RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT AND THE WELL-BEING OF FIRST-TIME MOTHERS

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a vital source of support for many groups, including first-time mothers. Social media platforms provide accessible, empathetic, and practical support, especially for mothers lacking traditional support systems. These platforms help alleviate feelings of isolation, offer peer-to-peer advice, and foster a sense of community that aids in emotional resilience. This study investigates the role of social media in enhancing the well-being of new mothers by examining four types of support: informational, emotional, instrumental, and appraisal. Each type addresses unique maternal needs, from practical advice to validation and encouragement. Using a quantitative approach, survey data was collected from 385 first-time mothers in Sabon Gari Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Findings reveal that appraisal, emotional, and instrumental support obtained through social media significantly positively impact mothers' well-being, promoting confidence, mental health, and satisfaction during early motherhood. Conversely, while valuable, informational support does not show a statistically significant influence on well-being, suggesting that knowledge alone may not fully address first-time mothers' emotional and psychological needs. The implications suggest that healthcare providers and policymakers should consider social media as a complementary tool for maternal support and recommend structuring online programs to emphasise emotional, appraisal, and instrumental support.

Keywords: First-time mothers, Social Media Support, Well-being, Information Support

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become essential to everyday life, offering virtual spaces where people can connect, share, and find support (Gündüz, 2017). In recent years, growing interest has focused on how social media fosters social support, particularly among specific groups like first-time mothers. Since the rise of social media, numerous studies have highlighted its positive impact, especially in providing emotional support (Humphreys, 2018). For first-time mothers, online communities and support groups are safe spaces to share feelings, discuss experiences, and receive empathy from others in similar situations (Barak *et al.*, 2008). These digital platforms help create a sense of belonging and combat the isolation many new mothers experience. The ease of connecting with others at any time and from any location also enhances the accessibility of emotional support, making it easier for first-time mothers to find the help they need.

Smith *et al.* (2021) emphasize that social media platforms have become invaluable resources for first-time mothers, offering them access to a wealth of information and support networks. New mothers learn about essential topics like pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and infant care through online forums, blogs, and dedicated websites. Social media provide evidence-based information, expert advice, and practical tips, empowering mothers to make informed choices and effectively navigate the complexities of early motherhood (Aston *et al*., 2018; Nasidi *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, social media fosters a sense of community, where mothers can openly share their personal experiences, advice, and lessons learned. This shared understanding and support allows mothers to learn from one another's challenges and successes, which can help boost their confidence in parenting. By bridging gaps in knowledge and providing emotional support, social media has transformed how new mothers approach and manage the often-daunting journey of motherhood (Song *et al.*, 2012).

Another significant advantage of social media for first-time mothers is its opportunity for peer-to-peer support and validation (Aston, 2008). By connecting with other mothers navigating similar stages of motherhood, women can openly share their concerns, seek advice, and receive affirmation for their unique experiences. This interaction builds a sense of solidarity, as new mothers find comfort knowing that others face similar challenges and uncertainties. Such connections can be incredibly empowering, boosting confidence and self-esteem as mothers gain reassurance from peers who understand their struggles firsthand. Moreover, peer support networks on social media offer a space to celebrate milestones, share achievements, and exchange parenting tips (Frey *et al*., 2022). The shared joy of milestones, like a baby's first steps or words, helps foster a supportive community that enhances the emotional well-being of new mothers. These platforms enable women to feel more connected, reducing the isolation that first-time mothers may experience while providing a continuous source of encouragement and collective strength through the highs and lows of motherhood.

Furthermore, social media transcends geographical boundaries, enabling first-time mothers to connect with others far beyond their immediate physical environments (Brubacher et al., 2023). This connectivity is especially beneficial for mothers living in remote or rural areas or those with limited access to local support networks. By joining online communities, these mothers can overcome geographical constraints and engage with a diverse, supportive group of individuals who can offer practical guidance and emotional reassurance. For mothers who may not have close family or friends nearby, these virtual connections serve as a crucial support system, providing a network of people who can help answer questions, share advice, and offer encouragement (Khasawneh, 2024). The accessibility and inclusivity of social media allow mothers from various backgrounds to participate, making support and resources available regardless of location. Against this backdrop, this study aims to examine the role of social media support in enhancing the well-being of first-time mothers, exploring how these online networks contribute to confidence, mental health, and overall life satisfaction during early motherhood.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Support

Research on social support often focuses on its importance in patient care, emphasising how patients and their families function (Labrague, 2021). It underscores that social support is essential for improving the quality-of-care hospital staff provides, as it fosters a more supportive environment for patients and their families. Moreover, the impact of severe illness or injury on the entire family is well recognised, with studies highlighting the crucial role of family support in achieving positive patient outcomes. For example, access to strong social support networks has been shown to significantly improve recovery outcomes for stroke patients (Mensah, 2021). Social support is the assistance provided to others, which can take two forms: tangible and intangible. Tangible support includes financial help or any material assistance, while intangible support encompasses non-monetary aids, such as emotional support, advice, or guidance.

