

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN HEALTHCARE DECISION MAKING

Dissertation Submitted to



The IIHMR University, Jaipur

for the partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

in

Hospital and Health Management

By

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Under the Supervision and Guidance of

Dr Arindam Das

2024

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled **“Influence of social media in healthcare Decision making”** is a bonafide record of my original research work. I declare that it has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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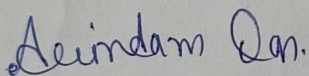
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Date

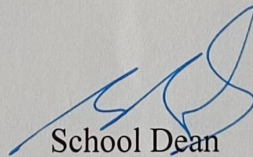
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **“Influence of social media in healthcare Decision making”** is a record of the research work undertaken by **Mr. Nilesh Dhakar** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MBA (Hospital and Health Management) from the IIHMR University, Jaipur under my guidance and supervision and his approach to the research study has been sincere, scientific, and analytical.



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Date: 10/07/2024.

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I am deeply grateful to the management and staff of Prem Niketan Hospital for providing me with the opportunity to intern and gain firsthand experience in healthcare operations and my sincere gratitude to Dr. Manisha Gupta and Dr. G. S. Ranawat for their constant support, motivation, and precious suggestions during this internship and while writing this dissertation.

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It is my pleasure to thank my family and friends for their encouraging and believing in me all the time throughout this study process which pay off.

It is important to recognize that this project would not have been possible without the support of such individuals and institutions. I am extremely grateful for it.

Sincerely,

Nilesh Dhakar

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ABSTRACT

Social media, therefore, is noted to have entered a revolutionary phase in exploding interests across many areas of people's lives, including healthcare. This research aims to explore the role of social media in determining healthcare decisions among patients in Jaipur with a focus on its reliability of health information. Conducted during the internship at Prem Niketan Hospital, Jaipur, the study contains information on 150 patients and general public in catchment area of the hospital (a radius of 3 km of the hospital) about how their use of social media affects their health care related decisions.

This research aims to identify how social media influences patients to make their decisions on healthcare and evaluate perceived credibility in health information sources on social media, while suggesting further improvements that will make better patient engagement for decision-making informed. It is indicated from the results that, in most cases, social media has influenced patients in a vast way when it comes to options for treatment, health care providers, or general health behaviors. Nevertheless, most report that the health information they access through those same sites is unreliable, and they do not trust it at all.

A close look at the results reveals that while social media offers a channel for pluralistic opportunities in terms of peer support, exposure to alternative views, and timely health-related information, it also provides a number of important challenges. This includes misinformation, the absence of credible information, information overload, and invasion of privacy. In the midst of all this, the study has therefore made recommendations that healthcare providers can embrace to become stronger advocates of health literacy, educate the public on how to shift through this information, and ensure that they are significantly present in the social media platforms to give credible and accurate information on health.

Major policy recommendations that emanate from this research include the designing of the interface of guidelines between health institutions and social media in order that proper channels in the disbursement of correct health information can be operational, the acclimatization of active fact-checking projects for health information provided on social media sites, and obviously, public campaigns at awareness-raising about the risks of health information of an unverified nature. These recommendations, if implemented, provide certainty and assure an enhanced quality and reliability of health information

passed through social media, heightening patient engagement that leads to better health decisions.

This dissertation adds that empirical evidence determines how social media affects healthcare decision-making. These strategies underscore the need for credible health information and offer an avenue for the application of practical ways for health policy implementers and administrators. Areas for future research include longitudinal designs that can test changes over time, the extension of the study population to more heterogeneous groups to increase generalizability, and the performance of qualitative studies to gain in-depth understanding of patients' engagement with social media in terms of health information.

Summing up, social media has played a significant role in generating and shaping healthcare decisions, but the authenticity of the information available matters a lot. Overcoming the continuing challenges and building upon the present opportunities is likely to skyrocket patient engagement in an effective manner to foster informed health decisions. This points to the need to continue to improve the credibility of health information using social media to maximize benefit for patients and, in a larger dimension, public health.

Keywords

Social media, Healthcare Decision Making, Patient Behavior, Digital Health Communication, Multispecialty Hospital, Social Media Influence, Healthcare Choices, Social Media Usage, Patient-Centered Care, Social Media Platforms, Jaipur Healthcare, Social Networking Sites, Patient Satisfaction, Online Health Forums, Questionnaire Survey.

Chapter-1

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The Rise of Social Media

Over the past decade, social media has emerged as a dominant force in global communication. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp have not only transformed personal interactions but have also significantly influenced various professional domains, including marketing, politics, and healthcare. It is through the ease of access to sharing and consuming these large bulks of information instantaneously, as well as being interactive platforms, that have cemented their places in modern society.

Social Media in Healthcare

Social media in the healthcare sector does much more than its functions. It acts as a channel for health education, support system for patients, accommodates different public health campaigns, and facilitates sharing of knowledge among health professionals and interaction with the public. Patients have used social media to find information on symptoms and treatment options, healthcare providers, to network with others with similar health issues, and lookout for emotional support and advice.

Information Quality and Reliability

The democratization of health information on social media empowers patients but also brings along important challenges. Unlike traditional sources of medical information, the content of social media is not usually rigorously peer-reviewed or fact-checked. The quality and reliability of health information on such platforms are therefore very variable. Misinformation, anecdotal advice, and unverified claims can quickly spread and diffuse with harmful health consequences.

Health Decision-Making

The influence of social media on a patient's decision-making in matters concerning health is great. Increasingly, patients rely on social media to find information to guide decisions for their health, from choosing a healthcare provider down to the selection of a plan of treatment. Obviously, this trend begs the following two very important questions: Do they get accurate information? And does this impact the quality of their health outcome? Knowing how patients interpret and make use of social media content in their healthcare decisions is very important for the formulation of strategies to improve health information accuracy and foster informed decision-making.

Prem Niketan Hospital

Located in Jaipur, Rajasthan, Prem Niketan Hospital is one of the most famous healthcare institutions in the city, with a reputation built around quality patient care and clinical excellence. With its heterogeneous patient population, it offers the ideal hospital setting to study the effect of social media use on healthcare decision-making. During the two-and-a-half-month internship at Prem Niketan Hospital, I get a close look at how patients, healthcare providers, and information sources—the latter including social media—are interacting. From this observation, it became quite crystal clear the instrumental role played by the social media in shaping patients' health-related choices and behaviours.

Relevance and Implications of the Study

Understanding the role social media plays in health decisions has mammoth potential for many stakeholders:

- **Patients:** Understanding how social media is influencing their health decision-making makes them better consumers of online health information, thus promoting himself for better outcomes.
- **Healthcare Providers:** With the knowledge of the role of social media in the patients' decision-making, a health provider will be better placed to advise and help his patients by correcting any misconception with accurate information.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and evaluate the influence of social media on healthcare decision-making among patients. Specifically, this research aims to understand how social media impacts patients' decisions regarding treatments, healthcare providers, and overall health behaviours. Additionally, this study seeks to assess the reliability of health information found on social media platforms and to provide recommendations for improving patient engagement and informed decision-making in healthcare settings. The findings from this research will offer valuable insights into the role of social media in the healthcare landscape, contributing to better health communication strategies and patient outcomes.

