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**SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND MATERNAL IMPACT ON MALNUTRITION:  
INSIGHTS FROM A BREASTFEEDING MOMS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY**

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12 August 2023

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### **SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND MATERNAL IMPACT ON MALNUTRITION: INSIGHTS FROM A BREASTFEEDING MOMS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY**

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## Biographical Sketch



Jesseca Gutierrez Flamiano was born in the Philippines in 1982. She is married to Atty. Jojo Flamiano, a family lawyer. Mrs. Flamiano is a mother to two boys. Her eldest is 15 years old and is an incoming grade 10 student, while her youngest is five years old and is in senior nursery. She currently resides in Quezon City, Philippines.

Mrs. Flamiano has a Bachelor of Science Major in Public Relations degree from Santa Isabel College. She is pursuing her graduate studies in Development Communications at the University of the Philippines Open University. She also works as an SEO project manager at lolite Ventures.

Mrs. Flamiano is known as a highly accountable and reliable corporate professional. According to her LinkedIn reputation, she has kept a good record across her multiple public relations experiences (i.e., SEO consultant, digital marketing, and

the like). She is hardworking, articulate, flexible, approachable, helpful, dedicated, and a team player. It is also due to these qualities, alongside her qualifications, that she qualified for her jobs over the years. Mrs. Jesseca Flamiano is working intensively towards utilizing her education for mutual benefit and upholding the standards of her profession.

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## **Dedication**

I humbly dedicate this thesis to the guiding forces in my life who have been the pillars of support, love, and encouragement throughout this journey. Each one has played an invaluable role in shaping me into the person I am today, and their unwavering belief in me has been the driving force behind the completion of this work.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND MATERNAL IMPACT ON MALNUTRITION: INSIGHTS FROM A BREASTFEEDING MOMS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY**

This study surveyed 472 members of the Breastfeeding Moms PH Facebook group to comprehensively explore the utilization of social media for malnutrition prevention information, with a focus on maternal education through information gathered from social media influencers. It aimed to understand factors influencing engagement, assess the impact of social media on knowledge and behavior related to malnutrition prevention, analyze trust in social media content, and identify challenges and opportunities for effective malnutrition communication. Drawing on Social Presence Theory (Short, Williams, and Christie, 1976), the study investigated correlations between breastfeeding mothers and social media influencers in mitigating malnutrition.

It revealed that most respondents, primarily aged 26-30 and married, prefer Facebook and TikTok as their main social media platforms for gathering malnutrition prevention information. Popular influencers like Mommy Diaries and Kryz Uy play a significant role in this, with short videos from them and other influencers being the favored content format due to its alignment with the demographic's fast-paced lifestyle. The respondents' interest mostly center on nutritious recipes and specific nutrient importance when gathering information online, despite recognizing social media's limitations and the prevalence of fake news. In addition, trust in malnutrition

prevention information hinges on scientific research and reputable sources, while challenges include information overload and source credibility issues.

## **Chapter I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

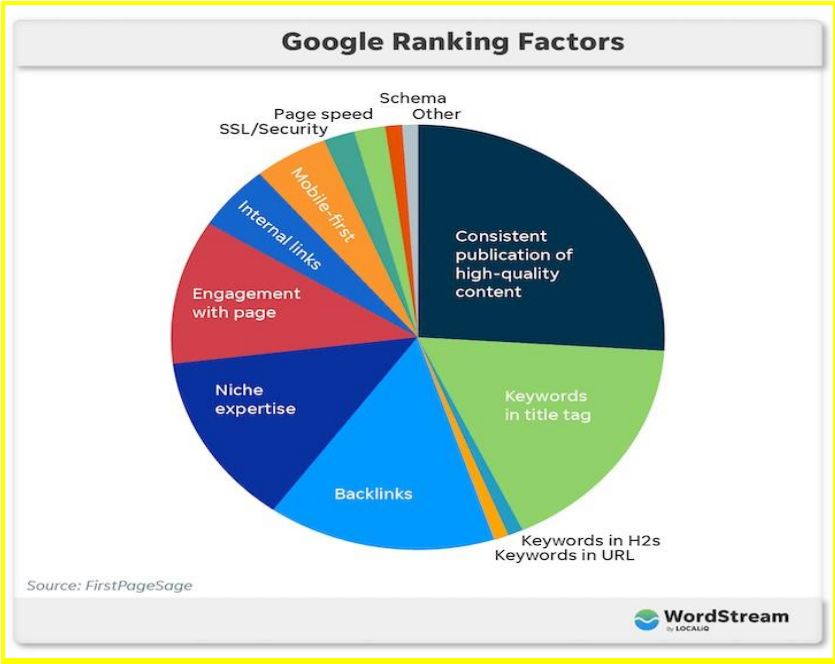
Today, the omnipresence of social media in people's lives remains unmistakable. Anyone seeking to stay current is on at least one social media platform. How much time an individual spends on social media depends on a variety of factors, one of them being social media influencers. What follows may be a question of the extent of the social media influencer's influence as noted from his or her social media presence.

The predominance of social media doesn't come as a surprise as today's digital age is permissive of that level of interconnectedness and the quality of being technologically-savvy. Due to the dynamic nature of online communication and internet culture, social media influencers were born. The fact that not everyone enjoys the privilege of popularity on social media platforms add to the allure of these influencers. The nature of social media often results in attention and recognition being focused on a select few individuals or groups who successfully capture the interest of a larger audience. Factors such as charisma, content quality, timing, and strategic networking can play a role in determining who gains popularity and who does not.

There is an art to popularity on the internet, and the principles of SEO or Search Engine Optimization is one such way to achieve this. SEO represents a collection of techniques used to improve a brand or website's visibility and ranking in the organic list of a search engine like Google (Berman & Katona, 2013). Figure 1

shows the google ranking factors vis a vis the (social media) website. Google's ranking algorithm is a complex mathematical formula used to determine the order in which websites appear in search engine results pages (SERPs). The exact details of the algorithm are not publicly disclosed, as Google aims to prevent manipulation and maintain the integrity of search results. But key factors affecting the rankings may include high-quality and relevant content, backlinks from authoritative websites, positive user experience (e.g., fast page load speed and mobile-friendliness), on-page optimization, domain authority, site security, user engagement metrics, social signals, and the authority of individual pages.

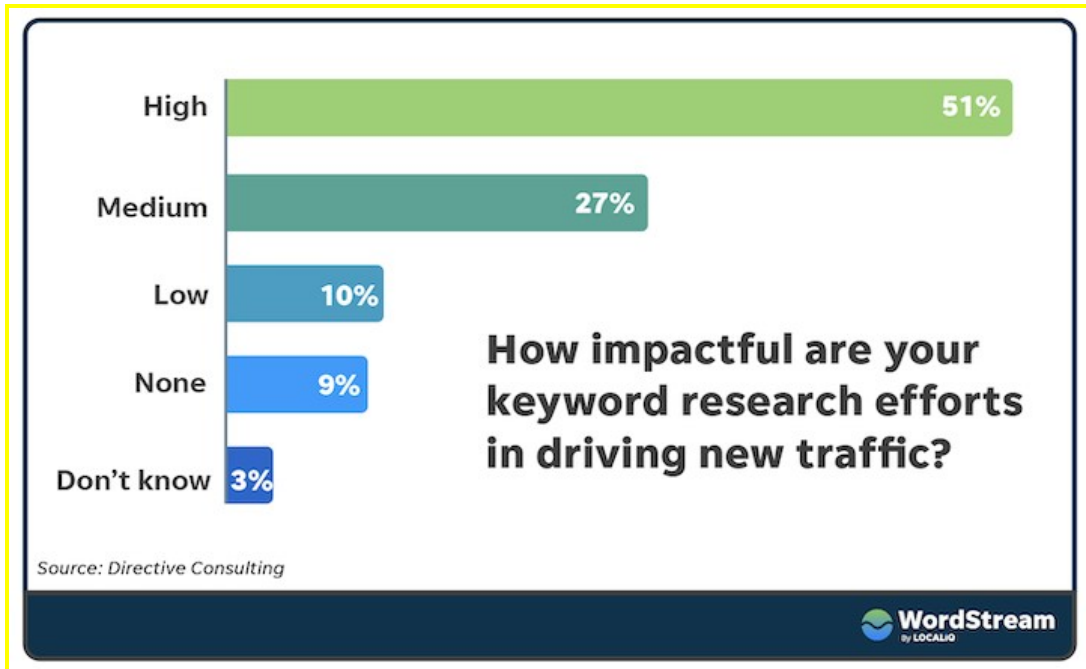
**Figure 1. Google Ranking Factors**



To deploy on-page SEO successfully, there must always be relevant, high-quality content. It is important to build credibility while meeting the demands of the readers when it comes to content. This allows one to build their brand and establish a loyal audience. Individuals look for content that they can trust which is also readable, fresh, and coherent. How they gain access to this content is through

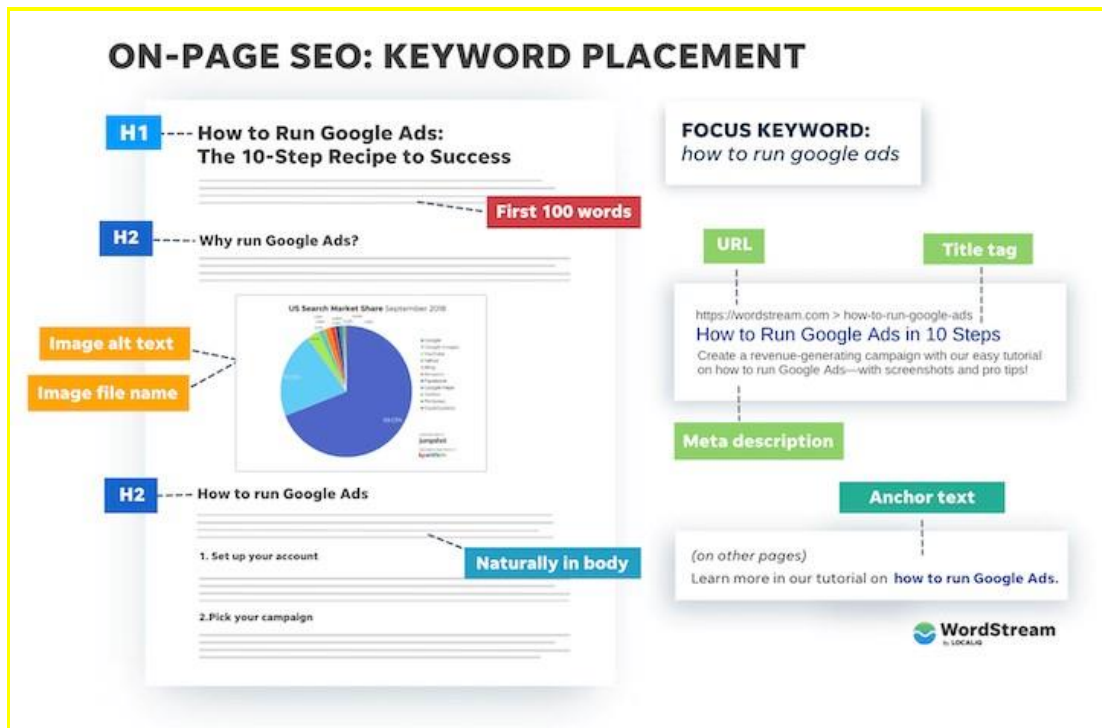
keywords. Figure 2 provides a glimpse on the impact of keyword research efforts in driving new traffic.

**Figure 2.** *Impact of Keyword Research*



Related to the topic of content is the importance of keyword placement. Specifically in the operationalization of webpages, there needs to be discipline in keyword placement. There must be keywords in the following: title tag, H1 title, H2 headings, URL, in the body, and meta description. Figure 3 illustrates the importance of keyword placement.

