

The mental health benefit of social media: The use of social media skits for depression treatment among women in Nigeria

Chika Kate Obiechina

Department of Mass Communication Nasarawa State University

Correspondence Email: ckobiechina@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Social media skits have become a regular feature on social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Despite this, limited studies from developing countries like Nigeria have examined its mental health benefits.

Objective: This study aimed to determine the use of social media skits for depression treatment among women in Nigeria.

Methods: The study was a descriptive survey of 330 women who were social media users. The questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection.

Results: The researcher found that overall, women use social media for depression treatment. However, this is determined by the age of the women. Younger women use it most, followed by middle-aged women. Older women above 40 years do not use social media skits for depression treatment. The current study has also shown that self-care consciousness significantly moderates the relationship between social media skits and depression treatment among women.

Contribution: This study has shown that women who possess high awareness regarding self-care are more likely to make deliberate efforts to address their depressive mood than those who do not.

Conclusion: Social media skits are important mental health tools for treating depression among women.

Key recommendation: Interventions should be designed and implemented to promote self-care awareness among women.

Keywords: depression; self-care; skits; social media; women

Introduction

Recently, there has been a raging debate on the impact of social media on users' mental health. The argument suggests that social media use negatively impacts users' mental well-being. Valkenburg *et al.* (2022) affirm that the impact of social media on an individual's mental health is an issue of concern. It is not out of place to contemplate the negative impact of social media on the mental health of users, it is equally important to look at the opportunities that social media platforms offer vis-à-vis mental health promotion. Naslund *et al.* (2020) corroborate that social media may negatively impact mental health, but there are opportunities for promoting mental well-being through the platform.

Social media platforms play important roles in the lives of many individuals. Millions of people subscribe to one social media platform or other. Consequently, when people are

emotionally down and mentally stressed, they are likely to seek companionship from social media. This means that social media platforms are now a critical fixture in the lives of individuals who use them to connect with friends, colleagues, and family members. People also take to social media platforms to consume newsfeeds and other entertainment content. Ahmad *et al.* (2022) opine that social media platforms are now an essential part of most individuals.

Social media have the potential to serve as useful channels for mental health promotion and mental wellness. Mental health can be defined as the presence of mental wellness and the absence of mental disorders (Beyens, *et al.*, 2020). Individuals look forward to a sound mental health status, but in most cases, this is hardly possible because life itself is not perfect. Daily, people face challenges in the area of finance, career, relationship, and business, among others. There are also disasters such as conflict, and natural disasters, among others. All these contribute to mounting pressure on the mental wellness of individuals.

Women are of particular concern regarding mental health promotion because biologically, they are not emotionally strong like their men counterparts. Rosenfield and Mouzon (2013) conducted a study and found that women suffer from mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety more than their men counterparts. This means that women are more emotionally fragile, and their mental well-being requires top-priority attention in the literature. Additionally, the impact of social media content on users also differs based on gender. For example, Asogwa *et al.* (2020) in a study reported that gender plays an essential role in the impact of social media on users. Muscanell and Guadagno (2012) also reported that gender plays a significant role in social media use. Despite this, limited studies exist on the use of social media for treating depression among women, especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

Objective of the study

This study aims to determine the use of social media for depression treatment among women in Nigeria. This objective was from the perspective of assessing how women use social media for mental health self-care.

Literature review

The literature review was conducted under the following sub-headings:

a. Depression burden in women

Depression is a mental health condition that is characterized by excessive worry. Smith (2014) says that depression is responsible for many years lost to disability than any other condition. Smith add that depression lasts for many years, yet is mainly undiagnosed due to treatment and stigma. The World Health Organization (2021) says that an estimated 5% of adults globally suffer from depression, and women are more affected by depression than men. WHO adds that depression is one of the major causes of disability globally and that depression can fuel suicide ideation. There are two central ideas to consider from the submission of the World Health Organization. The first is that more women than men are affected by depression. The second is that depression leads to suicide. This means that depression poses a serious threat to the lives of women.

