

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN IMPROVING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF  
SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA  
OF EDO STATE**

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was duly carried out by **Jackson-uweru Ewomazino**,  
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## **DEDICATION**

This project is lovingly dedicated to the Almighty, whose grace has guided me through the challenges and triumphs of this academic pursuit. It is also a tribute to my own resilience, determination, unwavering commitment and perseverance that has been the cornerstone of this journey. It stands as a testament to the power of self-belief and the relentless pursuit of knowledge.

To the late nights, early mornings, and endless hours of research this accomplishment is not just a reflection of academic endeavour, but a mosaic of the passion, discipline, and resilience that define me.

To God, for the wisdom bestowed upon me and the strength to persevere, I am eternally grateful. To myself, for the courage to embark on this journey and the commitment to see it through, I offer my heartfelt congratulations.

May this project reflect the divine support that has been my constant companion and the personal growth that I have experienced throughout this endeavour.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at how well social media works in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria, to improve public perception of the social work profession. The study uses quota sampling and a descriptive research approach to examine the interaction and content on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The study finds important themes and attitudes that shape public opinion through questionnaires. The results show that social media used strategically greatly improves community comprehension and appreciation of social work services. The study comes to the conclusion that social media may be a powerful tool for social advocacy and education when used wisely, which will make the workplace a more encouraging place for social workers.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being. (International federation of social workers, 2014). Social work is one of the academic disciplines of the social sciences that focus on human interactions and other social interactions, Ugiagbe (2018) evolving from Europe and America because of humanitarian needs, Osagie (2022). Social work in Nigeria has a rich history and has evolved significantly over the years. It can be traced back to the colonial era when social welfare programs were introduced. However, it was not until the 1950s that formal social work education and training began in the country. Since then, social work has become an indispensable profession in Nigeria. Social workers in Nigeria are trained to provide assistance and support to individuals, families, and communities. (Idoko, 2024)

Social workers' perception of public understanding of the profession has been shown consistently in research studies to be much worse than the actuality. Some research in England and Scotland has shown a strong public recognition of social work as an essential service, believing social workers are generally doing a good job often under the radar (Ruth Allen, 2022).

Positive views of social workers mainly come from individuals who have had contact directly with social workers and social workers in their everyday lives rather than from the media (Ruth Allen, 2022) and social workers' lives are greatly impacted by how the public views them, which in turn greatly influences how they feel about themselves.

In a contemporary era filled with rapid advances in information and communication technology, there is no denying that social media has gained the status of an inseparable element of modern society's daily routine (Wahyoedi et al., 2023). The various platforms that have burst onto the social media scene, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, have brought about fundamental changes in people's interaction patterns, information-sharing patterns, and the way their viewpoints are expressed (Tarigan et al., 2023).

Social media is an important part of today's world; helping people stay connected and share ideas, thoughts, and opinions with others in a safe and secure environment. Other benefits include promoting businesses, organizations, and causes, as well as staying informed about current events and trends. Additionally, social media can help build

relationships with others, allowing us to interact with people from around the world and build meaningful connections and it can be used as a platform for self-expression, allowing us to express ourselves creatively and share our thoughts and experiences with others (Johan, 2023). Together, these transformations have produced a new stage for social dynamics, which has led to a crucial change in the way public opinion is formed and a reconfiguration of how these influences can impact different facets of life, including the field of social work. Social media has shaped our lives in the digital era and has a big impact on how we view and comprehend different ideas. (Aarti konar, 2023). The influence of social media has grown in less than ten years, from being a fun bonus to a completely integrated element of almost every facet of everyday life for many; becoming fundamental to the way that billions of people get information about the world and connect, which raises the stakes enormously. (Kevin werbach, 2019).

The field of social work, with its emphasis on providing support to those in need, has also learned to navigate the world of social media, leveraging its best aspects to connect members of the social work community. For social workers, social media presents numerous opportunities to cultivate a personal network that serves to educate and support those (Social Media for Social Workers, 2012). Social workers can utilise social media's frequent instantaneous communication to learn more about topics pertinent to their client's unique circumstances, whether it's the newest app to utilise as part of treatment or to deepen understanding of a client's cultural experiences. Social media can assist social workers on a more personal level in learning about issues and advancements related to

particular cases, enabling them to offer their clients better, more inclusive services. The perception of social workers is crucial as they provide services to those in need. Positive impressions foster stronger relationships between social workers and clients, leading to improved service quality.

This study is set to examine how social media plays a vital role in influencing public perception of social work.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Social work is a profession dedicated to the service of individuals, families, and communities, yet it often faces challenges in public perception. The portrayal of social workers in media has historically been mixed, with a tendency towards negative depictions that do not fully represent the diversity and complexity of the profession (Saturno, 2019). The profession of social work is integral to the fabric of society, providing support and advocacy for individuals and communities in need. Despite its importance, social workers often face challenges in public perception, which can be influenced by a variety of factors, including media representation and societal attitudes (Legood et al., 2016)

In the digital age, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. Platforms like Twitter have been identified as significant arenas for influencing public understanding and reactions to various professions and public health information

(Fuentes & Peterson, 2021). Social media creates opportunities for social workers to engage with the public in direct and meaningful ways, potentially lifting barriers and encouraging discussion across professional levels (*Social Media and Social Service Workers*, 2019)

However, the impact of social media on the public perception of social workers is not well understood. While there is evidence that social media can be a powerful tool for public health communication and perception management (Fuentes & Peterson, 2021). There is a need for empirical study to investigate its effectiveness, particularly in the social work field. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating how social media can be used to improve the public's impression of social workers, thus improving the profession's standing and ability to carry out its goal.

This problem statement emphasizes the need to know how social media influences the public's perception of social workers. It emphasizes the importance of research in informing methods that can favourably influence views and advance the profession's aims.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The primary goal of this research is to analyse the public's overall perception of social workers and how to enhance it through the use of social media. Additional objectives are as follows:

1. To evaluate the current public perception of social work and social workers, identifying common themes and sentiments prevalent in society.
2. To determine how the use of social media can improve the public perception of social workers.
3. To find out common misconceptions about social work, and how social media can help to change them.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the general public's perception of social work and social workers in the Uselu community (Egor local Government)?
2. How can social media promote the public's comprehension of social work?
3. What are common misconceptions about social work, and how might social media help to change them?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The different roles that social work practitioners play might be better-understood thanks to social media platforms. By increasing awareness, the public's perception of social work can progressively be brought into line with reality. Social media can aid in rapidly increasing and disseminating knowledge around the world at a much faster rate. Although

social media has contributed to certain misconceptions about the industry, it may still be used to help change these prejudices.

The study aims to look at how social media can actively educate or enhance the general public's awareness of what the profession of social work is all about and what it encompasses.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study “The Role of Social Media in Improving Public Perception of Social Workers” encompasses an examination of the influence of major social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, on the public’s understanding and perception of social workers. It delves into how these platforms, due to their extensive use and influence on public opinion, shape perceptions of the profession, the responsibilities of social workers, and the impact of their work on society.

The study considers social workers across various fields, including child and family social work, school social work, healthcare social work, and mental health and substance abuse social work. While aiming for a broad scope, the study primarily focuses on the context of a specific country or region, acknowledging the varying nature of social work across different cultural and societal contexts.

The study also includes an analysis of social media posts and public reactions over a specified period, such as the past five years, to understand trends and changes in public

perception over time. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including content analysis of social media posts, surveys of public opinion, and interviews with social workers and members of the public, are used for data collection.

This study is delimited to the people living in Ugbowo which is located in the Egor local government area of Edo state. According to the National Population Commission, Edo state has a population of about four (4) million people.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

The specific focus of this study is on how social media platforms in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria, shape and enhance public perceptions of the social work profession. The Egor Local Government Area is the only geographic area included by the study. Without more investigation, the results might not apply to other areas. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, linkedIn etc. will be considered. The study will focus on Egor Local Government adults over the age of eighteen who use social media and have engaged with social work-related information. A qualitative approach will be employed using a descriptive research design. Quantitative measures are beyond the scope of this study. These boundaries are intended to give the research a distinct focus and bound, keeping it manageable and within the bounds of the resources available. By outlining these parameters, the study hopes to provide insightful information unique to the context of how social media is used to shape the perception of social work in the Egor Local Government Area.

## **1.8 Definition of Terms**

**Social work:** According to the global definition of social work, it is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels

**Public perception:** a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem.

**Social media:** the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

**Misconceptions:** a view or opinion that is incorrect because based on faulty thinking or understanding.

**Knowledge:** facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Review of Relevant Concepts

To understand the impact of social media on the public impression of social work, it's crucial to first define the profession. Social work is a helping profession which fundamentally and radically aims to assist individuals, groups and communities to cope with their complex socio-economic psychological problems by enabling themselves so that they can solve their problems by helping themselves (*Concept of Social Work- Characteristics, Aims & Objectives*, and n.d.) Social work practice promotes human well-being by strengthening opportunities, resources, and capacities of people in their environments and by creating policies and services to correct conditions that limit human rights and the quality of life. The social work profession works to eliminate poverty, discrimination, and oppression. Guided by a person-in-environment perspective and respect for human diversity, the profession works to effect social and economic justice worldwide (Tsw, 2023).

Man has many challenges in his daily life. While most of the challenges we encounter are manageable, they don't escalate into bigger issues. Problems arise when we face challenges beyond our capacity for adjustment. These challenges impact our mental state.

These issues further impair an individual's ability to operate socially, and a social worker's aid is needed to address them.

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living (Ricciardelli et al., 2020)

Social Work practitioners in developed countries are gradually shifting focus towards the adoption of technology in teaching, intervention and development of policy for the vulnerable population (Ko & Rossen, 2017) and this has been translated that other professionals utilize technology in the provision of social services because it is critical in the improvement of lives of the disadvantaged population (Young, 2014).

### **Public Perception of Social Workers**

On a global scale, the social work profession has served the public for over a century of its existence, yet few scholars have examined the views of the public regarding the profession in their respective countries, (Amadasun, 2020). Most of this small-scale research has involved members of the general population in developed nations.

Amadasun (2020) states that as a profession forged from the sands of equity, justice, and fairness, all marginal voices must be heard and respected. It is only by doing this that the social work profession can be rightly said to be non-discriminatory, privileging the Global North over the Global South.

Weinberger (1967) stated that the knowledge of public about the social work profession has been shaped by timelines with findings of earlier studies Weinberger, 1967 reporting a lack of awareness of social work by the public. As time went on, as reflected in later studies (Condie et al., 1978; LeCroy and Stinson, 2004; Davidson and King, 2005; Revans, 2007; IPPR and PWC, 2009; Olin, 2013; Penhale and Young, 2015; Ipson MORI, 2018; Scottish Government, 2018; McCulloch and Webb, 2019), there arose an increase in familiarity regarding the social work profession by the public. (Amadasun, 2020). The public perception of social work and social workers is varied, complex and multifaceted. The portrayal of social work has been of concern to government funders of social services, social workers and social work bodies for many decades (Comparing Public Perceptions of Social Work and Social Workers' Expectations of the Public View, 2016).

A mixed method study of public knowledge and attitudes about social work in Scotland conducted for the Scottish Executive by Davidson and King (2005) found that while there was good general knowledge about what social workers did, “detailed knowledge about social workers and specifically about the different services they provide and how these can be accessed, was fairly low among significant proportions of research participants”.

The perception of social workers and social workers is important. LeCroy and Stinson (2004) in their study stated that social workers cannot fulfil their mission to care for others if the general public is uninformed, confused, or hostile toward the profession. According to the European Journal of Sustainable Development (2019). The credibility of the profession falls along with the public's support for the profession with Veigel (2009) indicating the serious consequences that could occur if there are negative perceptions of the profession: hurt credibility, stigma for receiving services from social workers, a decline in the number of people entering the profession, and a decrease in services offered (cited by European Journal of Sustainable Development, 2019).

### **Social Media and Social Work**

**Limited research is available regarding the relationship between the profession of social work and the media** (Mendez, 2015). Social media technologies—blogs, wikis, social networking sites (SNS), blogs, or social tagging tools—are part of daily life for most people today (Chitat Chan, 2016) and they continue to be an integral part of our lives and have become a valuable tool to connect with others (Tips for Social Media Etiquette in Social Work Practice, n.d.)

Social media is a broad term, covering communication and interaction across a range of platforms and channels and the term ‘social media’ makes one immediately think of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. While these are useful tools, they are not the only tools available to workers. The

Scottish Social Services Council (2017) defines social media as the online platforms you ‘use to engage – to create relationships, have conversations and communicate with others. It is a platform you use to upload content, share and interact with others, and is often closely associated with the rise in the use of digital technologies including smartphones and tablets (Jackson, 2019)

Rebecca Jackson (2019) stated that one of the most common barriers to the uptake of social media within social services is anxiety among both professionals and organizations about the potential challenges, ethical considerations and risks of social media use. Boddy and Dominelli (2017) explore the challenges of what they refer to as the ‘new ethical space’ that has been created by the rise in the use of social media. They discuss the importance of social workers retaining their professional judgment when it comes to scenarios like boundary crossing and call for greater organizational support and guidance to help social workers make informed decisions when using social media.

Yankeeloy stated that the expansion of social media into social work practice and education has had a profound impact on the profession with technology being a tool of intervention, including web and mobile-based software to manage behavioural health issues and other identified social problems. This has opened up social work education to the world (Uadmin, 2022). Several tertiary education projects focus on the interface between social work and the media; in all cases, the rationale given for such projects

comes from two places. The first refers to the social advocacy role of social work – the responsibility the profession has to make use of media and to develop media-related skills. The second and more recent rationale arises from the established media misrepresentation of social work and the risk this poses to vulnerable populations. The corresponding suggestion is that for media reporting to more successfully promote social change, the professions must learn and work together. (Stanfield & Beddoe, 2016)

England's largest social work charity, *Frontline*, warns that negative news stories are having a detrimental effect on the public perception of social workers after new independent research reveals that over half (58%) of people say social workers have a 'bad reputation', and of those, nearly a third (31%) would be reluctant for their help despite needing support. (*Shifting the Social Work Stigma*, 2024). The words "worry," "fear," and "frustration" seem to be common in media reports about social workers. There seems to be much that social workers should not post or share on social media. But the wealth of information that they can and should share is far greater (Westwood, 2014).

### **Misconceptions about Social Workers**

Most people don't realize how much more there is to social work. Misconceptions and stigmas about the profession may prohibit people from making use of the services that social workers may offer, or they may discourage students from pursuing a social work degree and serving the public. A social worker's primary purpose is to answer questions, provide assistance, and create a strategy to help their clients succeed in life. Briefly, we

will be discussing some misconceptions the public has about social work and the need for them to be debunked.

**Misconception #1:** Social work is all about removing children from their families.

One of the most common misconceptions about social work is that it's all about removing children from their families. While child protection is an essential part of social work, it's not the only thing social workers do. Social workers work with a wide range of clients, including adults, older people, people with disabilities, and those who are experiencing mental health difficulties. They provide emotional support, advocate for their client's rights, and work with other professionals to ensure that their clients receive the support they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

**Misconception #2:** Social work is an easy job that anyone can do.

Another common misconception about social work is that it's an easy job that anyone can do. The truth is that social work is a demanding and challenging profession that requires a wide range of skills, including excellent communication, empathy, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Social workers often work in challenging and emotionally charged situations, such as child protection cases and working with clients who have experienced trauma. Social workers need to be able to handle stress and pressure and be committed to ongoing professional development to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

**Misconception #3:** Social work is a low-paying job with no prospects for career progression.

Another common misconception about social work is that it's a low-paying job with no prospects for career progression. While it's true that social work is not one of the highest-paid professions, social workers are not poorly paid. Social work salaries are generally competitive with other helping professions such as nursing and teaching. Additionally, there are many opportunities for career progression in social work, including management roles, policy and research positions, and specialized roles in areas such as mental health, child protection, and disability services.