Figure 3. Keyword Placement



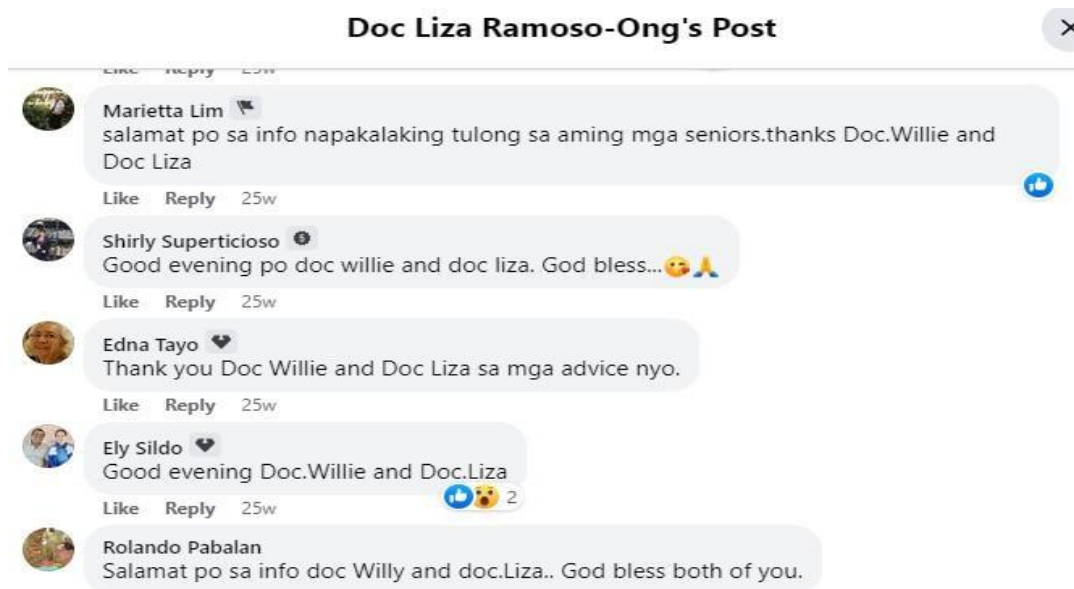
For the longest time, social media has been known to connect people all around the globe. But as time progressed, it has since been maximized in different areas. One can also advance certain advocacies by increasing audience awareness and education as well as include a call to action. In the Philippines, the social media community has grown to acknowledge certain influencers in health. Health professionals, including but not limited to Dr. Willie Ong, Dr. Liza Ramozo-Ong, and the likes (de Leon, 2023), have garnered popularity and reverence for their expertise on health. This includes the topic of malnutrition prevention as presented in Figures 4 and 5

Figure 4. Netizens' note on Doctor Willie Ong's credibility



Source: Doc Willing Ong's Facebook Page

Figure 5. Netizens' note on Doctor Liza Ong's credibility



Source: Doctor Liza Ramoso-Ong's Facebook Page

Given that health is one of the many areas social media can have an impact on, the researcher deemed it essential to tap into one of the prevailing health problems in the Philippines—malnutrition.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were enacted by the United Nations in 2015 as a global call to action to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that by the year 2030, everyone will experience peace and prosperity. Addressing malnutrition falls squarely under these goals. Malnutrition refers to the insufficiency of proper nutrition and stems from the lack of food or insufficient intake of appropriate food, among others (WHO, 2023). As food and resources has been a continuing problem of mankind since time immemorial, dealing with malnutrition also goes way back. However, despite various efforts at addressing malnutrition on a large scale, it continues to be a huge problem today.

The Borgen Project (2019) claims that half of the population is suffering from malnutrition-related conditions, stunted growth is typical, and poor education potentially affects malnutrition. To make matters worse, the World Bank Group (2023) reports on the burdensome effect of the Covid-19 pandemic to the state of health. The source states that hunger in the Philippines escalated sharply, with 31 percent of the family experiencing hunger after just 30 days of quarantine, while 9 percent experienced extreme hunger. To note, these statistics are the highest findings ever recorded in more than 20 years.

Even in 2014 malnutrition was already a rampant issue in the Philippines, with UNICEF stating that malnutrition claims the lives of 95 children in the Philippines every day. Out of every 1,000 Filipino children, 27 do not live to see their fifth birthday. A third of Filipino children experience stunting, which means they are shorter than

expected for their age. It is important to note that stunting occurring after the age of two can have lasting and irreversible effects. In severe cases, it can even be fatal.

The problem of malnutrition in the Philippines is alarming, which is why it is necessary for parents, government officials, and even corporate companies—to combat it. There have been several studies on the influence of people in power in combating malnutrition in the Philippines. Lau et al (2020) explored people's trust in religious leaders and institutions as a mechanism for improving retention in child malnutrition interventions in the Philippines. Sangalang et al (2022) investigated the association between diarrhea, malnutrition, dehydration (effect) and the water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions (cause) in schools in Metro Manila and tapped into the roles of schools in preventing these diseases. The study found that the implementation of school restroom cleaning policies, ensuring sufficient water supply, promoting enhanced handwashing practices, and providing hygiene education are necessary measures to prevent the spread of diseases.

Malnutrition indeed remains a pressing global health issue (UNESCO, 2013). This period is of paramount importance as it lays the foundation for a child's physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development. Malnutrition during this period can lead to lifelong health and developmental consequences. To address children's malnutrition, it's imperative that mothers have access to accurate and dependable information regarding nutrition and health, especially breastfeeding. After all, Mothers are primary caregivers and decision-makers when it comes to infant nutrition. Their breastfeeding practices, dietary choices during pregnancy and lactation, and adherence to recommended feeding guidelines all directly influence the health and nutritional status of their children. And in today's digital age, an increasing number of

mothers are turning to social media platforms as a significant source of information. The rise of social media has revolutionized the way information is disseminated and received, potentially offering a unique platform for addressing public health challenges.

This research, then, will aim to look at the power of social media influencers and the impact mothers have in preventing malnutrition, through widely shared online information on breastfeeding, child nutrition, and other health practices. While the influence of social media influencers on various topics, particularly health, has been acknowledged, there is a potential research gap in understanding the specific impact of social media influencers in the Philippines on malnutrition prevention.

The given background highlights the popularity and credibility of health professionals such as Dr. Willie Ong and Dr. Liza Ramoso-Ong in the realm of social media. However, there is a need for further research to investigate the extent to which these influencers, and others in the Philippines have contributed to raising awareness, education, and promoting preventive measures specifically related to malnutrition.

Understanding the influence of social media influencers in the Philippines on malnutrition prevention could provide valuable insights for public health campaigns, policymakers, and organizations involved in addressing this issue. It could help identify effective strategies for leveraging social media platforms to reach vulnerable populations, improve nutritional education, promote sustainable solutions to combat

malnutrition, and help breastfeeding mothers get the right information on breastfeeding, child nutrition, and other health practices

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the context of the Social Presence Theory (Short, Williams, and Christie, 1976), the study aimed to explore the intricate interplay between mothers and social media influencers, specifically focusing on their role in addressing malnutrition. Without conducting this study, a crucial understanding of how these two entities connect to prevent malnutrition would remain incomprehensible. The absence of this investigation could hinder the development of effective strategies and interventions, potentially leaving a gap in the efforts to combat malnutrition and promote healthy practices among breastfeeding mothers.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of social media usage by mothers for seeking information related to malnutrition prevention?
2. What are the factors influencing mothers' engagement with social media content on malnutrition prevention?
3. How do information shared by social media influencers and online communities influence maternal decision-making regarding infant nutrition?
4. What are the sources of trust and credibility attributed to social media content on malnutrition prevention?

5. What are the potential challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging social media for effective malnutrition prevention communication?

Since malnutrition is still an alarming and prevailing health problem in the Philippines, there's a need for more solutions to combat and prevent it. The absence of this type of research creates a substantial knowledge void concerning the extent to which social media impacts behaviors associated with preventing malnutrition, which in turn can improve maternal impact. The study's findings, then, ultimately, would provide valuable insights that can inform strategies and interventions aimed at utilizing social media and influencers effectively in addressing malnutrition and improving public health outcomes, and empower mothers to have a more significant positive impact on their children's nutritional well-being.

### **Objectives of the Study**

In general, the study aims to describe the phenomenon of social media and its degree of influence on malnutrition prevention.

Specifically, the study attempts to:

1. Assess the extent of social media usage by mothers for seeking information related to malnutrition prevention.

2. Determine the factors influencing mothers' engagement with social media content on malnutrition prevention
3. Examine the perceived influence of social media on mothers' knowledge and impact regarding malnutrition prevention
4. Investigate the sources of trust and credibility attributed to social media content on malnutrition prevention and maternal education
5. Identify the potential challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging social media for effective malnutrition prevention communication and improving breastfeeding mothers' maternal education

### **Significance of the Study**

The current study can be beneficial to different sectors of society because of its natural context. The following are the main and direct beneficiaries:

*Non-governmental organizations.* Health-related NGOs have been known to rally for the prevention of malnutrition along with other advocacies. Since this study draws from the context of such, this study can help NGOs advance the cause currently through data mining.

*Department of Health.* The Department of Health is the main arm of the country in combating national issues such as malnutrition. With the information stemming from this research, the DOH can be helped in a more current way and context, concerning social media and malnutrition.

*Development Communication.* This study can contribute knowledge, particularly strategies and solutions, on students, programs, and educational institutions. By studying the influence of social media influencers on preventing malnutrition in the Philippines, development communication students can acquire practical skills, theoretical knowledge, and critical thinking abilities that will enable them to effectively utilize digital platforms and influencers in future development communication initiatives. They can contribute to creating impactful campaigns, fostering behavior change, and improving public health outcomes in the context of malnutrition and beyond. Educational institutions, meanwhile, can provide and explore more programs and research opportunities focused on digital communication, particularly social media.

*Social media influencers.* This study can provide information on how to be more effective in reaching out to people. As social media influencers, such is their main goal.

*Malnourished children.* They can primarily benefit, stemming from the content of social media influencers. As there would be betterment in terms of the way social media influencers reach people, it would also affect malnutrition victims differently and more effectively.

*Breastfeeding mothers.* This study holds the potential to significantly benefit breastfeeding mothers by leveraging the power of social media to provide tailored and accessible maternal nutritional education. Through evidence-based content and resources shared on social platforms, mothers can gain vital information about

optimal nutrition during breastfeeding, leading to improved health for themselves and their infants.

*Future researchers.* This study is a good and accurate basis for future relevant studies.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The data gathering portion of this study will be done entirely online and within the parameters of Filipino social media influencers-health practitioners who reside in the Philippines and cater to the Filipino community who also reside in the Philippines. To note, the scope of the study can be across the nation since the data gathering will be done remotely. The online data gathering will be done via Google Forms, as permitted by the research methodology. The duration of the study will be in the year 2023 alone. This includes the data gathering and completion of the research.

The study's findings may be limited to the social media culture in the Philippines. The dynamics of social media influencer culture, audience behavior, and perceptions of malnutrition prevention can vary across different countries and cultures. Therefore, the findings may not be directly applicable to other settings without considering the unique contextual factors.

The study may also raise ethical concerns regarding the influence and power of social media influencers, especially in sensitive areas such as public health. Issues

like transparency, conflicts of interest, and the potential for misinformation or misleading content may need to be carefully considered and addressed within the study's design and interpretation of results.

Lastly, the study mostly focused on one type of malnutrition, undernutrition. Therefore, it doesn't delve into the other types of malnutrition like overnutrition and obesity.

The researcher recognizes the importance of delving deeper into the influence of culture, location, and ethics on the prevention of malnutrition. While the initial study on social media influencers' impact provides valuable insights, there is a need for further research to expand the understanding of these factors and their implications for effective prevention strategies.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the context of malnutrition prevention, there seems to be little to no studies found regarding the presence or absence of a relationship between social media presence and degree of influence, especially in the Philippines, one of the biggest social media users in Southeast Asia (OOSGA, 2023). According to OOSGA's data, approximately 94 million users in the Philippines are actively engaged in social media, with the majority accessing these platforms through their mobile devices. This results in an average daily usage of 4.1 hours on these platforms, which notably exceeds the global average of approximately 2 hours.

However, there are numerous studies unraveling the impact of maternal nutritional education and awareness on the nutritional status of children to prevent malnutrition Prasetyo, Y.B., et al (2023) said that some of the influencing factors in Malnutrition is low economic factors and the mother's education. *"The effect of nutrition education on mothers affects children's nutritional status, namely in the form of changes in the average birth weight of children"*, the research concluded. Locally, in the Philippines, a study conducted by Mai-Alauya, S. & Bangcola, A (2021) explored the relationship between nutritional knowledge of parents and the malnutrition status of Children in Southern Philippines. The research identified a total of 178 undernourished children through municipal records in the southern Philippines, and the findings indicated an elevated prevalence of malnutrition

among children aged 0 to 71 months in the region, so urgent health interventions are recommended for addressing this issue, including raising awareness among parents and guardians.

Combining the lack of research regarding the impact of social media in preventing malnutrition and providing maternal education and the research opportunities for studies exploring the impact of maternal nutritional education in preventing malnutrition, the researcher conclude that there is a compelling need to delve into this subject. This research project stands at the intersection of two vital aspects – the largely unexplored potential of social media in preventing malnutrition and the pressing need for more research into the impact of maternal nutritional education of breastfeeding mothers.

### **Social Media Presence**

The social media presence of an influencer can be reliant on various determinants. Campbel et al (2020) mentioned that influencers can be categorized into different categories, founded upon expertise, follower count, and revenue. Mega influencers possess over 1 million followers with renowned expertise and a big quantity of brand partnerships. Macro-influencers can have a range of 100,000 to 1 million followers and generally take part in limited local partnerships. Lastly, nano-influencers can have 10,000 followers or less, noting them as the news faces in the industry as they count on exposure and networking.

The University of Kansas (2023) directly linked social media presence to social media, branching towards the implications of social media. As the prior stems from the latter, the implications, including zero to low hard set-up costs, plausible wide reach, quick sharing of messages, novel chances to listen, engage, and observe one's progress, are deemed important. These are all important in dealing with social media presence as these also dictate it. Trunfio et al. (2021) also claimed that a person or company's social media presence can be quantified by normalized indexes, quantitative metrics, qualitative metrics, or set of indexes. In terms of quantitative methodologies, most utilized digital engagement and financial performance (i.e., company revenue). This is appropriate as the aforementioned validates that the customer engagement level on a company's Facebook fan page has an effect on revenue. Meanwhile, for the qualitative metrics, the researchers claim that people's interaction with the brand's social media platform is the top determinant.