Women are vulnerable to depression due to several reasons. For example, women suffer from violent partner abuse that could lead to the development of depression. In most homes, women experience more violent abuse than men. The World Health Organization (2012) notes that partner abuse is one of the human rights abuse against women. Mapayi *et al.* (2012) did a study to examine the impact of intimate partner abuse on depression among a sample of 373 women in Nigeria. The researchers applied a descriptive survey research design and collected data using three scales. The researchers found that 36.7% of the women examined reported intimate partner abuse and reported 15.5% depression. The researchers noted further that intimate partner abuse is

ten times more likely to lead to depression. This study is related to the current one because it examined depression in women. However, the study did not examine how women treat depression.

Wong *et al.* (2011) did a study to examine the impact of partner abuse on depression among 200 Chinese women in Hong Kong. The researchers used a cross-sectional design and collected data using validated scales. They found that partner abuse leads to the development of depression among women. However, less educated women were more affected than those with high education. Other contributory factors were finance, support from friends and level of abuse. One limitation of Wong *et al.* study is that the researchers did not examine how to treat depression among women.

The work environment can also cause depression in women. Usually, the work environment is the second home of people. For this reason, events at work play a critical role in women's mental wellness. Lin *et al.* (2010) carried out a study to ascertain the impact of job stress on depression among female nurses in Taiwan. The researchers found that job stress contributes to the depressive mood of female nurses. The researchers were silent regarding women's use of social media to cope with depression. Emdad *et al.* (2013) studied women in Sweden and found that the work environment plays a crucial role in developing depression symptoms in women. It is essential to note here that of all the studies reviewed, little or no attention was paid to how to use social media for self-care with specific reference to depression treatment.

b. A look at social media skits

Social media skits are short dramas that are meant to entertain, educate, and inform. A skit is a short drama meant to create amusement and meet the entertainment needs of consumers. Ojomo and Sodeinde (2021) say that introducing skits on social media has brought about tremendous changes in both social media use, the value derived, and career development. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, have made provisions for creating and sharing social media skits. Users can access these skits at their convenience. Skit makers also take advantage of their followership to place adverts, thus improving their income. Skit consumers also expect advertisements and other content from the producers. Social media skit makers project messages such as love, hard work, career, personal development, and emotional stability. Therefore, social media skit makers rely on different appeals such as humour, fear, sexual appeal, romantic appeal, endorsement appeal, empathy appeal, potential appeal, and pain solution appeal. The utilization of these appeals is to ensure that the message achieves its goal and gains more followership. Consumers are also expected to engage with social media skits in different ways. Examples of engagement are sharing the content, clicking the like button, commenting, and following the skit maker to receive notifications on new skits. Despite this, limited evidence exists in the literature on using social media skits to treat depression.

Using social media for self-care

Self-care can be defined as the activities in which an individual engages to promote his or her social, physical, and psychological wellness. Mindpeace (2018) says that self-care, if successfully implemented, could be effective in reducing stress, increasing productivity and health, aiding in achieving a balance between life and work, and reducing fatigue and burnout. Wang *et al.* (2019) note that due to the centrality of self-care in mental health promotion, self-care education is needed to assist people in coping better with mental challenges. In a study, Shapiro *et al.* (2007) reported that self-care training could significantly contribute to promoting mindfulness and mental well-being. Overall, a self-care practice is an important health behaviour that has corresponding benefits for the well-being of those who practice it.

The emergence of social media platforms has changed the face and scope of self-care significantly. Researchers (Onuora *et al.*, 2021; Okpara *et al.*, 2021; Wogu *et al.*, 2019; Gever & Okoro, 2020) agree that social media platforms have led to changes in almost every part of the society. Social media users can adopt different aspects of the platforms for self-care purposes. Through social media platforms, users can keep track of their self-care practice. They can also depend on different aspects of social media for self-care purposes. For example, for some social media users, viewing pictures posted by other social media users could offer therapeutic assistance. For some, it could be by viewing news feeds, while others could be commenting on issues through social media.