1.3 Problem Investigated

Social media has turned into a day-to-day pathway for health-related information in this digital age. Patients increasingly resort to these sites for seeking advice, sharing experiences, and making informed health decisions. Nevertheless, nature of unregulated content on social media presents specific challenges. Misinformation, anecdotal advice, and other baseless health claims can easily spread, leading uninformed or harmful healthcare decisions. The more worrisome issue is the difficulty of identifying relevant health information from misleading content; this has key implications for patient safety and outcome. Therefore, it addresses a critical need: assessing the role of social media as a channel in healthcare decision-making while at the same time estimating the credibility of the information that patients come across online.

1.4 Context and Importance of the Problem

This has led to a change in how people obtain and digest health information. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp have become part of the critical coalition through which patients seek out health information. The platforms are characterized by being interactive and user-created, which will spread any piece of information fast, be it accurate or not. That alone is begging for attention from health fraternity members since patients increasingly depend on social media for vital health decisions.

This study is set against the background of Prem Niketan Hospital in Jaipur—one of the most famous and leading health institutions in healthcare. With patients suffering from a variety of diseases and the aim to achieve excellence in clinical care, the setting presents a varied environment to study the influence of social media on healthcare decision-making. During my two-and-a-half-month-long internship at the prem Niketan Hospital, I got to observe the pattern of interaction between patients, health providers, and information sources, underlining what role is played by social media in patients' health-related choices and behaviours.

Misinformation in social media has the potential to lead to bad health results, increase distrust among people with their personal doctors, and a rise in cost expenditure because of treatment inappropriateness or unnecessary treatment. Knowing how patients use social media for health information to make informed healthcare decisions is critical in developing effective strategies for communication that enhance patient education and evidence-based health information.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Objectives:

- 1. Find out the Use of social media on Healthcare Decisions.**
- 2. Identify Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media in Healthcare and Provide Recommendations.**

1.6 Significance of the Study

It has important implications for stakeholders namely, patients, health care providers, policy makers, and researchers. Patients would be informed on how to navigate the vast online health information landscape responsibly to better health outcomes. Health care providers can use the insights to guide patients more effectively, solving the misconceptions and giving accurate information. Policymakers can develop guidelines that support the dissemination of credible health information across social media platforms, which may reduce the virus-like spread of misinformation. Conversely, researchers should broaden their research founding into investigating more about digital

media's effects on health behaviours, contributing further to the wider field of study of health communication.

Such findings from this study would elaborate on how social media impacts health decision-making processes, thus enabling the formulation of strategies geared toward the promotion of patient empowerment, improved health literacy, and collaborative relationships between patients and providers. The insights learned in this study could help in shaping policies and education directed at upgrading the quality and integrity of health information exchanged through a social media platform.

Chapter-2

Review of Literature

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sr no.	Author	Title	Study Location	Salient Features
1.	S. Chirumamilla, M. Gulati	Patient Education and Engagement through social media	India	It brings out how social media can play a role in patient education and engagement and also in research dissemination. A vast number of patients are getting information about their health from social media. Generational, income, and racial differences persist across different platforms of social media. It also notes the inclusion of the need to derive relevant, trustworthy health information from social media to have better health literacy outcomes, mostly in disadvantaged populations. Through this paper, the authors discuss the advantages that social media provides in patient engagement, peer support, and advocacy with challenges of appropriate and ethical use by healthcare providers. It is the ultimate conclusion of the paper that perhaps social

				media can play a very important role in bridging the gap of health literacy to improve patient outcomes. Social media can equally enhance health literacy and patient engagement in various ways, such as the provision of accurate health information, facilitation of peer review, or even care advocacy. It also engages patients who get involved with field experts, become educated, garner support with peer groups, and advocate for care. Further, social media can be used to reduce the communication gap between patients and healthcare practitioners on matters of lifestyle and preventive medicine. It is indisputable that patient-designed social media platforms can contribute positively toward health disparities reduction by engaging patients in more peer support, emotional and social support, and mobilizing
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				efforts aimed at improving health. This would mean that such facilities provide means for having patient-powered research networks, thereby giving them chances to offer improvements toward healthcare. Besides enhancing the chances of contributing to healthcare, it gives an opportunity for the patient to become empowered.
2.	Chen J, Wang Y.	The influence of online health information on health decisions: A systematic review	China	This systematic review explored how social media is used for a variety of health purposes by institutions, health researchers and professionals, and members of the public. Ten general uses of social media for health that the review identified include invigilance, which means using the data in social media for disease surveillance, dissemination of information on health and countering misinformation, support of health interventions, facilitation of research in health and

			professional development, assurance of doctor-patient communications, and enabling members of the public to seek and share health-related information, exchange social support, track and share health activities. It also noted several new uses that have come into being since 2013 and listed the gaps in research, such as testing strategies for segmenting audiences and evaluating dose-response relationships for the differential impact of various social media applications on health interventions. Moreover, there are pending concerns about the privacy of personal information. The review categorizes the three classes of social media users into health institutions, health researchers and professionals, and the general public. Some of the challenges and concerns this review has
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				noted as issues for health social media relate to the quality of health information and its bearing on individual health outcomes, spreading misinformation, the need to reduce misinformation on social media, and improvement of public abilities to find sources of reliable information on social media.
3.	C.L. Ventola	Social media and Health Care Professionals: Benefits, Risks, and Best Practices	NA	An increasing percentage of physicians also uses social media to communicate directly with patients to supplement clinical care. In a survey by the social media site Quantum, including more than 4,000 physicians, more than 90% of physicians are using some form of social media for personal activities; only 65% use such sites for professional purposes. Media-Sharing Sites Websites for sharing media, like YouTube, make up an important portion of social media tools that specialize in rendering, sharing, and

				embedding digital media content on the Web. They also support many of the features found on other forms of social media sites, including profiles, connections, comments, and private messaging. Many of these universities also have a branded YouTube channel, which is possible to share videos in the university's social media site. Social media permit pharmacies to address large customer groups at a time and conduct surveys, letting patients feel they are part of the community in a pharmacy. Similar problems arise with traditional online press, but the interactive nature of social media exacerbates the problems because anybody can post information on the site. Social media users could also be bombarded with both latent and overt forces of conflicts of interest that the users might have no way of knowing.
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				Social Media Guidelines from Health Care Institutions social media has a lot of underlying risks for health care organizations, many of which could have an effect on the safety and security of patient information and patient consent, as well as impacting employment practices, physician credentialing and licensure, HCP-patient boundaries violations, and many other ethical issues.
4.	S Roberts-Lewis, H Baxter, G Mein, S Quirke-McFarlane, FJ Leggat, H Garner, M Powell, S White, L Bearne	Examining the Effectiveness of Social Media for the Dissemination of Research Evidence for Health and Social Care Practitioners: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis		It evaluated the effectiveness of social media in sharing research evidence with health and social care practitioners. In view of all articles published within 2010-2023, which could be found after an extensive literature search, the study showed that social media interventions generally showed positive effects on reach, engagement, direct dissemination, and impact at moderate-certainty for large within-group effects, considering the different