To note, it also helps that social media has the component of being innovative in terms of informing and utilizing communities in the effort for advocacy and urging supporters towards the call to action (Maryman et al, 2023). With the use of social media, this is technically called digital advocacy. -Providing that the primary building-block is trust, subscribers have the tendency to engage and interact with the brand or personality after subscription. They perceive that their link with the influencer will be beneficial for them. Customers are inspired to engage with the influencers and express an intention to purchase a product being promoted or take and follow their advice (Ao, 2023). According to NASSP (2022), the following are the reasons why one should mobilize social media for advocacy: 1) it supplies a wide platform for

networking, 2) it supplies a cost-effective medium to link with others and advocate a common cause, 3) it supplies efficient resources to provide information and gather support, 4) it links one with almost every lawmaker for advocacy, and 5) it links one with almost every reporter for information dissemination.

Furthermore, the implication of social media presence is the use for social media for in some cases, the enhancement of supporters' advocacy engagement. Hestres (2017) added on to these findings, stating that social media presence can impact how citizens and advocacy organizations can effectively and politically approach the policies they choose to rally for. Fundamentally, Lisichkova et al (2017) made a firm claim that for a social media presence to be effective in terms of advocating, the following must be present: authenticity, trustworthiness, legitimacy, credibility, expertise, and honesty. Not only do these contribute to the effectiveness, but also affects consumers and online purchase intent.

Social media, however, is said to not be a sufficient tool for it is only supplementary to traditional methods (Maryman et al, 2023).

### **Importance of Social Media Presence in the Prevention of Malnutrition**

Arce-Amare et al. (2020) claimed that social media online platforms can be appropriate instruments to enhance population health. This is due to social media reaching millions of users with the benefit of free access to such. Social media

platforms, innately branching to social media presence, can be low-cost which is beneficial to users who have economic limitations. Some more specific findings are on the children's health. Dutta (2023) claims that the mobilization of social media can partially impact the eating behaviors of adolescents and children, pertaining to an elevated prevalence of eating disorders. This stems from the age groups' dissatisfaction with their body shape or weight. Friedman et al (2022) confirms that social media highly influences dietary behavior through various social influence pathways. Social norms that circulate on the web are a crucial component of altering young adults' health behaviors. Bohonis et al (2021) agrees with these findings, adding that social networking sites also affect their sleeping behavior. From these studies, the social networking sites' use time was determined to be negatively linked to general health.

Moreover, the negative implication of a social media presence in the prevention of malnutrition might pertain to the misleading of information, enabled by false accounts (Arce-Amare et al, 2020).

### **Essence of a Social Media Influencer**

NFI (2023) defined a social media influencer as a usual digital creator with a typically large social media following. A social media influencer is expected to constantly produce high-quality online content that entertains, educates, or motivates their audience, permitting them to engage with their fans. To date, a social media influencer can be anyone, which gives rise to the term "citizen influencer." Literally

anyone can be a social media influencer. A citizen influencer is known to evolve and share their ideas and experiences in the online world for the consumer audience.

With this, influencer marketing is also on the rise. With influencer marketing in mind, the social media influencer is known to aid brands in terms of promotion. The essence of the social media influencer is upon their credibility towards influencing consumer attitude on the brand (Cook et al, 2021). This, along with the creation of substantial content, appropriate content design, creativity (with the use of emojis), and quality are essential components to influencer marketing. As these enable consumer involvement, which is primary to build brand relationships, these constitute the essence of a social media influencer vis a vis influencer marketing (Bryla et al, 2022).

To note, fundamentally, influencer marketing and its implications have been proven to have a favorable impact on consumer behavior. The essence of a social media influencer, in this case, is associated with consumers' attitude towards them as well as perceived consumer behavior control (Avhad et al, 2020). Moreover, trust and friendship are established by factors such as visual content and targeted communication mechanisms (Bohnet-Joschko, 2019).

### **Strategies of Social Media Influencer**

McCormick (2023) placed four main strategies of a social media influencer to rank highly on Google, namely 1) relevant, top-quality content (trustworthiness, readability, fresh, and appropriate), 2) effective keyword placement, 3) accurate

image optimization, and 4) niche expertise. Molenaar (2022) supplements this with more specific sub-components, but on the same topic. The 15 tips for ranking higher on Google are as follows: 1) zero in on on-page SEO (search engine optimization), 2) be mindful of technical SEO, 3) produce high-quality content, 4) make internal links, 5) include LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing) keywords, 6) “E-A-T” more (practice expertise, authority, and trust), 7) pair search intent, 8) enhance bounce rate, 9) include video, 10) share statistical data, 11) enhance click-through rate, 12) make a Google My Business profile, 13) audit your brand and content, 14) be mindful of results, and 15) hire experts.

SEO is highly effective in earning follower interaction (Rana, 2021). The idea behind it is that SEO becomes functional when one’s social media following elevates in number, when a blog traffic becomes better via view count, when a note-worthy quantity of subscribers follows the call-to-action cues of the subscribers (click-through-rate), or when a big number of follower stays on one’s page for longer.

According to Dogtiev (2016), connection and emotion are two components that permits the effectiveness or the capacity to be of social media influencers. The same author claims that consumers turn to ad blockers to refrain from online advertisements. With this case, marketers are dealt with the task of standing out from the rest. To attain consumer engagement, marketers are now geared towards brand storytelling, as capitalizing on emotional connections are more effective. This now leads to the informed decision of working with social media influencers or individuals

with a relevant following on social media platforms in the hopes of generating a sense of connectedness between the brand and consumers.

### **Impact of a Social Media Influencer in the Prevention of Malnutrition**

Action for Healthy Kids (2023) claims that social media can be a potent instrument towards the promotion of better eating and active lifestyle, especially among youth. Social media is contributory towards the gamification of physical activities, nutrition tracking, and wellness. Bohnet-Joschko (2019) suggests that influencers can establish a healthy relationship with their consumer vis a vis body perfection by the identification and definition of diet and exercise.

However, the opposite can also be true. Smit et al (2019) states that social media (such as YouTube via vlogs) can easily promote unhealthy foods and drinks. Such are considered unhealthy as they elevate the risk of being overweight, obese, and other diseases. Boyland et al (2019) agrees with these claims with the inclusion of influencer marketing. The author claims that influencer marketing is responsible for children's food intake, increasing it up to an unhealthy level. In fact, contrary to popular belief, the promotion of healthy food (which is already considered the opposite) is reported to be ineffective in promoting healthy dietary behaviors in children (Boyland et al, 2019). Alwafi et al (2022), moreover, supports the fundamental finding that social media is contributory to food consumption in the context of the Saudi population.

## **On Degree of Influence**

The available literature on the degree of influence varies, depending on specific context. For the purpose of assessing the literature, the following are different takes on the “degree of influence.”

Cornell University (2023) rallied on Nicholas Christakis’ proposed theory of three degrees of influence. The source talked about how everything one does or says about dominos through his or her network. Such will inevitably influence his or her friends up to the third degree (friend of a friend’s friend). The influence, however, is limited to three degrees alone. Kamloops North Shore Business Improvement Area Association (2019), meanwhile, focused on a more e-business-centered approach. According to their point of view, there are four degrees of influence. These are: the self, the unit, the organization, and the universe. The source narrates the following principles as the explanation: 1) one’s response to issues directly impacts how his team sees him, 2) one’s team will be centered upon one’s example, despite set standards, 3) the appropriate enactment of standard, combined with skilled staff will make positive effect for the organization, and 4) the greater attention given to the four degrees of influence, the better the outcomes to be achieved. On a more related note, Doi et al (2020) talks more on health. This source speaks about how children who have a greatly diverse social network showed better health (i.e., fewer depressive symptoms). On the contrary, children with a low degree of influence in class are less healthy.

According to Pittman et al (2021), influencer marketing has assessed popularity metrics. However, there has been an inconclusive finding regarding how the quantity of followers and post likes affect consumer behavior. However, this is contrasted by Berne-Manero et al (2020), stating that a particular type of influencer has more credibility than another. To specify, macro-influencers are seen to have greater expertise and credibility in their specific areas. This is in comparison to nano-influencers who are deemed from a place of heightened intimacy and approachability.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Presence Theory**

Social Presence Theory (Short, Williams, and Christie, 1976) is defined as the “degree of salience of the other person in a mediated communication and the consequent salience of their personal interactions.” It predicts how real a person is when communicating in a given medium. It explains how individuals perceive and interact with others through communication media. It focuses on the degree of social presence, defined as the extent to which individuals perceive the mediated communication environment as sociable and involving. Thus, communication depends on verbal and non-verbal cues during the interaction. It also relies on what form of media is used that will increase potential for social presence. This is because some communication mediums have a higher potential for social presence like video compared to print for instance. The theory further assumes that performance largely depends on the quality of the social presence in a communication medium. Hence,

Social Presence Theory is the most relevant for this study, given the emphasis it places on people's influences over others through their presence on huge platforms like social media, and proves that the quality of virtual interactions and outcomes are impacted by the extent of social presence. As a framework for this study, it helped explore the interplay between social media presence, the degree of influence, and the prevention of malnutrition and understand how social presence on social media platforms influences individuals' attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, and the diffusion of nutrition-related information.

Social presence theory offered valuable insights for understanding the objectives of the study. It helped identify the characteristics of social media that predict a strong following, including high interactivity, personalization, emotional resonance, authenticity, visual appeal, and a sense of community. Additionally, this theory helped in examining how social media influencers strategically present themselves online through self-disclosure, visual aesthetics, language style, and active engagement with followers. Furthermore, it explored the relationship between influencers' social media presence and their ability to influence followers' beliefs, considering factors such as perceived authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility, and social connectedness.

Thus, the dynamics shaped social media interactions, the strategies employed by influencers, and the impact of social media presence on followers' beliefs and trust. The theory delves into the intricate dynamics of online interactions, comprehend the effects of social influence, explore the formation of virtual communities, and grasp the significance of emotional connections. This comprehensive understanding serves as a compass for developing targeted and impactful prevention strategies, interventions,

and policies that harness the power of social media platforms in tackling malnutrition challenges.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The study guided by the Social Presence Theory assumed that the form of communication medium determines the quality of interaction in this case the social media platform, Facebook, the largest social media platform in the Philippines (OOSGA, 2023). Based on the most recent data released in January 2023 by OOSGA, it is evident that the number of Facebook users in the Philippines has reached approximately 90.2 million, with a growth rate of 0.94%. Interestingly, this user base is composed of approximately 46.45% male users and 53.55% female.

Given Facebook's popularity in the Philippines, numerous merchants, including prominent consumer packaged goods brands, have seized the opportunity to leverage the platform for both sales and customer engagement. These merchants, goods, and brands are then promoted by various types of influencers. And these influencers directly and indirectly reach out to consumers of goods, products, and information—in this case, mothers who actively engage with influencers on the platform.

The rise of social media influencers has significantly impacted the purchasing behavior of consumers, especially mothers. With the ease of access to information and the power of social proof, mothers are turning to influencers for product recommendations, reviews, and lifestyle inspiration. Influencers, often relatable

figures with whom mothers can identify, play a crucial role in shaping their preferences and decisions. Hence, the salience or degree of influence between a social media influencer and a follower can be established based on the quality of their interaction on a given content. Social media platforms as a form of mediated communication offer various cues that simulate face-to-face communication, such as profile pictures, comments, likes, and videos. These cues enhance the sense of social presence experienced by users. Exploring how these cues affect users' perceptions of social presence and the subsequent influence on their attitudes and behaviors related to nutrition can provide insights into effective communication strategies on social media.

As a mediated communication medium, interactions between the social media influencer and the audience or follower could be influenced by their emotional connection, attitudes, and perceptions toward the content. Emotional connection may represent how social media platforms allow users to express emotions, empathy, and support through comments, reactions, or direct messages, as well as the users' emotional connection to the actual influencer before and after following or subscribing. This variable was measured by conducting an online survey that included specific items related to their emotional connection towards the influencers they are following and the posts they read on social media.

On the other hand, attitudes and perceptions refer to individuals' subjective evaluations, beliefs, and opinions related to nutrition and malnutrition. They can be shaped by various factors, including social media content, interactions, and influential

figures. Attitudes and perceptions were measured by the users' level of interaction with the influencer and the likelihood of them following or sharing influencers' advice regarding preventing malnutrition. Users can perceive a sense of social presence through their interactions, engagement, and visibility on these platforms. Understanding how individuals perceive social presence on social media can shed light on their attitudes, behaviors, and receptiveness to nutrition-related messages.

