



TikTok Narratology, Health Belief System and Sexual Health Awareness among Students of Akwa Ibom State University

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of TikTok narratology and students' health belief systems on sexual health awareness among Akwa Ibom State University students. The research utilised the Health Belief Model as its theoretical framework. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, with a sample size of 370 participants drawn from the population of 10,200 students using the Krejcie and Morgan formula. A structured questionnaire was employed to gather data, which was analysed to determine students' knowledge, perception, and practices regarding reproductive and sexual health information shared on TikTok platform. Findings demonstrated that TikTok increased students' understanding of reproductive and sexual health issues, with many participants finding its content relatable, engaging, and informative. However, participants evaluated content credibility primarily through its alignment with their existing health beliefs. While TikTok campaigns by organisations such as the Society for Family Health (SFH) and the Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) effectively shaped participants' knowledge, attitudes, and practices, doubt existed when the content contradicted cultural or personal health beliefs. Additionally, the combination of easy accessibility with innovative narrativity enabled TikTok to become an effective health communication channel, but it needed enhancement to adapt sensibly to different cultural belief systems. The study concluded that students' health belief systems determine how effectively TikTok could spread sexual health information, though the platform is a valuable tool for sexual health information dissemination. It is recommended that health educators and campaign organisers develop culturally sensitive and credible content that aligns with student's needs while working with trusted organisations to integrate TikTok into broader health awareness programmes. Communicators were also urged to support digital health campaigns to enhance their reach and impact.

Keywords: TikTok, Health Belief Model, sexual health awareness, reproductive health, health communication, narratology

1. Introduction

The digital sphere has developed gradually into a fertile ground for creativity and communication, with TikTok emerging as one of the big social media platforms since its launch in September 2016. TikTok is a short form video sharing app developed by Bytedance - a Chinese company that enables users to create, share and interact with short-form videos that often incorporate music, effects and narration. The platform's worldwide appeal is in its flexible, easy-to-use interface and ability to accommodate diverse narratives (Lin, 2021). Narratology, the study of narrative structures and how they affect our perception of the world around us, intersect with TikTok, a platform which thrives on storytelling through short videos (LeBlanc, 2024). Understanding of TikTok's role in shaping undergraduates' perceptions concerning health-related behaviours is especially important considering the platform's impact on youth engagement.

Health belief systems affect how individuals perceive and address their health needs (Flanagan, 2024). These systems grew out of cultural, religious and societal norms and shape attitudes toward sexual and reproductive health (Ajgaonkar et al., 2024). Sexual and reproductive health awareness includes knowledge of contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STI), safe-sex practises, and entire reproductive well-being (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021). Such awareness is crucial for students in tertiary institutions as they scale through critical phases of self-discovery and vulnerability to risky behaviours.

The evolution of TikTok can be traced back to Douyin in China, its precursor before the international rebranding in 2018. By 2020, it had achieved widespread global recognition, especially among the younger generations, becoming a platform for education, advocacy and entertainment (Grundy, 2024). The platform's versatility in combining education with entertainment makes it suitable for disseminating health-related information.

Narratology, the study of how stories are structured and consumed, became popular in the 20th Century. The concept of 'narratology' was pioneered by scholars such as Tzvetan Todorov and Roland Barthes with the aim to analyse narrative structures, techniques and methods used in various forms of storytelling, including digital formats such as TikTok videos (LeBlanc, 2024). Its relevance has further increased with the rise of digital storytelling, filling the gap between traditional and modern communication paradigms.

Historically, health belief systems have been a cornerstone to understanding health behaviours. In Nigeria, there are many of these systems, ranging from traditional practices to religious doctrines and scientific standpoints, which have far-reaching impacts on sexual and reproductive health practices. The Health Belief Model (HBM), which came in the 1950s, claims that personal beliefs about health risks and benefits affect health behaviours (Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988). Among young Nigerians, these beliefs manifest in diverse forms:

1. Religious-based beliefs: looking at sexual health through the lens of religious doctrines.
2. Cultural beliefs: relying on traditional norms and taboos concerning sex.
3. Modern medical views: based on healthcare interventions and scientific understanding.