Social support is the process by which individuals give, receive, or feel supported by others (Lin & Kishore, 2021). This supportive interaction occurs within various social networks, including relationships with friends, family, colleagues, and other connections, all of which contribute to an individual's sense of support. Everyone is expected to have at least some support network, no matter how minimal. These networks play a crucial role, especially during stressful times, providing individuals with people they can rely on for emotional or practical help. Whether facing everyday life challenges or more intense traumatic events, having a support system can stabilise resilience and overall well-being. Social support networks act as safety nets, offering guidance, comfort, and assistance when individuals need it most.

Social Media Support

The term "social media support" describes the help and inspiration people get via internet channels to advance their health and well-being. It gives users access to a community, a network of people, and medical experts who can provide support, understanding, and counsel (Naslund et al., 2014). Through social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and online forums, users may ask questions, share their stories, and get immediate answers from those who have gone through similar struggles. This assistance is essential for lowering feelings of loneliness, improving mental health, and creating a sense of community, particularly for vulnerable populations such as new mothers, people with long-term medical conditions, and those with little access to social networks.

Social media's interactive features and ease of use make it an excellent resource for health-related assistance. Unlike traditional support systems, social media allows users to ask for assistance whenever they need it and from any place (Strupp et al., 2024). This round-the-clock accessibility guarantees that people may get help when needed most, removing obstacles related to time zones or geographical limitations. Additionally, it facilitates peer-to-peer connections, which help users build emotional resilience and solidarity by connecting with others who have gone through similar health challenges. Patients with long-term illnesses like diabetes or cancer, for example, can participate in special support groups where they can share personal stories, talk about treatment options, and swap coping mechanisms. These exchanges improve users' capacity to properly manage their diseases, which offer both practical counsel and emotional comfort.

Users gain confidence in handling their health issues when they can get support, encouragement, and guidance from a varied community. Social media platforms provide a feeling of community that helps people feel understood and supported by those who truly understand their challenges, promoting psychological well-being. For groups like those with mental health disorders or uncommon physical illnesses who can face stigma or prejudice in conventional support settings, the community component is very helpful. Online anonymity further empowers users to openly discuss delicate health issues without worrying about criticism, which fosters sincere communication and more profound emotional support.

Furthermore, social media support is essential to contemporary health systems as it enhances official healthcare services. Social networking networks offer continuous peer support outside clinical settings, while healthcare experts provide professional advice. Patients have access to health education resources offered within their online communities, prescription reminders, and updates on medical research. This dual system of official and informal support fills the gaps in healthcare service, particularly for people living in rural or underdeveloped regions.

Dimension of Social Media Support
Informational Support

Informational support is a crucial form of social support that provides individuals with factual information on specific issues or conditions (Lin & Kishore, 2021). This type of support is precious for first-time mothers as it encompasses advice, guidance, and practical knowledge needed to address the many challenges and uncertainties associated with new parenthood (Bae Brandtzæg et al., 2021). First-time mothers often experience a blend of excitement, anxiety, and self-doubt, and they frequently have questions about their roles and responsibilities. In these moments, informational support offers a reliable source of insight, helping them make informed decisions and fostering a sense of preparedness. By equipping new mothers with essential knowledge, informational support can reduce feelings of stress, increase confidence in their parenting abilities, and improve their overall well-being, ultimately contributing to a more positive and manageable transition into motherhood.

A crucial component of informational support for first-time mothers is access to accurate, trustworthy information on essential topics like childcare, breastfeeding, sleep routines, and infant development. This access is instrumental in enabling mothers to make well-informed decisions, which fosters confidence in their parenting abilities (Bedaso et al., 2021b). Informational support provides clarity on best practices and reassures mothers navigating new and often overwhelming responsibilities. Additionally, this support is accessible through various channels (Jin & Hahm, 2021). Traditional face-to-face interactions with healthcare providers or experienced family members offer one source, while online social media platforms present another valuable avenue. Through online communities, mothers can connect with peers who share similar experiences or have navigated parenthood longer, offering insights that may enhance understanding and provide comfort during early motherhood.