**Misconception #4:** Social workers are just glorified bureaucrats who push paper.

Some people believe that social workers are just glorified bureaucrats who push paper and do not make a real difference in people's lives. This is far from the truth. Social workers have a crucial role in helping people who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. They work in a range of settings, including hospitals, schools, community organizations, and government agencies, to provide support and advocacy for their clients. Social workers are instrumental in bringing about positive change in people's lives and in promoting social justice and equality.

**Misconception #5:** Social workers are constantly interfering in people's lives.

Another common misconception is that social workers are constantly interfering in people's lives. Social workers do have a duty to ensure the safety and well-being of their

clients, but they also respect their clients' autonomy and work collaboratively with them to identify their goals and support them in achieving them. Social workers do not interfere in people's lives unnecessarily and always work within a legal and ethical framework.

**Misconception #6:** Social work is a thankless job with little recognition.

Finally, some people believe that social work is a thankless job with little recognition. While it's true that social workers may not receive as much recognition as they deserve, this is changing. Social work is increasingly being recognized as a vital profession that makes a significant contribution to society. Social workers are instrumental in bringing about positive change in people's lives (*Debunking Misconceptions: What Social Workers Actually Do – Brescia University – Owensboro, Kentucky, 2013*).

### **The Role Social Media Plays in Improving Public Perception of Social Workers**

Social work remains something that happens, for the most part, away from the public gaze. It has been easy to fill this void with at best misunderstanding and worst dishonest portrayals. Those with an axe to grind or a point to prove have been given the open goal and far too often social workers, their agencies and organisations have not even been on the pitch. Participation in the media is often blocked for reasons such as confidentiality or legal proceedings. These are perfectly reasonable justifications for not engaging openly with the media, but they only add to the sense of a closed, secretive and potentially untrustworthy area of work.

More recently there has been a positive change, perhaps less from corporate social work, but instead from individual professionals who have found a voice through news and social media. This human and real face of social work has slowly started a process of demystification and education but, at present, only to a limited audience (Worker, 2018). Whenever social media is discussed in the context of social work, it mainly conjures up images of confidentiality breaches and disciplinary hearings. Novell, (2013) stated that the largely negative portrayal of social workers in mainstream media has a palpable effect on the confidence of practitioners. When the public sees a social worker on the TV show *East Enders* unfairly and without query removing a child from Lola, a capable mother, it's no surprise that their understanding of our role is warped. The damaging consequences should not be underestimated and challenging these negative portrayals and presenting an honest picture of what we do is essential for restoring confidence in our profession. The media is central in shaping public perception and, subsequently, in shaping local and national policy. While it may not be possible for every social worker to represent their profession on prime-time television, every social worker can have an online blog and a Twitter account (Novell, 2013).

The social work profession has long been concerned with how it is portrayed in the media (Franklin & Farton, 1991; Gabor, 1990; McGowan & Walsh, 2000); (Mendez, 2015). There are pervasive public and media misconceptions of our profession that are prevalent and concerning. According to Saturno (2019) often we encounter vitriol and misguided

comments about social work from people who don't understand what we do and the public's perception will gradually begin to align with increased visibility of the diverse roles social work professionals play, coupled with a realistic portrayal by the media.

Social media can be a valuable outlet for social workers to enact social changes and address controversial issues (Kerr & Kerr, 2022). The usage of these many online tools, such as websites, blogs, and social networking sites, can aid in the dissemination of information. Social workers use digital platforms and social media to reach bigger audiences and promote awareness. The public can actively dispel any unfavourable perceptions they may have about the profession with the aid of social media. Additionally, by utilizing digital platforms and social media, social workers expand their reach and engage the public in meaningful conversations. Through the implementation of these strategies, social work in Nigeria can effectively address social issues and bring about the desired social change (Idoko, 2023).

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

According to Solomon Amadasun (2020) "Public Perceptions of Social Work in Nigeria" The study conducted by Amadasun is a valuable contribution to understanding the public's view of social work in Nigeria. The methodology employed a structured survey, which provided quantitative data on the perceptions held by a diverse group of Nigerians. The results indicate a gap between the recognition of the term 'social work' and the appreciation of the profession's roles and contributions. This suggests that while

social work as a term may not be widely known, the functions and impact of social workers are recognized and valued.

The article also highlights the importance of public perception in the survival and value of a profession. It aligns with McCulloch and Webb's (2019) assertion that public understanding is crucial for the strategy, policy design, service delivery, and evaluation of social services. Amadasun's findings underscore the need for increased awareness and education about the social work profession to bridge the knowledge gap and enhance the profession's visibility and impact. Furthermore, the study's conclusion that social work has the potential to address social development challenges not only in Nigeria but also across the African continent is particularly significant. It reflects the respondents' belief in the profession's problem-solving capabilities and its role in promoting social change and development.

In summary, Amadasun's article provides insightful data on the Nigerian public's perception of social work. It calls attention to the profession's potential in social development and the necessity for greater public awareness and understanding. The study is a call to action for social work practitioners and educators to advocate for the profession and demonstrate its value in addressing the pressing social issues facing Nigeria and beyond.

According to Amadasun, S., & Gray, M. (2022, August 2). "Enhancing the relevance of social work education in Nigeria." The authors employ a qualitative approach, analyzing the historical and contemporary landscape of social work education in Nigeria. They

review existing literature, educational policies, and curricula, and draw on their professional experiences to provide a comprehensive overview of the field. The article identifies a gap between the current educational practices and the socio-cultural realities of Nigerian society. It highlights the challenges faced by social work educators in adapting Western models of education to the Nigerian context. The authors emphasize the ongoing need for curriculum revision to include digital connectivity, locality relevance, and professionalization. Amadasun and Gray discuss the implications of their findings for social work practice in Nigeria. They suggest that enhancing the relevance of social work education can lead to more effective service delivery and better outcomes for communities. The article proposes a collaborative effort among educators, administrators, and policymakers to achieve these goals. The article concludes that for social work to be effective in Nigeria, it must be grounded in the local culture and societal needs. The authors call for a concerted effort to revise the social work curriculum, ensuring it is aligned with the country's developmental goals and the digital era's demands. The article provides a valuable perspective on the state of social work education in Nigeria. However, it could benefit from a more detailed analysis of specific educational programs and direct feedback from practicing social workers. Additionally, the discussion on digital connectivity is timely, but the article could expand on how technology can specifically enhance educational outcomes.

According to Carole B. Zugazaga, Raymond B. Surette, Monica Mendez and Charles W. Otto (2006) "Social workers perceptions of the portrayal of the profession in the news

and entertainment media: An exploratory study”. This exploratory study describes social workers’ perceptions of the depiction of the social work profession found in the news and entertainment media. A survey was carried out among 1500 members from the Florida Chapter of NASW. The study's findings show that a small majority of social workers believe they are portrayed unfavourably in the news and entertainment media, with unfavourable representation occurring more frequently in the news media. For the news and entertainment media alike, two relationships are held. A social worker was more likely to believe that their field was portrayed in the news and entertainment media as being more compassionate the more money they made. It was shown that social workers, both male and female, were more likely to believe that the social work profession is portrayed in the news and entertainment media as being heartless.

According to Chitat Chan and Steven Sek-yum Ngai (2019) “Utilizing social media for social work: insights from clients in online youth services”. In addition to conceptualizing and investigating service users' experiences in online outreach initiatives, the study employed theme analysis to investigate service users' encounters with social workers that would not have been feasible in the absence of technology. Fifteen active users of their Facebook fan page were interviewed. The findings demonstrated that online status indicators enhance service accessibility, individualized news feeds aid in identifying news and service information, and online communications promote a disinhibition effect.

The article by Kathleen C. Sitter and Ashley H. Curnew (2016) titled “The Application of Social Media in Social Work Community Practice” is a qualitative study that explores how social workers use social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, to engage with communities and promote social change. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 social workers from Canada and the United States, who were involved in various forms of community practice, such as community development, community organizing, advocacy, and activism. The authors used thematic analysis to identify the main themes and patterns in the data and discussed the findings about the existing literature and the social work values and ethics. The authors concluded that social media can be a valuable tool for social work community practice, but it also requires careful and critical reflection, as well as on-going learning and adaptation. The authors suggested that social work education and training should incorporate social media literacy and competency and that social work research should further explore the best practices and outcomes of social media use in community settings.

The article by Deb Stanfield and Liz Beddoe (2013) titled “Social Work and the Media: A Collaborative Challenge” is a qualitative study that explores how social workers and journalists can collaborate to improve the media representation of social work and social issues. The authors conducted focus groups and interviews with 12 social workers and 12 journalists from New Zealand, who had experience in working with each other or in covering social work-related stories. The authors concluded that collaboration between

social workers and journalists can be a challenging but rewarding process that can contribute to the improvement of the media representation of social work and social issues and the advancement of the social work profession and values. The authors recommended that social work education and practice should incorporate media literacy and competency and that social work research should further investigate the best practices and outcomes of collaboration with the media.

The article by Stanfield and Beddoe (2013) is a relevant and timely contribution to the literature on social work and the media, as it provides an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the experiences and perspectives of social workers and journalists who have collaborated or attempted to collaborate. The article has several strengths, such as the use of a qualitative approach that allows for rich and contextualized data, the inclusion of diverse and experienced participants who represent different forms and fields of social work and journalism, and the use of thematic analysis that ensures rigour and transparency in the data analysis. The article also has some limitations, such as the small and convenient sample that limits the generalizability and representativeness of the findings, the lack of triangulation and validation of the data from other sources, and the lack of a theoretical framework or model that guides the research question and the interpretation of the results. The article could be improved by addressing these limitations, and by providing more details and examples to illustrate the themes and subthemes, as well as more discussion and comparison with the previous studies on the topic. Overall,

the article by Stanfield and Beddoe (2013) is a well-written and informative study that offers valuable insights and implications for social work and journalism practice and education in the digital age. The article can be useful for social work and journalism practitioners, educators, researchers, and students who are interested in learning more about the challenges and opportunities of collaboration between the two professions. The article can also inspire further research and debate on the role and impact of the media on social work and social issues and the need for developing and implementing ethical and effective collaboration strategies and policies.

The article by Craig W. LeCroy and Elizabeth K. Anthony (2015) titled “The Role of Social Media in Social Work Research” is a conceptual and methodological study that examines how social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, can be used as sources and tools for social work research. The authors provide an overview of the definitions, types, and features of social media, and discuss the advantages and challenges of using social media for research purposes. The authors also present examples and guidelines for conducting social media research, such as selecting and accessing social media data, designing and implementing social media interventions, and analysing and disseminating social media findings. The article has several strengths, such as the use of a conceptual and methodological approach that integrates theory and practice, the inclusion of diverse and updated examples and references of social media research, and the provision of useful and specific guidelines and recommendations for

conducting social media research. The article also has some limitations, such as the lack of empirical evidence and evaluation of the effectiveness and outcomes of social media research, the lack of discussion and comparison with other sources and methods of social work research, and the lack of a theoretical framework or model that guides the research question and the interpretation of the results. The article could be improved by addressing these limitations, and by providing more details and illustrations to explain the concepts and processes of social media research, as well as more discussion and critique of the advantages and challenges of social media research.

According to Oluwagbemiga Oyinlola (2020) “Adoption of Social Work Technology in Africa: Possibilities and Realities”. The paper explores the possibilities and realities of social work technology in the African region. The article provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of social work technology in Africa, highlighting both the potential benefits and the perceived threats. It suggests that while there are challenges to overcome, the adoption of technology in social work could significantly enhance service delivery, particularly for hard-to-reach populations.

According to Abu Muna Almaududi Ausat (2023) “The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Its Influence on Economic Decisions”. The paper investigates the impact of social media on public opinion formation and its subsequent influence on economic decisions. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of social media in shaping public opinion and its influence on economic decisions. It suggests that

social media platforms have significantly changed the way people interact, share information, and express their views, thereby playing a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing economic decision-making. A qualitative research method was used for data collection. This involved a literature review and social media content analysis, focusing on opinion patterns and their influence. Reliability and validity were emphasized through triangulation and the participation of secondary source participants in the analysis process. The results of the study concluded that social media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing economic decision-making. In the digital age, individuals and groups can interact with each other, share information, and participate in discussions that shape collective views on various issues through social media.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

The theory used for this research is the “Cultivation Analysis Theory”. Cultivation Analysis Theory, or Cultivation Theory, was introduced by George Gerbner in the 1960s. This hypothesis holds that long-term exposure to media, particularly television, influences how media consumers view the world and behave. Gerbner claimed that prolonged exposure to media nurtured the assumption that the media's contents applied to the real world. Media exposure shapes not only people's perceptions but also their beliefs, values, and attitudes.

## **2.4 Application of the Theory**

In the context of social media and the public view of social workers, one may use cultivation theory to examine how the portrayal of social workers on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram affect public opinion.

To apply cultivation theory to the research topic "The role of social media in improving public perception of social workers" looks into how social media content about social workers influences the audience's beliefs and attitudes. This includes looking at the frequency and nature of social work-related postings, how social workers are portrayed in these posts, and how engaged the audience is with this content. For example, if social media constantly highlights positive tales and achievements of social workers, individuals who are heavily exposed to such content may form a more positive opinion of the profession. This is consistent with the concept of resonance, a major component of cultivation theory, which states that when media content closely mirrors viewers' real-life experiences, the cultivation impact is enhanced. Furthermore, the active engagement and interactivity enabled by social media may result in a more nuanced and individualized understanding of social workers, as users may connect directly with content, share their experiences, and add to the narrative. This could improve the public's perspective of social workers, who are not only passive consumers of media information, but also active players in creating the conversation.

In conclusion, adopting cultivation theory to this endeavour would necessitate a thorough examination of social media content relating to social work, user engagement patterns with this content, and the possible impact on public perceptions of the field. It is critical to evaluate both the content and context of social media interactions to understand their function in shaping public opinion about social workers. By leveraging this, strategies can be developed to use social media effectively to improve the public's understanding and perception of social work

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 Research Design

This chapter gives an insight and describes the research design that is going to support the research process. A descriptive design was adopted to investigate the role social media plays in the knowledge the public has about the social work profession. A descriptive research design is a type of non-experimental research design that allows for a survey of a population or situation being studied. This research study is designed to allow the respondents to express their opinions freely about what they know, feel and understand about social work and how the media played a part in the acquiring of this knowledge.

### 3.2 Population of the Study

The target population of the study consists of youths who reside in Egor local government area, Benin City. Egor LGA is a vibrant and dynamic region within the larger metropolitan area of Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. As of the 2006 census, Egor LGA had a total population of 339,899. The population projection for 2022 was estimated at 502,700 (*Egor (Local Government Area, Nigeria) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map and Location, n.d.*). According to the 2006 census data, there were 80,502 individuals aged 20-29 years. (*Egor (Local Government Area, Nigeria) -*

Population Statistics, Charts, Map and Location, n.d.). Due to the large size of Egor local government, I will be focusing on Uselu which is an area located in Egor.

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample was selected from youths aged 18 to 35 years residing in the area. The total amount of youths in the area is unknown. A sample size of 260 respondents will be used for this study.

Subjects were selected using a non-probability sampling technique due to the unsure population size. The quota sampling technique was used as it was relatively in expensive and easy to administer and has the desirable property of satisfying population proportions. This technique was carried out by splitting the population into strata. Each stratum was made up of different social media platforms which consist of What Sapp, TikTok, Facebook, Google, Snapchat, and Others.