4. Peer-influenced beliefs: shaping perceptions through social interactions and peer groups.
5. Media-driven beliefs: absorbing of information and misinformation from digital platforms and social media.

Sexual and reproductive health awareness among tertiary institution students is a worldwide issue (Agu et al., 2024). In Nigeria, this awareness is influenced by a combination of formal education, peer influence and media consumption. Previous studies have shown that despite greater availability of information, misconceptions about contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) persist (Udoudom & Igiri, 2024). Tertiary institution campuses are critical places for addressing these gaps because of their diverse student populations and exposure to external influences.

Entities such as the Society for Family Health (SFH) and the Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) have promoted reproductive and sexual health awareness campaigns across schools and colleges in Nigeria. These organisations use a combination of traditional and more contemporary digital approaches, including TikTok, to reach the youth. Issues addressed by their campaigns include contraceptive use, adolescent reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS prevention, and gender-based violence, utilising TikTok's interactive format to deliver educational content (SFH, 2024). The results of these efforts have been remarkable. A study by Udoudom and Igiri (2024) established that these organisations' social media campaigns raised awareness of contraceptive options among students of tertiary institutions. Furthermore, TikTok's algorithm driven reach has led to targeted campaigns, ensuring that health messages are delivered to specific audiences.

Several studies draw attention to the social media, health narratives, and youth behaviour nexus. For example, Arousell & Carlbom (2016) explored how digital storytelling impacts health education by using examples of how TikTok demystified complex health topics. A similar study done by Davidson, Hammarberg, Romero, & Fisher (2022) showed that social media could be used to tackle stigma and misinformation; for example, TikTok could be used as an effective tool to provide awareness about STIs.

Regardless of the promising potential of TikTok and similar online platforms in health advocacy, there is limited research on their specific impact on narratology and health belief systems in shaping sexual health awareness among Nigerian tertiary institution students. This study fills the gap by examining how TikTok's narratological features influence students' health beliefs and awareness. The study seeks to fill this gap by investigating this interplay to understand how digital tools can most efficiently be used to support reproductive and sexual health education better.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, this study seeks to:

- i. Assess the level of knowledge among students of Akwa Ibom State University regarding reproductive and sexual health information disseminated through TikTok;

- ii. investigate the perception of students at Akwa Ibom State University towards sexual health narratives presented on TikTok;
- iii. assess the effectiveness of TikTok as a medium for disseminating reproductive and sexual health information in relation to students' health belief systems;
- iv. investigate the influence of health belief system on the sexual health practices of students at Akwa Ibom State University regarding TikTok content;
- v. determine the effectiveness of TikTok campaigns by organisations like SFH and ARFH in shaping knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to sexual and reproductive health among Akwa Ibom State University students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 TikTok Narratology: Evolution and Impact

TikTok narratology is the study of storytelling and narrative structures on the social media platform TikTok. ByteDance's TikTok, launched in 2016, has become a global phenomenon that is transforming the sphere of digital storytelling. TikTok was originally designed for short, entertaining videos, but it expanded its uses over time to include education and health advocacy. The platform encourages engagement, with its unique algorithm personalising content to the preferences of the users and creators to enable them to build good relationships with their audience (Grundy, 2024). TikTok's narrative tools, such as music, captions, and filters, allow users to craft compelling stories that are relatable to the viewers. A study by Lin (2021) reveals that younger audiences are often drawn to relatable and engaging online content. For this reason, TikTok's narrative framework has been instrumental in capturing the attention of these demographics.

TikTok's narratology, exemplified by brevity and creativity, has proven particularly effective in health advocacy. Health professionals and organisations use the platform to simplify and make sense of complicated health messages into something that is both understandable and engaging. For example, using humour, relatable examples, situations, and personal anecdotes, creators can crack through difficult topics like sexual health to make them not so challenging to discuss. Research has shown that this approach increases awareness and encourages behavioural changes among users (Carman, 2020). Also, TikTok's interactive features, such as duets and comments, promote active participation, making it a dynamic space for health discourse (Maheshwari & Holpuch, 2023).