Emotional Support

Emotional support provides empathy, understanding, and encouragement to individuals facing emotional distress or challenging situations (Meng & Dai, 2021). Similarly, (Cheng et al., 2022) describe it as offering care, empathy, and compassion during emotional upheaval. This type of support typically includes active listening, providing thoughtful advice, and offering reassurance. For first-time mothers, emotional support can come from various sources, such as partners, family, friends, and healthcare professionals, through in-person interactions or online communities. A vital aspect of emotional support is validating a mother's feelings and experiences, which can be essential during moments of self-doubt and uncertainty about caring for a newborn. By acknowledging and supporting these feelings, emotional support helps reduce anxiety, fosters resilience, and enhances self-confidence, all of which contribute to a more positive experience in early motherhood (Modak, Ronghe, & Gomase, 2023).

Moreover, emotional support offers mothers a safe space to express their feelings and concerns openly, fostering communication without fear of judgment. This supportive environment allows mothers to process their emotions more effectively and seek guidance when necessary. By encouraging honest expression, emotional support becomes crucial in helping mothers cope with the stress and challenges of early motherhood. Additionally, emotional support serves as a protective factor against mental health issues, such as postpartum depression, which can impact both the mother and child. Modak, Ronghe and Gomase (2023) observe that emotionally supported mothers are likelier to exhibit sensitive and responsive caregiving behaviours. These behaviours enhance the mother's well-being and promote positive outcomes in child development, as responsive caregiving fosters secure attachment and healthy emotional growth in children.

Instrumental Support

Instrumental support, in the context of first-time mothers, includes practical assistance such as help with household chores, childcare, or transportation (Murrell et al., 2023). First-time mothers often undergo significant physical, emotional, and psychological changes as they transition into motherhood. These changes can be overwhelming, frequently leading to heightened stress and feelings of inadequacy (Melov et al., 2023). By providing instrumental support, loved ones can help alleviate some of this stress, offering new mothers relief and reassurance. Instrumental support focuses on reducing new mothers' daily workload and responsibilities, allowing them to prioritise their newborns without the added strain of everyday tasks (Bosatta et al., 2024). This type of support lightens the practical burdens and creates a more supportive environment, enabling mothers to confidently engage in their caregiving role and promote their overall well-being.

Beyond its practical benefits, instrumental support is vital in first-time mothers' social and emotional adjustment. A supportive network fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness, helping to alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness that new mothers often experience. The presence of friends, family, and community members who offer hands-on assistance provides both practical relief and emotional reassurance, creating a more positive environment during this transitional phase. According to (Javad et al., 2023), it is essential to recognise that the type of instrumental support needed can vary significantly among first-time mothers; while some may benefit most from help with household chores, others might require assistance with transportation, errands, or childcare. Thus, providing instrumental support tailored to each mother's specific needs is crucial, as this personalised approach maximises its effectiveness, ultimately contributing to the mother's well-being and confidence in her parenting role.

Appraisal Support

Appraisal support provides positive feedback, encouragement, and validation to help individuals navigate life-changing circumstances (King et al., 2019). Appraisal support also includes constructive criticism, positive reinforcement, and guidance, which aid individuals in understanding and adjusting to their experiences. This type of support is essential for first-time mothers as they adapt to the demands of their new role. Many first-time mothers face doubts and uncertainties about their parenting abilities, making appraisal support from family, friends, and healthcare professionals invaluable. Such support helps to alleviate concerns and foster confidence. According to Botha et al. (2020), first-time mothers who receive consistent appraisal support report higher levels of self-efficacy in their parenting skills. By reinforcing a mother's sense of competence, appraisal support promotes a positive self-perception, which is critical for her overall well-being and smooth transition into motherhood, enhancing her capacity to manage the challenges of early parenthood.

Appraisal support also plays a critical role in strengthening the mother-infant bond. Amin et al. (2018) found that first-time mothers who regularly receive positive feedback and validation from their partners develop stronger emotional connections with their infants. This bonding is essential for the child's socio-emotional development and creates a more fulfilling and positive parenting experience for the mother. Furthermore, appraisal support is linked to improved mental health outcomes for first-time mothers. According to Law et al. (2019), mothers who receive consistent appraisal support experience lower levels of postpartum depression and anxiety, highlighting its value as a protective factor against mental health challenges. By fostering a sense of competence and reducing feelings of self-doubt, appraisal support promotes emotional resilience in new mothers, enhancing their overall well-being and capacity to adapt to the demands of motherhood in a healthier, more positive way.