### **3.4 Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection that was used is the questionnaire. The researcher administered an open-ended questionnaire to collect the necessary data from the respondents. The design of the questionnaire was based on an extensive review of the literature and the research questions of the study. Section A consisted of Socio-demographic data. Section B consisted of (6) questions that analyse the public's overall perception of social workers. Section C consisted of ten (10) questions that attempt to

understand some of the misconceptions the public has of social workers. Section D consisted of eleven (11) questions that attempt to see how often individuals have come across anything related to social work on any social media platform and how the utilization of social media can help improve the overall public perception of social work.

### **3.5 Validity of Instrument**

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was constructed in line with the research objectives and research questions.

### **3.6 Reliability of Instrument**

A pilot study was carried out by administering ten (10) self-constructed questionnaires to individuals who resided in Uselu, Benin City. The Test-Retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was re-administered on the ten (10) respondents who completed the initial questionnaire after three weeks. The data was coded and analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and a score of 0.9 was obtained which proved the instrument reliable.

### **3.7 Method of Data Collection**

A total number of 300 questionnaires were distributed to individuals in Uselu for two weeks. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and only those who met the inclusion criteria and give consent to participate were included in the study.

Instructions guiding the filling of the questionnaire were provided and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

Socio-demographic data was analysed using simple frequency and percentage while research questions was analysed using frequency, percentage, and descriptive statistics of mean. To ascertain the role of social media in improving public perception of social workers.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and the interpretation of data collected from the sample. The data collected were analysed statistically and presented in tables and figures for better understanding.

The findings of the study were analysed and arranged under the following:

- Distribution according to age
- Distribution according to sex
- Distribution according to occupation
- The public's overall perception of social workers
- Some misconceptions the public have about social workers
- The representation of the social work profession on social media and the utilization of social media platforms can help improve the overall public comprehension of social work.

#### 4.1 Presentation and analysis of Demographic Data

**Table 1: Distribution according to age (n=260)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>AGE</b>	18-21	80	31%
	22-25	50	19%
	26-29	60	23%
	30-35	70	27%
	<b>Total</b>		<b>260</b>

Table 1 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied; 80(31%) were aged 18-21 years, 50(19%) were aged 22-25 years, 60(23%) were aged 26-29 years while 70(27%) were aged 30-35 years.

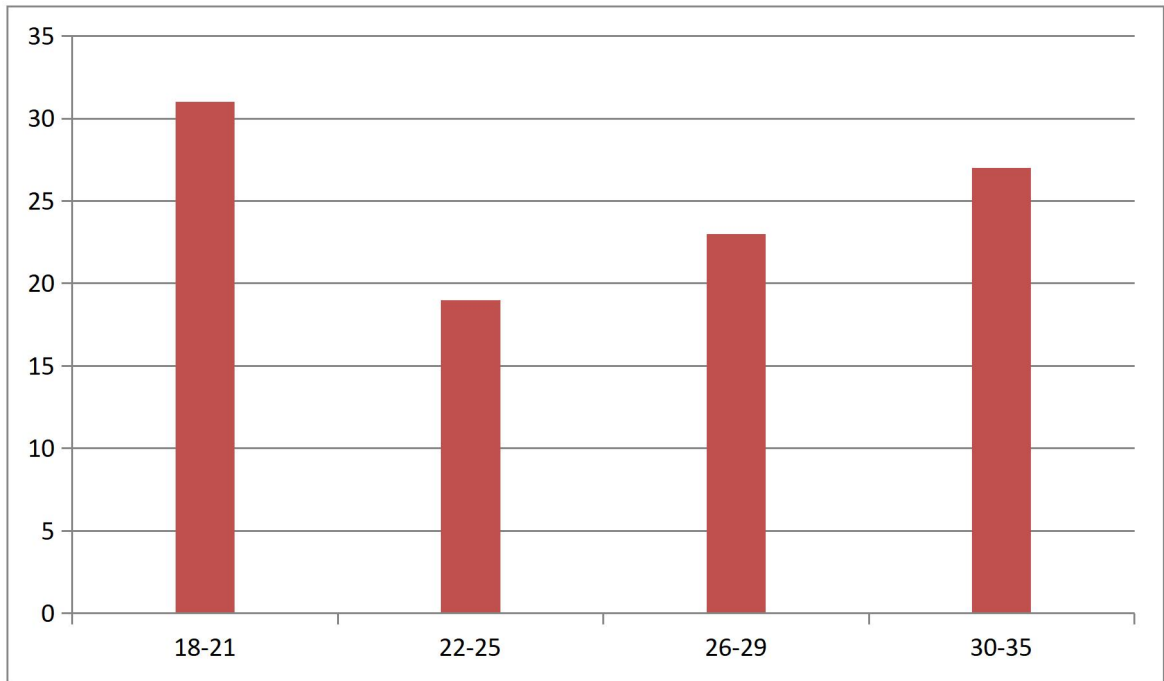


Figure 1: shows the percentage distribution according to age.

**Table 2: Distribution according to sex (n=260)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>SEX</b>	Male	100	38%
	Female	160	62%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 100(38%) were male while 160(62%) were females.

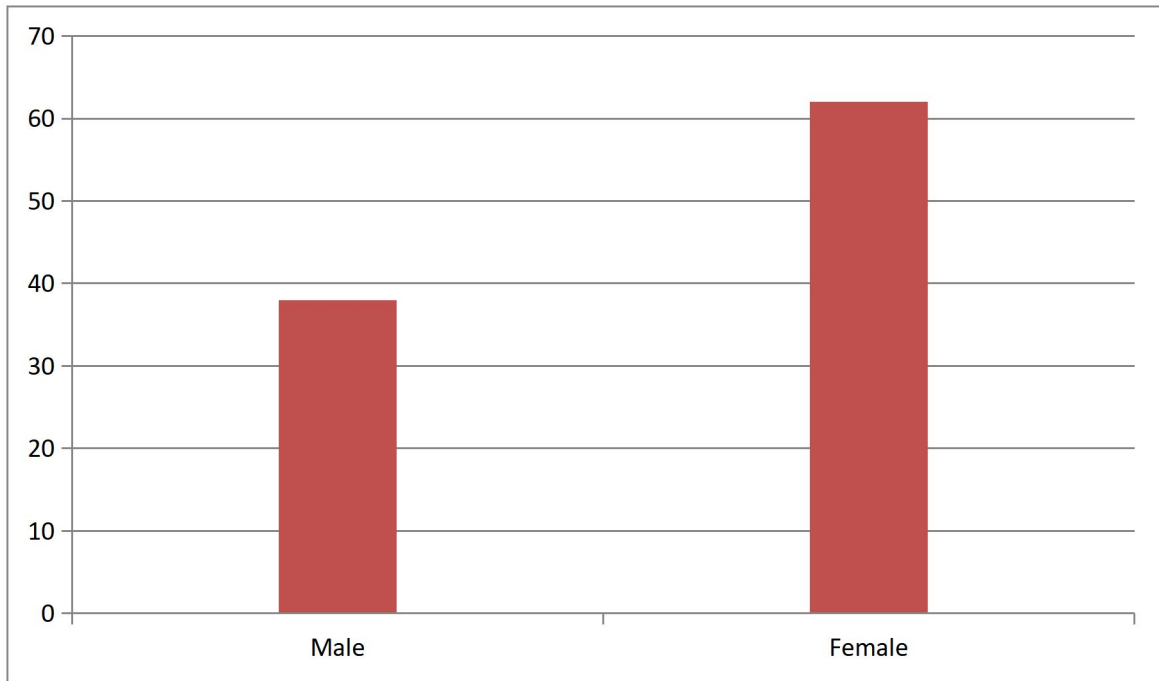


Figure 2: shows the percentage distribution according to sex.

**Table 3: Distribution according to occupation (n=260)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	No vocational skill	30	12%
	Entrepreneur	40	15%
	student	90	35%
	Others	100	38%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 30(12%) had no vocational skills, 40(15%) were Entrepreneurs, 90(35%) were students and 100(38%) had other occupations.

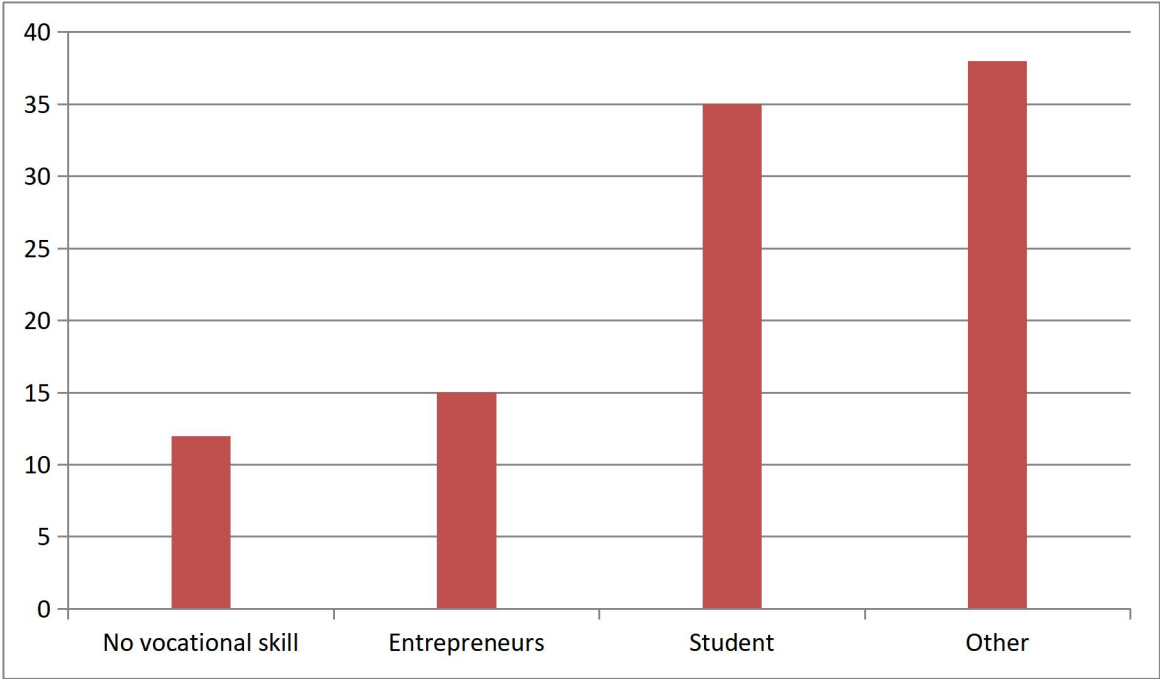


Figure 3: shows the percentage distribution according to occupation

## 4.2 Presentation and analysis of the items in the Research Questions

**Research question 1: What is the general public's perception of social work and social workers in Egor Local government? (n=260)**

**Table 4: Have you heard of social work before?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	120	46%
No	140	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that out of the 100 respondents studied, 120(46%) had heard of the profession of social work and 140(54%) had not heard of the profession of social work.

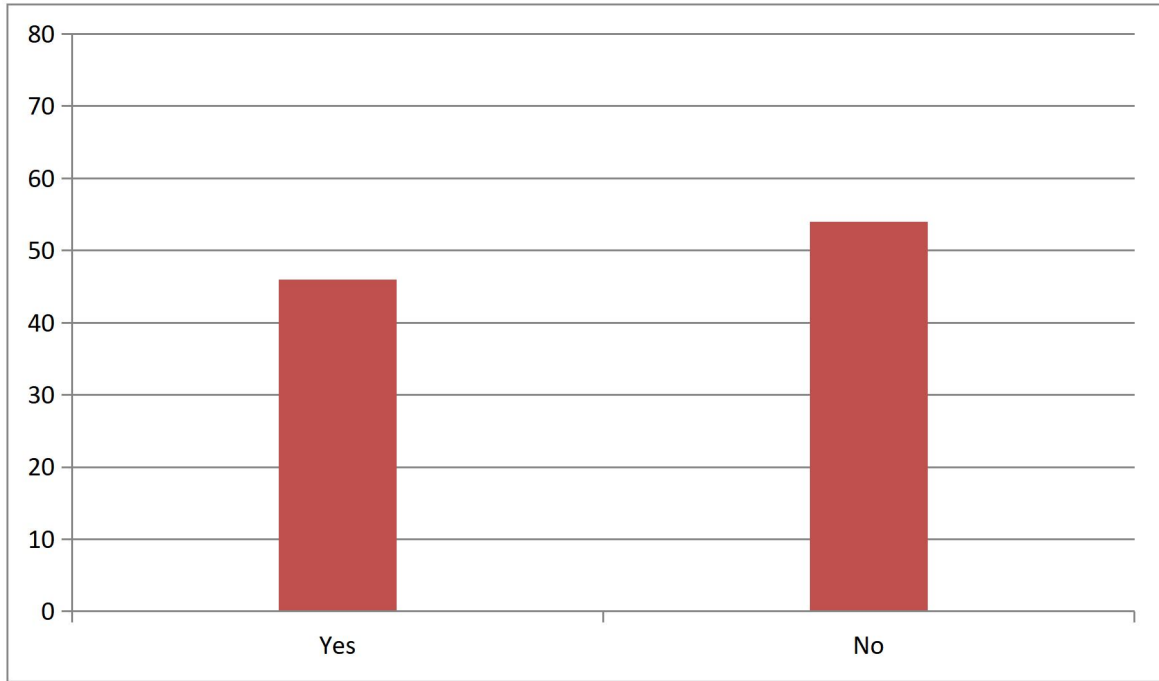


Figure 4: shows the percentage distribution according to knowledge of social work.

**Table 5: If yes, what is the source?**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Friend	16	13%
Relative	9	8%
Social media	90	75%
Other	5	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 shows that out of the respondents who had heard of social work, 16(9%) heard through a friend, 9(8%) heard through a relative, 90(75%) heard through social media and 5(4%) heard through other sources.

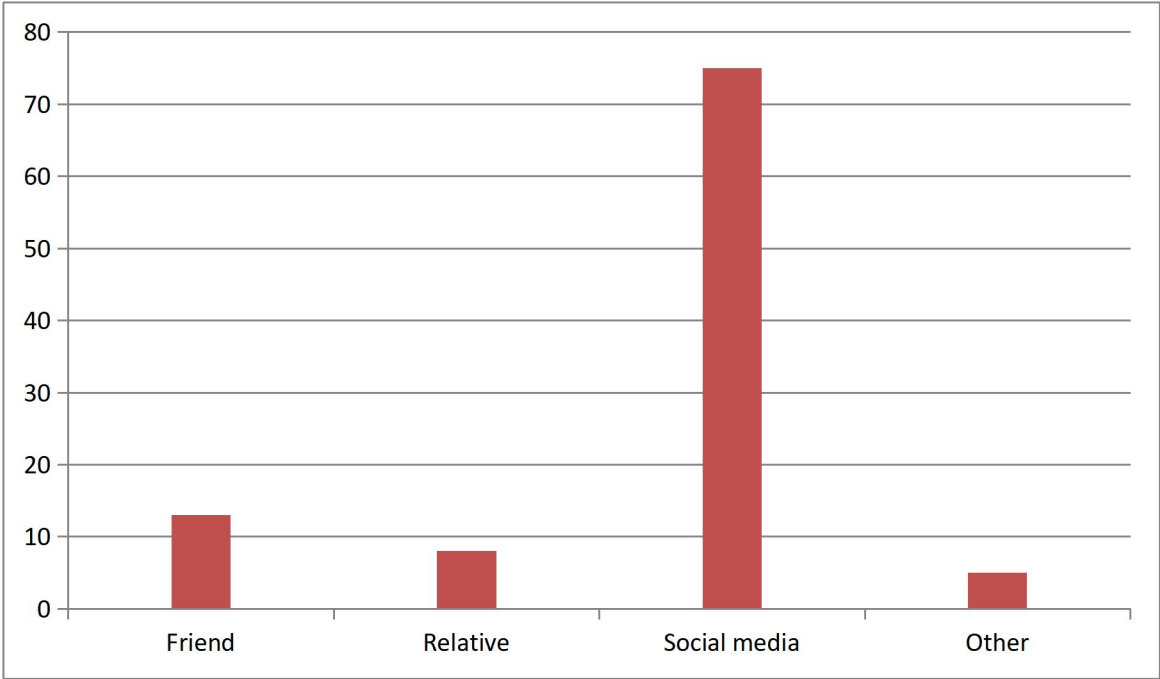


Figure 5: shows the percentage distribution according to source.

