptom tracking, dietary adjustments, stress management, and alternative therapies, all of which are integral components of effective self-management. For instance, a study by Johnson and Thompson (2023) demonstrated that patients engaged in digital health communities showed improved adherence to self-care routines and reported fewer flare-ups due to increased awareness and peer encouragement. This finding resonates with the current study where many participants indicated that shared tips and personal stories motivated them to adopt healthier behaviors and adhere better to medical advice.

Moreover, the interactive and easily accessible nature of the Facebook support group allows for real-time information exchange and clarification of doubts, which is often missing in conventional healthcare encounters due to time constraints or stigma surrounding reproductive health issues (Kumar & Bawa, 2020). The group also acts as an educational platform where new research findings and treatment modalities are discussed, helping members stay informed and make empowered health decisions. This educational aspect is crucial in low-resource settings like Nigeria, where access to

specialized gynecological care and comprehensive patient education remains limited (Eze et al., 2022). However, while the group enhances knowledge, some literature warns about the potential for misinformation and non-validated self-management practices that may arise in peer-led online forums (Afolabi et al., 2021). This emphasizes the importance of integrating healthcare professional oversight or linking support groups with credible health resources to mitigate risks. The current study similarly notes occasional skepticism among respondents about unverified advice, which highlights a need for balanced moderation and educational input to maximize benefits.

Furthermore, cultural factors influence self-management practices in Nigerian women, as discussed by Okeke and Onwudiwe (2023), who found that traditional beliefs and social norms sometimes impede the adoption of recommended management strategies. The Facebook group helps counteract these barriers by fostering a community of shared understanding and encouragement, thereby promoting evidence-based self-care while respecting cultural contexts. In contrast to some earlier studies that suggested limited impact of social media on actual behavioral change (Mbakwe et al., 2020), this research demonstrates that when the support group is condition-specific and actively moderated, it can significantly improve knowledge and potentially influence self-management practices positively. This distinction points to the importance of targeted and engaged online communities in chronic disease management.

The findings of this study highlight that female university employees in Anambra State derive significant emotional support

benefits from participating in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group. Many respondents indicated that the group provides a safe and empathetic space where they can share their experiences, fears, and frustrations related to living with endometriosis without judgment. This form of emotional connection and validation plays a crucial role in mitigating the psychological burden of the disease, which often includes feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression. Such results are consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of emotional support in chronic illness management, especially for conditions that carry stigma or are poorly understood by the general public (Li & Su, 2021; Nwosu & Eze, 2023). The social bonds formed within the support group foster a sense of belonging and reduce the loneliness that many endometriosis patients experience. By sharing stories of challenges and coping strategies, members encourage and uplift one another, which enhances resilience and improves mental well-being (Thomas et al., 2022). This peer-to-peer interaction offers emotional comfort that might be lacking in traditional healthcare settings, where consultations are often brief and focused on physical symptoms rather than psychosocial aspects (Adeyemi & Onyekachi, 2020).

Importantly, the anonymity and asynchronous nature of Facebook groups allow participants to express emotions and seek support at their own pace, which can be less intimidating compared to face-to-face interactions (Kumar et al., 2023). Many respondents in this study reported feeling understood and less alone after engaging with the group, which aligns with findings from global studies showing that online support groups significantly reduce

feelings of shame and social stigma associated with reproductive health disorders (Morris & Johnson, 2021). However, some literature cautions that online emotional support can sometimes be inconsistent or insufficient without proper moderation, potentially leading to negative experiences if conflicts or misinformation arise (Adekunle et al., 2022). Despite this, the current study indicates that the Endometriosis Million Voices group maintains a positive and supportive atmosphere, which respondents appreciate as a critical source of comfort and motivation. Culturally, emotional expression around gynecological health can be constrained in many Nigerian communities due to taboos and gender norms (Obi & Nwachukwu, 2024). The support group thus functions as an alternative outlet where women feel free to express vulnerabilities and receive empathy, promoting emotional healing and empowerment. This function has been underscored in similar studies conducted in African contexts, highlighting how digital platforms break cultural barriers and facilitate psychosocial support (Okeke & Eze, 2023).