2.2. Research Framework

The research framework upon which the study is based is depicted in Figure 1. Hypothesis testing examined the relationship between the Independent Variables (IVs) and the Dependent Variable (DV).
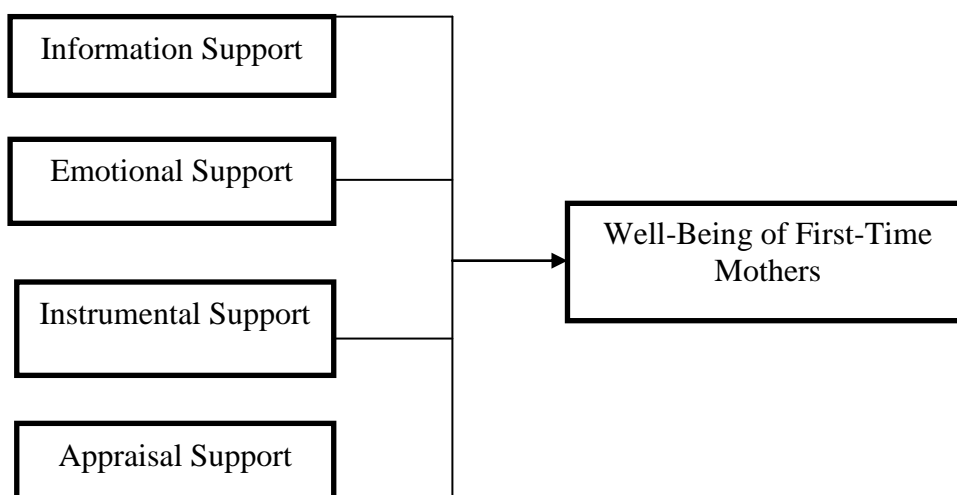
Figure 1: Research Framework

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a quantitative research design with a survey method to examine first-time mothers' use of social media for social support in Sabon Gari LGA, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The population consists of 140,982 women of childbearing age, from which a sample size of 385 participants is determined using the Raosoft calculator, ensuring proportional representation across selected wards. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques are employed, ensuring each ward has an equal chance of selection while targeting specific characteristics. Data was collected using a questionnaire designed. The study prioritises validity by having the instrument reviewed by experts, and reliability is ensured through consistent and stable measurement methods. The data was analysed using PLS-SEM.

4.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

Validity and Reliability

Table 1 presents values for Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, including Appraisal Support, Emotional Support, Information Support, Instrumental Support, and Well-being for First-Time Mothers. These metrics are essential for evaluating the reliability and validity of the constructs, showing how consistently each construct is measured and how well the indicators represent each concept.

First, the reliability of the constructs is assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 indicate good internal consistency, with all constructs highly reliable. Appraisal Support (0.912), Emotional Support (0.939), Information Support (0.932), and Instrumental Support (0.936) all exhibit Alpha values above 0.9, indicating excellent internal consistency. Well-being for First-Time Mothers, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.773, also demonstrates acceptable reliability, though it is slightly lower than the other constructs. Composite Reliability further supports these findings, with all constructs showing values above 0.85, which strongly indicates overall consistency. Appraisal Support (0.932), Emotional Support (0.95), Information Support (0.944), and Instrumental Support (0.949) each display excellent reliability, while Well-being for First-Time Mothers (0.868) also meets the acceptable threshold.

In terms of validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values indicate that each construct has good convergent validity, as all values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.5. This confirms that each construct captures significant variance from its indicators. AVE values range from 0.677 for Information Support to 0.758 for Instrumental Support, showing that each construct explains more than 50% of its indicators' variance, which suggests that the indicators reliably reflect the intended constructs.

Table 1: CR, AVE and CA

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Appraisal Support	0.912	0.932	0.696
Emotional Support	0.939	0.95	0.732
Information Support	0.932	0.944	0.677
Instrumental Support	0.936	0.949	0.758
Well-being First-Time Mothers	0.773	0.868	0.689

Source: Authors' Analysis (2025).

Discriminant Validity

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion is used to evaluate discriminant validity, which determines whether each construct in a model is distinct from the others. In this case, the diagonal values in Table 2 represent the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct, such as Appraisal Support (0.834), Emotional Support (0.855), Information Support (0.823), Instrumental Support (0.871), and Well-being for First-Time Mothers (0.83). These values ideally should be higher than the correlations with other constructs in the same row and column, indicating that each construct is unique and captures distinct aspects of the model.