			effect sizes of the estimates for various outcomes. An effective strategy involved multiple channels or platforms—at least Twitter and Facebook—and images, for example, with infographics. Intensive social media campaigns were carried out with high posting frequency, including by influential individuals, and social media proved effective for health care practitioners, but no studies specifically related to social care practitioners. This study required a quantitative synthesis of the effectiveness data on using social media for disseminating research evidence to health and social care practitioners by comparing a number of different platforms, formats, and strategies. After this, the electronic databases were searched thoroughly for English-language articles published from January 1, 2010, to
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			January 10, 2023. Fifty heterogeneous articles were included in the review, of which 18% were RCTs. The measured outcomes were reach, engagement, direct dissemination in terms of link clicks, article views and downloads, and altmetric scores on impact. Results of the meta-analyses revealed that in most cases, while the social media interventions were positive, the studies offering direct dissemination and impact modality showed a moderate certainty of large and moderate between-group effects with an SMD of 0.88 and 0.76, respectively. There was also moderate certainty of large within-group effects on reach, engagement, and direct dissemination with SMD 1.99, 3.74, and 0.82, respectively; however, there was very low certainty for a small within-group effect on changing thinking or practice with an SMD of
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				0.45. The evidence suggested that multiple social media platforms, in particular, Twitter, now rebranded as X, and Facebook, accompanied by visual content in the form of infographics, with the stratagems of posting intensively and frequently in combination with influential figures, might enhance effectiveness. In relation, the conclusions stated that social media is an effective tool for spreading research evidence among health care professionals, recommending more intensive campaigns for better results. On top of that, future randomized controlled trials should be conducted to determine whether or not social media can affect the dissemination of research evidence within social care settings.
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Chapter-3

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a cross-sectional descriptive study in nature. Quantitative data was collected to explore the influence of social media on healthcare decision-making among patients and general population. It was decided to conduct a survey for collecting primary data from a heterogeneous patient population both inside and outside Prem Niketan Hospital, Jaipur.

3.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in the Prem Niketan Hospital, Jaipur, which is one of the prime institutions in Rajasthan. This hospital includes a big spectrum of services, with a highly heterogeneous population, which was suitable for this study. Apart from these hospital-based settings, some respondents were also selected from the general population to derive a more representative view of social media influence on healthcare decision-making.

3.3 Population and Sample

Population

The study population was patients visiting Prem Niketan Hospital, Jaipur, and members of the general population.

Inclusion criteria:

- Any person who is 18 or above years of age.
- Any current social media user who has looked for health-related information in the last year.
- Residing within 3 km radius of the hospital (for general population)
- Patients visiting the hospital

Sample Size

A sample size of 150 respondents was considered. The sample consisted of 75 patients from Prem Niketan Hospital and 75 general population.

3.4 Sampling Technique

In the survey, the respondents were selected using a convenience sampling technique. This was adopted for various reasons: It is practical, and the respondents can easily be accessed within the hospital setup and from among members of the general public. Though in some ways convenience sampling introduces an element of bias, the sample attempted to be diverse and representative by including sets of different demographic backgrounds among the respondents.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The ethical approval of the study was obtained from the Ethical Committee of Prem Niketan Hospital. The following ethical considerations have been addressed:

- **Informed Consent:** Each of the respondents was informed about the intention of the study, that participation was purely on a voluntary basis, and that they had a right to withdraw at any point during the exercise. Prior to the research, all participants, therefore, gave their informed consent.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. The dataset was stored securely, with identifying information not being linked to the dataset.
- **Data Security:** Adequate provisions were ensured to make the data collected secure by having files that were password protected and storage systems that were secure.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Survey Instrument

A semi structured questionnaire was prepared for the respondents. This questionnaire was designed to elicit information about the details like

- age, sex, education, etc.
- the pattern of social media usage
- types of health information sought on social media
- influence of social media on healthcare decisions
- perceptions of the reliability and credibility of health information on social media.

Questionnaire Development

There were 25 questions, a mix of multiple-choice and Likert scale questions, along with open-ended questions. The questions were structured in such a manner that the questions were clear, concise, making sure that any kind of respondent would find it easy to understand, and answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire had been pre-tested on a small sample of respondents before conducting the main data collection for its validity and reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection lasted for one month during April 15-May 15, 2024. This was both an online and offline survey to ensure wider reach and higher response rates. The digital questionnaires shared on social media and via email while the in-person ones were conducted within the premises of Prem Niketan Hospital. Participation was voluntary, having assured that the responses obtained from the respondents would be kept confidential and anonymous.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. In line with the preceding, the following steps for data analyses done were:

1. **Cleaning and Coding Data:** All the responses of the survey were checked for completeness and accuracy. The incomplete or invalid responses were removed from the analysis. The data were then coded and entered into a package of statistical software for analysis.
2. **Descriptive Statistics:** This involved calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to describe characteristics of the respondents and their usage patterns of social media.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

This study, although having provided several major insights into the influence of social media on healthcare decision-making, does have its limitations:

- **Sampling Bias:** Convenience sampling may introduce bias and limit the generalizability of the findings.
- **Self-Reported Data:** One can underline that in the present study, the student has used self-reported data, which might be subjected to response bias or even inaccurate responses by the respondents.
- **Cross-sectional design:** This is a cross-sectional study. As such, information that can be captured concerns only one point in time; changes over time cannot be assessed.

Chapter-4

Results

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the survey on the influence of social media in healthcare decision-making amongst patients in Jaipur. The target sample size was 150, comprising patients from Prem Niketan Hospital and the general public. The data were analysed descriptively according to the objectives of the study set out in Chapter 1.