Researchers have examined the use of social media for self-care. Among the studies reviewed is that of Kebede and Pischke (2019), who studied the use of social media for self-care among Diabetic patients. The researchers conducted an online survey involving 1053 type 1 and 630 type diabetic patients. They found that as high as 52.2% of the patients reported using diabetic mobile applications for self-management, indicating that social media platforms play important roles in diabetic self-management. Although the study has highlighted the centrality of social media platforms for diabetic management, the study did not focus on mental health.

Song *et al.* (2019) conducted a study to ascertain the use of social media for self-care among patients In-Center Hemodialysis. The researchers used a descriptive survey and studied 20 patients. Half of the sample were women. The result of the study revealed that social media network was used for self-care among the sample examined. The study is related to the current one because the researchers examined the use of social media for self-care. However, the study did not examine mental health. Also, the sample was made up of both men and women.

Latifi *et al.* (2021) did a study to examine the impact of social media on the self-care behaviour of patients with heart failure. They sampled 227 participants that had a history of heart failure. Their result showed that social media use significantly impact self-care behaviour. Overall, the studies reviewed have shown that social media platforms have become essential self-care platforms. However, one aspect that is worth mentioning here is that less attention has been paid to the literature regarding the use of social media for depression treatment among women. The current study filled this gap by examining the use of social media skits for self-care among women with depression in Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

Uses and gratification theory was used in this study. Blumler and Katz suggested the theory in 1974 to explain the motivation for media use. The theory explains that people make decisions to use media based on the needs that they have to meet. Unlike theories of media effect, such as agenda-setting theory that focus on the impact of media on the consumers, uses and gratification theory focuses on what the audience does with the media. It assumes that media consumers are active and rational in their choice of media, hence they consume media that meet their needs. Okoro and Gever (2018) say that the theory is the most appropriate for studies related to the use of media content.

The uses and gratification theory has been found useful as a framework for studying the motivation for social media use. Whiting and Williams (2013) note that the theory is relevant to social media study because of its origins in the communications literature. Williams *et al.* (2012) opine that social media platforms are communication mechanisms that enable users to exchange

information and interact with others globally. Lariscy *et al.* (2011) note that individuals usually select certain media ahead of others because of the benefit that they will get from consuming such media content. Grellhesl *et al.* (2012) applied the use and gratification theory to social media users, and the result showed that the theory is an appropriate framework for understanding social media use. Women can use social media platforms to meet their needs or reduce their depressive moods. Their choice of content for social media skits may also be determined by their desire to reduce their depressive mood. Based on this theory, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1: The need to reduce depressive mood will influence women to consume social media skits.

H2: Self-care consciousness will moderate the relationship between social media skits and depression treatment among women.

Methodology

The researcher presents the methodology of this study in sub-headings as reflected below:

Design: The researchers used a descriptive survey in this study. The choice of the survey was because it is usually the most appropriate for studies that seek to explain, describe or explore phenomenon.

Population of the study: The population of this study was all the active women social media users in Nigeria. There is no official data on the exact number of women who are active social media users in Nigeria.

Sample size/Sampling technique: The sample size of this study is 330 women who are social media users. Before arriving at the sample size, the researcher conducted a priori power analysis using the G*power programme. The guidelines were checked as effect size 0.19; power $(1 - \beta)$ at 0.95, and $\alpha = .05$. This revealed that a sample size of 330 was required to detect statistical differences at a .05 level of confidence. Figure 1 below illustrates our results.

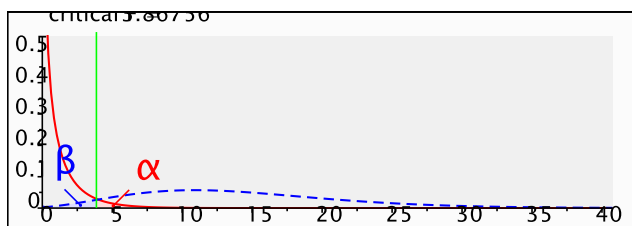


Figure 1 Result of the power analysis

The respondent-driven sampling (RDS) chain referrals as a sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the study. This sampling technique normally begins with identifying prospective respondents who are then requested to recommend potential participants. The researcher sampled the initial participants through their social media networks. They were then requested to suggest other potential participants. This process lasted for one week. The inclusion criteria include that respondents must be 18 years and above, must have been using social media for at least five years and must be able to read and write in English.