TikTok's impact in health advocacy cannot be over-emphasised. By providing entertainment with education, the platform combats health misinformation and bridges gaps in traditional health communication techniques. During critical times such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations like the World Health Organisation (WHO) have adopted TikTok to spread credible health information (WHO, 2021). In the same way, local health campaigns targeting youth, including sexual health awareness initiatives, have also succeeded by tailoring their messages to the TikTok style. As Manning and Parker (2023) demonstrate, this new

narratology also produces better recall and engagement than typical health communication approaches. So, TikTok has now become a powerful tool for storytelling and advocacy that can positively influence public health outcomes.

2.2 Understanding Health Belief Systems in Nigeria

Cultural traditions, religious teachings and modern viewpoints highly influence the Health belief systems in Nigeria. These beliefs, which are promoted among young Nigerians, especially students, shape attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health (Tilahun et al., 2024). Sexual health topics are often linked with morality within Cultural norms, which then discourages open discussion about sexual health. Many young people grow up in environments where conversations on sex-related topics or sexual health are seen as taboo, leading to limited knowledge and misconceptions about sexual health (Kurt & Kürtüncü, 2024). For instance, in some cultures, people believe that contraceptive use is associated with promiscuity, and this belief creates barriers to its adoption among youths (Rajapakshe, Wickramasurendra, Amarasinghe, Wijerathne, Wijesinghe, & Madhavika. 2024).

However, religion also contributes to the moulding of health beliefs in Nigeria. Both Christianity and Islam, the dominant religions, often discourage premarital sexual activities among their adherents, promoting abstinence instead. While this stance on morality influences sexual behaviour positively, such ethics limits discussions on safe sex practices (Green, Murphy, & Gryboski, 2024). Aside from religious teachings, traditional African beliefs rooted in herbal medicine and spiritual remedies have continued to influence discussions about adolescents' reproductive and sexual health. Ironical that many young people turn to faith leaders or traditional healers for guidance in sexual and reproductive health issues, most of which border on the intersection of religion and traditional cultures in health decisions (Arousell & Carlbom, 2016).

Modern influences, such as education and the media, are gradually transforming health belief systems among Nigerian youths. With access to information being on the increase via social media and digital health campaigns, young people are adopting evidence-based views on sexual and reproductive health (Stal et al., 2024). For instance, platforms like TikTok and Instagram are being used to address myths and promote safe practices. However, modern approaches often clash with entrenched cultural or religious beliefs, which necessitate strategic approaches to bridge these gaps (Rajapakshe et al., 2024). Understanding the interplay among these influences is quite important to designing effective health communication strategies that respect cultural values and address the unique needs of young Nigerians.

The Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is a psychological framework developed in the 1950s by social psychologists Hochbaum, Rosenstock and Kegels to explain why individuals adopt or refuse to adopt health-related behaviours. The implication is that an individual's perception of susceptibility to a health problem, the severity of the health problem, the benefits of taking action and the obstacles to taking that action influence that person's health behaviour. Self-efficacy and cues for action (e.g., health campaigns) influence decisions about health

behaviour. The HBM was subsequently incorporated into various health fields, from disease prevention to sexual and reproductive health, making it relevant for addressing public health challenges among young people (Rosenstock, Strecher, and Becker, 1988).

In this study, the HBM serves as a framework to explore how Akwa Ibom State University students perceive sexual and reproductive health risks and their engagement with health campaigns delivered via TikTok. For example, students who believe they are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or getting unintended pregnancy (perceived susceptibility) and who know that these outcomes are severe (perceived severity) may be more motivated to practice safe sex. These organisations, SFH and ARFH, campaign on TikTok by providing cues to action that correct misunderstandings, promote awareness of the benefits of safe practices, and reduce perceived barriers - such as stigma or misinformation. By examining these dynamics, the study explores how health belief systems affect students' responses to sexual health awareness campaigns and how such dynamics can help identify positive health behaviour strategies.