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

4.2.1 Age Distribution of the Respondents

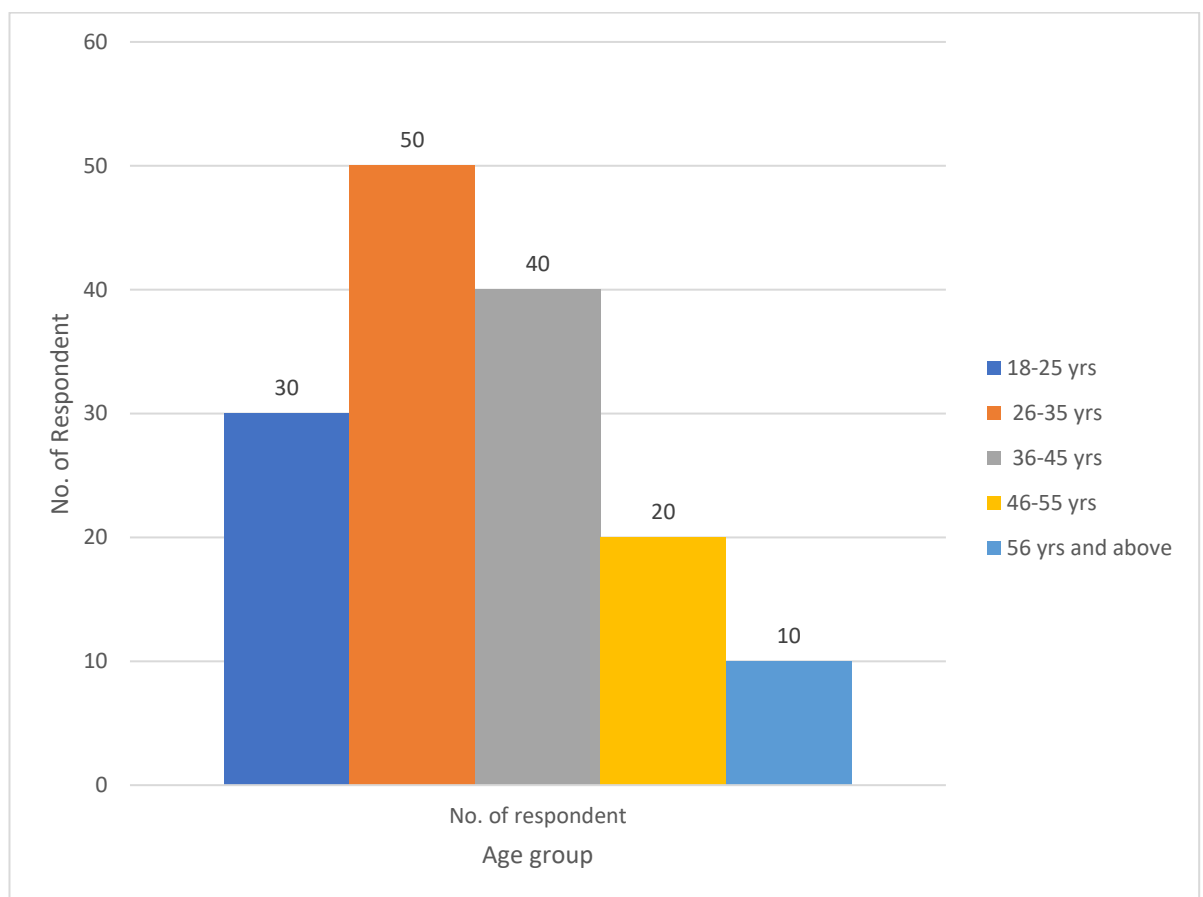


Figure 4.1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents according to Sex

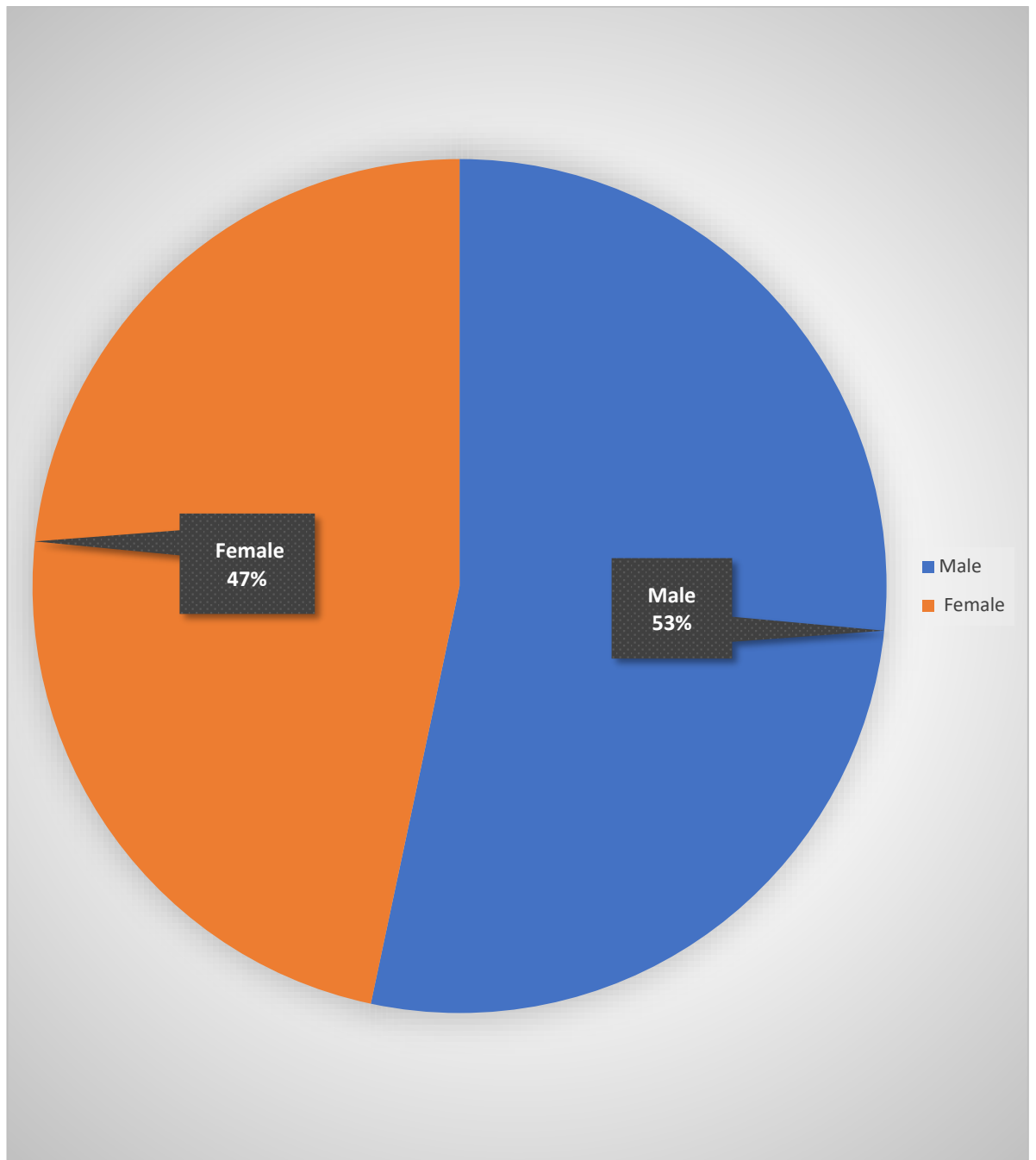


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Respondents according to Sex