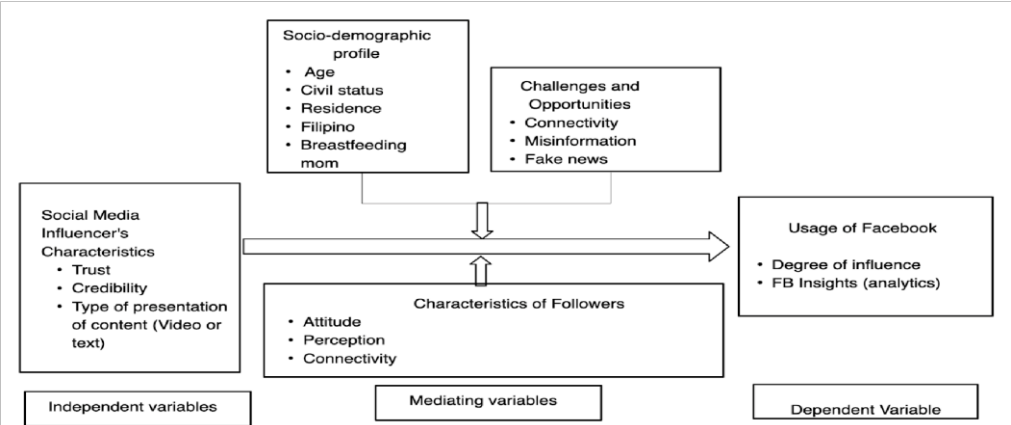
The socio-demographic profile of followers also plays a key role in establishing their capacity for sustained engagement. Age, civil status, being a Filipino, and residing in the Philippines are factors that could influence whether a follower would apply what has been learned.

Thus, socio-demographic profile and their attitudes, perceptions, and connectivity to social media could influence the extent of usage determined by the degree of influence. The interactions between the social media influencer and the follower would then lead to the degree of influence of how content was used. It represents the extent to which social media presence impacts individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral intentions related to nutrition. It includes both direct and indirect effects, which can vary based on factors such as the number of followers, credibility of information sources, online social networks, and the level of engagement.

Social media platforms enable the rapid dissemination of nutrition-related information and encourage engagement through sharing, liking, and commenting.

Social Presence Theory helps understand how the presence and engagement of individuals and organizations on social media platforms influence the diffusion of nutrition information, the reach of prevention messages, and the formation of online communities centered around nutrition to prevent malnutrition. Figure 6 presents the conceptual framework of the study.

**Figure 6.** *Determinants of social media presence and degree of influence among breastfeeding mothers to prevent malnutrition.*



**Hypothesis**

The higher level of social media presence points towards greater influence over followers. This implies that the extent of social media presence is directly associated with the level of impact of an individual, organization, or brand on their followers.

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Social Media Influencer's Trust and Credibility-** represents the perception of the audience regarding the reliability, authenticity, and expertise of the influencer. It relates to the degree of confidence that the audience places in the influencer's

information and recommendations concerning malnutrition prevention. Trust and credibility were assessed through feedback, reviews, and qualitative data on how the audience perceives the influencer's expertise and honesty.

**Attitude-** refers to the users' evaluative stance or feelings toward a particular subject, object, person, or content. In the context of the study, it pertains to the positive, negative, or neutral sentiments that users hold regarding malnutrition prevention information or the social media influencer's content.

**Perception-** refers to how individuals interpret and make sense of the information or content they encounter on social media. This includes their understanding, beliefs, and opinions formed in response to the content, which may influence their subsequent actions or behavior.

**Connectivity-** refers to the level of emotional connection, identification, or bond that social media users experience with the social media influencer and their content. It reflects the extent to which the audience feels personally connected or emotionally attached to the influencer's message and presence.

**Type of Content or Media-** the specific formats and themes of the content shared by the social media influencer. It can include text-based posts, images, videos, infographics, live streams, articles, or any other form of media used to convey information related to malnutrition prevention.

**Misinformation-** false or inaccurate information that is unintentionally spread, often due to a lack of knowledge or understanding of the facts. In the context of the study, it relates to incorrect information shared on social media platforms regarding malnutrition prevention.

**Fake News-** intentionally fabricated or deceptive information presented as factual news with the aim of misleading the audience. It involves deliberate efforts to spread false narratives or disinformation for various purposes.

**Usage of Facebook-** the frequency, duration, and activities performed by individuals on the Facebook platform. This includes actions such as posting status updates, sharing content, liking, commenting, messaging, and participating in groups or events.

**Degree of Influence-** the extent to which a social media influencer's content impacts or persuades their audience or followers. It can be measured by analyzing the level of engagement, interactions, and responses (e.g., likes, shares, comments) generated by the influencer's content, as well as changes in the behavior, attitudes, or opinions of the audience after exposure to the content.

**Facebook Insights-** a tool and system that provides data and metrics related to the performance and reach of their content on the platform. This data includes information about post reach, engagement, audience demographics, and other relevant metrics to help content creators understand their audience and content effectiveness.

**Maternal Impact** - The measurable influence or effect that a mother's actions, behaviors, or characteristics have on the physical, emotional, psychological, social, or developmental well-being of her child or children, as assessed through specific quantitative or qualitative indicators, such as changes in a child's behavior, health, academic performance, or overall quality of life, observed or reported over a specified period.

## **Chapter III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

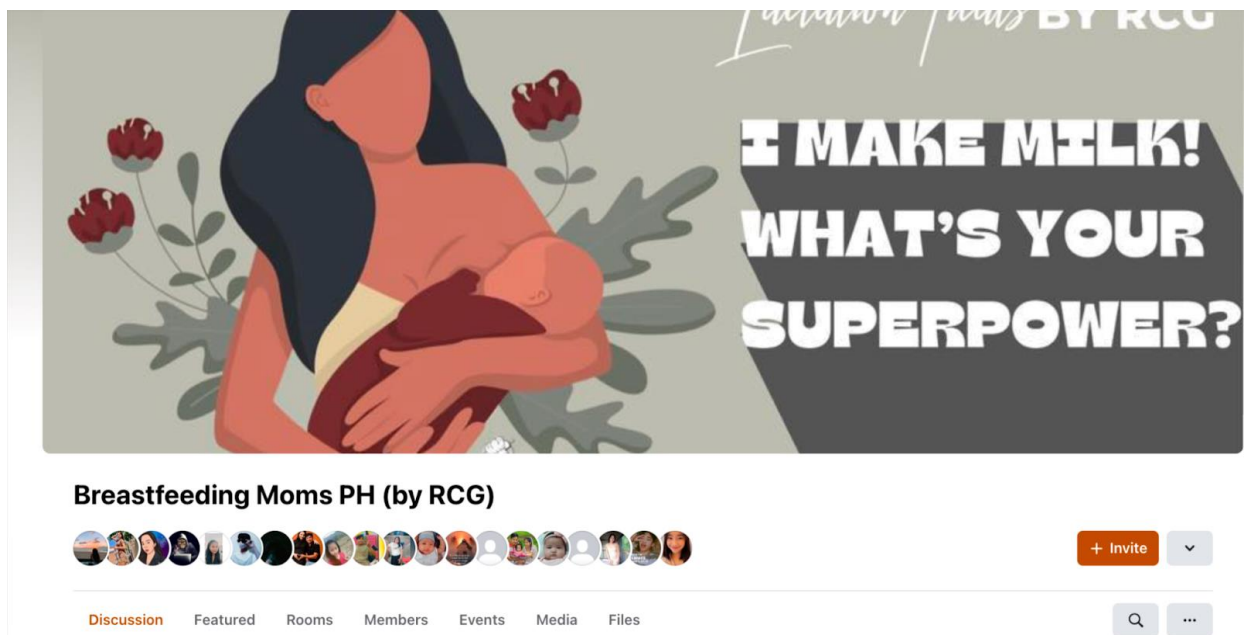
#### **Research Design**

The study employed a one-shot survey research design where data is collected from participants at a single point in time. The researcher used the one-shot survey research design to investigate various aspects of social media usage and its impact on malnutrition prevention among mothers. The survey consisted of structured questions and scales to measure various variables related to social media usage, emotional connection, attitudes, perceptions, engagement, trust, and credibility. The survey included Likert scale questions and multiple-choice questions to capture data.

#### **Locale of the Study**

The locale of the study was the online community "Breastfeeding Moms PH" with approximately 31,600 members. The online community represented a substantial and diverse group of breastfeeding mothers from various backgrounds and experiences, which made it an ideal platform to conduct the study. Breastfeeding mothers hold a paramount position in the context of maternal impact due to their pivotal role in nurturing and nourishing their infants. Breastfeeding is recognized globally as the optimal method of infant feeding as it offers numerous health benefits

to newborns and infants, including vital nutrients, antibodies, and a strong foundation for physical and emotional development. The act of breastfeeding itself establishes a profound emotional and physical connection between a mother and her child. The study's findings would have particular relevance and applicability to the unique challenges and opportunities faced by breastfeeding mothers in the Philippines.



**Breastfeeding Moms PH (by RCG)**  
Private group · 31.6K members

Joined ▾

[Community home](#)

**Breastfeeding Moms PH (by RCG)**

**Jess Gutierrez Flamiano**  
July 15 at 5:30 PM · 🌐

Dear Fellow Breastfeeding Moms,

I would like to request your participation as respondents for my master's thesis, titled "Social Media Presence and Degree of Influence in the Prevention of Malnutrition." Your participation in this study is crucial for its success.

The aim of my research is to investigate the correlation between social media presence and the degree of influence in the prevention of malnutrition, specifically focusing on breastfeeding practices for infants. B... [See more](#)

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES OPEN UNIVERSITY

**SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE AND DEGREE OF INFLUENCE IN THE PREVENTION OF MALNUTRITION**

Dear Fellow Breastfeeding Mom, I am humbled and honored to have you as my respondent for my master's thesis that I am conducting, entitled: "Social Media Presence and Degree of Influence in the Prevention of..."

The online community "Breastfeeding Moms PH" is an exclusive space tailored for breastfeeding mothers. Within this page, mothers share their experiences, seek advice, and offer encouragement related to breastfeeding, pumping, nursing, and all aspects of maternal health connected to breastfeeding.

With its substantial membership count of approximately 31,600 members, the group had represented a diverse and engaged population of breastfeeding mothers in the Philippines. The group's focus on breastfeeding practices and nutrition made it an ideal locale for the study, which allowed the researcher to gain unique insights into how social media influences mothers' attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge regarding malnutrition prevention. Moreover, the group's emphasis on supporting one another while respecting the need for expert medical advice ensured that the data collected from this community has contributed to a holistic understanding of the role of social media in fostering effective communication on malnutrition prevention and empowering mothers in their breastfeeding journeys.

### **Respondents**

The respondents of the study were four hundred seventy-two Facebook users who were inclined towards or advocate for the prevention of malnutrition. Another criteria this study looked at in terms of respondents was their natural tendency to subscribe to certain social media influencers-health practitioners who also championed health-related content, especially on the topic of malnutrition prevention. There were no limitations in terms of social demographics, namely, age. However, for

the sake of legalities and convenience, the study included respondents who are of legal age (18 years old and above). Since the study's focus is on the Philippines, respondents were Filipinos who follow Filipino social media influencers-health practitioners.

### **Research Instrument**

The data gathered for this study was ordinal, meaning it was ascribed to degrees in order to measure a certain phenomenon. Hence, it also inherently meant that it categorized and labeled variables and ranked them in order (CFI Team, 2022). Ordinal data were usually derived from surveys or questionnaires that deploy an ordinal scale. An ordinal scale is a measurement scale to designate values to variables based on their perceived ranking, in consideration to one another in the data set that is given (Multon et al, 2023). The most common and relatively effective ordinal scale via surveys or questionnaires is the Likert scale. In this study, a 5-point Likert scale was utilized and adjusted, depending on the demands of the study.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

Data were gathered online via Google Forms survey. The data gathering commenced with an introductory page that spoke about the nature of the research and the basic identity of the researcher as part of the greeting. It also solicited informed consent. The terms and conditions of the data gathering were also provided. If the prospective respondent has agreed to the consent form by clicking

“Next”, he or she will proceed in answering the survey. The allotted time to complete the survey was around 15-30 minutes. Upon completion, the respondent was acknowledged with thanks.

## **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages. The relationship of variables was established using Spearman’s rank correlation. It is a type of correlation that measures the direction and strength of the link between two ranked variables. It gauged how established is the relationship between two variables vis a vis the monotonic function. Fundamentally, a monotonic relationship is similar to a linear relationship in that it could go into two possible directions. In a monotonic relationship, one value can increase and the other can increase or one value can increase while the other can decrease (and vice versa) (Lundt Research Ltd, 2018).

In layman’s terms, as the Spearman correlation was deployed to examine links involving ordinal variables (Minitab, 2023), it is appropriate for this study to have examined the attributes that contribute to the effectiveness of social media influencers as perceived by the followers.