**Table 6: what is your general opinion of social workers?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Social workers are civil servants.	80	31%
Social workers are social service providers	40	15%
Haven't heard of social workers	140	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 80(31%) responded that they view social workers as civil servants, 40(15%) responded that social workers are social service providers, and 140(54%) responded that they have not heard about social workers before.

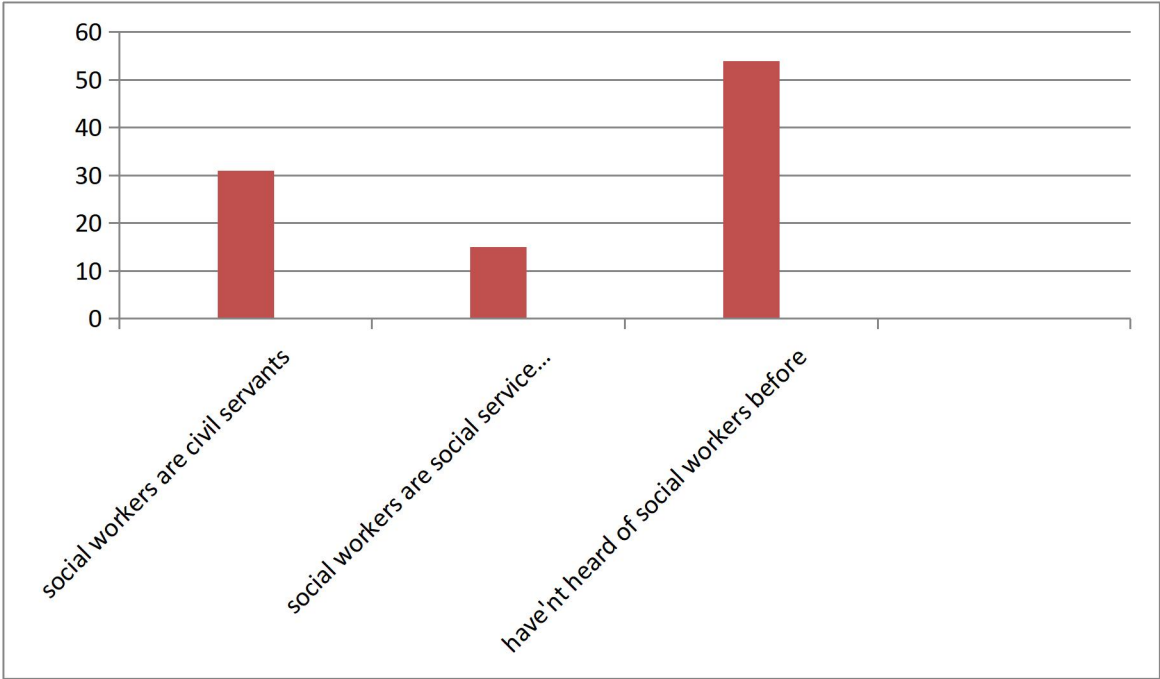


Figure 6: shows percentage distribution according to the public knowledge of social workers.

**Table 7: have you encountered a social worker before?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	40	15%
No	220	85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 40(15%) have encountered social workers before while 220(85%) have never encountered social workers.

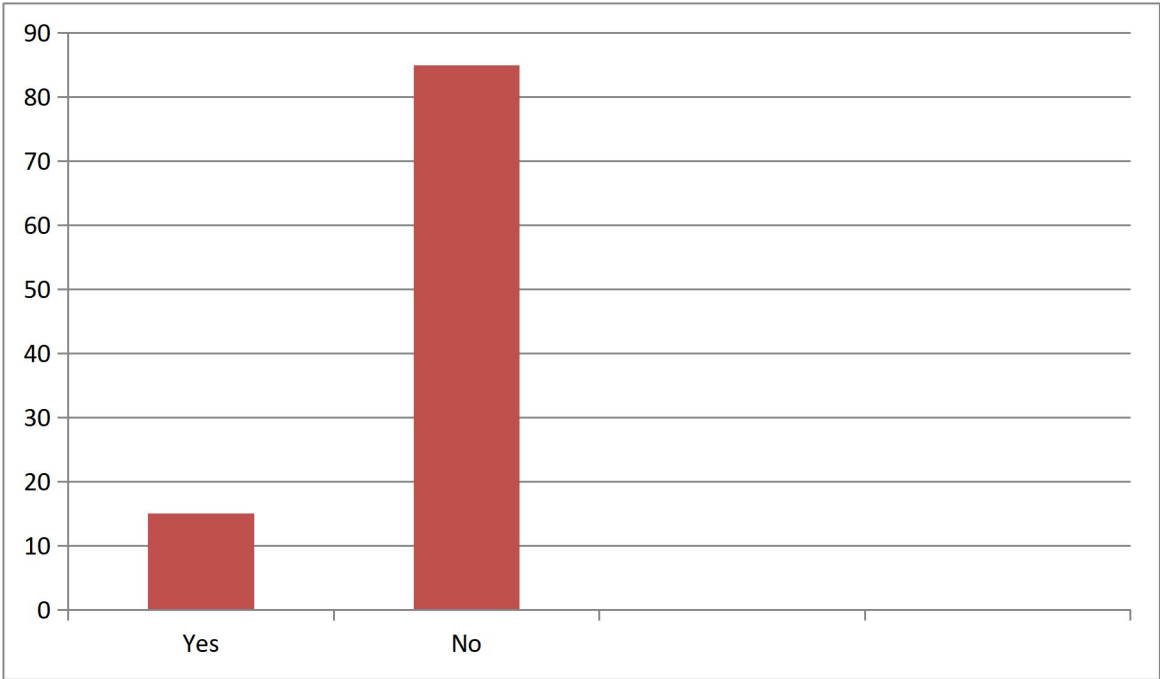


Figure 7: shows the percentage distribution of individuals who have encountered social workers and those who have not.

**Table 8: Were you satisfied with the services provided by the social worker?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	15	37%
No	5	13%
Not sure	20	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8 shows that out of the 40 respondents who have encountered social workers, 15(37%) were satisfied with the services they were provided with by the social worker, 5(13%) were not satisfied with the services they were provided with by the social worker, and 20(50%) were not sure.

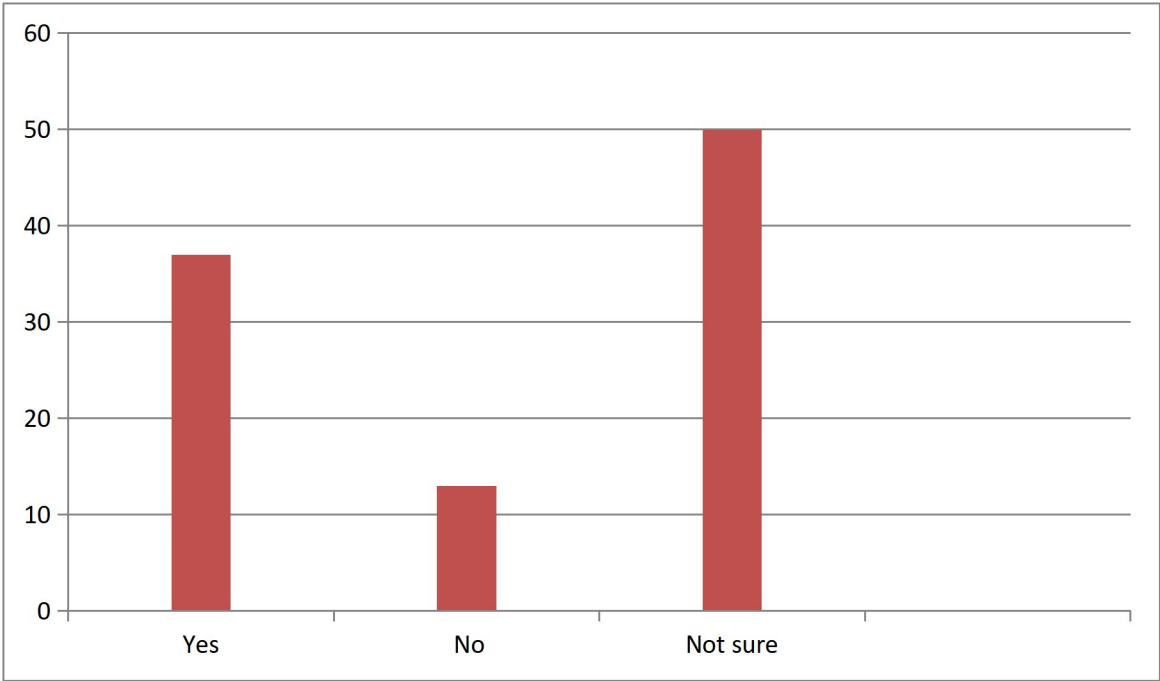


Figure 8: shows the percentage distribution according to the satisfaction with the services they received

**Research Question 2: What are common misconceptions about social work, and how might social media help to change them? (n=260)**

**Table 9: Do you believe social workers only work with children and families?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	40	15%
No	80	31%
I don't know	140	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 40(15%) believe that social workers work with only children and families, 80(31%) believe that social workers do not work with only children and families while 140(54%) were not sure who social workers work with.

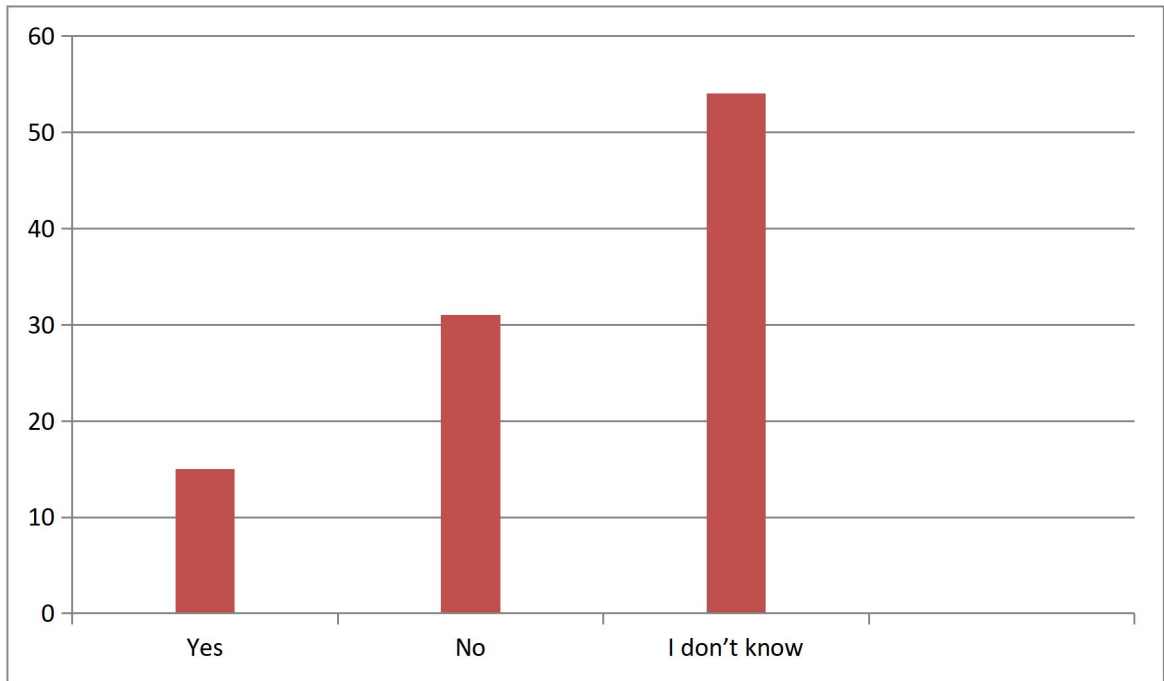


Figure 9: shows the percentage distribution according to the belief they have of social workers' duties

**Table 10: Is it your understanding that social work is primarily about providing financial assistance to people?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	120	46%
No	140	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 120(46%) have an understanding that social workers' primary duty is to provide financial assistance, and 140(54%) do not believe that social workers provide just financial support.

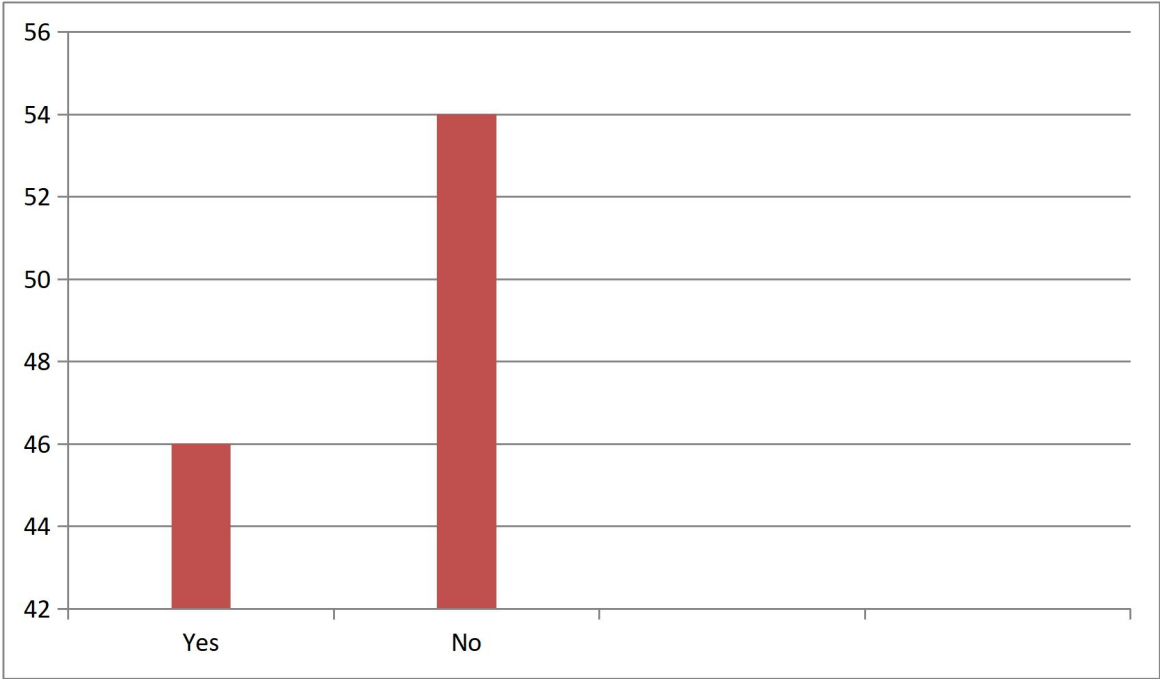


Figure 10: shows the percentage distribution according to the duties of social workers

**Table 11: Do you agree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	40	15%
Agree	60	23%
neutral	80	31%
Disagree	50	19%
Strongly disagree	30	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 11 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 40(15%), Strongly agree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues, 60(23%) agree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues, 80(31%) are neutral on the subject, 50(19%) Disagree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues while 30(12%) strongly disagree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues.