Instrument/validation: The researcher used a structured questionnaire as the instrument for data collection for this study. The questionnaire had part A for demographic information and part B for psychographic data. Overall, there were 12 items on the questionnaire. The response format was a

combination of multiple choice and four-point Likert Scale. Two experts, one each in Psychology and Communication validated the instrument. Also, a pilot study involving 30 participants was conducted, and the result revealed an overall Cronbach Alpha of .87, indicating that the instrument was valid.

Method of data analysis: The researcher used percentages, mean and standard deviation to analyse the data for the study. Also, ANCOVA was used to test the hypotheses while results were presented in tables and charts.

Results

The researcher got 302 copies of the questionnaire that were correctly filled and returned. This represents a return rate of 91% from the required 330 participants. The researcher considered this sufficient for analysis. The participants' marital status revealed that 46% were married, while 54% were single. In the area of age distribution, 45% were young (19-35 years), 36% were middle-aged (36-40), and 19% (above 40 years) were older adults. The result of the hypotheses testing is presented below:

Table 1: ANOVA results on the use of social media skits for depression treatment among women

S/N	Age of women	Mean	SD	p-value
1	Younger women	3.2	.65	
2	Middle age	2.9	.67	
3	Older women	2.3	.45	
4	Total	2.8	.59	0.03

The researcher computed Table 1 to determine the use of social media skits for treating depression among women social media users. The results of the study showed a significant statistical difference in mean scores on the use of social media skits among the three age categories $F(3,261)=33.1270, p=0.001$. The effect size using eta squared was .325. The post hoc comparisons with the Tukey HSD test showed that mean scores for younger women ($M=3.2; SD=.65$) significantly differed from middle-aged women ($M=2.9; SD=.67$) and older adults ($M=2.8; SD=.45$) at 0.05 level of significance. Based on this result, the first hypothesis was supported, and it is concluded that women use social media to treat depression symptoms. Although the result achieved statistical significance, it was found that the mean scores for older women and the accompanying p-value did not achieve statistical significance. Therefore, only young and middle-aged women use social media skits for depression treatment, older women do not.

Table 2: Regression analysis of the predictive power of self-care consciousness on the use of social media skits for depression treatment

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Constant</i>	β <i>value</i>	<i>R</i> <i>Square</i>	<i>F. value</i>	<i>P. value</i>
High consciousness	4.231	.546	.142	18.452	.001
Moderate consciousness		.341			.003
Low consciousness		.102			.213

The result of Table 2 revealed the predictive power of self-care consciousness on the use of social media skits for depression treatment among women. The result of the study showed that overall, the result achieved statistical significance. However, individually, only high and moderate consciousness achieved statistical significance. Therefore, the second hypothesis was also supported, and it is concluded that self-care consciousness will moderate the relationship between social media skits and depression treatment among women.

Discussion of Findings

This study aimed to determine the use of social media skits for depression treatment among women in Nigeria. The study was a descriptive survey of 330 women who were social media users. The questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The researcher found that overall, women use social media for depression treatment. However, this is determined by the age of the women. Younger women use it most, followed by middle-aged women. Older women above 40 years do not use social media for depression treatment. This result has expanded previous studies (Mapayi *et al.*, 2012; Wong *et al.*, 2011) that have examined issues related to depression without looking at how women make efforts to treat their depressive mood. The current study has expanded the debate in this direction by showing how women make efforts to address their mental health challenges.

The current study has also shown that self-care consciousness significantly moderates the relationship between social media skits and depression treatment among women. This implies that women who possess high awareness regarding self-care are more likely to make deliberate efforts to address their depressive mood than those who do not. This is an aspect that has received less attention in the literature. While researchers (Kebede & Pischke, 2019; Shapiro *et al.*, 2007) have examined the centrality of self-care in mental health promotion, such studies did not link it to social media and depression in particular. However, the current study shows that higher consciousness of self-care will lead to a greater propensity to use social media skits for depression treatment.