2.3 Sexual Health Awareness among Students of Akwa Ibom State University

Sexual health awareness among students of Akwa Ibom State University has become a growing concern due to its significant influence on their well-being. Despite this, many students have a good understanding of sexual and reproductive health. However, gaps still remain in their understanding of key concepts such as contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and safe sexual practices. Misconceptions about the proper use of condoms and birth control pills persist as studies show awareness of them is high, but some unsafe behaviours still occur (Udoh & Idung, 2015). For instance, some students wrongly believe that contraceptives have permanent effects on fertility, hence discouraging their use (Johnson & Bassey, 2019).

Many of these misconceptions have been a result of poor access to accurate sexual health information (Berglas et al., 2024). However, students frequently depend on one another, social media, or unofficial online sources for information that often perpetuates myths and misinformation (Adrian Parra et al., 2024).v. Additionally, cultural taboos surrounding open discussions about sex also restrict the amount of knowledge one has. Research shows that due to stigma and judgment, students are wary of asking healthcare professionals or counsellors for advice (Stephen, 2015). This hesitance leaves many unable to access important services like STI testing or contraceptive counselling, which only makes them more vulnerable to unintended pregnancies and infections (Akpa, Anam, & Akah, 2024).

Despite these challenges, the targeted interventions have shown promise in improving sexual health awareness. Health organisations, such as the Society for Family Health (SFH) and the Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) have mounted active campaigns through workshops and social media to get students on board, as this has in some cases, bridged the gaps in knowledge (Udoh, Onofiok, & James, 2022). Social media platforms like TikTok are being used to make sexual health education more available and relatable, addressing sensitive topics in a non-judgmental manner. These initiatives are gradually shifting perceptions of students, encouraging them to take up healthier practices and make informed

decisions. However, more work will be needed to make sure all students have access to the right and comprehensive information about sexual health.

2.4 The Role of TikTok in Health Communication Campaigns

TikTok has become a powerful platform for health campaigns, becoming a creative and engaging way to disseminate important health information. With its short video format, trending music and visual effects, health education has become more accessible to young audiences. TikTok has also been successfully used by organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Society for Family Health (SFH) to produce relevant short, simple content that relates to sexual and reproductive health (World Health Organisation, 2021). For example, videos that particularly focus on STI prevention, contraceptive methods, and consent tend to go viral, spreading awareness far beyond traditional classroom or community set-ups (Savic, 2021).

One significant thing among the many key strengths of TikTok platform is its ability to personalise content through algorithms for users. Through this, the platform ensures that users who are interested in health-related topics are targeted effectively. For instance, campaigns targeting students of tertiary institutions, such as the Society for Family Health's "Stay Protected" initiative, have leveraged TikTok's interactive features like duets and challenges to encourage active participation. Students are encouraged to create videos about safe sex practices using campaign hashtags, enabling peer-to-peer learning. The approach not only raises awareness but also normalises conversations around sexual health topics, thereby reducing the stigma often associated with it (Rizki, 2023).

TikTok campaigns' impact on health awareness is evident in increased engagement and behavioural changes among young people. A study by Duffy (2023) shows that using TikTok as a means to promote health campaigns has higher recall rates than traditional means, as the platform appeals to students' preference for dynamic and relatable content. However, challenges abound, some of which are fighting misinformation and ensuring inclusivity for users without much internet access. Despite these limitations, TikTok has shown itself to be a transformative tool in health communication, especially for reaching tech-savvy audiences such as students of tertiary institutions. With a good blend of education and entertainment, TikTok has successfully redefined how sexual health campaigns are delivered in the digital age.

2.5 Organisational Efforts and Campaign Outcomes

Organisations like the Society for Family Health (SFH) and the Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) have led the way in adolescents' reproductive health campaigns to induce sexual health behaviour among students of tertiary institutions. These bodies recognise the widespread use of TikTok among young Nigerians and have begun to incorporate the platform into their awareness strategies. TikTok's short-form videos, hashtags and interactive challenges allow these organisations to get the campaign messages to students in a relatable and engaging way, breaking down difficult health topics into something simple. For instance, the Society for Family Health's "#HealthyChoices" campaign used storytelling

and creative visuals to educate students on contraception and STI prevention, thereby achieving millions of views and active engagement (SFH, 2021).