The off-diagonal values in the table represent the correlations between different constructs, such as 0.643 between Appraisal Support and Emotional Support and 0.882 between Emotional Support and Information Support. For discriminant validity to be confirmed, the

square root of each construct's AVE should be greater than all of its correlations with other constructs. Here, we see that the square root of AVE for Appraisal Support (0.834) is greater than its correlations with most constructs, except for Instrumental Support, where the correlation (0.846) is slightly higher than 0.834. This indicates a potential overlap between Appraisal Support and Instrumental Support, suggesting that these constructs may not be entirely distinct. Similarly, Emotional Support's square root of AVE (0.855) is slightly lower than its correlation with Information Support (0.882), indicating a lack of clear distinction between these two constructs.

Table 2: Fornell Lacker Criterion: Discriminants Validity

Constructs	Appraisal Support	Emotional Support	Information Support	Instrumental Support	Well-being First-Time Mothers
Appraisal Support	0.834				
Emotional Support	0.643	0.855			
Information Support	0.636	0.882	0.823		
Instrumental Support	0.846	0.7	0.692	0.871	
Well-being First-Time Mothers	0.791	0.678	0.637	0.788	0.83

Source: Authors' Analysis (2025).

In cases like Information Support, the AVE square root (0.823) is lower than the correlation with Emotional Support (0.882), suggesting that these constructs overlap and may not be fully distinguishable. Conversely, Well-being for First-Time Mothers shows clearer discriminant validity, as its AVE square root (0.83) is greater than its correlations with all other constructs in the table, indicating that it remains distinct within the model.

Table 3 shows the cross-loadings of each item on the constructs of Appraisal Support, Emotional Support, Information Support, Instrumental Support, and Well-being for First-Time Mothers. Cross-loadings help assess discriminant validity by confirming that each item should load more strongly on its intended construct than on others, indicating that the constructs are distinct and measured appropriately.

Starting with Appraisal Support, the items (AS1-AS6) generally load most strongly on this construct. For instance, AS1 has a loading of 0.815, and AS4 loads at 0.874, both higher than their loadings on other constructs. However, some notable cross-loadings, such as AS1 and AS6, show relatively high loadings on Instrumental Support (0.758 and 0.752, respectively). While these cross-loadings are not as strong as those on Appraisal Support, they suggest some overlap with Instrumental Support.

For Emotional Support, items (ES1-ES7) show strong loadings on their construct, with values such as 0.862 for ES1 and 0.893 for ES5. These loadings exceed those on other constructs, reinforcing discriminant validity. Nonetheless, cross-loadings with Information Support are evident, particularly for ES6, which loads at 0.81 on Information Support. This pattern suggests that there may be some conceptual overlap between Emotional and Information Support in this model.

Table 3: Cross Loading: Discriminants Validity

Items	Appraisal Support	Emotional Support	Information Support	Instrumental Support	Well-being First-Time Mothers
AS1	0.815	0.599	0.584	0.758	0.702
AS2	0.732	0.491	0.479	0.551	0.52
AS3	0.844	0.512	0.51	0.666	0.652
AS4	0.874	0.513	0.498	0.752	0.675
AS5	0.862	0.509	0.505	0.724	0.647
AS6	0.869	0.583	0.597	0.752	0.733
ES1	0.52	0.862	0.775	0.575	0.6
ES2	0.523	0.858	0.755	0.556	0.595
ES3	0.582	0.877	0.756	0.637	0.58
ES4	0.53	0.818	0.709	0.571	0.558
ES5	0.55	0.893	0.766	0.599	0.574
ES6	0.607	0.873	0.81	0.662	0.588
ES7	0.534	0.803	0.706	0.593	0.564
INTS1	0.685	0.619	0.607	0.846	0.64
INST2	0.723	0.593	0.569	0.884	0.676
INST3	0.712	0.605	0.604	0.88	0.709
INST4	0.729	0.635	0.579	0.854	0.704
INST5	0.787	0.582	0.59	0.876	0.679
INST6	0.779	0.625	0.663	0.884	0.704
IS1	0.494	0.672	0.821	0.519	0.418
IS2	0.494	0.701	0.834	0.527	0.484
IS3	0.504	0.686	0.794	0.537	0.517
IS4	0.559	0.74	0.803	0.571	0.536
IS5	0.498	0.696	0.824	0.588	0.553
IS6	0.57	0.753	0.865	0.584	0.547
IS7	0.534	0.798	0.845	0.623	0.573
IS8	0.524	0.739	0.792	0.584	0.534
WFT1	0.536	0.446	0.435	0.464	0.717
WFT2	0.689	0.592	0.554	0.718	0.874
WFT3	0.725	0.631	0.585	0.742	0.889

Source: Authors' Analysis (2024).