Another aspect of the study that is worth highlighting here is that the researchers have pinpointed the positive aspect of social media on women's mental health. Typically, researchers (Naslund *et al.*, 2020; Valkenburg *et al.*, 2021) are more interested in the negative impact of social media on users' mental health, thus making it look as though social media content does not have a positive impact on mental health. With the introduction of skits on social media platforms, users have more options to choose from regarding the content they want to consume. Users can meet different needs through social media, and attaining mental wellness is one of such needs.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The conclusion of this study is that women from 18 to 40 years make use of social media to improve their depressive mood. The researcher also concludes that self-care consciousness significantly moderates the relationship between social media skits and the treatment of depressive mood. The results of this study have enriched the literature on social media use on one hand and depression treatment on another. This is because the study has provided fresh results that could broaden the debates on mental health vis-à-vis social media. Regarding theory, this study has added empirical data for interpreting the uses and gratification theory by showing that the theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the gratification that people seek from social media. In practical terms, the result of this study could serve as a wake-up call on the need to promote self-care consciousness in women in developing countries like Nigeria. Despite the contribution of this study, it has some limitations. One of the limitations is that the researcher used a survey. It will be helpful to use other designs like quasi-experiment. Also, the researcher studied only women, men also suffer from depression and deserve attention. It is recommended that further studies should be conducted to address these limitations.

References

- Ahmad, J., Okwuowulu, C., Sanusi, B., Bello, S., Talabi, F., Udengwu, N., & Gever, V. C. (2022). Impact of social media-based dance therapy in treating depression symptoms among victims of Russia–Ukraine war. *Health Promotion International*, 37 (6)<https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daac172>
- Asogwa, C., Okeke, C., Ezeah, G., & Gever, V. C. (2020). Gender disparities in the influence of social media advertisements on buying decision in Nigeria. *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*. 46 (3): 87-105 DOI:10.1080/02500167.2020.1825100.
- Beyens, J. L., Pouwels, I. I., van Driel, L., Keijsers, P. M., & Valkenburg. (2020). The effect of social media on well-being differs from adolescent-to-adolescent. *Scientific Report* 10, p. 10763
- Blumler, J. G. & Katz, E. (Eds.). (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Emdad, R., Alipour, A., Hagberg, J., & Jensen, I. B. (2012). The impact of by standing to workplace bullying on symptoms of depression among women and men in industry in Sweden: an empirical and theoretical longitudinal study. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 86(6), 709–716. doi:10.1007/s00420-012-0813-