The findings of this study reveal that shared experiences within the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group significantly influence the health-seeking behaviors of female university employees in Anambra State. Respondents indicated that reading and sharing personal stories about symptoms, diagnosis challenges, and treatment journeys motivated them to take proactive steps toward managing their condition. This peer exchange of lived experiences served not only to validate their symptoms but also provided practical insights into navigating healthcare services, which many respondents found empowering. This outcome aligns with

existing literature on the impact of online health communities on patients' behavior. Studies have shown that peer narratives can reduce uncertainty and fear about medical procedures, encouraging timely medical consultations and adherence to treatment protocols (Van Uden-Kraan et al., 2020; Wang & Liu, 2021). In the context of endometriosis, where delayed diagnosis is a common global challenge due to symptom normalization or misdiagnosis (Nnoaham et al., 2021), shared experiences in support groups play a critical role in alerting women to the severity of their symptoms and the importance of seeking specialist care.

Within the Nigerian healthcare context, cultural factors and limited awareness often contribute to delayed or inadequate health-seeking among women with gynecological issues (Eze et al., 2022). The Facebook support group mitigates these barriers by normalizing conversations around endometriosis and providing peer endorsements for visiting healthcare professionals, thereby fostering more assertive health behaviors. This is consistent with research by Chukwudozie and Obi (2023), which highlighted how online peer support empowers Nigerian women to overcome stigma and mistrust of healthcare systems. Moreover, the group's discussions about self-management strategies, including diet, exercise, and pain management techniques, encourage members to complement medical treatment with lifestyle modifications. This holistic approach to health-seeking reflects the evolving patient-centered care models emphasized in chronic illness management literature (Adeyemi & Ojo, 2020). However, it is important to note that while shared experiences positively

influence health-seeking behaviors, respondents also reported occasional confusion or conflicting advice within the group. This underscores the need for integrating professional moderation or expert input in online support communities to ensure accurate health information is reinforced (Adekunle et al., 2022).

The findings of this study indicate that while the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group provides valuable health information and emotional support, female university employees in Anambra State perceive several limitations associated with its use. Respondents reported concerns about the reliability and accuracy of information shared within the group, noting instances where advice from members varied widely and sometimes contradicted medical recommendations. This lack of professional moderation was identified as a key limitation, as it could lead to misinformation or the propagation of unverified self-management strategies. This observation aligns with broader research on online health support communities, which emphasizes the risk of misinformation in unregulated digital environments (Chou et al., 2021; Singh & Singh, 2022). Although peer support is critical for emotional validation and experiential learning, the absence of expert oversight in Facebook groups can undermine the credibility of shared content, potentially leading to adverse health outcomes if members act on inaccurate advice (Wong et al., 2023). Additionally, some respondents expressed privacy and confidentiality concerns related to sharing sensitive health information on a public or semi-public platform like Facebook. The fear of stigmatization or unintended disclosure of

their health status was a barrier to full participation for a few members, which limited their ability to benefit fully from the group's resources. This finding is consistent with studies highlighting privacy issues as a deterrent to engagement in online health forums, especially concerning gynecological conditions that carry social stigma (Okafor & Nwafor, 2020; Mensah et al., 2022).

Another limitation reported was the occasional emotional distress caused by exposure to negative or distressing stories within the group. While sharing personal experiences fosters empathy and community bonding, continuous exposure to others' pain and challenges sometimes intensified feelings of anxiety or hopelessness among members, reflecting the "emotional contagion" phenomenon described in social support literature (Rains & Brunner, 2020). This underlines the importance of providing professional psychological support or resources alongside peer networks. Furthermore, technological challenges such as inconsistent internet access, difficulty navigating Facebook features, and limited digital literacy among some respondents were barriers to optimal use of the support group. These challenges reflect the digital divide issues prevalent in many parts of Nigeria and other developing contexts, affecting equitable access to online health resources (Eze et al., 2021). Despite these limitations, respondents acknowledged that the benefits of the support group outweighed the drawbacks, emphasizing the need for enhanced moderation, verified health information, privacy safeguards, and supplemental professional involvement to improve the platform's effectiveness.