4.2.3 Education Level of the Respondents

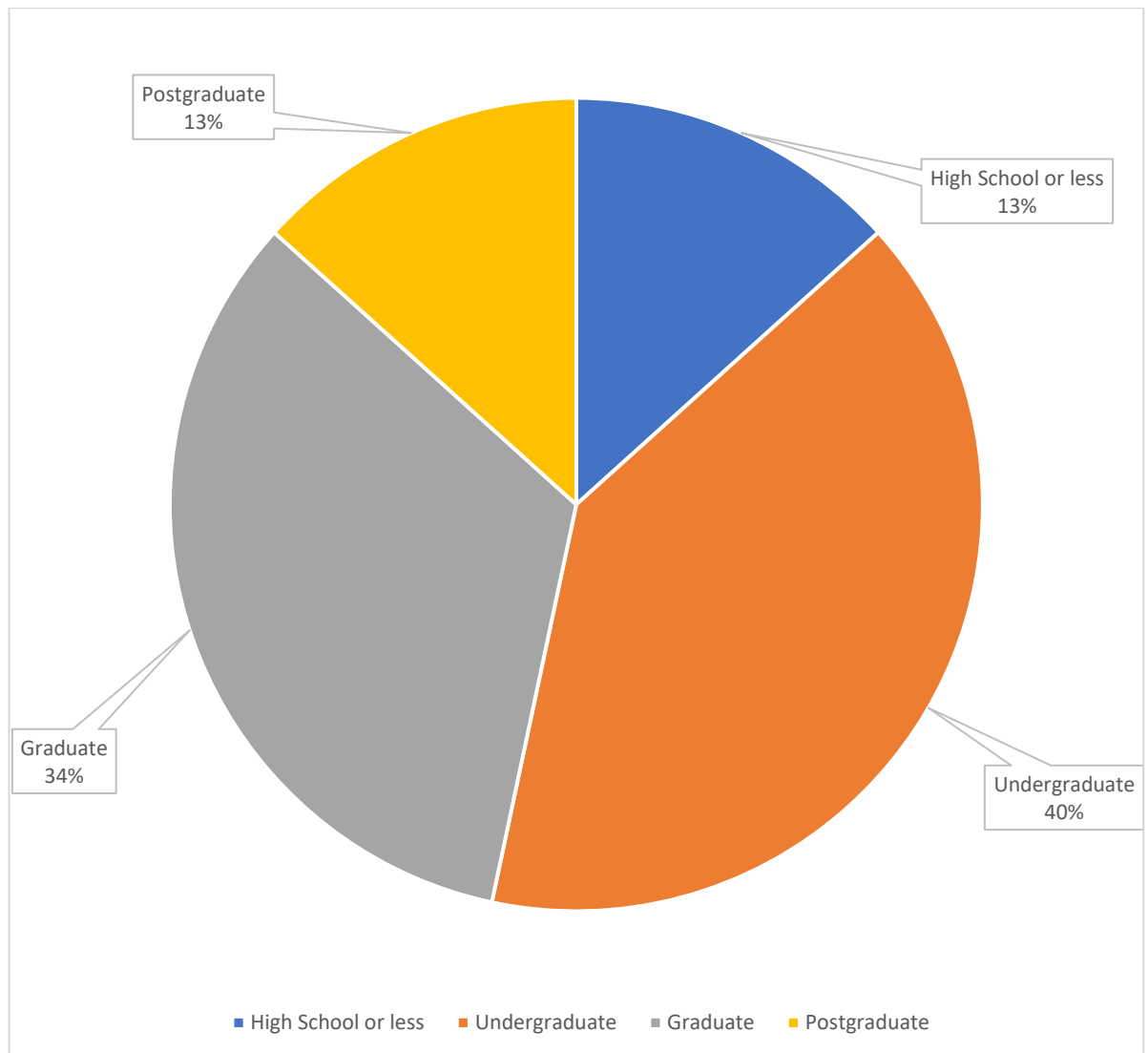


Figure 4.3: Education Level of the Respondents

4.2.3 Place of Residence of the Respondents

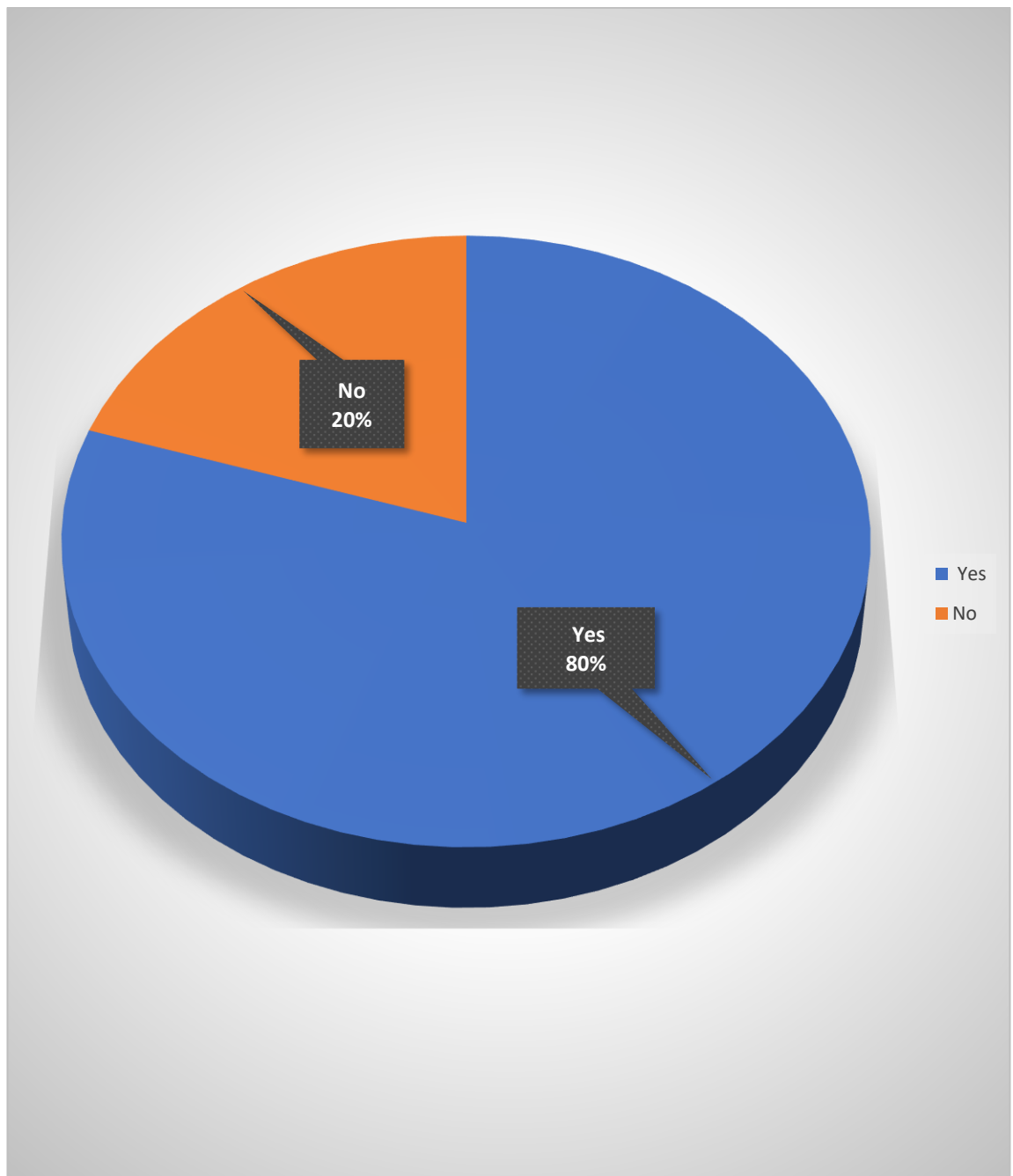