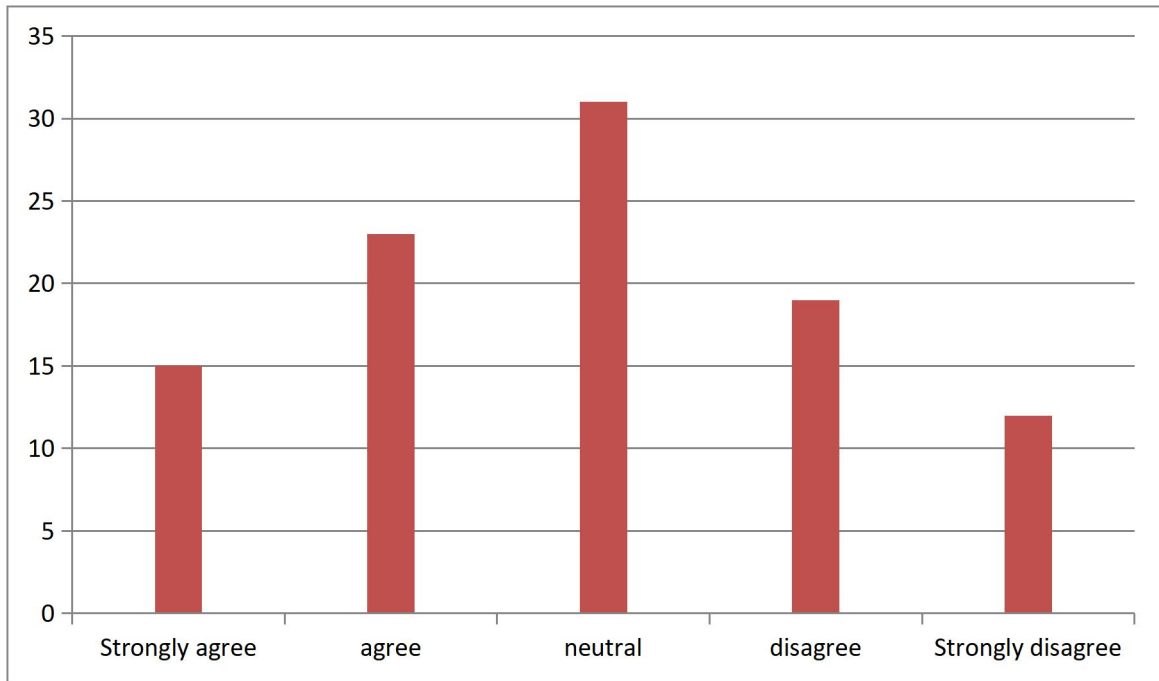


Figure 11: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 12: In your opinion, can social media campaigns effectively educate the public about the diverse roles of social workers?**

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Definitely	150	58%
Probably	50	18%
Not sure	15	6%
Probably not	20	8%
Definitely not	25	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 12 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 150(58%) Believe that social media campaigns can effectively educate the public about the diverse roles of social workers, 50(18%) Believe that there is a probability that social media can campaigns can effectively inform the public about the diverse roles of social workers, 15(6%) are unsure on the issue, 20(8%) Believe that there may not be a probability that social media can campaigns can effectively educate the public about the diverse roles of social workers while 25(10%) Believe that social media campaigns cannot effectively educate the public about the diverse roles of social workers.

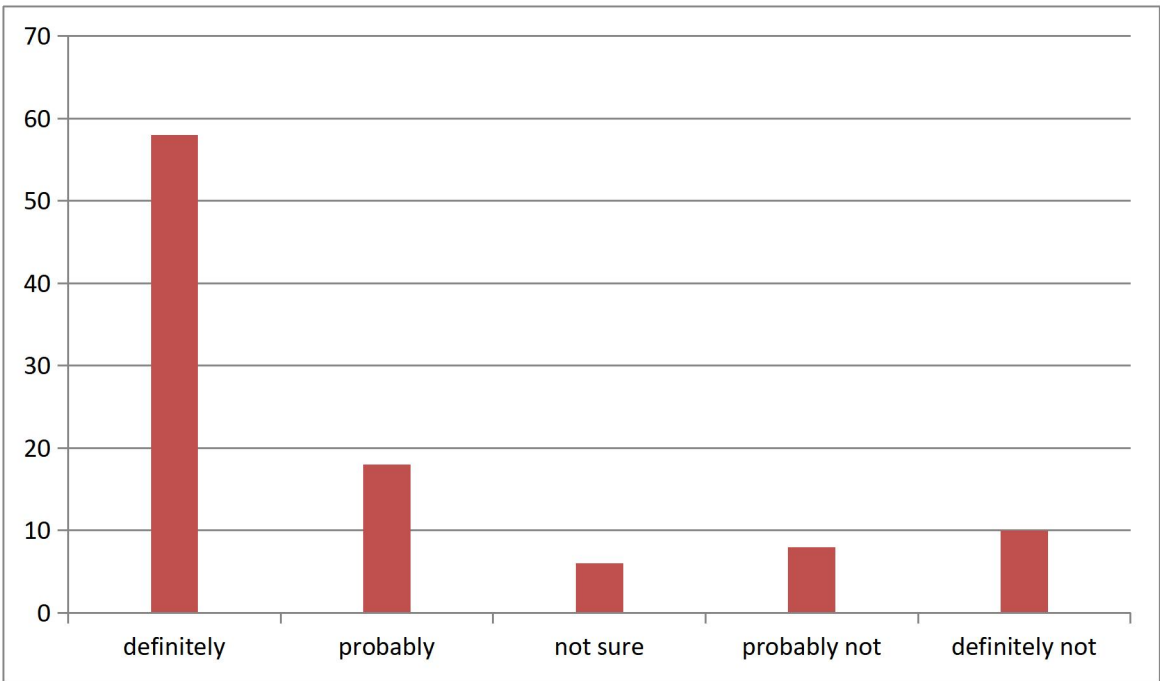


Figure 12: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 13: Would you change your perception of social work after seeing information on social media?**

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	240	92%
No	20	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 13 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 240(92%) agree that they would change their perception of social work after seeing information on social media, 20(8%) believe that they would not change their perception of social work after seeing information on social media.

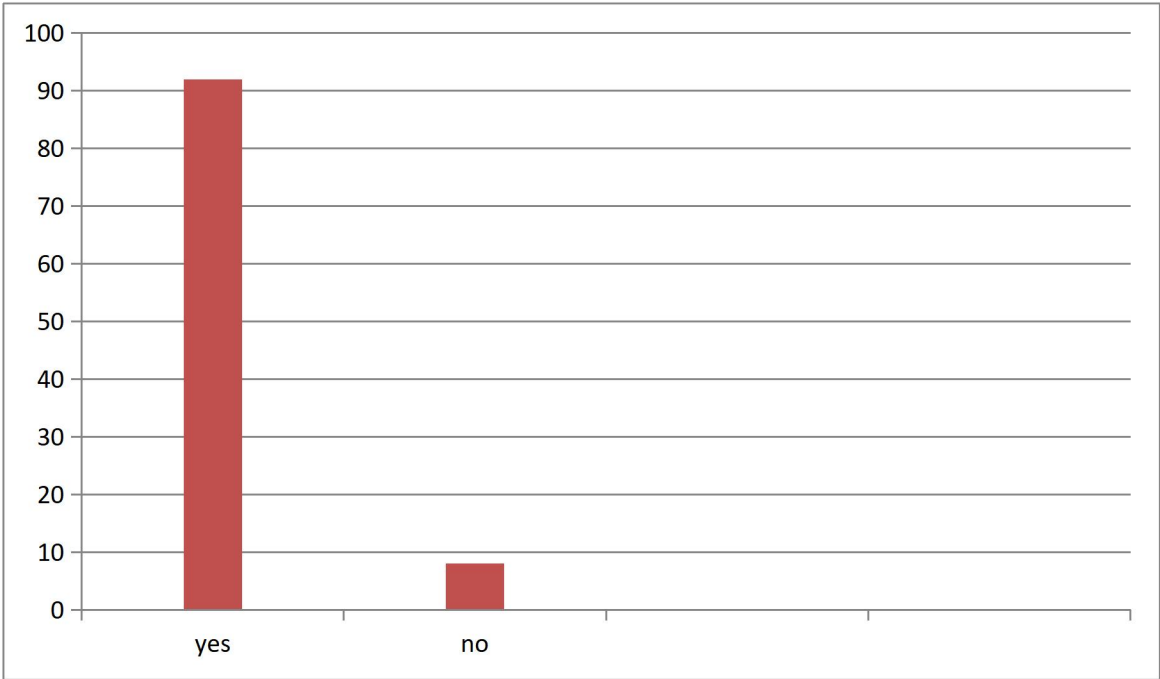


Figure 13: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 14: Do you think social media is a reliable source for learning about social work?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Always	100	38%
Often	80	31%
Sometimes	50	19%
Rarely	20	8%
Never	10	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 14 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 100(38%) believe that you can always get reliable source for learning about social work, 80(31%) believe that you can often get reliable source for learning about social work, 50(19%) believe that you can sometimes get reliable source for learning about social work, 20(8%) believe that you can rarely get reliable source for learning about social work and 10(3%) believe that you can never get reliable source for learning about social work.

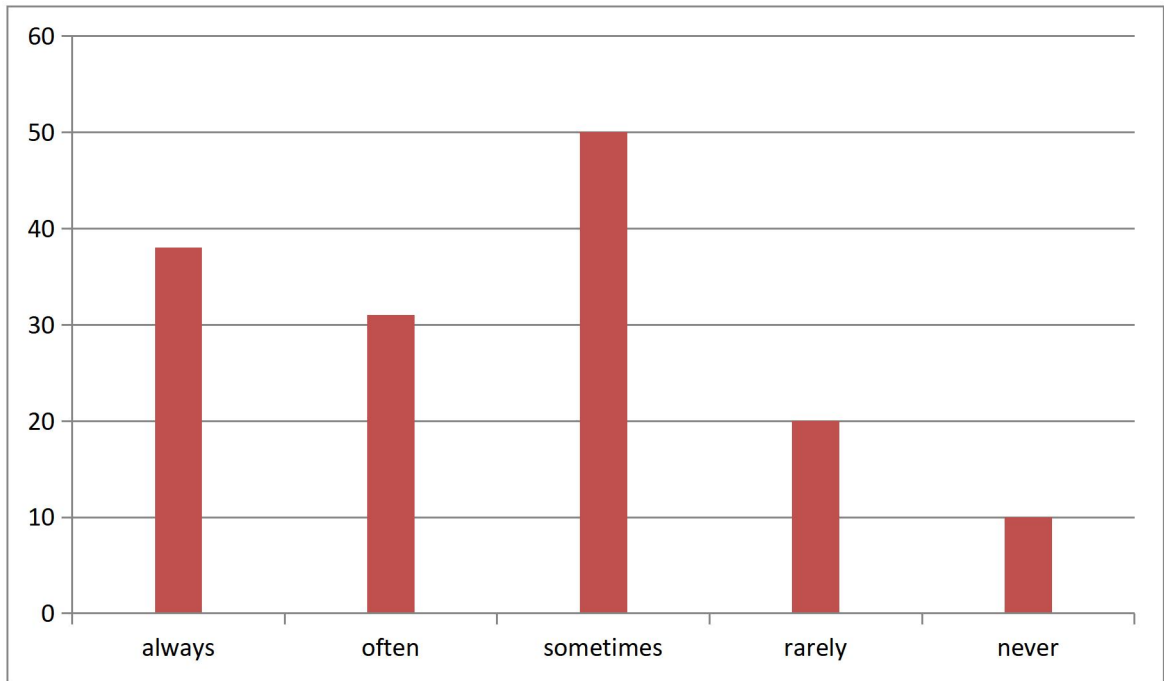


Figure 14: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 15: Are you aware of any social media accounts or pages dedicated to debunking myths about social work?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	15	6%
No	245	94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 15 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, only 15(6%) were aware of social media dedicated to debunking myths about social work and 245(94%) were not aware of social media dedicated to debunking myths about social work.

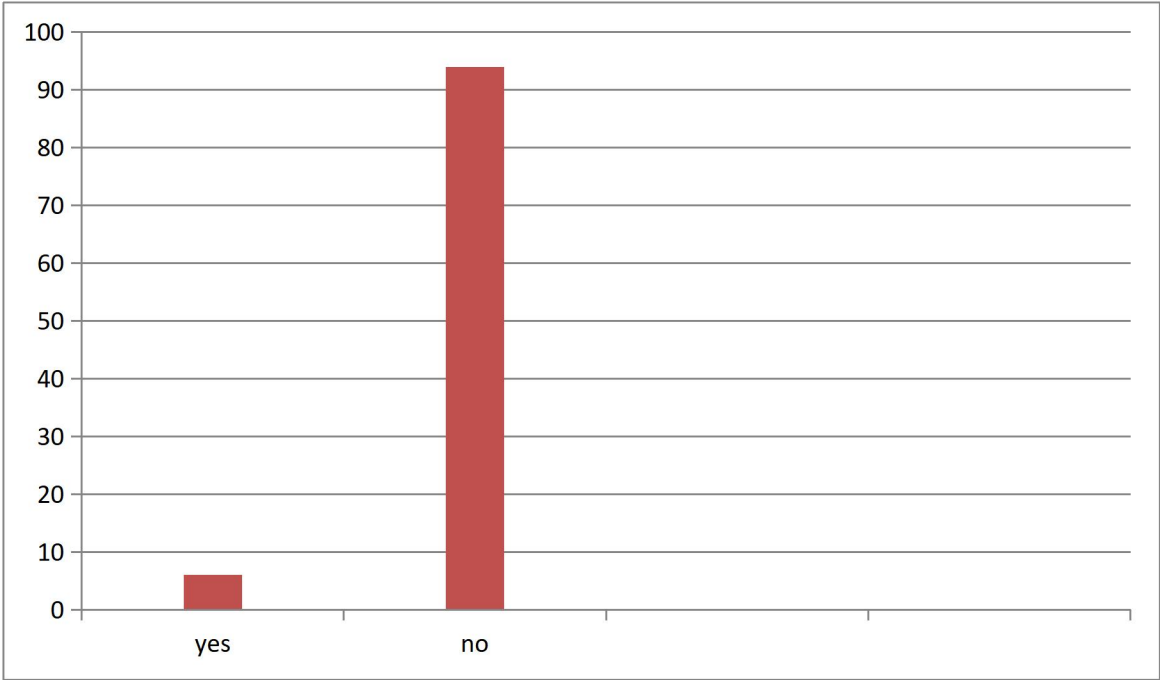


Figure 15: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 16: Would you trust information about social work if it comes from a professional organization’s social media account?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	200	77%
No	60	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 16 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 200(77%) agree that they would trust information about social work if it comes from a professional organization social media account, while 60(23%) believe that they would not trust information about social work if it comes from a professional organization social media account.