The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) had indicated the actual orientation of the relationship between two variables (Lund Research, 2018). The formula below was used to calculate the coefficient ( $\rho$ ):

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

(used when there are no tied ranks)

$\rho$  = Spearman rank correlation  $d_i$  = the difference between the ranks of corresponding variables  $n$  = number of observations

$$\rho = \frac{\sum_i (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum_i (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum_i (y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

(used when there are paired ranks)  $i$  =  
paired score

A Spearman coefficient varied from -1 to +1. When  $\rho = 0$ , the interpretation has arrived at having no association between the two variables (Lund Research, 2018). However, when  $\rho = -1$  or  $+1$ , there is a perfect monotonic relationship. A monotonic relationship can either signify the following: 1) as one variable increases in value, so does the other variable (positive monotonic) or 2) as one variable increases in value, the other decreases (negative monotonic).

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** *Distribution of respondents by socio-demographic profile*

| Percentage | Ratio of Respondents                 |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 50%        | 1/2                                  |
| 51%        | Majority                             |
| 60%        | 6 out of 10; big majority            |
| 67%        | 2 out of 3; two-thirds               |
| 70%        | 7 out of 10; great majority          |
| 75%        | 3 out of 4; overwhelming majority    |
| 80%        | 8 out of 10; most of the respondents |
| 90%        | Almost all the respondents           |
| 100%       | All the respondents                  |

#### **Socio-Demographic Profile**

Of the 472 respondents, less than half (161 or 42.60%) belonged to the age bracket 26-30. The youngest was 20 while the oldest was 36 and above. This implies that age ranges were of reproductive age and mature enough to bear children. Furthermore, the age ranges suggest that women's physical development is complete that would allow breastfeeding. In terms of civil status, a big majority (231 or 61.11%) were married with less than 20 percent (56 or 17.72%) on live in status. This finding connotes that having children does not require getting married. All respondents are Filipinos, residing in the Philippines, and are breastfeeding moms. Even if there were

single parents or separated, they tended to breastfeed their child/children. It can be surmised that Filipino young mothers raised their children through breastfeeding to some extent (**Table 1**).

**Table 2.** *Distribution of Respondents by Social Media Usage.*

| <b>Characteristics Age</b> | <b>Frequency (n=472)</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 26-30                      | 198                      | 41.95%            |
| 31-35                      | 137                      | 29.03%            |
| 20-25                      | 123                      | 26.06%            |
| 36 and above               | 14                       | 2.97%             |
| Sub-total                  | 472                      | 100.00%           |

| <b>Characteristics</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Civil Status</b>    |                  |                   |
| Married                | 291              | 61.65%            |
| Separated              | 90               | 19.07%            |

|           |     |         |
|-----------|-----|---------|
| Live in   | 63  | 13.35%  |
| Single    | 26  | 5.51%   |
| Sub-total | 472 | 100.00% |

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| <b>Characteristics Residing in the Philippines</b> | <b>Frequency<br/>(n=472)</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------|
|--|------------------------------|-------------------|

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|           |     |         |
|-----------|-----|---------|
| Yes       | 472 | 100.00% |
| No        | 0   | 0%      |
| Sub-total | 472 | 100.00% |

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| <b>Characteristics Filipino Citizens</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
|--|------------------|-------------------|

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|           |     |        |
|-----------|-----|--------|
| Yes       | 472 | 100.00 |
| No        | 0   | 0      |
| Sub-total | 472 | 100.00 |

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| <b>Characteristics</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Breastfeeding Mom</b> |                  |                   |
| Yes                      | 467              | 98.94             |
| No                       | 0                | 0                 |
| Sub-total                | 472              | 100.00            |

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### **Social Media Usage in Seeking Information Related to Malnutrition**

When asked about the social media do respondents have more than a third (35.41%) responded “Facebook In the Philippines, Facebook holds the title of the largest social media platform (OOSGA, 2023). According to the most recent data released in January 2023 by OOSGA, approximately 90.2 million people in the country are Facebook users, and this number continues to grow at a rate of 0.94%. This particular data, therefore, comes as no surprise as it coincides with the normal trend. Interestingly, this user base is composed of approximately 46.45% male users and 53.55% female users. This close range between percentages does imply that Facebook, as a social media platform, is highly close to being universally neutral and relevant to different demographics.

TikTok was the second preferred most popular social media platform (22.73%). It is indeed understandable, especially considering the respondents'

interest in short videos as a preferred content format for malnutrition prevention information on social media. Knowing that the population is highly technological-savvy, their consumption of short-form videos was anticipated. This is due to the demographic's preference to consume fast-paced, eye-catching, and interesting content. Since TikTok is known for its focus on short videos, it aligns well with the respondents' preference for easily digestible and engaging content. As nowadays, everything is instant, even content is judged in the snap of a finger; TikTok offers that option for the demographics. This correlation suggests that TikTok's format resonates with users when it comes to sharing content related to malnutrition prevention.

Noteworthy are Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, as they are most relevant in that order from greatest (next to TikTok) to least. Only 0.43% answered that they have all of the social media apps.

**Table 2.1.** *Social Media Usage in Seeking Information*

| <b>What social media do you have?<br/>(multiple responses)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Facebook   | 148              | 32.03             |
| Instagram  | 97               | 21.00             |
| Twitter  | 70               | 15.15             |

|                         |          |             |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------|
| YouTube                 | 40       | 8.66        |
| TikTok                  | 105      | 22.73       |
| <b>All of the above</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0.43</b> |

The distribution of respondents' social media usage is shown in Table 2. Out of 462 participants, 32.03% use Facebook, 21.00% use Instagram, 15.15% use Twitter, 8.66% use YouTube, and 22.73% use TikTok. Only 0.43% use all of the mentioned platforms, while the total percentage sums up to 100.00%.

**Table 3.** *Frequency of Social Media Usage to Seek Information on Malnutrition Prevention*

| <b>Social Media</b> | <b>Frequency<br/>N = 462</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Facebook            | 148                          | 32.03%            |
| TikTok              | 105                          | 22.73%            |
| Instagram           | 97                           | 21.00%            |
| Twitter             | 70                           | 15.15%            |
| YouTube             | 40                           | 8.66%             |
| All of the Above    | 2                            | 0.43%             |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>462</b>                   | <b>100.00%</b>    |

Respondents' frequency of social media usage for seeking information on malnutrition prevention is presented. The majority, 56.93%, use it daily, while 22.73% use it twice a week, and 20.35% use it once a week. The daily use of social media in this population greatly reflects the frequency of social media usage of the general Filipino population. According to statistics, there has come to a recent point that the Philippines is number one in social media usage across Asia. As interconnectedness via technology is already a need, which necessarily denoted other benefits such as being informed and updated, this is not a surprise. No respondents indicated using it differently. The total sample size is 462, with the percentages summing up to 100.00%.

What is worthy to be mentioned is that most of the respondents seek information about malnutrition prevention on relevant social media platforms on a daily basis. What is even more noteworthy is that the rest of the sample population regularly does the same, but just not as frequent.

**Table 3.1** *Frequency of Social Media Usage to Seek Information on Malnutrition Prevention*

| Frequency    | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Daily        | 263       | 56.93%     |
| Twice a Week | 105       | 22.73%     |

|              |            |                |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Once a Week  | 94         | 20.35%         |
| Other        | 0          | 0.00%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

---

Facebook reigns as the main social media platform this sample population of breastfeeding moms use in gathering data about malnutrition prevention (29.87% of the whole sample population). This finding coincides with the fact that Facebook remains as the primary social media platform in the general worldwide population. This is while TikTok runs in second (22.08%). The other three, namely Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, are almost at par with each other as minorities.

**Table 4.** *Primary Social Media Platforms for Gathering Information on Malnutrition*

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| <b>Social Media</b> | <b>Frequency N = 462</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Facebook            | 138                      | 29.87%            |
| TikTok              | 102                      | 22.08%            |
| Twitter             | 89                       | 19.26%            |
| Instagram           | 78                       | 16.88%            |
| YouTube             | 55                       | 11.90%            |

|                  |     |         |
|------------------|-----|---------|
| All of the Above | 0   | 0.00%   |
| Total            | 462 | 100.00% |

---

In this category, the respondents are widely spread out amongst the existing choices. However, the majority of the respondents claim that they usually search for information on social media regarding nutritious recipes and meal ideas (30.74%) and information on the importance of specific nutrients (21.86%). Although the options are closely related and, in some cases, interconnected, the specific orientation of the primary choices has mainly something to do with downright eating. All the more, as eating is a daily occurrence, it is inferred that people covet ease in their daily lives while maintaining a healthy habit for them and their household.

**Table 5.** *Commonly Sought Malnutrition-Related Information on Social Media*

| <b>Content Type</b>                                    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
|  | <b>N = 462</b>   |                   |
| Nutritious recipes and meal ideas                      | 142              | 30.74%            |
| Information on the importance of<br>specific nutrients | 101              | 21.86%            |

|   |            |                |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Success stories or personal experiences | 88         | 19.05%         |
| Tips for ensuring balanced nutrition    | 66         | 14.29%         |
| Advice on dealing with picky eaters     | 65         | 14.07%         |
| Other                                   | 0          | 0.00%          |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

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The data depicted in the table below indicates a prevailing belief among respondents regarding the reliability of social media as an information source for malnutrition prevention. According to the respondents, they regard social media as somewhat reliable for information on malnutrition prevention. This sentiment aligns with the assertions of Lisichkova et al. (2017), who emphasize that the effectiveness of a social media presence in advocacy requires the presence of attributes such as authenticity, trustworthiness, legitimacy, credibility, expertise, and honesty. These attributes not only contribute to effectiveness, but also impact the overall perception.

In layman's terms, it cannot be denied that although social media has its benefits, it also has its issues. The prevalence of fake news, as propagated by its users, has conditioned the dangers of social media itself on the minds of its consumers. This finding is relevant and accurate because of the fact that social media is not full proof from fake information.

**Table 6. Perceptions of Social Media as a Reliable Information Source**

| Statement/Question   | Scale | Frequency (F) | Percentage (%) | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|--|-------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| How do you perceive social media as a reliable information source about malnutrition prevention? | 5     | 216           | 46.75          | 3.98          | Somewhat reliable     |
| Success stories or personal experiences  | 4     | 103           | 22.29          | 101           | 21.86                 |
| Tips for ensuring balanced nutrition   | 3     | 83            | 17.97          | 88            | 19.05                 |
| Advice on dealing with picky eaters  | 2     | 39            | 8.44           | 66            | 14.29-                |
| Other  | 1     | 21            | 4.55           | 65            | 14.07                 |
| Total  | 15    | <b>462</b>    | <b>100.00</b>  | <b>0</b>      | <b>00.00</b>          |

**Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:**

- 1.00 to 1.79 *Highly unreliable*
- 1.80 to 2.59 *Somewhat unreliable*
- 2.60 to 3.39 *Neutral*
- 3.40 to 4.19 *Somewhat reliable*
- 4.20 to 5.00 *Highly reliable*

**Table 7.** *Implementation of Malnutrition Prevention Recommendations and Practices Acquired from Social Media*

| <b>Recommendations / Practices</b>      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Trying new nutritious recipes           | 187              | 40.48             |
| Implementing portion control strategies | 98               | 21.21             |
| Introducing new food groups into meals  | 97               | 21.00             |
| Following specific feeding schedules    | 74               | 16.02             |
| None of the Above                       | 6                | 1.30              |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>462</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

All of the respondents agree that they have practices that they have learned from social media regarding malnutrition prevention. The majority (40.48%) has responded that they have learned how to try out new recipes. Secondly, at 21.21%, the majority have learned how to implement portion control strategies. Other

categories such as introducing new food groups into meals and following specific feeding schedules, came very close.

Social media has been known to be an encouraging platform for learning different kinds of information. Hence, this finding supports this general knowledge, most importantly in relevance to the type of content consumers follow. As their interest in malnutrition prevention is manifested through action in terms of the influencers they follow online, the content that they will digest will most likely come from these influencers with their specific niches.

**Factors Influencing Mothers’ Engagement With Social Media Content On Malnutrition Prevention (In relevance to Objective 2)**

**Table 8.** *Followed Social Media Accounts and Influencers for Malnutrition Prevention Support and Information*

| <b>Influencer</b>       | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Jo Sebastian            | 86               | 18.61             |
| Kryz Uy                 | 92               | 19.91             |
| Isabelle Daza           | 91               | 19.70             |
| Mommy Diaries           | 105              | 22.73             |
| Dr. Willie and Liza Ong | 72               | 15.58             |

|                |            |               |
|----------------|------------|---------------|
| Bettina Carlos | 16         | 3.46          |
| Other          | 0          | 0.00          |
| Total          | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

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All the mentioned influencers are almost equally popular amongst the respondents, except Bettina Carlos (only 3.46% respondents said they follow her). However, Mommy Diaries reigns the most popular amongst everyone with 22.73% of the respondents following her. Right behind her is Kryz Uy, who garners significant support with 19.91% of the respondents backing her.