These initiatives have produced measurable differences in students' knowledge, attitudes and practice. Results of the research indicated that students engaged in TikTok sexual health campaigns enjoyed higher awareness about sexual health issues as compared to those relying on traditional communication channels (Wang, Wong, Zhang, & Zou, 2023). The ARFH surveys have witnessed declining misconceptions regarding contraceptives and greater student demand for factual information from verified sources (Idiong, Akwaowo, & Umoh, 2021). Moreover, TikTok campaigns tend to generate discussions surrounding sexual health among peers, normalising discussions that were previously considered taboo (Yu, 2023).

However, challenges still remain despite these successes. The impact of credible campaigns can be diluted by misinformation being spread on social media platforms, making it necessary for organisations to counteract false narratives effectively (Duffy, 2023). Yet, the overall results of these TikTok-driven campaigns show promise for an exciting change in the field of health communication. Organisations such as SFH and ARFH continue to bridge this health education and youth engagement gap through digital storytelling coupled with interactive content to enable students to make informed decisions and engage in healthier practices.

3. Research Method

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. Using a cross-sectional survey, the researcher collected data from a representative sample of the target population at a specific time. This allowed studying the relationships between variables without the long-term follow-up or multiple measurements (Sertia, 2016). This study targeted undergraduates from Akwa Ibom State University (Ikot Akpaden & Obio Akpa campuses) during the 2023/2024 academic year. This population is comprised of all undergraduates from various academic levels and disciplines. This selection is based on why undergraduate students tend to be young adults, from late adolescence to early adulthood. This age group is often considered a critical target audience for health promotion and behaviour change initiatives, as they are in a transitional phase of life where healthy habits and beliefs can be established or reinforced (Udoudom and Igiri, 2024).

Therefore, the population of this study is 10,200 male and female students of Akwa Ibom State University. The sample size for this study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Thus, the sample drawn from the population of 10,200 (ten thousand, two hundred) was 370 respondents. The study employed multi-stage sampling techniques that involved stratified sampling to represent different faculties and simple random sampling to select the participants. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, measure awareness, usage, and engagement with TikTok, and participate in digital health campaigns. Out of the number of questionnaires distributed, 361 (97.5%) copies were retrieved and found valid. Descriptive statistics (weighted mean scores and standard deviation) were used to analyse quantitative data from the questionnaire.

4. Result and Discussion

Table 4.1: Participant's knowledge of reproductive & sexual health information on TikTok (N=361)

Item	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
Awareness/Knowledge	2.75	1.63	1.28
Increased understanding	2.84	1.13	1.06
Ability to recall health facts	2.86	1.35	1.16
Provision of accurate info.	2.91	1.14	1.07
Source of new knowledge on preventive measures.	2.86	1.18	1.09

Source: Survey data, 2024

On item one, the data show respondents demonstrated average awareness about reproductive and sexual health information presented through TikTok (2.75 mean scores). Responses revealed varied student awareness about reproductive and sexual health knowledge, which the standard deviation measure of 1.28 confirmed. The mean score for item 2 was 2.84, showing students' overall agreement with the statement that TikTok videos help them learn about reproductive and sexual health topics. Students displayed moderate levels of agreement consistency, according to the standard deviation score of 1.06. Results from Item 3 showed that most students could remember exact reproductive and sexual health facts or guidance they encountered in TikTok videos. Responses showed moderate variability, as indicated by the standard deviation of 1.16. Respondents strongly agreed with TikTok's clear and accurate information delivery about reproductive and sexual health by answering Item 4 with an average score of 2.91. Consistent response patterns surface through the observed standard deviation of 1.07. On item five, respondents exhibited agreement with a mean score of 2.86 regarding their acquisition of sexual and reproductive health preventive knowledge from TikTok. The standard deviation of 1.09 indicates that students revealed somewhat different perspectives compared to other items in TikTok's content. The findings revealed that most students accepted that TikTok helped enhance their knowledge and understanding of reproductive and sexual health content and agreed differently on specific topics examined through this study.