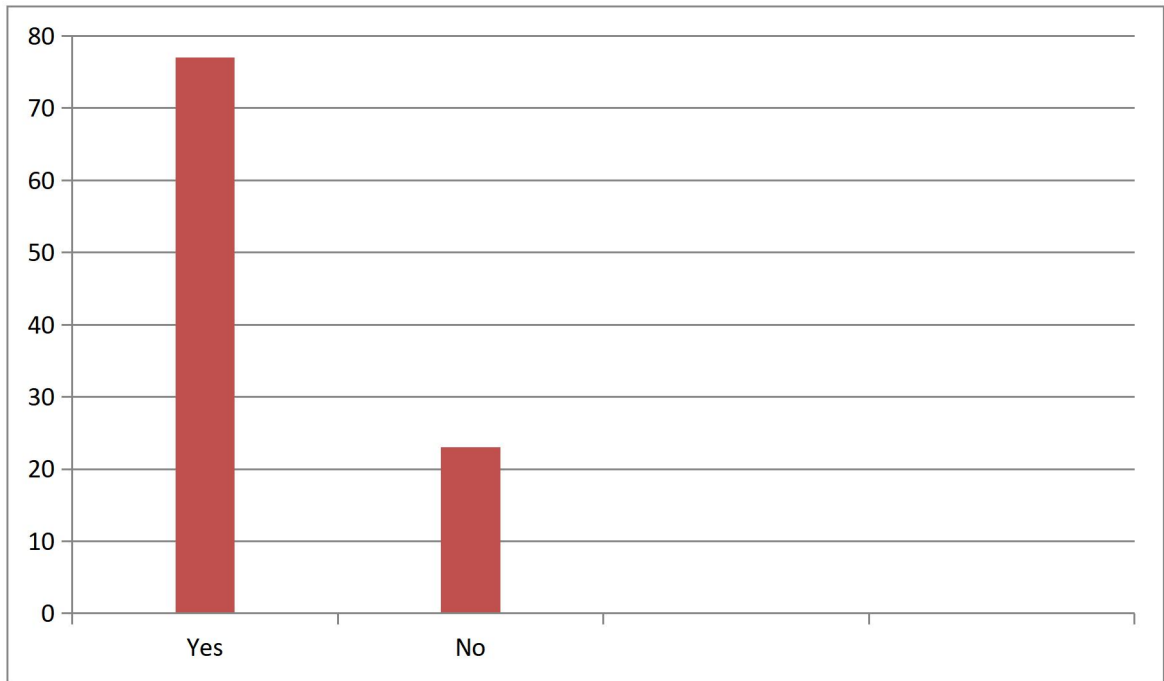


Figure 16: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 17: Do you believe that social media influencers can play a significant role in correcting misconceptions about social work?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	220	85%
No	40	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 17 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 220(85%) believe that social media influencers can play a significant role in correcting misconceptions about social work, 40(15%) do not believe that social media influencers can play a significant role in correcting misconceptions about social work.

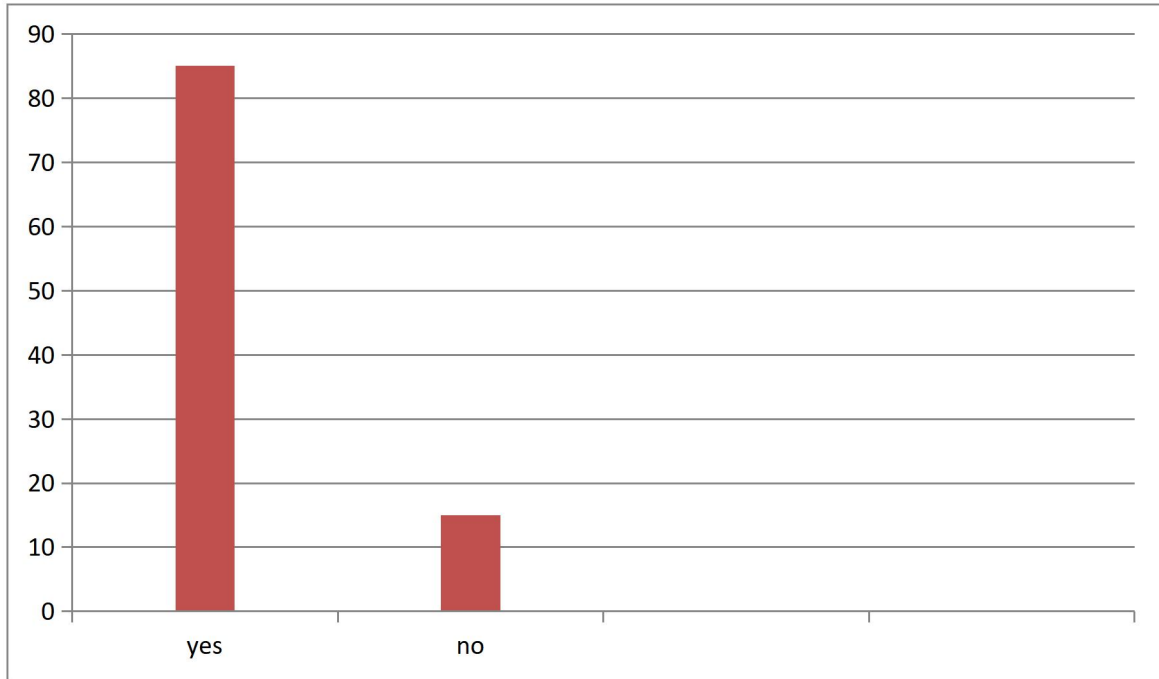


Figure 17: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 18: How often do you encounter posts about social work on social media?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very often	0	0%
Often	0	0%
Occasionally	0	0%
Rarely	20	8%
Never	240	92%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 18 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 0(0%) very often encounter posts about social work on social media, 0(0%) often encounter posts about social work on social media, 0(0%) occasionally encounter posts about social work on social media, 20(8%) rarely encounter posts about social work on social media while 240(92%) Never encounter posts about social work on social media.

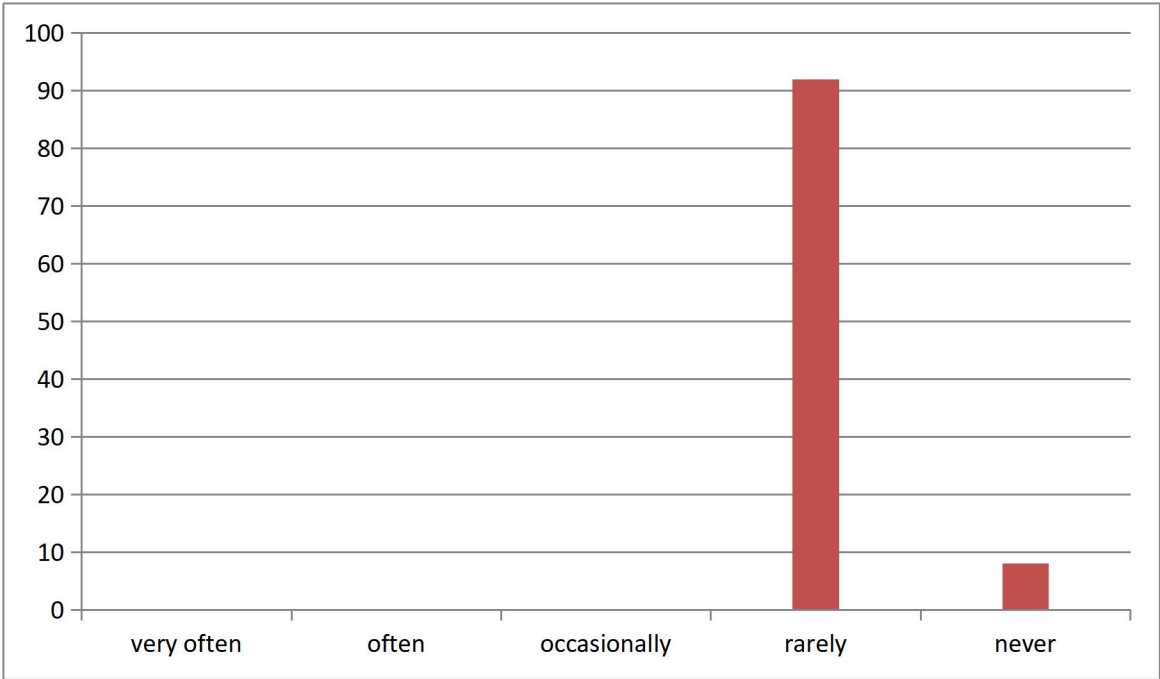


Figure 18: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Research Question 3: The representation of the social work profession on social media and the utilization of social media platforms can help improve the overall public comprehension of social work.**

**Table 19: How frequently do you use social media platforms?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Daily	200	77%
Weekly	40	15%
Monthly	10	4%
Rarely	10	4%
Never	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 19 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 200(77%) use social media platforms daily, 40(15%) use social media platforms every week, 10(4%) use social media platforms every month 10(4%) rarely use social media platforms, 0(0%) Never use social media platforms.

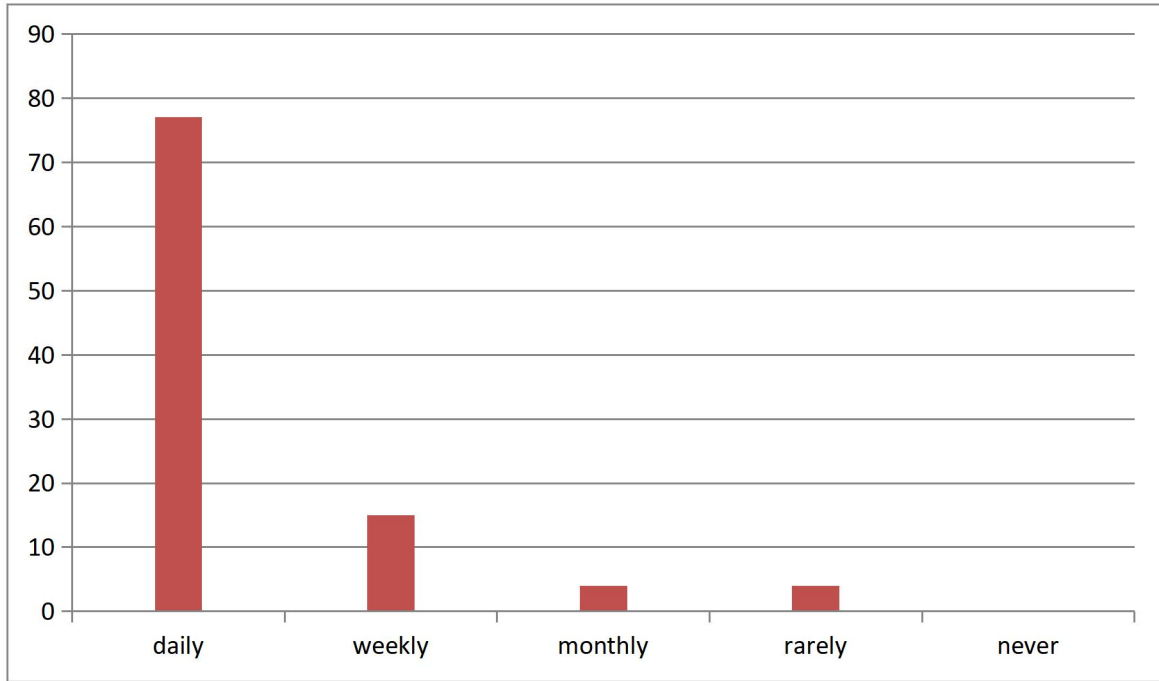


Figure 19: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 20: Which social media platforms do you actively engage with?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Facebook	60	23%
Twitter	30	12%
Instagram	60	23%
LinkedIn	10	4%
TikTok	90	34%
Other	10	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 20 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 60(23%) agree that they would change their perception of social work after seeing information on social media, 20(8%) believe that they would not change their perception of social work after seeing information on social media.

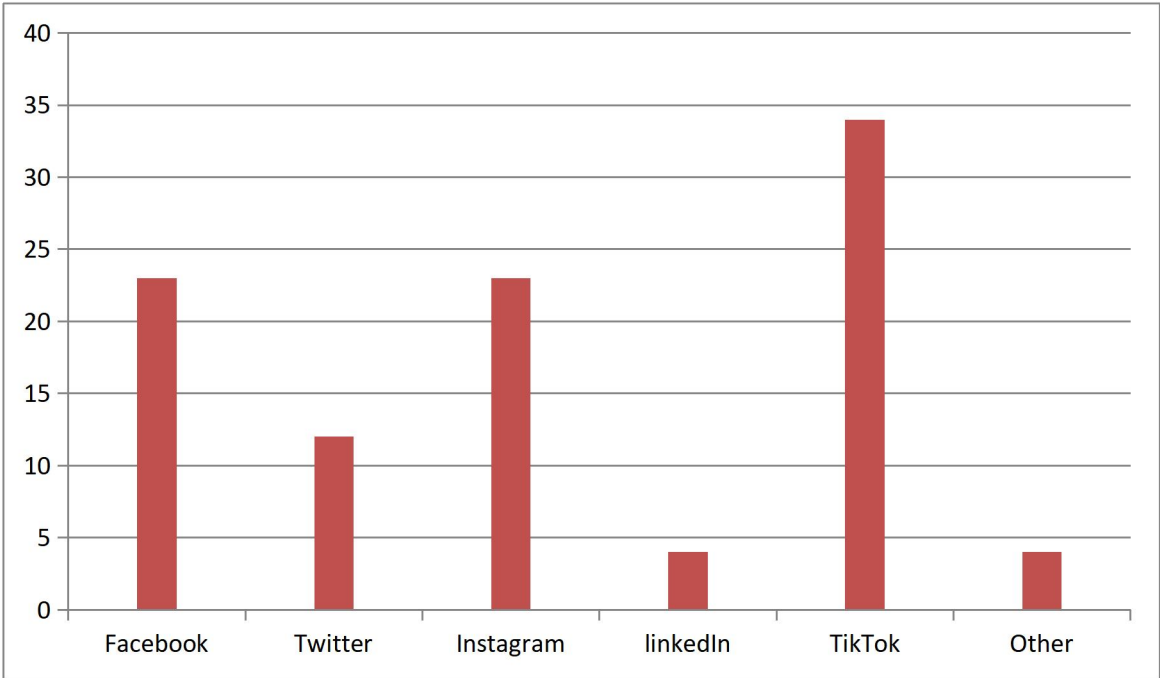


Figure 20: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 21: Do you follow social workers or related organizations on social media?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	0	0%
No	260	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 21 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 0(0%) follow social workers or related organizations on social media,260(100%) do not follow social workers or related organizations on social media

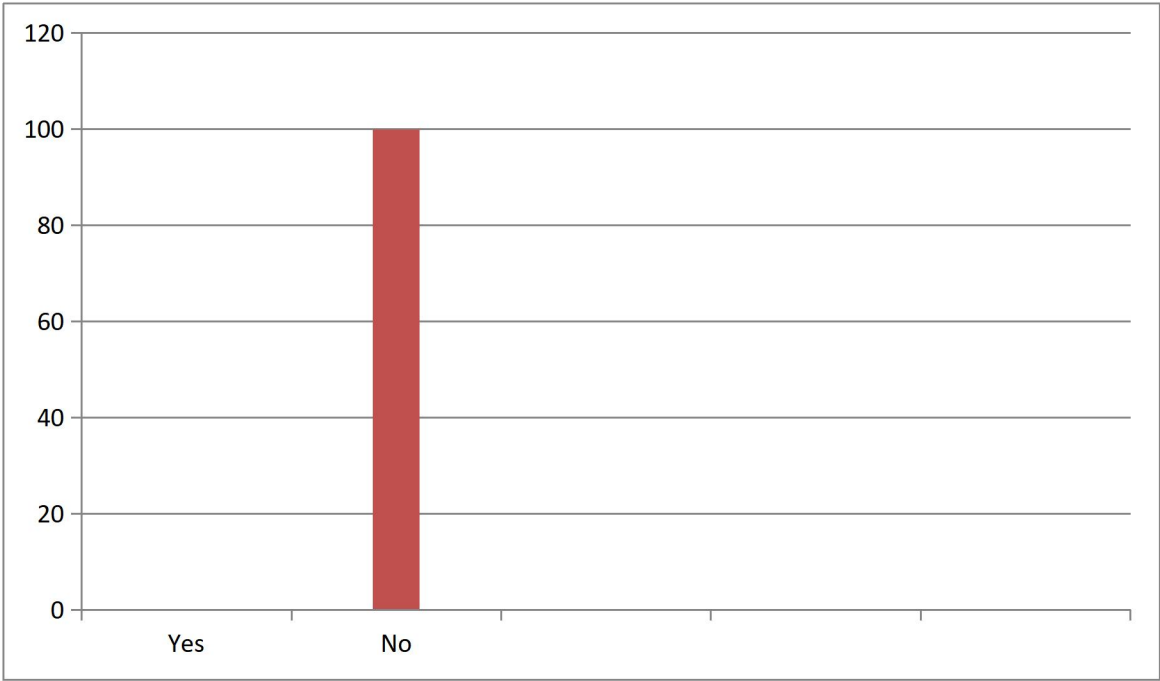


Figure 21: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 22: How do you perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very positive	140	54%
Positive	60	23%
Neutral	30	11%
Negative	20	8%
Very negative	10	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 22 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 140(54%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be very positive, 60(23%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be positive, 30(11%) are neutral on the issue, 20 (8%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be negative and 10(4%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be very negative.