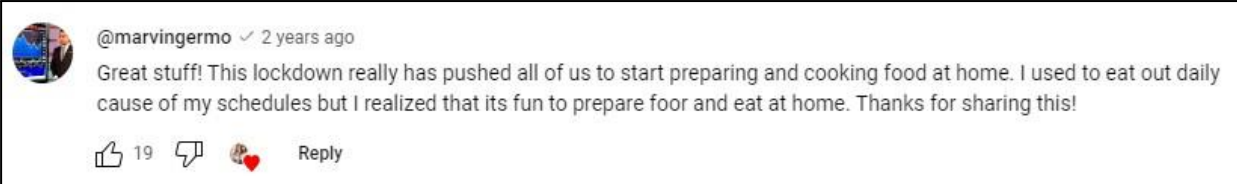
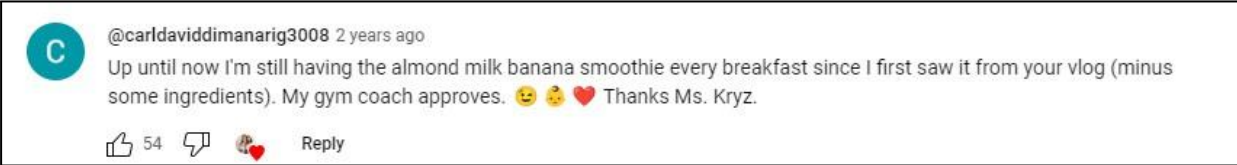
For example, in the case of Mommy Diaries, there is already a sense of bond found between her and her audience. There is trust and credibility fostered because her audience feels like they can connect, relate, and even confide in her. The page currently has 1.3 million followers. Her relatively healthy relationship with her followers are as seen in the pictures below.



Source: Mommy Diaries PH

Meanwhile, for Kryz Uy, there is a sense of prominence in terms of her health content. Such orientation has led her content in reverence by the people who follow her. Not only is her content relevant and elegant, but it is timely and functional for her

audience. This makes her content trustworthy and reliable, as is seen through the following comments on one of her YouTube videos:



Source: [Kryz Uy](#)

**Table 9.** Preferred Types of Malnutrition Prevention Content on Social Media

| Content           | Frequency  | Percentage    |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|
| Short videos      | 165        | 35.71         |
| In-depth articles | 106        | 22.94         |
| Infographics      | 97         | 21.00         |
| Personal Stories  | 94         | 20.35         |
| None of the Above | 6          | 1.30          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

When asked what type of content on malnutrition prevention are more likely to catch their eye on social media, the respondents are almost equally widespread on the different options (i.e., in-depth articles with scientific explanations, eye-catching infographics presenting key information, personal stories and testimonials, and short videos with practical tips). Such the aforementioned options are set in descending order from what is most generally relevant to the respondents to the least. Short videos are the most preferred type of content. To reiterate, this goes hand in hand with the age range of the respondents. As the age group is reliant on a more fast-paced, convenient, easily-digest yet entertaining form of content, short videos are mostly preferred. In-depth articles offer a more comprehensive set of data which can be very beneficial to the demographic.

**Table 10.** *Analysis of Sharing Practices Across Different Social Media Platforms*

| <b>Type of Social Media</b>                                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| A few close friends or family members                            | 145              | 31.39             |
| Several friends or acquaintances                                 | 86               | 18.61             |
| A large number of people in my social network                    | 117              | 25.32             |
| I have actively shared the information on social media platforms | 114              | 24.68             |
| Other  | 0                | 0.00              |

Total

462

100.00

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This section delves into the respondents' behaviors regarding sharing information they practice on various social media platforms. The results reveal distinct patterns in sharing preferences:

- **A Few Close Friends or Family Members:** Most participants, comprising 31.39%, tend to share information they practice with a select group of individuals, such as close friends or family members. This likely reflects a sense of intimacy and trust within this circle. Not only that, but it can be imply that the sample population most likely spend most of their time with close friends or family members.
- **Several Friends or Acquaintances:** About 18.61% of respondents opt to share their practiced information with a slightly broader audience, including several friends or acquaintances. This suggests a willingness to extend the sharing beyond the immediate circle. As is fitting for mothers who have family or responsibilities, the sample population are more likely to spend less time with friends or acquaintances who are not already part of their daily routine. Conversations are limited to these groups of people and hence, topics such as malnutrition prevention may not usually be covered.

- A Large Number of People in My Social Network:** A substantial 25.32% of participants express a preference for sharing their practiced information with a wide range of individuals within their social network. This choice indicates a desire to reach a larger audience and potentially contribute to broader awareness. Social media is very accessible nowadays. Hence, there is an assumption that what comes easy will most likely get done.
- Actively Shared on Social Media Platforms:** Notably, 24.68% of respondents actively share the information they practice on various social media platforms. This proactive approach underscores the significance of these platforms as channels for disseminating information.

These findings collectively emphasize the diverse ways in which individuals engage with social media platforms to share information they practice. The data underscores the pivotal role of social media in enabling communication and information-sharing across different levels of social connection.

**Table 11.** *Number of Participants Who Are Breastfeeding Mothers*

| <b>Number of Breastfeeding Mothers</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Below 5                                | 331              | 71.65             |
| 5 to 10                                | 113              | 24.46             |

|             |             |               |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 11 to 15    | 6           | 1.30          |
| 16 and more | 12          | 2.60          |
| Total       | <b>462</b>  | <b>100.00</b> |
| Mean        | <b>3.73</b> |               |

However, in connection to the previous question, 71.65% of the respondents revealed that the people they share the information range only below five in quantity. This occurrence can be attributed to the general orientation of the respondents, being mothers with responsibilities. Usually, people, at this stage in their lives, are only able to maintain a small circle of connections because that is what is permitting their situation.

**Table 12.** *Information Sharing Among Mothers Through Social Media*

| <b>Sharing of Information</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes, they actively share information about malnutrition prevention with other mothers on social media platforms. | 157              | 33.98%            |
| Some mothers share the information occasionally, but not on a regular basis.                                     | 155              | 33.55%            |

|  |            |               |
|--|------------|---------------|
| No, they do not share the information with other mothers through social media. | 48         | 10.39%        |
| Mothers prefer to share the information offline or in more private settings.   | 59         | 12.77%        |
| It varied among mothers; some share while others do not.                       | 43         | 9.31%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

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The graph on top shares that information dissemination can be considered relatively successful. This is despite the underwhelming population to which malnutrition prevention information is shared, originating from the respondents, the said population actively share the information themselves (33.98%). What is even more noteworthy is that 33.55% of the respondents share that these mothers may not regularly share the information, but still occasionally do.

These findings do imply the importance of sharing information for the respondents. These respondents are not just health advocates because of their families but are health advocates as a stand-alone. This means that they really do care about furthering the advocacy, even if it's just in their own little spheres of influence. In the most rational sense, the respondents may be health advocates for the sake of their families, but they have also embodied being health advocates in general.

**Table 13.** *Importance of Receiving Malnutrition Prevention Information via Social Media vs. Traditional Sources*

| <b>Statement/<br/>Question</b>   | <b>Scale</b> | <b>f</b>   | <b>%</b>      | <b>Weighted<br/>Mean</b> | <b>Verbal<br/>Interpretati<br/>o<br/>n</b> |
|--|--------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|--|
| How important is it for you to receive information about malnutrition prevention through social media rather than other traditional sources? | 5            | 207        | 44.81         | 3.97                     | Somewhat important                         |
|  | 4            | 110        | 23.81         | 98                       | 21.21                                      |
|  | 3            | 87         | 18.83         | 97                       | 21.00                                      |
|  | 2            | 42         | 9.09          | 74                       | 16.02                                      |
|  | 1            | 16         | 3.46          | 6                        | 1.30                                       |
| <b>Total</b>   |              | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>462</b>               | <b>100.00</b>                              |

***Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:***

*1.00 to 1.79 Not at all important*

*1.80 to 2.59 Not very important*

*2.60 to 3.39 Neutral*

*3.40 to 4.19 Somewhat important*

*4.20 to 5.00 Very important*

For the respondents, at 3.97%, it has been recorded that social media is a more important medium for them in terms of receiving malnutrition prevention than traditional sources. Synonymous with the fact that respondents find social media as a somewhat reliable source of information, this finding is an accurate conclusion

about how important social media is in receiving malnutrition prevention information, in comparison to traditional sources. Social media still has its issues; hence, respondents are still not all out. In another facet, social media has also become very convenient for respondents due to the ease and convenience. This is the upside of social media vis a vis this finding.

**Table 14. Barriers and Challenges to Active Engagement with Social Media Content on Malnutrition Prevention**

| <b>Barriers</b>                                 | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Lack of time                                    | 182              | 39.00             |
| Concerns about the accuracy of information      | 97               | 21.00             |
| Abundance of content that could be overwhelming | 96               | 25.95             |
| Difficulty finding reliable information         | 87               | 23.51             |
| Other   | 0                | 0.00              |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>462</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

When asked about the barriers that prevent the respondents from actively engaging with social media content on malnutrition prevention, all of them are almost equally widespread amongst the following, In descending order, the most significant reason is the lack of time (39%), which clarifies why respondents lean towards short videos (such as Facebook reels, TikTok, and Instagram reels) as their preferred content format. Again, this can be attributed to the responsibilities that come with

being a mother. The second prominent barrier is the difficulty in finding reliable information, coupled with concerns about the accuracy of the shared content. What we see here is a pattern along these findings. There is an absence of high confidence with regards to social media because of its bad reputation,

**Perceived influence of social media on mothers' knowledge and behavior regarding malnutrition prevention** (In relevance to Objective 3)

When asked about the extent social media has increased their awareness about the importance of malnutrition prevention, the general leaning of the sample population is “high”. This means that social media has undoubtedly improved their awareness towards malnutrition prevention. This can come off as very surprising, as the general population are not fully convinced of the reliability of social media platforms. Despite this, we can see that the respondents are either deluded vis a vis the information that they have absorbed or have effectively filtered fake news from social media.

**Table 15.** *The Impact of Social Media on Increasing Awareness About the Importance of Malnutrition Prevention*

| <b>Statement / Question</b>             | <b>Scale</b> | <b>Frequ<br/>ency<br/>(f)</b> | <b>Percent<br/>age (%)</b> | <b>Weighted<br/>Mean</b> | <b>Verbal<br/>Interpret<br/>ation</b> |
|---|--------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Implementing portion control strategies | 5            | 149                           | 32.25                      | 3.55                     | High                                  |

|  |   |            |               |      |           |
|--|---|------------|---------------|------|-----------|
| Introducing new food groups into meals | 4 | 90         | 19.74         | 3.40 | High      |
| Following specific feeding schedules   | 3 | 149        | 32.25         | 2.60 | Mode rate |
| None of the Above                      | 2 | 29         | 6.28          | 1.80 | Low       |
| Other                                  | 1 | 45         | 9.74          | 1.00 | Very Low  |
| <b>Total</b>                           |   | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> |      |           |

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***Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:***

*1.00 to 1.79 Not at all important*

*1.80 to 2.59 Not very important*

*2.60 to 3.39 Neutral*

*3.40 to 4.19 Somewhat important*

*4.20 to 5.00 Very important*

**Table 16.** *Influence of Social Media on Knowledge and Understanding of Malnutrition Prevention*

| <b>Statement/<br/>Question</b>  | <b>Scale</b> | <b>f</b>   | <b>%</b>      | <b>Weighted<br/>Mean</b> | <b>Verbal<br/>Interpretati<br/>o<br/>n</b> |
|---|--------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|--|
| To what extent do you think social media has positively influenced your knowledge and understanding of malnutrition prevention? | 5            | 228        | 49.35         | 3.68                     | High                                       |
| Implementing portion control strategies   | 4            | 95         | 20.56         | 98                       | 21.21                                      |
| Introducing new food groups into meals  | 2            | 81         | 17.53         | 97                       | 21.00                                      |
| Following specific feeding schedules  | 3            | 36         | 7.79          | 74                       | 16.02                                      |
| None of the Above   | 1            | 22         | 4.76          | 6                        | 1.30                                       |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>Total</b> | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>462</b>               | <b>100.00</b>                              |

***Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:***

|                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| <i>1.00 to 1.79</i> | <i>very low</i>  |
| <i>1.80 to 2.59</i> | <i>low</i>       |
| <i>2.60 to 3.39</i> | <i>moderate</i>  |
| <i>3.40 to 4.19</i> | <i>high</i>      |
| <i>4.20 to 5.00</i> | <i>very high</i> |

When asked about the extent that the respondents think that social media has positively impacted their knowledge and understanding of malnutrition prevention, the general response is “high”. Despite the possibility of absorbing fake news, the respondents have benefited from the information they get on social media. From the analytic perspective vis a vis the features of social media, social media platform tools may have contributed to this experience. Users have the option of reporting possibly unreliable content which, all in all, sets the algorithm of these social media platforms on what to show their users.