Figure 4.4: Place of Residence of the Respondents

4.3 Patterns of Social Media Usage

4.3.1 Social Media Usage for Health Information

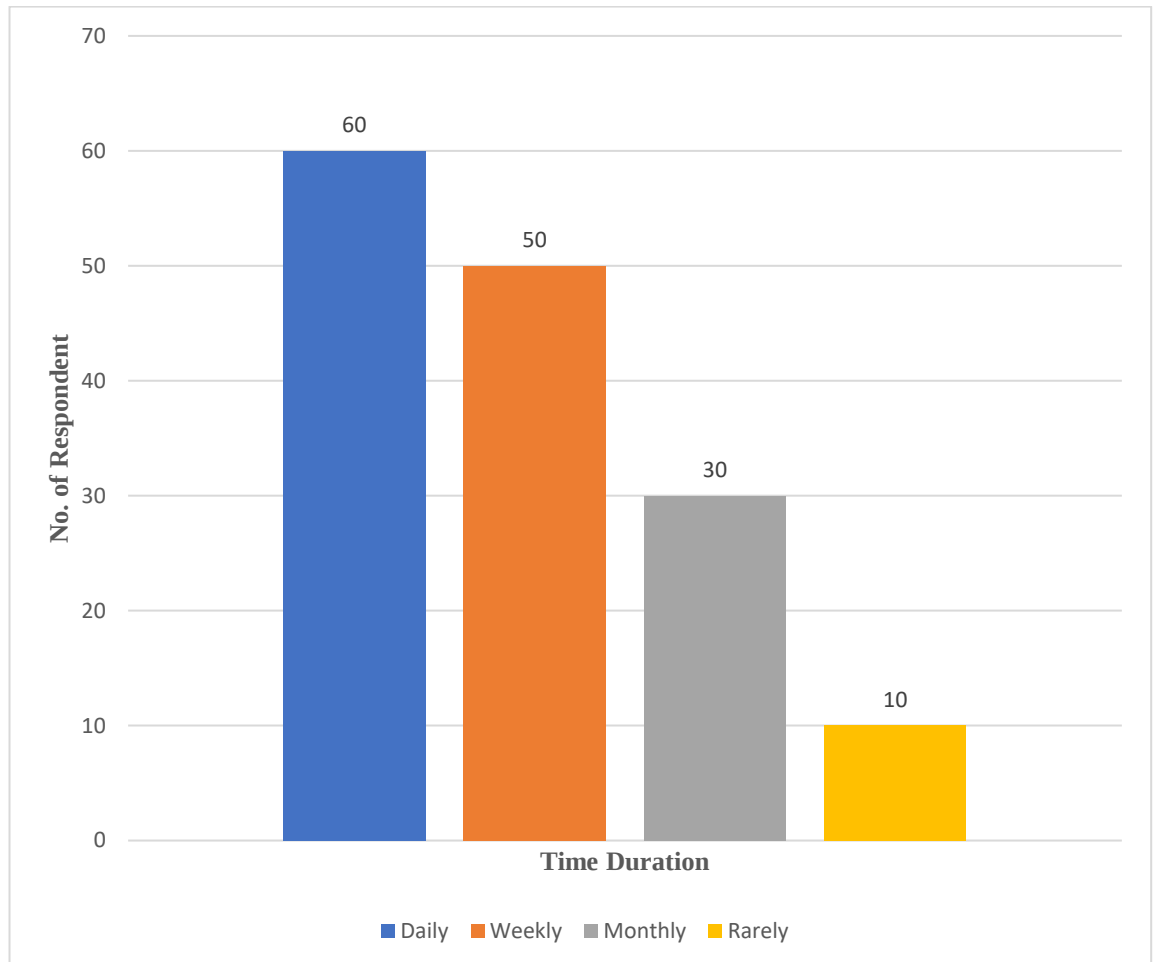
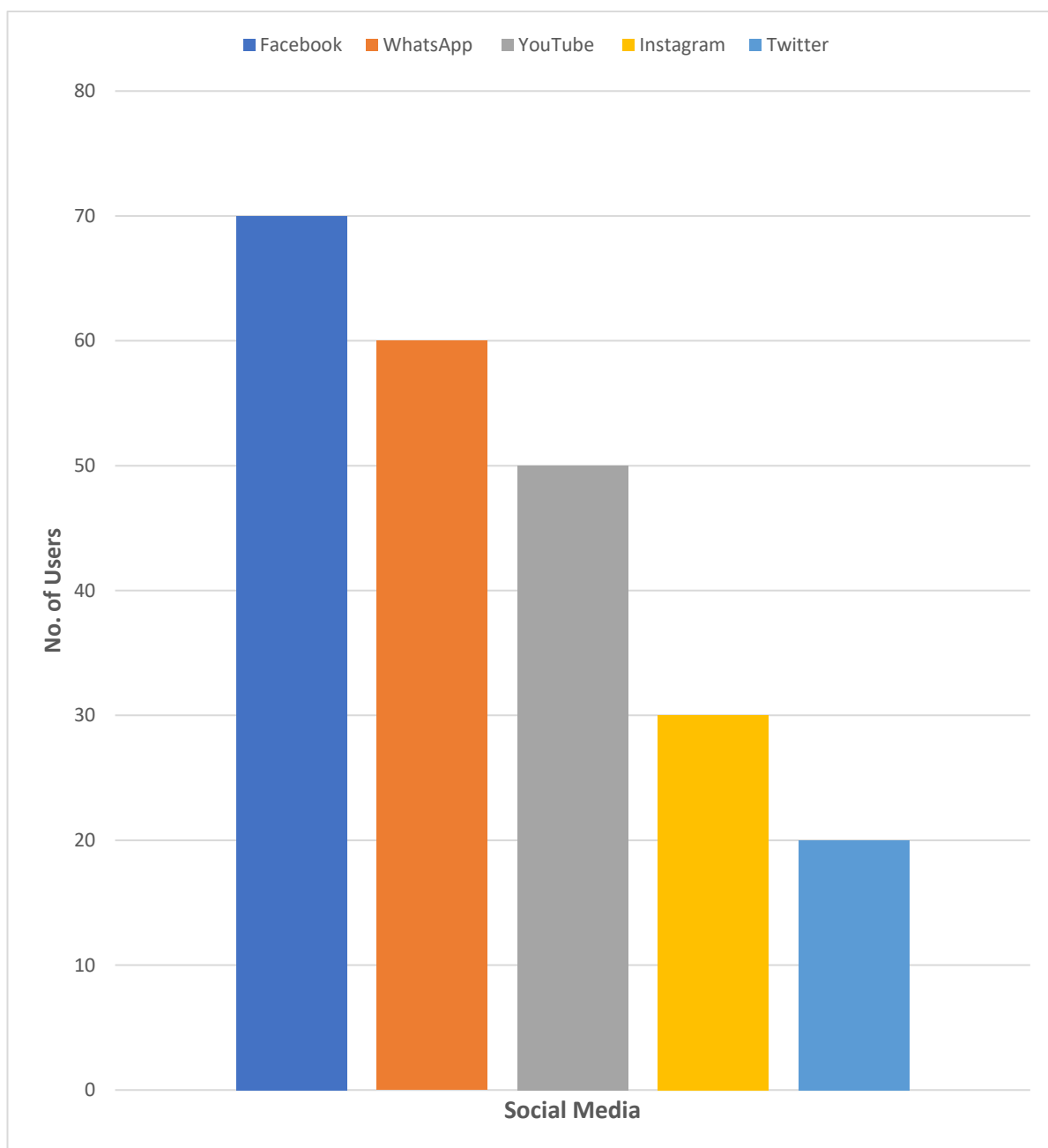