Table 4.2: Participant's perception of sexual health narratives on TikTok (N= 361)

Item	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
Content relatable to personal experiences.	2.89	1.10	1.05
Content credible & trustworthy	2.50	1.25	1.12
TikTok narrative info clear & easy to understand.	2.88	1.22	1.10
Content engaging & informative	3.28	0.77	0.88
Content respect cultural & societal norms.	2.70	1.21	1.10

Source: Survey data, 2024

Students indicated through Item 1 (mean score of 2.89) that they find sexual health narratives on TikTok relevant to their downloaded personal experiences. The standard deviation of 1.05 suggested moderate variability in responses. Students evenly split their

opinions regarding the trustworthiness of sexual health content presented on TikTok with a mean score of 2.5 on Item 2. A standard deviation measure of 1.12 showed a slightly wider spread of opinions. The mean score of 2.88 in Item 3 showed students found sexual health videos on TikTok easily understandable. Responses showed moderate consistency based on the computed standard deviation of 1.10. Most students evaluated Item 4 content on TikTok positively since they found it engaging and informative, according to the obtained mean score of 3.28. Participants demonstrated a relatively high agreement with a standard deviation of 0.88. Data analysis for Item 5 showed students' moderate agreement regarding cultural norm respect in TikTok narratives. The spread of opinions among participants measured by standard deviation landed at 1.10. Study results showed that students generally approved of TikTok narratives for their relatability, engagement levels, and clarity but expressed divergent opinions regarding narrative credibility and cultural sensitivity.

Table 4.3: Participant's responses on the effectiveness of TikTok in health communication (N= 361)

Item	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
TikTok videos effectively address concerns.	2.79	1.12	1.06
Contents motivate adoption of health practices.	3.09	0.93	0.96
TikTok provides reliable and practical information.	2.27	1.15	1.07
Info helps in health decisions	2.50	1.25	1.12
Content is easily accessible & appealing.	2.70	1.21	1.10

Source: Survey data, 2024

TikTok videos proved moderately successful in handling students' reproductive and sexual health questions, according to the survey respondents' scores of 2.79. The responses exhibited a middle range of variability based on the standard deviation 1.06. Item two showed the highest mean score of 3.09, indicating student agreement regarding how TikTok content promotes better health practices. The standard deviation of 0.96 revealed relatively consistent responses. With a mean score of 2.27 on item three, students heavily disagreed about TikTok content matching their health beliefs. The 1.07 standard deviation showed students varied in their perception of particular health information. The mean score for Item 4 equalled 2.50, revealing that students held neutral opinions about whether TikTok's content effectively taught sexual health risks and benefits. Data spread showed a wide range of variation with a standard deviation of 1.12. TikTok content accessibility for health education drew average-level agreement (mean = 2.70) from participants who completed the survey. The results showed an average opinion diversity with a standard deviation of 1.10. Findings showed that students perceived TikTok as moderately effective in motivating healthy practices and being accessible, but its alignment with students' health belief systems was disagreed.

Table 4.4: Participant's responses on the influence of students' health belief system (N= 361)

Item	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
Students health belief influence application of health advice.	2.97	0.92	0.96
Students trust TikTok content if it aligns with personal health belief.	3.02	0.98	0.99
Perception of risk and benefits influences response to content.	3.02	0.95	0.98
Sexual health info contradicting personal health belief.	2.79	1.12	1.06
TikTok content reinforcing sexual health practices.	3.08	0.92	0.96