The Instrumental Support items (INTS1-INST6) also display high loadings on their intended construct, with loadings of 0.884 for INST2 and 0.846 for INTS1. However, some items, like INST5, also have noticeable loadings on Appraisal Support, with a cross-loading of 0.787. This overlap implies that some aspects of Appraisal and Instrumental Support may be closely related.

Regarding Information Support, items (IS1-IS8) largely load strongest on their intended construct, with loadings such as 0.865 for IS6 and 0.834 for IS2. Despite this, several items also cross-load on Emotional Support, such as IS6, which shows a loading of 0.753 on Emotional Support, indicating a degree of similarity between these constructs.

Finally, for the Well-being of First-Time Mothers, items (WFT1-WFT3) demonstrate strong loadings on their construct, with values of 0.889 for WFT3 and 0.874 for WFT2. Cross-loadings for Well-being items are relatively low, suggesting that this construct is more distinct from the support constructs than they are from each other.

The cross-loading results support discriminant validity, as items load most strongly on their respective constructs. However, some overlap exists, particularly between Appraisal and Instrumental Support, as well as between Emotional and Information Support. These overlaps suggest potential conceptual similarities among the support constructs, warranting further exploration to clarify their distinctiveness.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 and Figure 2 outline the path coefficients for the hypothesised effects of various types of support, such as appraisal support, emotional support, information support, and instrumental support, on the well-being of first-time mothers. Hypothesis 1 (H1) examines the influence of Appraisal Support on well-being, showing a path coefficient of 0.401, with a T statistic of 4.502 and a p-value of 0, indicating a significant positive relationship. This suggests that increased Appraisal Support contributes to improved well-being, supporting H1. Hypothesis 2 (H2) tests the relationship between Emotional Support and well-being and reveals a path coefficient of 0.25, a T statistic of 3.397, and a p-value of 0.001. This positive and significant effect confirms H2, indicating that Emotional Support is also important in enhancing well-being.

In contrast, Hypothesis 3 (H3) explores the relationship between Information Support and well-being, showing a path coefficient of -0.053, a T statistic of 0.686, and a p-value of 0.493. These values suggest no statistically significant effect, meaning that Information Support does not have a meaningful impact on the well-being of first-time mothers, leading to the rejection of H3. Lastly, Hypothesis 4 (H4) examines the influence of Instrumental Support on well-being, with a path coefficient of 0.311, a T statistic of 3.453, and a p-value

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of 0.001, showing a significant positive relationship. This result supports H4, indicating that Instrumental Support positively contributes to well-being.

Table 4: Path Coefficients

| Hypotheses	Path Analysis	Beta Value	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
H1	Appraisal Support -> Well-being First-Time Mothers	0.401	0.089	4.502	0.000	Supported
H2	Emotional Support -> Well-being First-Time Mothers	0.25	0.074	3.397	0.001	Supported
H3	Information Support -> Well-being First-Time Mothers	-0.053	0.078	0.686	0.493	Not Supported
H4	Instrumental Support -> Well-being First-Time Mothers	0.311	0.09	3.453	0.001	Supported