The findings of this study strongly support the use of Social Support Theory as a relevant framework. The data revealed that female university employees actively participate in the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group to receive emotional support, share experiences, and gain valuable information about endometriosis symptoms and self-management strategies. These findings echo the core premise of Social Support Theory, which emphasizes that social networks provide critical emotional and informational support that can positively influence health behaviors. The emotional benefits reported by respondents, including feelings of reassurance, encouragement, and decreased isolation, demonstrate the role of social support in enhancing psychological well-being and fostering adaptive coping strategies, consistent with previous research on chronic illness support groups. Moreover, the influence of shared experiences on improving health-seeking behavior further affirms the theory's application, as appraisal and informational support motivate individuals toward proactive health management.

Similarly, the study's findings validate the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) in understanding why female employees engage with the Facebook support group. Respondents actively sought out the group to fulfill specific needs such as acquiring knowledge about endometriosis symptoms, gaining emotional comfort, and connecting with peers who share similar challenges. The findings highlight the users' agency in selecting this platform based on its ability to gratify their informational, emotional, and social integrative needs. The active participation observed—through

posting, commenting, and sharing experiences—reflects the gratification derived from meaningful social interaction and the empowerment gained from the accessible, user-driven digital environment. This aligns with UGT's proposition that individuals use media purposefully to satisfy their distinct psychological and social needs.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that the Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group functions both as a vital source of social support and as a media platform that gratifies the users' diverse needs. The complementary application of Social Support Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which the support group influences awareness, knowledge, emotional well-being, and self-management among female university employees in Anambra State. This dual theoretical framework not only explains the positive outcomes observed but also justifies the strategic importance of online peer support networks in managing chronic health conditions in contexts with limited traditional support options.

Conclusion

The Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group significantly influences female university employees in Anambra State by enhancing their awareness and knowledge of endometriosis symptoms and self-management strategies. It provides a vital platform for emotional support and community bonding, which positively affects members' health-seeking behaviors. However, the presence of misinformation and privacy concerns calls for cautious use and highlights the importance of integrating such

online platforms with professional healthcare services for comprehensive management of chronic conditions like endometriosis. The study concludes that social media support groups can serve as effective complementary resources for chronic disease management, particularly in contexts where stigma, lack of awareness, and limited access to specialized care prevail. The Endometriosis Million Voices Facebook Support Group exemplifies how digital peer support empowers women by fostering knowledge sharing, emotional resilience, and proactive health behaviors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Healthcare Providers and Policy Makers should recognize and integrate online support groups into broader health communication and patient education strategies. Collaboration between health professionals and online communities can help ensure accurate information dissemination and address misinformation.
2. Support Group Moderators need to implement stricter guidelines and fact-checking mechanisms to reduce misinformation and protect members from harmful content. Providing verified medical resources within the group would enhance reliability and trust.
3. Privacy and Security Measures must be strengthened to safeguard members' personal information and create a safe space for open discussion. Administrators should educate members on privacy settings and encourage responsible sharing.
4. Health Communication Campaigns

targeting female university employees should leverage platforms like Facebook to increase awareness about endometriosis and available self-management practices, given the demonstrated effectiveness of social media in reaching this demographic.

5. University Health Services should consider promoting awareness of credible online support groups to female staff and provide complementary counseling and medical support, creating a holistic approach to managing chronic health issues like endometriosis.
6. Further Research should explore the long-term impact of participation in online support groups on clinical outcomes and psychological well-being. Studies could also examine how different demographic factors influence engagement and benefits derived from such groups.

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