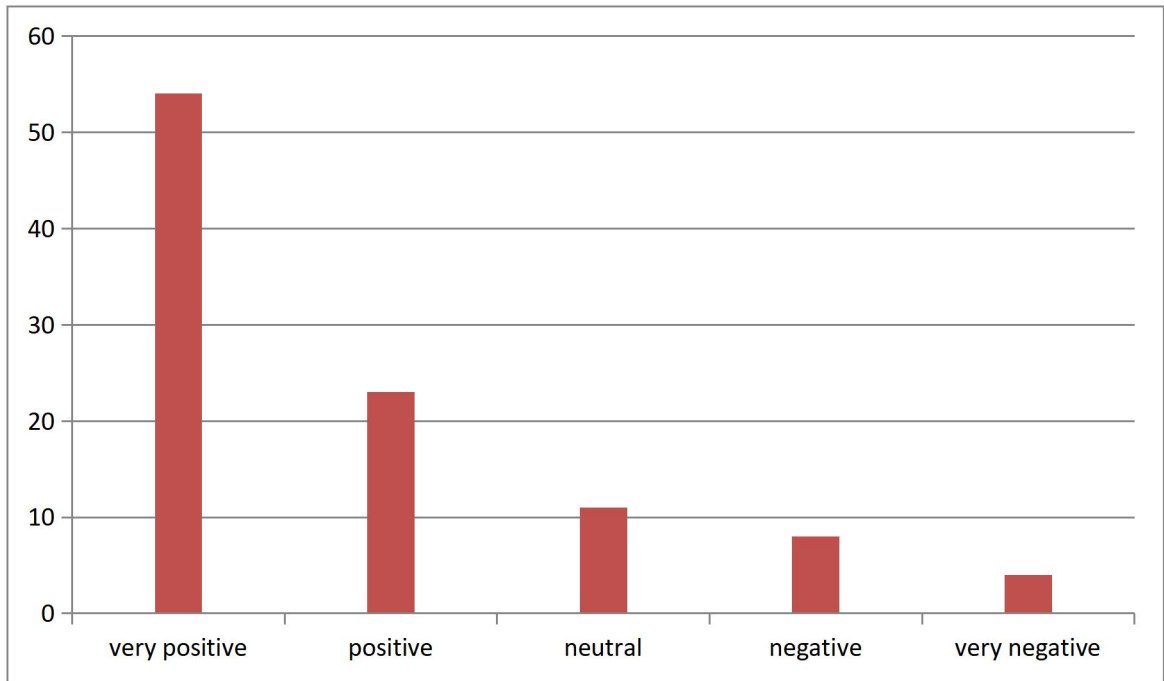


Figure 22: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 23: Have you ever learned about social work-related issues or initiatives through social media?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	40	15%
No	220	85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 23 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied,40(15%) have learnt about social work-related issues or initiatives through social media,220(85%) have not learnt about social work-related issues or initiatives through social media.

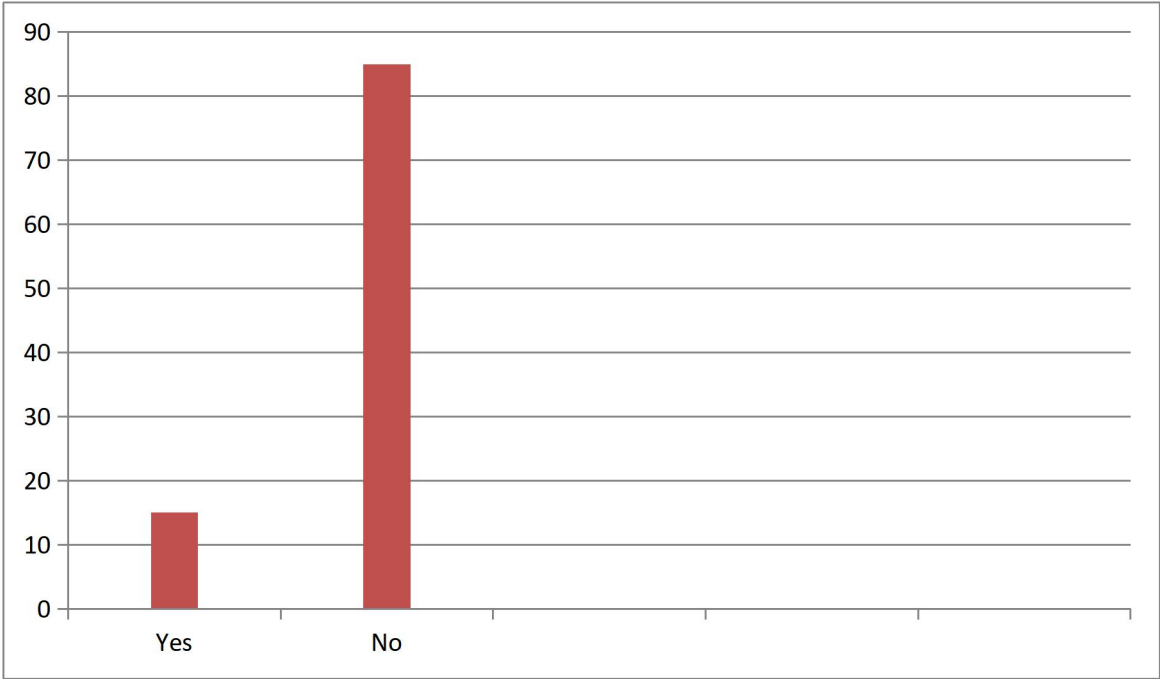


Figure 23: shows percentage distribution according to the response of the question asked.

**Table 24: Do you believe that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	120	46%
Agree	80	31%
Neutral	40	15%
Disagree	15	6%
Strongly disagree	5	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 24 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 120(46%) Strongly agree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions,80(31%) agree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions,40(15%) are neutral on the notion that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions, 15(6%) disagree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions while 5(2%) strongly disagree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions.

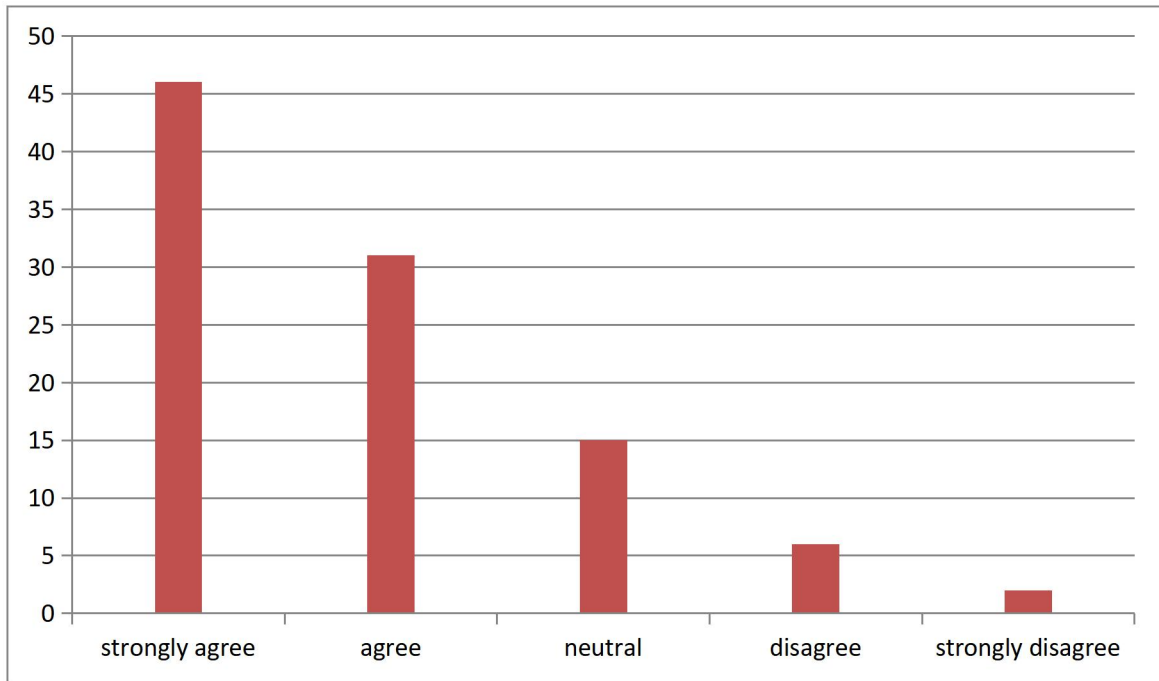


Figure 24: shows percentage distribution according to the response of the question asked.

**Table 25: What types of social media content would you find most informative regarding social workers?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Personal stories from social workers	100	38%
Educational posts about social work	90	35%
Advocacy campaigns	20	8%
Interviews with social workers	30	11%
Infographics or visual content	20	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 25 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 100(38%) would be interested in personal stories from social workers,90(35%) would be interested in educational posts about social work, 20(8%) would be interested in advocacy campaigns social media content, 30(11%)would be interested in interviews with social workers and 20(8%) would be interested in infographics or visual content.

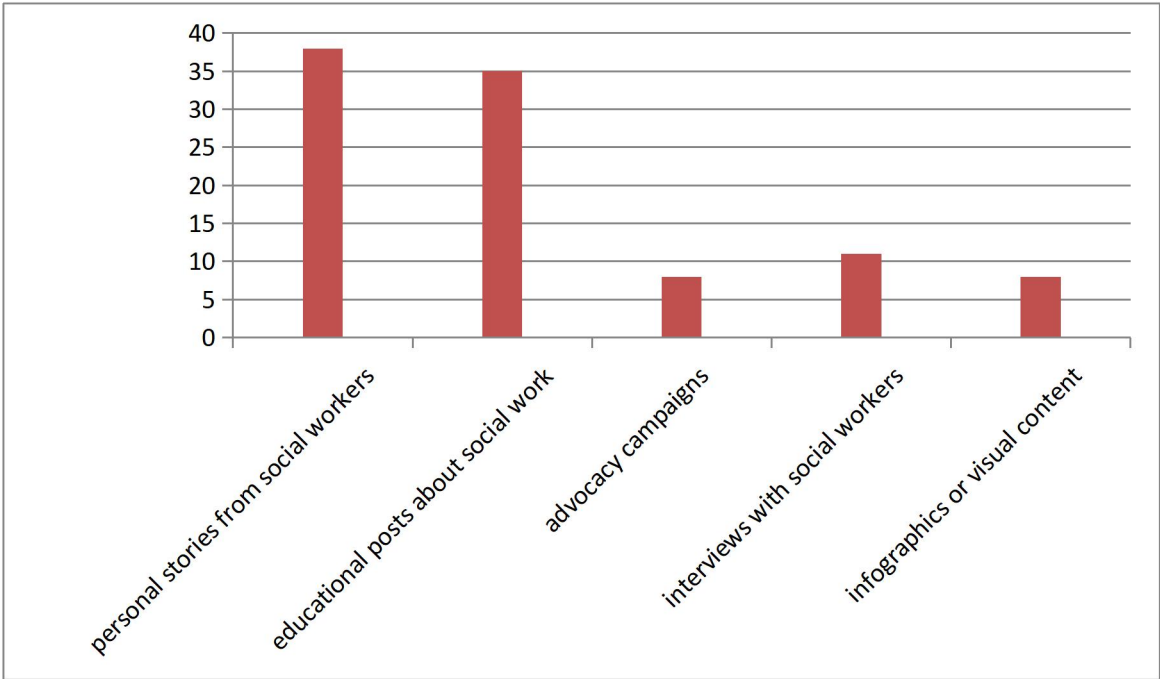


Figure 25: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 26: Do you think social media can bridge the gap between social workers and the general public?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	240	92%
No	20	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 26 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 240(92%) believe that social media can bridge the gap between social workers and the general public, while 20(8%) do not believe that social media can bridge the gap between social workers and the general public.

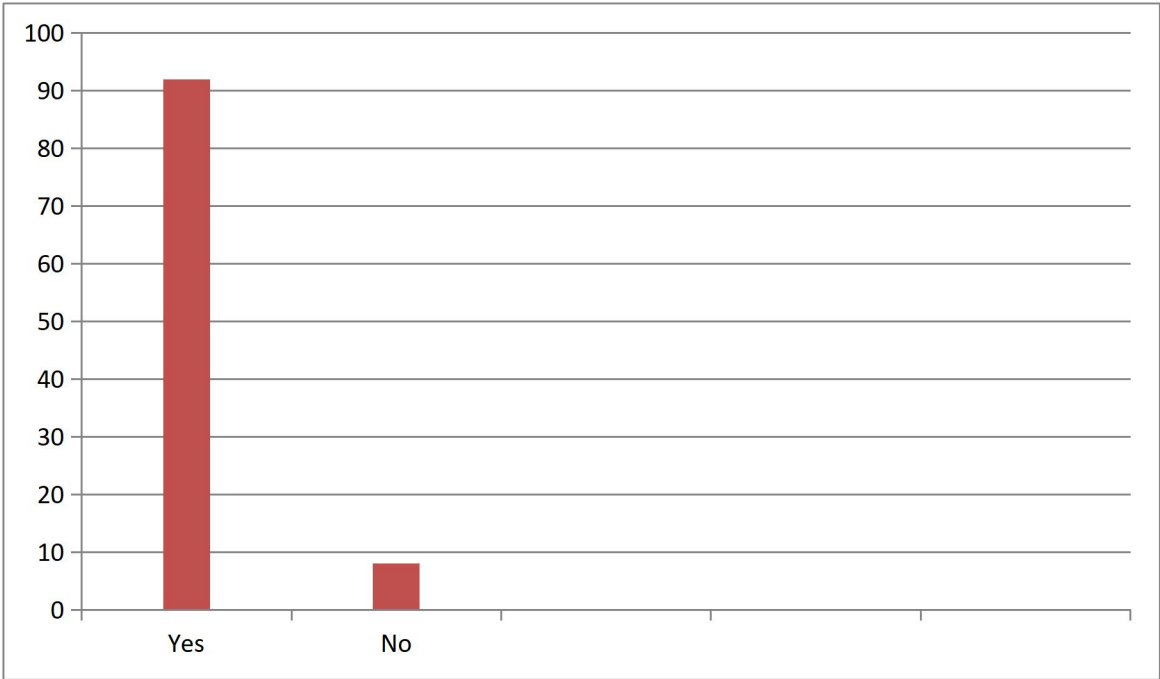


Figure 26: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

**Table 27: Would you be interested in participating in online discussions or webinars led by social workers on social media platforms?**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	250	96%
No	10	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 27 shows that out of the 260 respondents studied, 250(96%) believed that they would interested in participating in online discussions or webinars led by social workers on social media platforms,10(4%) believed that they would not be interested in participating in online discussions or webinars led by social workers on social media platforms.