Source: Authors' Analysis (2024).
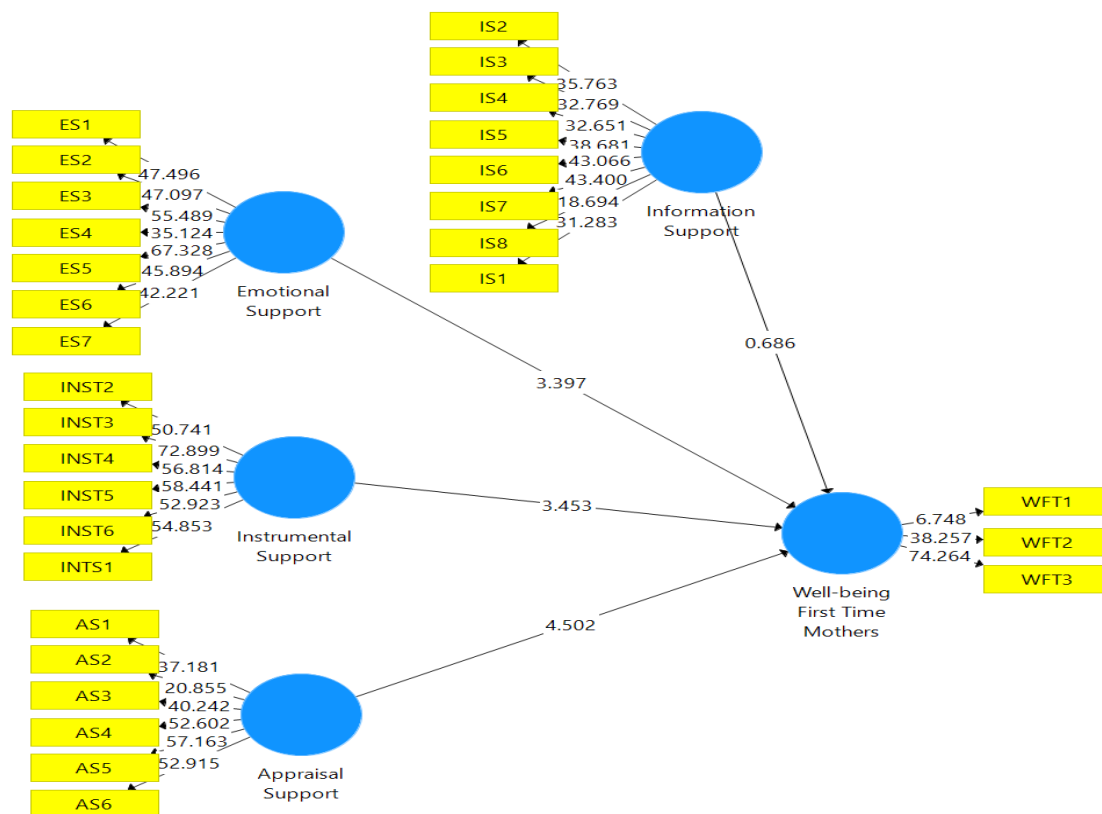
Figure 2 Graphical Model of Results

Structural Model

The analytical technique is translated into visuals using SmartPLS 3.0.0. The diagram is depicted in Figure 2, and the direction of the hypotheses put forward in the framework determines the direction of the arrows connecting the study's components. To confirm that the research construct has a causal effect, single-headed arrows are employed.

4.2. Discussion

The study found that appraisal, emotional, and instrumental support positively affects the well-being of first-time mothers, while informational support showed no significant impact. These findings align with and contribute to existing literature on social media's role in providing critical support structures, especially for vulnerable groups like new mothers. Each emotional, informational, and instrumental support appraisal has unique impacts on the well-being of mothers, demonstrating how social media fills different needs for new mothers and influences their overall psychological and emotional adjustment to motherhood.

Appraisal support, the study indicates, has a strong positive relationship with the well-being of first-time mothers ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$). This aligns with findings from Botha et al. (2020), who emphasise that appraisal support reinforces a mother's sense of competence, essential for boosting self-efficacy and self-confidence. By validating new mothers' experiences, social media platforms can be a powerful mechanism for enhancing their self-worth and mitigating doubts, an effect also highlighted in studies on parenthood self-efficacy (Amin et al., 2018). Positive feedback, encouragement, and reassurance from other mothers online foster an environment where first-time mothers can navigate their uncertainties and feel more equipped to manage parenting challenges. Additionally, Law et al. (2021) noted that appraisal support has been linked to improved mental health outcomes by reducing symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety, affirming its crucial role in promoting maternal well-being.

The significant positive relationship between emotional support and well-being ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.001$) underlines the role of empathy and encouragement in helping new mothers cope with emotional stress. Emotional support provided through social media can include active listening, understanding, and encouragement, which are critical for new mothers, especially during self-doubt. Cheung et al. (2022) assert that emotional support from online networks can reduce psychological stress, making mothers more resilient. Social media platforms offer a judgment-free zone where mothers can express feelings that may be difficult to share in person. This aligns with findings from Modak, Ronghe, Gomase, et al. (2023), who suggest that emotional support significantly mitigates feelings of isolation, which many new mothers experience. Furthermore, Zou et al. (2024) found that even support from artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots offering empathetic responses can positively influence mental health.

However, human empathy, especially from other mothers, adds a layer of authenticity that AI interactions may lack, emphasising social media's unique benefit as a platform for emotional support.

Instrumental support, which includes practical help such as advice on childcare and assistance with daily tasks, showed a strong positive impact on the well-being of first-time mothers ($\beta = 0.311$, $p = 0.001$). This mirrors the findings by Tracy et al. (2018), who reported that mothers benefitted greatly from instrumental support through family and online communities, as it reduces the stress associated with managing daily responsibilities alongside newborn care. Bosatta et al. (2024) highlight that instrumental support alleviates physical and emotional demands on new mothers, allowing them to focus more on bonding with their infants and recuperating post-childbirth. Social media can provide advice and resources that ease daily routines, enhancing mothers' capacities to meet early motherhood's physical and emotional demands. This support becomes particularly valuable for mothers who lack physical assistance from family or friends, often in nuclear families or mothers living in isolated areas.