Source: Survey data, 2024

On item 1 (with a mean score of 2.97), students moderately agreed that their health beliefs shaped the way they handled TikTok sexual health information. The 0.96 standard deviation indicated students gave similar responses with moderate consistency. Item two had a mean of 3.02, indicating that students trust TikTok content when it agrees with their personal health beliefs. Results showed increased response variances through a standard deviation measurement of 0.99. Item three also had a mean score of 3.02, showing moderate agreement about their risk-benefit perceptions influencing their responses toward TikTok content. The standard deviation of 0.98 demonstrated high levels of consistency. On item 4 (with a mean score of 2.79), there was slightly lower agreement about interpreting TikTok content negatively when it contradicted existing beliefs. More diverse opinions characterised this rating measure according to its standard deviation level of 1.06. On item 5, most respondents (3.08 on the 4-point scale) strongly agreed that TikTok videos supported or reinforced previously held beliefs about sexual practices. A standard deviation of 0.96 demonstrated moderate levels of agreement between participants. The results showed students based their TikTok sexual health engagement on their established health beliefs because newly accessed narratives either matched their pre-existing beliefs or strengthened them.

Table 4.5: Responses on the effectiveness of TikTok campaigns by organisations (N= 361)

Item	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
TikTok campaigns by organisations have improved students knowledge of sexual health.	2.99	0.953	0.976
Students find TikTok campaigns by SFH & ARFH engaging and informative.	3.11	0.886	0.942
TikTok campaigns motivates students to adopt healthier sexual practices.	3.04	0.965	0.983
TikTok campaigns by SFH & ARFH are culturally sensitive and relatable.	3.04	0.993	0.997
TikTok campaigns have positively influenced students attitudes towards sexual health.	3.05	0.867	0.931

Source: Survey data, 2024

The results revealed that the mean score for all items was close to 3.0, showing that most students reacted to TikTok organisational campaigns of SFH and ARFH by either

agreeing or being neutral about the effectiveness of TikTok campaigns. The results also revealed that students most strongly agreed with Item Two's assessment of engaging and informative campaign content (with the highest mean of 3.11). The lowest mean score was recorded in item one (2.99), indicating slightly reduced agreement about campaigns' abilities to improve knowledge and understanding. Students responded similarly to the items evaluated since their standard deviations remained under 1.0. The perception among students was that these campaigns succeeded in modifying what they learned about sexual and reproductive health facts coupled with their responses and actions. The variability of students' assessments against Item 4 about relatability and cultural sensitivity exceeded other metrics, revealing room for improvement in addressing diverse student experiences.

5. Conclusion

The study established that TikTok is an effective platform for disseminating sexual and reproductive health information to Akwa Ibom State University students. The majority of the participants acknowledged that sensitisation campaigns produced by SFH and ARFH through TikTok provided them with valuable sexual health knowledge that led them to adopt healthier choices. The platform achieved success through its engaging and relatable content that was interesting and simple to understand while being accessible. However, some students showed doubts regarding new healthcare information, which conflicted with their current belief systems, demonstrating how student beliefs must match health messages for improved effectiveness. In addition, the study showed that health beliefs maintained by students directly affect their reception and implementation of information from TikTok content. While the platform strengthened several existing beliefs and encouraged good behavioural modifications, it had areas like cultural adaptability and relatability needing improvement. This reveals that TikTok is a valuable tool for sexual health awareness. Still, future sexual health campaigns must tailor messages to individual beliefs among different student cultures to ensure better trust and impact.

Recommendations

1. Health educators and organisations should create original TikTok content that appeals to university students through entertaining and culturally appropriate material suited to their interests. The information should transform complex sexual health knowledge into accessible messages reinforcing the targeted students' understanding.
2. Public health organisations such as SFH and ARFH should partner with TikTok content creators to create reliable campaign messages that boost sexual health awareness. Such collaborations between health organisations help maintain information accuracy and provide evidence-based content while upholding students' health beliefs and cultural values.
3. Universities should integrate TikTok into their sexual health awareness programmes. The institutions' utilisation of the platform's broad user base would enable them to broadcast

essential health education, which combats false information while spurring beneficial conduct changes within the student population.

4. Health campaign organisers should design TikTok campaigns that consider students' diverse health belief systems. When communications align with student health perceptions, their views on risks and benefits, and cultural factors, trust builds up, enabling students to accept beneficial sexual health behaviours.
5. The government should support digital health communication campaigns with adequate funding.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this work.

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