**Table 17.** *Confidence in Applying Malnutrition Prevention Knowledge from Social Media in Daily Life*

| Strategy                                | Scale | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|-------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Implementing portion control strategies | 3     | 217           | 46.97          | 3.39          | Moderate              |
| Introducing new food groups into meals  | 4     | 107           | 23.16          | 3.98*         | High*                 |
| Following specific feeding schedules    | 5     | 47            | 10.17          | 4.02*         | High*                 |
| None of the Above                       | 1     | 19            | 4.11           | 1.3           | Very Low              |
| <b>Total</b>                            | -     | <b>462</b>    | <b>100</b>     | <b>462</b>    | <b>100</b>            |

**Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:**

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Weighted Mean Range | Verbal Interpretation |
| 1.00 to 1.79        | Very Low              |
| 1.80 to 2.59        | Low                   |
| 2.60 to 3.39        | Moderate              |
| 3.40 to 4.19        | High                  |
| 4.20 to 5.00        | Very High             |

When asked about the level of confidence of the respondents in applying the knowledge gained from social media about malnutrition prevention in daily life, the general response is that they are moderately confident about such. However, it's worth noting that the range for this moderate level spans from 2.60 to 3.39, with the highest point at 3.39. What can be seen here is that despite the inconsistencies of social media, users still consider it to be credible. This reverence is seen in how they share information through social media confidently among their connections. It is evident that convenience really has a big hold on people's decision, as they choose ease and comfort towards a more stable sense of certainty in the form of

**Table 18.** *Current Dietary Habits and Feeding Practices for Malnutrition Prevention Derived from Social Media Information*

| <b>Dietary Habits of Feeding Practices</b>                    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Taking supplements recommended by trusted sources             | 105              | 22.73%            |
| Incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables into my diet | 98               | 21.21%            |

|  |            |               |
|--|------------|---------------|
| Consuming foods rich in protein, such as lean meats, eggs          | 79         | 17.10%        |
| Ensuring regular hydration by drinking an adequate amount of water | 65         | 14.07%        |
| Drinking plenty of water   | 63         | 13.64%        |
| Avoiding processed foods and opting for whole, unprocessed foods   | 52         | 11.26%        |
| Other  | 0          | 0.00          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

---

The dietary habits formed based on information that the general respondents have obtained from social media regarding malnutrition prevention are mostly on taking supplements recommended by trusted sources to meet nutritional needs (22.73). This comes to no surprise since the common knowledge is that what we normally consume is not enough to sustain or fill in the sufficient nutrients that the body needs. This finding is followed closely by the incorporation of a variety of fruits and vegetables into their diet (21.21%), and the consumption of foods rich in protein, such as lean meats and eggs (17.10%). This talks about how informed the sample population is with regards to what the body needs in a hierarchical matter. This speaks about how the respondents are relevantly literate enough to know their needs and yearn and consume knowledge accordingly.

**Sources of trust and credibility attributed to social media content on malnutrition prevention** *(In relevance to Objective 4)*

**Table 19.** *Fostering Trust in Malnutrition Prevention Information Shared on Social Media*

| <b>Factors</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Information backed by scientific research and reputable sources                           | 118              | 25.54%            |
| Positive reviews and endorsements from individuals who have experienced positive outcomes | 104              | 22.51%            |
| Verified sources or accounts with a strong track record of providing accurate information | 93               | 20.13%            |
| Consistency of information across multiple trustworthy sources                            | 76               | 16.45%            |
| Clearly cited references or links for further reading                                     | 71               | 15.37%            |
| Other   | 0                | 0.00%             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>462</b>       | <b>100.00%</b>    |

Majority of the respondents have responded that the information backed by scientific research and reputable sources are the main thing that encourage them to trust the information shared on social media regarding malnutrition prevention (25.54%). What follows relatively closely after is the positive reviews and endorsements from individuals who have experienced positive outcomes following the advice.

**Table 20:** *Evaluating Factors Influencing Acceptance of Malnutrition Prevention*

*Recommendations*

| <b>Factors</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Conducting my own research to validate the recommendations  | 117              | 25.32%            |
| Consulting reliable breastfeeding and nutrition resources beyond social media                       | 102              | 22.08%            |
| Looking for evidence-based studies or clinical trials supporting the recommendations                | 90               | 19.48%            |
| Seeking advice from healthcare professionals or lactation consultants                               | 90               | 19.48%            |
| Considering the experiences and testimonials of other mothers who have followed the recommendations | 77               | 16.67%            |

|       |            |                |
|-------|------------|----------------|
| Other | 0          | 0.00%          |
| Total | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

---

25.32% of the total respondents mention that conducting their own research to validate external recommendations is what convinces them before accepting recommendations about malnutrition prevention. What comes secondly is them consulting reliable breastfeeding and nutrition resources beyond social media (22.08%). What can be seen here is the rise of experiential validating in terms of ascertaining information. In the age of the reverence towards subjectivity in society, there are actual benefits of not automatically succumbing to popular trends just because. What can be seen here is an intelligent set of respondents who are independent thinkers. Independent thinkers are usually who set the scene on what to follow or what to ascribe to in their spheres of influence.

It is safe to presume that the sample represents a percentage of the general population, with that being educated people. As most of the general population are illiterate when it comes to filtering fake news, it can be assumed that the sample population have gathered at least a university level education, as such content is being scrutinized at the college level. This finding coincides with the level of confidence that the same population has in social media as being reliable. What follows is a presumption that the information this sample proliferates is accurate and reliable data and not fake information.

**Table 21.** *Qualities for Trustworthy Social Media Content in Malnutrition Prevention*

| <b>Qualities of Social Media Content</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Regular updates and engagement from the content creator, indicating ongoing commitment and credibility. | 120              | 25.97             |
| Clearly stated sources and references for the information provided.                                     | 98               | 21.21             |
| Balanced and unbiased presentation of information.  | 90               | 19.48             |
| Use of clear and concise language, avoiding exaggerated claims or sensationalism.                       | 87               | 18.83             |
| Inclusion of educational graphics, infographics, or visuals to support the content.                     | 67               | 14.50             |
| Other   | 0                | 0.00              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>462</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

With regards to the qualities of social media content that is more likely is perceived as trustworthy in terms of malnutrition prevention, the respondents are almost equally widespread in stance. However, the quality most revered is the regular updates and engagement from the content creator, indicating ongoing commitment and credibility (25.97%). It is logical how regular updates and engagement from the content creator entail credibility. This is true as such entails the quality of being active,

relevant, and up to date of influencers. In the age where instant information is a staple, being inactive can cost the influencer her followers. This is supported by the claim that most of the respondents go on social media at least once a day or regularly.

**Table 22.** *Approaches to Addressing Misleading or Inaccurate Malnutrition Prevention Information on Social Media*

| <b>Efforts</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Sharing evidence-based information or reputable sources as a counterpoint to misleading content | 110              | 23.81%            |
| Encouraging others to critically evaluate the information and consider multiple perspectives    | 98               | 21.21%            |
| Seeking clarification from healthcare professionals or experts in the field                     | 63               | 13.64%            |
| Engaging in respectful discussions with the content creator or others in the comments section   | 62               | 13.42%            |
| Reporting the misleading content to the social media platform for review                        | 72               | 15.58%            |
| Other   | 0                | 0.00%             |

Total

462

100.00%

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When asked how the respondents address misleading or inaccurate information about malnutrition prevention on social media, the majority of them (23.81%) respondents say that they do not address misleading or inaccurate information about malnutrition prevention on social media. This can be somewhat contradictory to another finding, stating that respondents have positively benefited from the information they find online, considering the inaction evident in addressing misleading or inaccurate malnutrition prevention from social media. However, this does not completely discount the possibility that rather than being on the offensive side, the sample population is defensive in terms of addressing fake news. This can be indicative of the nature and personality of breastfeeding mothers in cyberspace, being relatively amicable and non-confrontative. This can be extensively seen with the second option: 21.21% state that sharing evidence-based information or reputable sources as a counterpoint to misleading content.

**Table 23. Ensuring Accurate Information from Social Media Sources on Malnutrition Prevention**

| <b>Efforts in Checking the Accuracy of Social Media Sources</b>                                     | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Cross-referencing the information with reputable breastfeeding and nutrition resources.             | 111              | 24.03             |
| Discussing the information with healthcare professionals or lactation consultants.                  | 110              | 23.81             |
| Applying critical thinking skills and evaluating the consistency and coherence of the information.  | 85               | 18.40             |
| Verifying the credentials and expertise of the content creator or author.                           | 79               | 17.10             |
| Checking for citations or references to scientific studies, guidelines, or reputable organizations. | 77               | 16.67             |
| Other   | 0                | 0.00              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>462</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

When asked about the actions taken to ensure that the information received from social media about malnutrition prevention through other sources is accurate, the majority (24.03%) said that they cross-reference the information with reputable breastfeeding and nutrition resources. This is indicative of the sample population

being educated up to a certain extent. Such is so for it requires awareness of fake news to be able to sift through data and absorb the main point. All the more, it comes as a surprise since being part of Facebook alone can imply that the respondents are informed enough to care about fake news and absorb valid information.

***Potential challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging social media for effective malnutrition prevention communication (In relevance to Objective 5)***

**Table 24.** *Challenges in Disseminating Accurate and Reliable Information About Malnutrition via Social Media*

| <b>Challenges</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Difficulty in discerning between personal opinions and evidence-based information   | 133              | 28.79%            |
| The presence of conflicting or contradictory recommendations from different sources | 98               | 21.21%            |
| The potential for misinformation or biased content to gain popularity               | 82               | 17.75%            |
| The risk of information oversimplification or lacking                               | 67               | 14.50%            |

context in social media posts

|              |            |                |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Other        | 0          | 0.00%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

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When asked about the challenges the respondents foresee in utilizing social media for dissemination accurate and reliable information about malnutrition prevention, an overwhelming majority (28.79%), in comparison to others, has mentioned that the challenge is mostly with the abundance of information to identify trustworthy sources. It's incredibly difficult to filter information, especially if all data are presented in an array and all at once. Filtering information can take the fun out of being in social media and can take the ease out of something that should just be a no-brainer. The dissemination of accurate and reliable information about malnutrition prevention, in turn, is somewhat detrimental to the health advocates than it is beneficial.

**Table 25.** *Exploring Enhanced Features and Strategies for Effective Malnutrition Prevention Promotion on Social Media*

| <b>Social Media Features and Strategies</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Encouraging collaboration between healthcare professionals and content creators on social media platforms       | 129              | 27.92%            |
| Providing accessible and engaging educational resources, such as videos or interactive content                  | 109              | 23.59%            |
| Implementing fact-checking mechanisms or verification badges for trusted accounts                               | 83               | 17.97%            |
| Promoting user education on critical thinking and evaluating reliable information                               | 78               | 16.88%            |
| Facilitating direct communication channels between mothers and healthcare professionals for personalized advice | 63               | 13.64%            |
| Other   | 0                | 0.00%             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>462</b>       | <b>100.00%</b>    |

When asked what specific features that they believe would enhance the effectiveness of social media in promoting malnutrition prevention, the overwhelming majority (27.92%) responded that it is with regards to encouraging collaboration between healthcare professionals and content creators on social media platforms. This just entails how frequently the respondents encounter the problem vis a vis promoting malnutrition prevention in social media. This also shows that there is dire need and advocacy for credible information in the realm of social media and that users still care for the truth. In connection with the finding that social media still positively affects the users, despite the disadvantages of social media vis a vis information, internal factors can account for it instead of external factors. The breastfeeding mothers might have developed a more amicable approach towards the matter rather than being aggressive or plain aggressive.

**Table 26.** *Comfort Level in Engaging with Online Discussions or Communities for Malnutrition Prevention on Social Media*

| <b>Statement/<br/>Question</b>   | <b>Scale</b> | <b>f</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Weighted<br/>Mean</b> | <b>Verbal<br/>Interpretati<br/>o<br/>n</b>  |
|--|--------------|----------|----------|--------------------------|---|
| How comfortable are you in actively participating in online discussions or communities related to malnutrition prevention on social media? | 5            | 105      | 22.73    | 3.40                     | Comfortable to a certain extent, but I prefer to mainly observe and learn from others |

|   |   |            |               |            |               |
|---|---|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Implementing portion control strategies | 1 | 96         | 20.78         | 98         | 21.21         |
| Introducing new food groups into meals  | 3 | 89         | 19.26         | 97         | 21.00         |
| Following specific feeding schedules    | 2 | 89         | 19.26         | 74         | 16.02         |
| None of the Above                       | 4 | 83         | 17.97         | 6          | 1.30          |
| <b>Total</b>                            |   | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

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***Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:***

- 1.00 to 1.79      Very uncomfortable, and I prefer to rely on other sources for information without social media involvement*
- 1.80 to 2.59      Somewhat uncomfortable, as I prefer to seek information passively without engaging directly*
- 2.60 to 3.39      Neutral, as I haven't actively participated but would consider it if the opportunity arises*
- 3.40 to 4.19      Comfortable to a certain extent, but I prefer to mainly observe and learn from others*
- 4.20 to 5.00      Very comfortable, and I actively engage in discussions and share my experiences*

When asked how comfortable the respondents are in online discussions or communities related to malnutrition prevention on social media, the general response is leaning towards *'comfortable to a certain extent'*. This is because most of them prefer to mainly observe and learn from others, a characteristic that is evident from the demographic.