Interestingly, the study revealed that informational support does not significantly affect well-being among first-time mothers ($\beta = -0.053$, $p = 0.493$), challenging the assumption that informational resources on social media are crucial for this demographic. This finding contradicts studies such as Bedaso et al. (2021a), which highlight that access to information regarding infant care and maternal health through social media empowers mothers with decision-making abilities. However, it aligns with Lin and Li (2024), who observed that while informational support is helpful, it often lacks the personal reassurance that emotional or appraisal support provides, which might be more valuable for new mothers' mental health. Information without the empathetic or validating aspects of other support forms, may even contribute to feelings of overwhelm if not balanced with emotional and practical support (Hahn & Jeon, 2023).

Additionally, the limited impact of informational support could reflect the challenges of filtering relevant and reliable information online, a challenge noted by (Gündüz, 2018). New mothers may encounter a vast range of advice and opinions on social media, potentially leading to confusion rather than confidence. This suggests that while informational support has value, it may require contextual reinforcement, such as validation from experienced mothers or healthcare professionals, to impact well-being positively.

Although social media might be helpful, the results warn against relying too much on factual assistance devoid of emotional context. For example, moms require assistance in navigating the deluge of internet advice, according to Aston et al. (2018). This study supports the more general notion that mothers should have access to accurate, compassionate counsel rather

than just information, even if it did not discover a substantial benefit of informational assistance on well-being.

5. 0. Conclusion and Implications

This study emphasises the importance of social media as a support tool for first-time mothers, demonstrating its positive influence on maternal well-being through appraisal, emotional, and instrumental support. The findings reveal that while social media can effectively provide various types of support, not all forms have an equal impact. Appraisal, emotional, and instrumental support positively and significantly contribute to new mothers' psychological and emotional adjustment, while informational support shows no statistically significant influence. This discovery is particularly valuable as it highlights the nuanced role of each support type in helping first-time mothers navigate the early stages of motherhood.

Appraisal support, which involves feedback that helps mothers self-assess their parenting abilities, is vital in boosting their confidence and self-efficacy. When new mothers receive encouragement, validation, and constructive feedback from other mothers or experienced caregivers on social media, it strengthens their belief in their ability to handle parenting challenges. Emotional support, on the other hand, provides an avenue for mothers to express their feelings, fears, and anxieties in a safe and empathetic space. Online communities and peer support groups offer mothers the chance to share their emotional experiences, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting mental well-being. Instrumental support, which includes providing tangible resources or guidance on performing specific parenting tasks, also plays a significant role. Mothers often seek practical advice on issues like feeding techniques, sleep routines, or health concerns, and social media platforms serve as a convenient and accessible source for such information.

While still present, informational support was found to have no statistically significant influence on maternal well-being. This finding suggests that merely providing factual information or instructional content may not be as impactful as other support forms offering emotional reassurance or direct assistance. Unlike appraisal, emotional, and instrumental support, which foster personal connection and practical guidance, informational support may lack the interpersonal engagement required to address new mothers' deeper psychological and emotional needs. This insight is crucial for healthcare providers, policymakers, and online support communities, as it suggests that support interventions should focus more on personalised, empathetic, and interactive support types.

The findings of this study have significant implications for healthcare providers and policymakers. The results suggest that social media should be embraced as a complementary tool for supporting new mothers, particularly in areas with limited access to physical support services. Social media can bridge the gap in support services, providing a network that fosters

a positive parenting experience through accessible and empathetic connections. In remote or underserved communities, where traditional support systems may be scarce, social media platforms can offer timely and relevant support to mothers who would otherwise face these challenges alone. Policymakers can leverage these insights to develop targeted online support programs emphasising appraisal, emotional, and instrumental support over purely informational content. Such initiatives could enhance the relevance, effectiveness, and positive impact of social media-based interventions for maternal well-being.

For social media developers and community managers, the study underscores the need to structure platforms to facilitate genuine and supportive interactions. Platforms should be designed with features that prioritise emotional and appraisal support. For instance, peer-to-peer support groups or guided mentorship programs where experienced mothers can offer encouragement and advice to new mothers could be incorporated into platform design. Furthermore, training moderators to manage discussions and encourage positive, empathetic exchanges can create safer and more effective online spaces for mothers. By fostering a culture of empathy and support, social media platforms can become a vital resource for maternal well-being.

Competing Interest

The authors have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this paper.

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