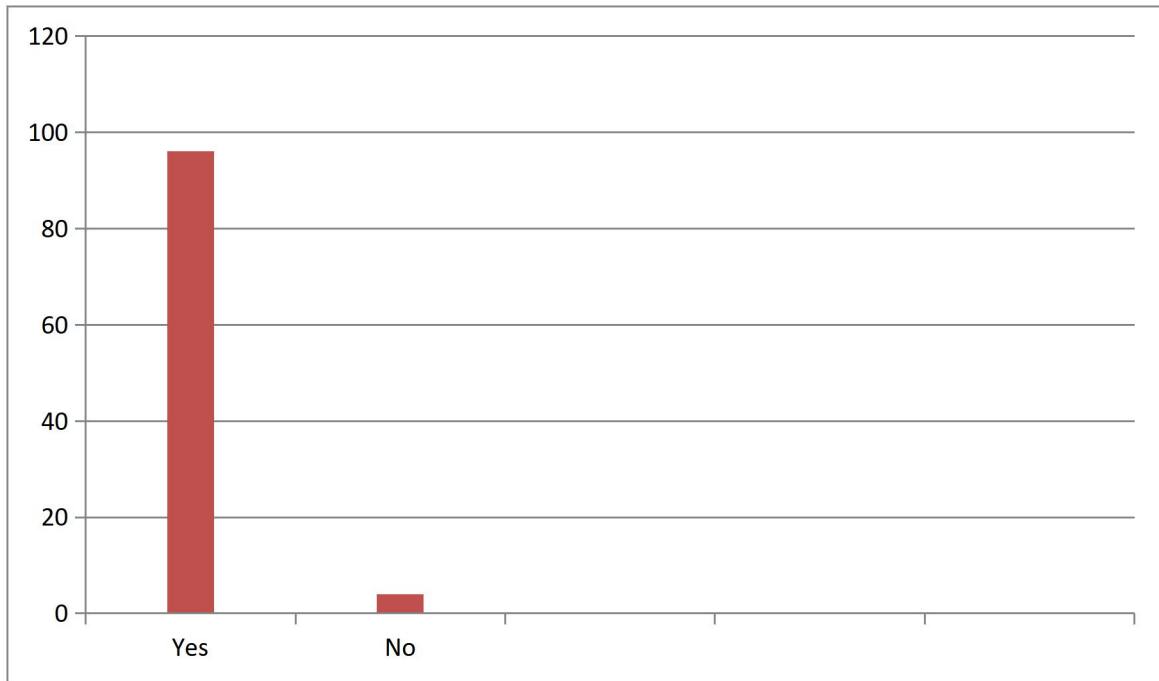


Figure 27: shows the percentage distribution according to the response to the question asked.

### 4.3 Discussions and Findings

**Research question 1:** What is the general public's perception of social work and social workers?

Results from the study showed that out of 260 respondents studied, 80(31%) responded that they view social workers as civil servants, 40(15%) responded that social workers are social service providers, while 140(54%) responded that they have not heard about social workers before. The general knowledge of the public from the study shows that they have minimal knowledge about what social work is and what social workers do. This study

agrees with Amadasun, S. (2020, August 20) implying that the general public's understanding of the field of social work is inadequate. The study revealed that a significant number of participants were unfamiliar with the phrase "social work," suggesting a deficiency in the general comprehension of the field. Nonetheless, despite the public's limited awareness of the term, social worker's duties and contributions were highly valued, indicating that even while the profession's name may not be widely known, people are generally aware of its effects and functions.

**Research Question 2:** What are common misconceptions about social work, and how might social media help to change them?

Results from the study showed that the respondents that out of the respondents studied, 40(15%) believe that social workers work with only children and families, 80(31%) believe that social workers do not work with only children and families while 140(54%) were not sure who social workers work with and then 120(46%) have an understanding that social workers primary duty is to provide financial assistance, 140(54%) did not believe that social workers provided just financial support. Another 40(15%) Strongly agree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues, 60(23%) agree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues, 80(31%) are neutral on the subject, 50(19%) Disagree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues while 30(12%) strongly disagree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues. They generally have a wrong idea of what the social work

profession entails. They believe that social media will play a big role in actually curbing the misconceptions the public has about social workers.

This agrees with the study “Enhancing the Relevance of Social Work Education in Nigeria” by Solomon Amadasun and Mel Gray, published on August 2, 2022, which addresses the misconceptions of social work in Nigeria by examining the education of social workers in the country. The article suggests that misconceptions may arise due to a lack of understanding of the socio-cultural context of Nigeria by social workers educated under systems that do not emphasize this aspect. It proposes that social work educators and administrators play a crucial role in enhancing the profession’s relevance. By agreeing on the profession’s remit, educational standards, systematic curriculum revision, cultural relevance, and developmental perspective, fieldwork, and digital connectivity (Amadasun & Gray, 2022).

The article “Enhancing the Relevance of Social Work Education in Nigeria” by Solomon Amadasun and Mel Gray, published on August 2, 2022, addresses the misconceptions of social work in Nigeria by examining the education of social workers in the country. It highlights the need for quality and locally relevant social work education as essential in the professional development of social workers and the profession’s struggle for legitimacy and connection with local families and communities (Amadasun & Gray, 2022). The article also suggests that misconceptions may arise due to a lack of understanding of the socio-cultural context of Nigeria by social workers educated under

systems that do not emphasize this aspect. It suggests that by reaching a consensus on the profession's mission, educational standards, methodical curriculum reform, cultural relevance, a developmental perspective, fieldwork, and internet connectedness, social work educators and administrators can significantly increase the relevance of the discipline.

**Research Question 3:** How can social media promote the public's comprehension of social work?

The results from this study showed that of respondents studied, 140(54%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be very positive, 60(23%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be positive, 30(11%) are neutral on the issue, 20 (8%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be negative and 10(4%) perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers will be very negative. 120(46%) Strongly agree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions, 80(31%) agree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions, 40(15%) are neutral on the notion that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions, 15(6%) disagree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions while 5(2%) strongly disagree that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and

contributions. 250(96%) believed that they would be interested in participating in online discussions or webinars led by social workers on social media platforms,10(4%) believed that they would not be interested in participating in online discussions or webinars led by social workers on social media platforms. From the studies, it is evident that social media would play a vital role in improving the public's knowledge of the social work profession.

This agrees with the study by Deb Stanfield and Liz Beddoe "Social Work and the Media: A Collaborative Challenge", by discussing the significant role that media, including social media, plays in shaping public perception of social work (Stanfield & Beddoe, 2016). Social workers have a platform to communicate information about their profession and the problems affecting those who are vulnerable thanks to social media. This promotes public education and a deeper comprehension of the social work field. To shape public opinion and comprehend the complexity of social work, it facilitates public discourse on issues about social work. Social workers can use social media to correct erroneous and unfavourable news coverage that erodes public trust in their field. Social workers can speak up for themselves and the clients they serve by sharing truthful accounts of their experiences and accomplishments. To minimize the obstacles that exist between social workers and journalists and provide more accurate media portrayals of social work, the essay emphasizes the possibilities of interprofessional education. For this educational goal, social media can be a useful tool that produces media-savvy social workers and socially conscious journalists. Uniting experts from many professions to

address social concerns, social media can promote a collaborative approach to social justice and democracy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the summary of the findings of the research study, contributions to knowledge, limitations to the study, conclusion and recommendations and suggestions for further studies were also made.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Findings

This study was designed to ascertain the role of social media in improving public perception of social workers in the Egor local government area, Edo state. A descriptive study design was used and a sample of hundred (260) respondents was drawn using a non-probability sampling technique. Data was obtained through self-constructed questionnaires. Results revealed that 54% had not heard of the profession of social work, and the 46% that had heard of the profession had minimal knowledge of what the actual duties of the profession are. Most of them believe social workers generally work with only children and families, that social work is primarily about providing financial assistance to people and a good number are unsure if social workers are trained to deal with mental health issues. The majority agreed they would be willing to learn more about social work. 85% believe that social media influencers can play a significant role in correcting misconceptions about social work, but they hardly encounter social work-related posts on social media. The study revealed that regardless of over 77% of

individuals who use social media daily, do not encounter anything related to social work often. In summary, the study revealed that people have very limited knowledge about social workers and the profession is not always portrayed on social media. The study also revealed that the respondents would be willing to learn about the profession of social work on social media.

## **5.2 Contributions to Knowledge**

This study offers empirical support for the idea that social media platforms can be used to improve the public's impression of social work. By putting a number on the effect and pinpointing the underlying mechanisms, it expands on what is currently known. By integrating sentiment analysis and content analysis to gauge public opinion, the study presents a novel methodological technique and provides a repeatable model for further research on social media impact evaluation. This project adds to the body of knowledge about media influence theory, especially as it relates to social work and public perception. The results provide social work practitioners and organizations with practical advice on how to use social media strategically to enhance their public involvement and image.

The report makes policy recommendations based on the research findings to control and direct social media use in the social work industry to improve public perception. The study emphasizes how social media may be used as a tool for social change and how it can affect public attitudes and actions about social work and related concerns. The research contributes to worldwide knowledge of the issue by shedding light on cross-

cultural variances in the perception of social work through an examination of various social media platforms and user demographics.

### **5.3 Limitations to Study**

The following are the limitations the researcher was faced with in the course of the study:

- Egor local government is very vast with over 80,000 individuals dwelling in the local government and being a single researcher without proper funding it was difficult to collect data from other communities in Egor local government.
- Due to the limited knowledge the respondents have of the profession of social work, it was difficult to get them to fill out the questionnaire.
- Limited studies on the research topic and lack of empirical review to back the study.

### **5.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the role of social media in improving public perception is multifaceted and profound. Social media platforms have become integral to the dissemination of information, shaping public discourse and influencing individual beliefs and behaviours. They act as a double-edged sword, with the power to both enhance and distort public perception. On one hand, social media can amplify voices, foster transparency, and facilitate engagement between the public and various entities, leading to a more informed and active citizenry. On the other hand, it can also perpetuate misinformation and

reinforce biases, as seen in the cautionary case of influential Twitter accounts affecting public health perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fuentes & Peterson, 2021)

Societal media is an unmatched instrument for managing public perception because of its reach and immediacy, particularly during times of crisis or when addressing societal issues. To guarantee that their influence on public opinion is positive rather than negative, information users and disseminators must uphold ethical norms and pursue accuracy. In the current digital era, it is the duty of social media companies and their users to utilize this potent instrument for the good of society, encouraging an informed populace capable of separating fact from fiction and making constructive contributions to general awareness.

The findings of this study revealed that youth do not have knowledge about the profession of social work and the utilization of social media would serve as a means to help build awareness of the profession, this could only work if the profession is portrayed on social media platforms regularly.

Fundamentally, social media's influence on public opinion stems not only from the content disseminated but also from the conversations and interactions it promotes, which can result in a more informed and involved public. The ultimate objective of this continuous process of discussion and negotiation should be to improve the standard of public debate and advance a more complex and thorough knowledge of the world we live in.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

- Further studies need adequate funding in order to collect information from other areas in the Egor local government area to give proper generalization of results.
- Make sure the information you provide on social media is factual and verified.
- Encourage a two-way dialogue wherein criticism is welcomed and taken into consideration.
- Launch educational initiatives to raise users' digital literacy and teach them how to assess online content critically.
- Collaborate with legislators to create rules that preserve free speech while shielding users from false information.

## **5.6 Suggestion for Further Study**

Further investigation on the efficacy of different social media platforms in influencing public opinion could be relevant to the project topic, "The Role of Social Media in Improving the Public Perception of Social Work in Egor Local Government." A study using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies might look at how social media campaigns affect people's perceptions of social work over the long run and track changes in that perception. It would also be advantageous to create a framework

that incorporates engagement metrics and sentiment analysis to measure how social media affects public perception.

Examining case studies where social media tactics have been effective in changing public opinion may yield insightful information. This study may also reveal obstacles that could prevent social media from being used effectively in this situation, including linguistic, cultural, or technological difficulties unique to Egor Local Government. Another line of inquiry may be how social media use affects local government policies, with an emphasis on how regulations can bolster social media's beneficial effects. In this research, ethical issues—especially those about misrepresentation and privacy—must be carefully considered.

It might be necessary and beneficial to assess social worker training programs for social media usage. Another possible field of research is the function of community involvement on social media platforms and how it affects public opinion. Lastly, research might be done on the use of social media in social work crisis communication to learn how to best utilize it to preserve or enhance public perception in times of emergency. A more thorough understanding of the relationships between social media and the public's perception of social work would result from this kind of research, which would also give social workers and legislators in Egor Local Government and elsewhere useful information.

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**APPENDIX I**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BENIN CITY**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Hello, I am a student of the University of Benin in my final year. I am carrying out a study on the role of social media in improving public perception of social workers. Your response will only be used for this study and all data collected for this study shall be kept confidential and only made available to those directly involved in the research. Please tick the appropriate box for your response.

SECTION A: Socio-Demographic Data

1) AGE: 18-21  22-25  26-29  30-35

2) GENDER: Male  Female

3) PROFESSION: No vocational skills  Entrepreneur  Student  Others

SECTION B: The public's overall perception of social workers

4) Have you heard of social work before?

- o  Yes
- o  No

5) If yes, what is the source? Friend  Relative  Social media  Other

6) What is your general opinion of social workers? If any

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7) Have you encountered a social worker before now?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

8) Were you satisfied with the services provided by the social worker?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

**SECTION C:** Some misconceptions the public have about social workers

9) Do you believe social workers only work with children and families?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

10) Is it your understanding that social work is primarily about providing financial assistance to people?

- Yes
- No

11) Do you agree that social workers are not trained to deal with mental health issues?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12) In your opinion, can social media campaigns effectively educate the public about the diverse roles of social workers?

- Definitely
- Probably
- Not sure
- Probably not
- Definitely not

13) Would you change your perception about social work after seeing information on social media?

- Yes
- No

14) Do you think social media is a reliable source for learning about social work?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

15) Are you aware of any social media accounts or pages dedicated to debunking myths about social work?

- Yes
- No

16) Would you trust information about social work if it comes from a professional organization's social media account?

- Yes
- No

17) Do you believe that social media influencers can play a significant role in correcting misconceptions about social work?

- Yes
- No

18) How often do you encounter posts about social work on social media?

- Very often
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

**SECTION D:** The representation of social work profession on social media and utilization of social media platform can help improve the overall public comprehension of social work.

19) How frequently do you use social media platforms?

- [ ] Daily
- [ ] Weekly
- [ ] Monthly
- [ ] Rarely
- [ ] Never

20) Which social media platforms do you actively engage with?

- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] Twitter
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] LinkedIn

- TikTok
- Other

21) Do you follow social workers or related organizations on social media?

- Yes
- No

22) How do you perceive the impact of social media on public understanding of social workers?

- Very positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very negative

23) Have you ever learned about social work-related issues or initiatives through social media?

- Yes
- No

24) Do you believe that social media can effectively raise awareness about social workers' roles and contributions?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

25) What types of social media content would you find most informative regarding social workers?

- Personal stories from social workers
- Educational posts about social work
- Advocacy campaigns
- Interviews with social workers
- Infographics or visual content
- Other

26) Do you think social media can bridge the gap between social workers and the general public?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

27) Would you be interested in participating in online discussions or webinars led by social workers on social media platforms?

- Definitely
- Maybe
- Not interested