**Table 27.** *Fostering Community and Support Among Mothers for Malnutrition Prevention Through Social Media*

| <b>Social Media Benefits</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Facilitating the sharing of personal experiences, struggles, and success stories among breastfeeding mothers | 128              | 27.71%            |
| Offering opportunities for virtual events or webinars on malnutrition prevention topics                      | 100              | 21.65%            |
| Connecting mothers with similar interests or concerns through online groups or communities                   | 86               | 18.61%            |
| Providing a platform for mutual encouragement, advice, and emotional support                                 | 79               | 17.10%            |

|   |            |                |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Enabling direct communication with healthcare professionals or lactation consultants for individualized support | 69         | 14.94%         |
| Other   | 0          | 0.00%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>462</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

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When asked about their thoughts of how social media can help create a sense of community and support among mothers regarding malnutrition prevention, the overwhelming majority (27.71%) has responded that social media can help by means of facilitating the sharing of personal experiences, struggles, and success stories among breastfeeding mothers. In terms of camaraderie, social media can help foster such. As specified by the respondents, social media allows them to connect via its features. For example, on Facebook, users can share content publicly through messenger or their newsfeed or exclusively through the group. People can build bridges just by relating to the content they see online. Social media fosters connectedness, relatedness, and camaraderie.

**Table 28. Concerns and Risks of Over-Reliance on Social Media for Malnutrition***Prevention Information*

| <b>Concerns and Risks with Relying Heavily on Social Media for Information About Malnutrition</b>                                  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| The potential for misinformation or inaccurate information to be shared and followed blindly.                                      | 146              | 31.60             |
| The risk of self-diagnosis or self-treatment based on unverified information.  | 101              | 21.86             |
| Difficulty in verifying the credentials and expertise of content creators or authors.  | 77               | 16.67             |
| The possibility of feeling pressured or inadequate when comparing oneself to others' experiences or advice shared on social media. | 73               | 15.80             |
| The number of conflicting or contradictory information that may lead to confusion.   | 65               | 14.07             |
| Other  | 0                | 0.00              |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>462</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

When asked about the concerns associated with relying heavily on social media as a source of information for malnutrition prevention, there is a landslide of majority's responses (31.60%) that points towards the potential for misinformation or inaccurate information to be shared and followed blindly. This is indicative of how frequent misinformation really is on social media and how there is insufficient action taken on the matter. What is noteworthy about the population of breastfeeding moms is how amicable they continue to be despite this alarming case. It helps, however, that this demographic is aware and mindful of not being swayed by misinformation, despite the persistence of fake information.

## **Chapter V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **SUMMARY**

The rise of social media's influence in people's lives is evident, driven by influencers who shape online presence. The correlation between influencers' personalities and lifestyles and their online presence is clear. Amid widespread digital interconnectedness, attention gravitates toward select individuals or groups due to charisma, content, timing, and networking. Additionally, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques, when employed by these influencers correctly, enhance visibility, incorporating high-quality content, keyword placement, and credibility. This study delves into the effect social media influencers have on their audiences, particularly in the Philippines, on malnutrition prevention. Insights gained can empower public health campaigns and policy interventions to combat malnutrition effectively.

The study's findings aim to provide valuable insights that inform strategies and interventions leveraging social media and influencers effectively to address malnutrition and improve public health outcomes. Following the Social Presence Theory, the study examined the relationship between breastfeeding moms and social media influencers in preventing malnutrition. An online survey was conducted to collect data from 478 respondents.

Most of the respondents were married, residing in the Philippines, and actively breastfeeding their children.

The study revealed that Facebook and TikTok are the most popular social media platforms used by the respondents in seeking information on malnutrition prevention. They primarily searched for nutritious recipes, meal ideas, and information on specific nutrients. Social media influencers play a crucial role in educating breastfeeding moms about trying out new recipes and introducing new food groups into meals.

In addition, the study identified that Mommy Diaries and Kryz Uy are the most popular social media influencers among the respondents. Content on malnutrition prevention that includes in-depth articles with scientific explanations, eye-catching infographics presenting key information, personal stories and testimonials, and short videos with practical tips are all appealing to the audience.

The findings also indicated that information dissemination through social media is relatively successful, with respondents actively sharing the information they have learned. Trust in social media content is influenced by scientific research and reputable sources, while features such as clearly stated sources and references enhance the perceived trustworthiness of the content.

However, challenges exist in utilizing social media for promoting accurate and reliable malnutrition prevention information. The abundance of information makes it difficult for respondents to identify trustworthy sources, suggesting a need for collaboration between healthcare professionals and content creators to enhance the effectiveness of social media in this domain.

Below is the summary of the whole research vis a vis the objectives:

- 1) In relation to objective 1 (i.e., to assess the extent of social media usage by mothers for seeking information related to malnutrition prevention), the respondents gave general answers. Most of them are inclined towards Facebook and malnutrition prevention. They usually go online for information regarding nutritious recipes and meal ideas while believing that social media is somewhat of a reliable source of information. Most of them use social media every day.
  
- 2) In relation to objective 2 (i.e., to determine the factors influencing mothers' engagement with social media content on malnutrition prevention), the respondents also gave out general answers. Most follow Mommy Diaries and Kryz Uy and prefer watching short videos. They usually share the information they get online with a few close friends or family members or their friends or followers online, although the general estimate is sharing the information to five people or less. Despite this, such information dissemination can be considered relatively successful because the sample population actively shares the information.

It has also been noted that the respondents consider social media as the better platform in terms of receiving malnutrition prevention than traditional sources. To better absorb the information, the respondents need more time to engage in such content online.

- 3) Common answers were also gathered vis a vis the 3rd objective (i.e., to examine the perceived influence of social media on mothers' knowledge and behavior regarding malnutrition prevention). Social media has undoubtedly improved their awareness of malnutrition prevention. According to the respondents, social media has also generally impacted their knowledge and understanding of malnutrition prevention. The general population also represented that they are moderately confident in applying the knowledge gained from social media about malnutrition prevention in daily life. The dietary habits based on information that the general respondents have obtained from social media regarding malnutrition prevention are mostly on taking supplements recommended by trusted sources to meet nutritional needs.
- 4) In relation to objective 4 (i.e., to investigate the sources of trust and credibility attributed to social media content on malnutrition prevention), the respondents provided general answers. Respondents have claimed that the information backed by scientific research and reputable sources is their primary consideration in trusting the information shared on social media regarding malnutrition prevention. The participants share that this consideration happens after having conducted their own research to validate external recommendations. Through this, the respondents note that doing so convinces them to consider recommendations and are more likely to believe them. Crucial to the quality of social media content is if the content clearly states sources and references for the information provided. In terms of interactions, respondents say they engage in respectful discussions with the content creator or others in the comments section when encountering misleading or inaccurate

information about malnutrition prevention on social media. Most said they cross-reference the information with reputable breastfeeding and nutrition resources to counter this.

- 5) Lastly, in relation to objective 5 (i.e., to identify the potential challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging social media for effective malnutrition prevention communication), the respondents once again gave out general answers. The majority claimed that the challenge is mainly with the abundance of information to identify trustworthy sources when using social media to disseminate information. This is true as their primary concern with social media is how prone the platform is to misinformation or inaccurate information. Specially since fact-checking is not something everyone does automatically, the average social media user is vulnerable to receiving misleading information on any social media platform, However, they believe that encouraging collaboration between healthcare professionals and content creators on social media platforms would enhance social media's effectiveness in promoting malnutrition prevention. The general response is expected to be neutral on how comfortable the respondents are in online discussions or communities related to malnutrition prevention on social media. Despite these, most still believe that social media can help facilitate sharing of personal experiences, struggles, and success stories among breastfeeding mothers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study has provided valuable insights into the power and influence of social media influencers in preventing malnutrition among breastfeeding mothers in the Philippines. The researcher gained a deeper understanding of the extent of social media usage, factors influencing engagement, perceived influence on knowledge and behavior, sources of trust and credibility, and the challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging social media for effective malnutrition prevention communication.

Trust in social media content plays a pivotal role in influencing the respondents' acceptance of malnutrition prevention information. Information backed by scientific research and reputable sources holds the most sway, indicating the need for evidence-based and reliable content dissemination.

While social media has drastically increased awareness about the importance of malnutrition prevention, respondents express moderate confidence in applying the knowledge gained from social media to their daily lives. However, it is noteworthy that the range of this moderate confidence level is quite broad, ranging from 2.60 to 3.39, with the specific average moderate level being the highest which is 3.39.

Nevertheless, this suggests that further efforts are needed to enhance the practical application of social media education.

As for the dietary habits formed, the emphasis on incorporating fruits and vegetables into their diets and consuming protein-rich foods demonstrates the potential impact of social media in promoting healthier eating habits.

Social media is an effective tool for disseminating information and promoting malnutrition prevention. However, it also has a number of challenges, such as the abundance of sources of information and concerns about accuracy, which necessitates a concerted effort to address these issues and ensure that trustworthy content reaches the target audience.

To optimize the effectiveness of social media in promoting malnutrition prevention, collaboration between healthcare professionals and content creators is crucial. By working together, evidence-based information can be shared, leading to more reliable and impactful health education.

Overall, this research could contribute to the existing body of knowledge by filling a research gap concerning the specific impact of social media influencers in preventing malnutrition in the Philippines. The findings could hold implications for policymakers, healthcare professionals, content creators, and other stakeholders in effectively developing targeted and evidence-based communication strategies to combat malnutrition. By harnessing the power of social media and influencers, key people can create a healthier future for breastfeeding mothers and their children, addressing the alarming health issue of malnutrition in the Philippines and improving public health outcomes.

- 1) The current sample population does represent the typical inclination of the population vis a vis their extent of social media usage.
- 2) There is a balance between quality and quantity with regards to mothers' engagement on online content vis a vis malnutrition prevention.

- 3) Social media moderately impacts mothers' knowledge and behavior concerning malnutrition prevention, with a high range of variability in the moderate effect.
- 4) It is appropriate to state the respondents are strategically critical of the information they see online regarding malnutrition and prevention and are active in maintaining the trust and referring credibility of sources in the field.
- 5) Respondents believe that it is hard to keep track of information in upholding reliability and that professional partnership with healthcare experts is important.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **On Improving Developmental Communication Policies:**

- **Creation of Guidelines for Influencers:** Key organizations could develop clear guidelines and ethical standards for social media influencers involved in promoting health-related content, including malnutrition prevention. These guidelines should emphasize evidence-based information, responsible content creation, and collaboration with healthcare professionals to ensure accuracy and credibility.
- **Health Communication Initiatives:** Key organizations could allocate resources to support health communication initiatives that focus on malnutrition prevention, especially on helping mothers with newborns. These initiatives should leverage social media platforms to disseminate evidence-based information and foster positive behavior change among mothers.

### **For Future Studies:**

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Future researchers could conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of social media influencers on mothers' knowledge and behavior related to malnutrition prevention. Understanding the sustainability of the influence can guide the development of more effective communication strategies.
- **Comparative Studies:** Future researchers could compare the effectiveness of different social media platforms and content types in promoting malnutrition prevention and dive deeper on how mothers prevent undernutrition, stunting, and overnutrition through online information. Comparative studies can reveal which platforms and content formats resonate best with the target audience and inform future communication efforts.
- **In-depth Audience Analysis:** Future researchers could conduct in-depth audience analysis to understand the specific needs, preferences, and challenges faced by mothers in accessing and utilizing social media for health information. Tailoring communication strategies to the unique characteristics of the audience can enhance engagement and impact.

### **For Practical Application:**

- **Capacity Building for Content Creators:** Key organizations could organize workshops and training sessions to enhance the capacity of content creators, influencers, and healthcare professionals in creating evidence-based and

engaging content on malnutrition prevention. Empowering these stakeholders will result in the production of more effective and accurate health information.

- Public-Private Partnerships - Key organizations could foster public-private partnerships to maximize the reach and impact of malnutrition prevention campaigns on social media. Collaboration between government agencies, healthcare institutions, and private organizations can leverage their resources and expertise to amplify health messages.
  - Targeted Campaigns - Key organizations and influencers could develop targeted social media campaigns focused on specific aspects of malnutrition prevention, such as promoting diverse diets, introducing complementary foods, and improving breastfeeding practices. Tailoring messages to address specific challenges can increase the relevance and effectiveness of the campaigns.
- 1) It is wise to maintain what is effective and prune what is not. Social media remains an effective tool in engaging the population towards malnutrition prevention content and should be continually used accordingly.
  - 2) It is strategic that breastfeeding mothers start by reaching those close to them regarding sharing malnutrition prevention information. It is also suggested that they gain knowledge on how to effectively share information with a wide-scale vision to further the advocacy.

- 3) It is only balanced that social media has a moderate effect on mothers' knowledge and behavior regarding malnutrition prevention. It is suggested that the population would refer to academic sources to weigh what they absorb online.
- 4) Trust and credibility are vital to keeping up with the information on malnutrition prevention. It would also be best if the general population would gain more knowledge about fact-checking so they can discern, on their own, which sources they can trust.
- 5) It is appropriate to support the respondents' wishes to partner with healthcare professionals in validating the knowledge they absorb online.

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