- Gever, V. C., & Okoro, N. (2020). Influence of Facebook users' self-presentation tactics on their response to persuasive political messages. *Library Philosophy and Practice.1-12(e-journal)*
- Grellhesl, M., & Punyanunt-Carter, N. M. (2012). Using the uses and gratifications theory to understand gratifications sought through text messaging practices of male and female undergraduate students. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(6), 2175–2181. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2012.06.024
- Kebede, M. M., & Pischke, C. R. (2019). Popular diabetes apps and the impact of diabetes app use on self-care behaviour: A Survey among the digital community of persons with diabetes on social media. *Frontiers in Endocrinology*, 10. doi:10.3389/fendo.2019.00135
- Lariscy, R.W., Tinkham, S.F., & Sweetser, K.D. (2011). Kids these days: Examining differences in political uses and gratifications, internet political participation, political information efficacy, and cynicism on the basis of age. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55 (6), 749-764.
- Latifi, M., Anvari T. M., Davari D. N., Rafiei, Z., & Allahbakhshian F. L. (2021). E-Health: The Impact of Social Network on Self Care Behavior in Heart Failure Patients toward COVID-19 Epidemic. *Advanced biomedical research*, 10, 15. https://doi.org/10.4103/abr.abr_195_20
- Lin, H.-S., Probst, J. C., & Hsu, Y.-C. (2010). Depression among female psychiatric nurses in southern Taiwan: Main and moderating effects of job stress, coping behaviour and social support. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 19(15-16), 2342–2354. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2702.2010.03216.x
- Mapayi, B., Makanjuola, R. O. A., Mosaku, S. K., Adewuya, O. A., Afolabi, O., Aloba, O. O., & Akinsulore, A. (2012). Impact of intimate partner violence on anxiety and depression amongst women in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 16(1), 1118. doi:10.1007/s00737-012-0307-x
- Mindpeace (2018). Self-Care Guide. Retrieved from <https://mindpeacecincinnati.com/wp-content/uploads/SelfCareReportR13.pdf>
- Muscanell, N. L., & Guadagno, R. E. (2012). Make new friends or keep the old: Gender and personality differences in social networking use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(1), 107–112. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2011.08.016
- Naslund, J. A., Bondre, A., Torous, J., & Aschbrenner, K. A. (2020). Social Media and Mental Health: Benefits, Risks, and Opportunities for Research and Practice. *Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science*. doi:10.1007/s41347-020-00134-x
- Ojomo, O., & Sodeinde, O. A. (2021). Social media skits: Reshaping the entertainment experience of broadcast audience. *SAGE Open*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211032176>
- Okoro, N., & Gever, V. C. (2018). Gender differentials in mobile phone communication pattern among youth: Evidence from a qualitative study. *Nsukka Journal of Foreign languages and Library Studies*, 133-143.
- Okpara C. V., Anibueze, A., Talabi, O. F., Omowale, A., & Gever, V. C. (2021). The moderating role of colour in modelling the effectiveness of COVID-19 YouTube animated cartoons on the health behaviour of social media users in Nigeria. *Health promotion International* 36(6):1599-1609,

- Onuora, C., Torti, N., Ezeah, G., & Gever, V. C. (2021). 'Effect of dramatized health messages: Modeling predictors of the impact of covid-19 youtube animated cartoons on health behaviour of social media users in nigeria.' *International Sociology*, 36(1) 124–140.
- Rosenfield, S., & Mouzon, D. (2013). Gender and Mental Health. In: Aneshensel, C.S., Phelan, J.C., Bierman, A. (Eds) *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4276-5_14
- Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., & Biegel, G. M. (2007). Teaching self-care to caregivers: Effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction on the mental health of therapists in training. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 1(2), 105–115. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1931-3918.1.2.105>
- Smith, K. (2014). Mental health: A world of depression. *Nature* 515, 180–181 <https://doi.org/10.1038/515180a>
- Song, M.-K., Paul, S., Plantinga, L., Henry, C., & Turberville-Trujillo, L. (2019). Social networks of self-care and perceived treatment burden among patients on in-center hemodialysis. *Kidney Medicine*, 1(3), 97–103. doi:10.1016/j.xkme.2019.04.001
- Valkenburg, P. M., Meier, A., & Beyens, I. (2022). Social media use and its impact on adolescent mental health: An umbrella review of the evidence. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 44, 58-68 doi:10.1016/j.copsy.2021.08.017
- Wang, Z., Yin, G., & Jia, R. (2019). Impacts of self-care education on adverse events and mental health related quality of life in breast cancer patients under chemotherapy. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*. doi:10.1016/j.ctim.2019.01.027
- Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(4), 362–369. doi:10.1108/qmr-06-20130041
- Williams, D. L., Crittenden, V. L., Keo, T., & McCarty, P. (2012). The use of social media: An exploratory study of uses among digital natives. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 12 (2), 127-136.
- Wogu, J., Ezeah, G., Gever, V. C. & Ugwuanyi, C. (2019). Politicking in the digital age: engagement in computer-mediated political communication and citizens' perception of political parties, politicians and the government. *Library Philosophy and Practice, 1-15 (e-journal)*
- Wong, J. Y.-H., Tiwari, A., Fong, D. Y.-T., Humphreys, J., & Bullock, L. (2011). Depression among women experiencing intimate partner violence in a Chinese Community. *Nursing Research*, 60(1), 58–65. doi:10.1097/nnr.0b013e3182002a7c
- World Health Organization (2012). Understanding and addressing violence against women. Retrieved from https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.3_6_eng.pdf
- World Health Organization (2021). Depression. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>