Figure 4.4: Social Media Usage for Health Information

4.3.2 Popular Social Media Platforms for Health Information



**Figure 4.5: Popular Social Media Platforms for Health Information
(multiple responses)**

4.4 Influence of Social Media on Healthcare Decisions

4.4.1 type of healthcare decisions based on social media information

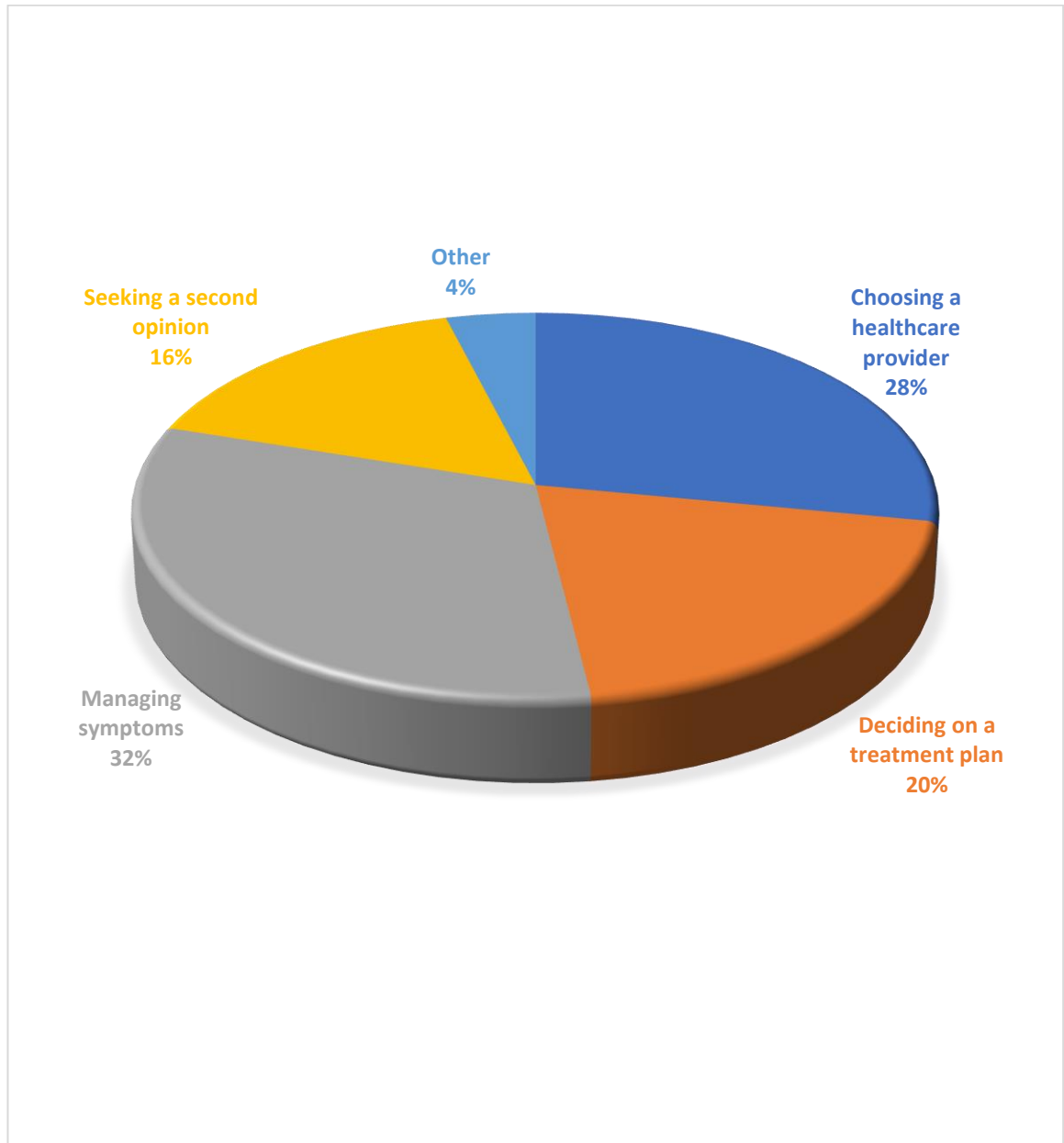


Figure 4.6: Type of healthcare decisions based on social media information

4.4.2 Influence on Treatment Choices

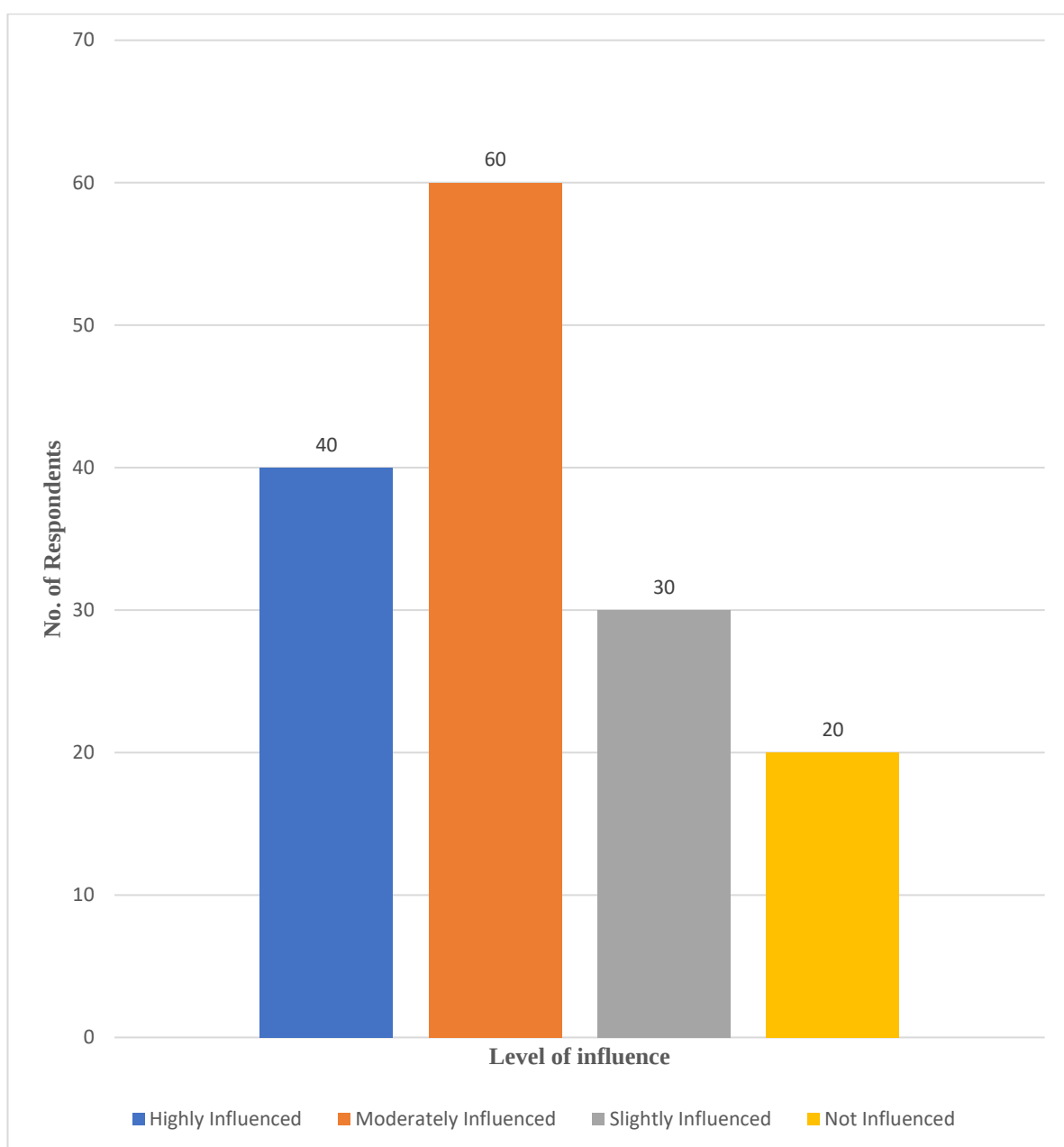


Figure 4.7: Level of Influence on Treatment Choices

4.4.3 Influence on Healthcare Provider Selection

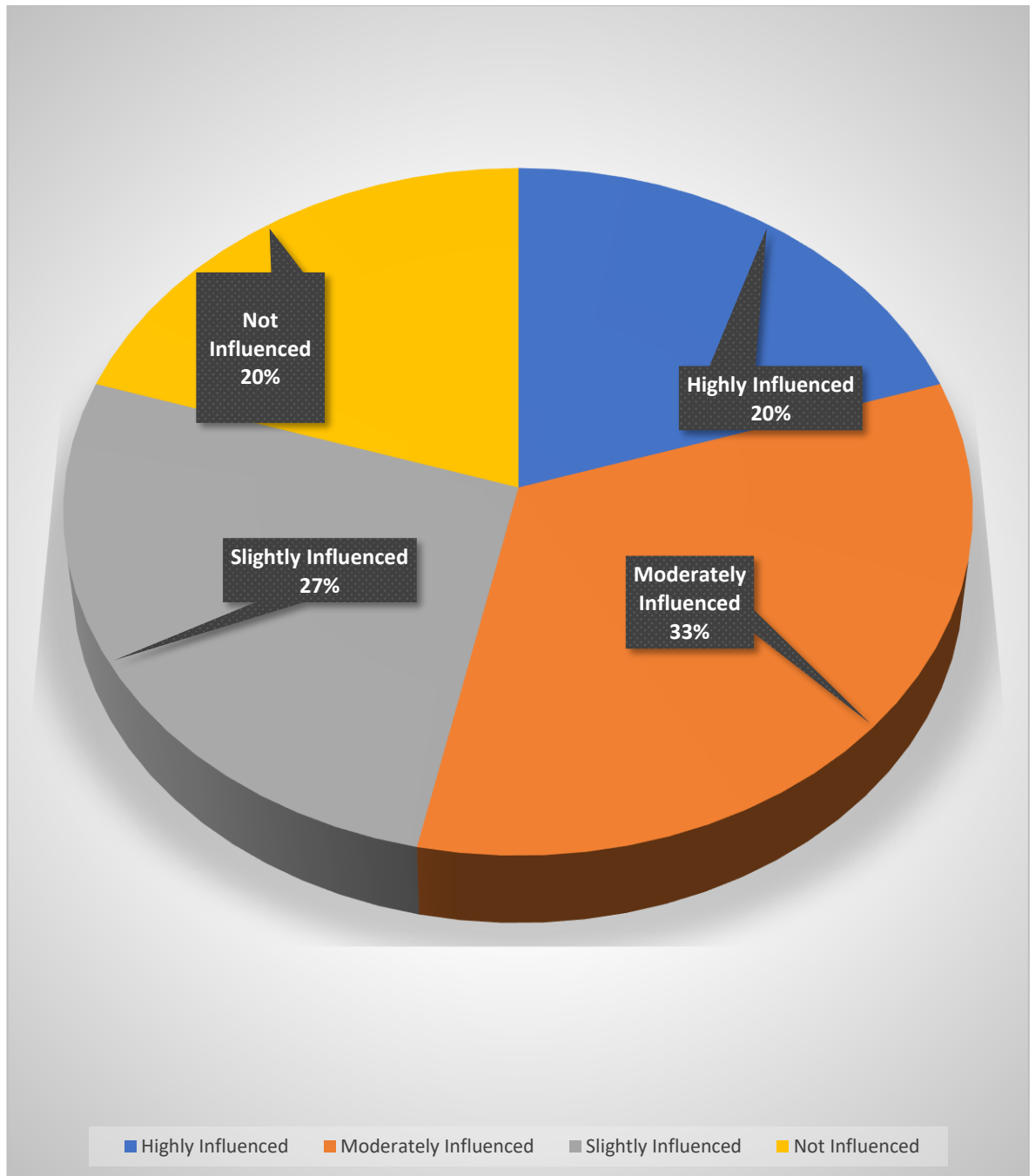


Figure 4.8: Level of Influence on Healthcare Provider Selection

4.4.4 Influence on Health Behaviours

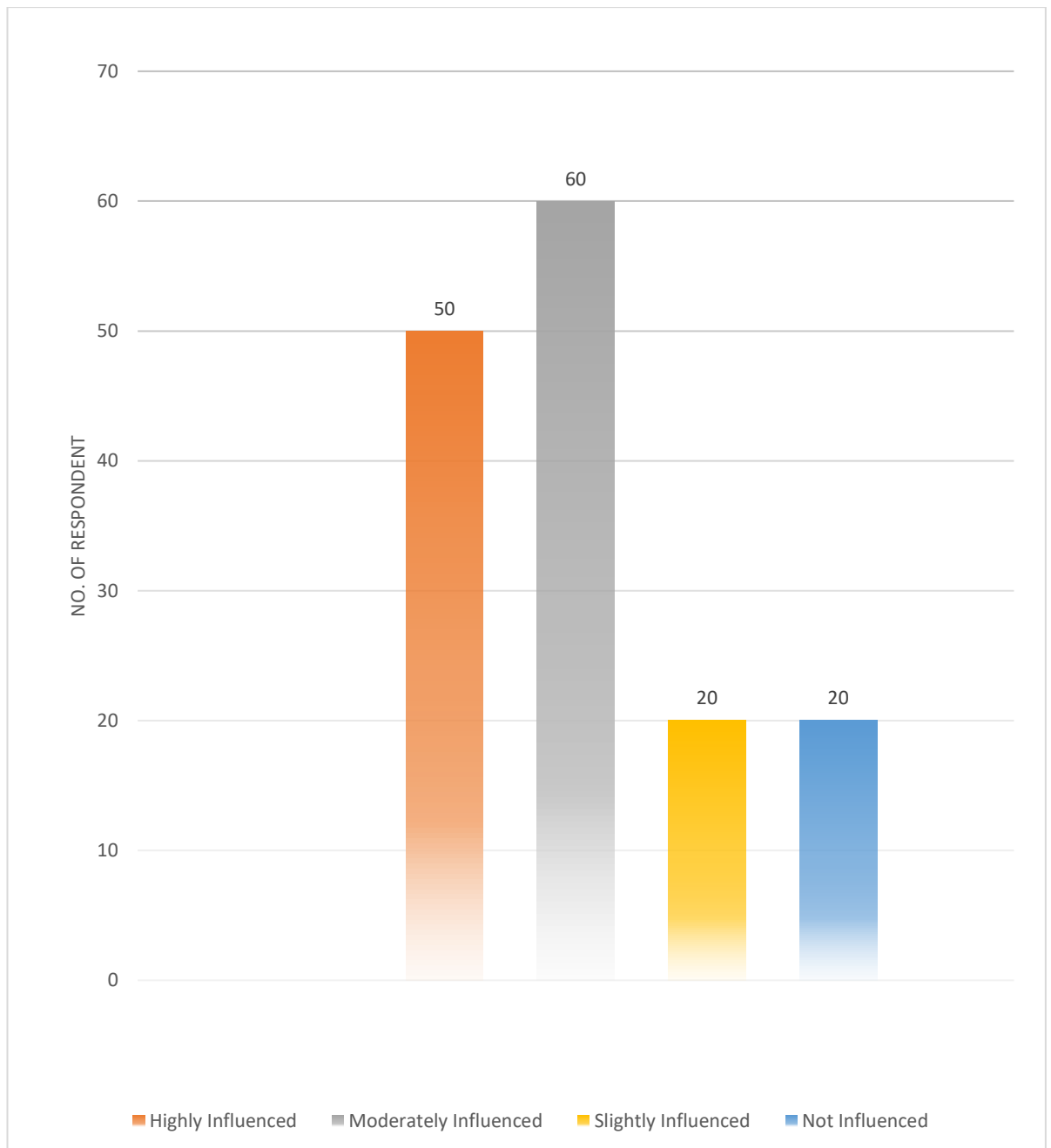


Figure 4.9: Level of Influence on Health Behaviours

4.4.5 Consult healthcare professionals after finding information on social media

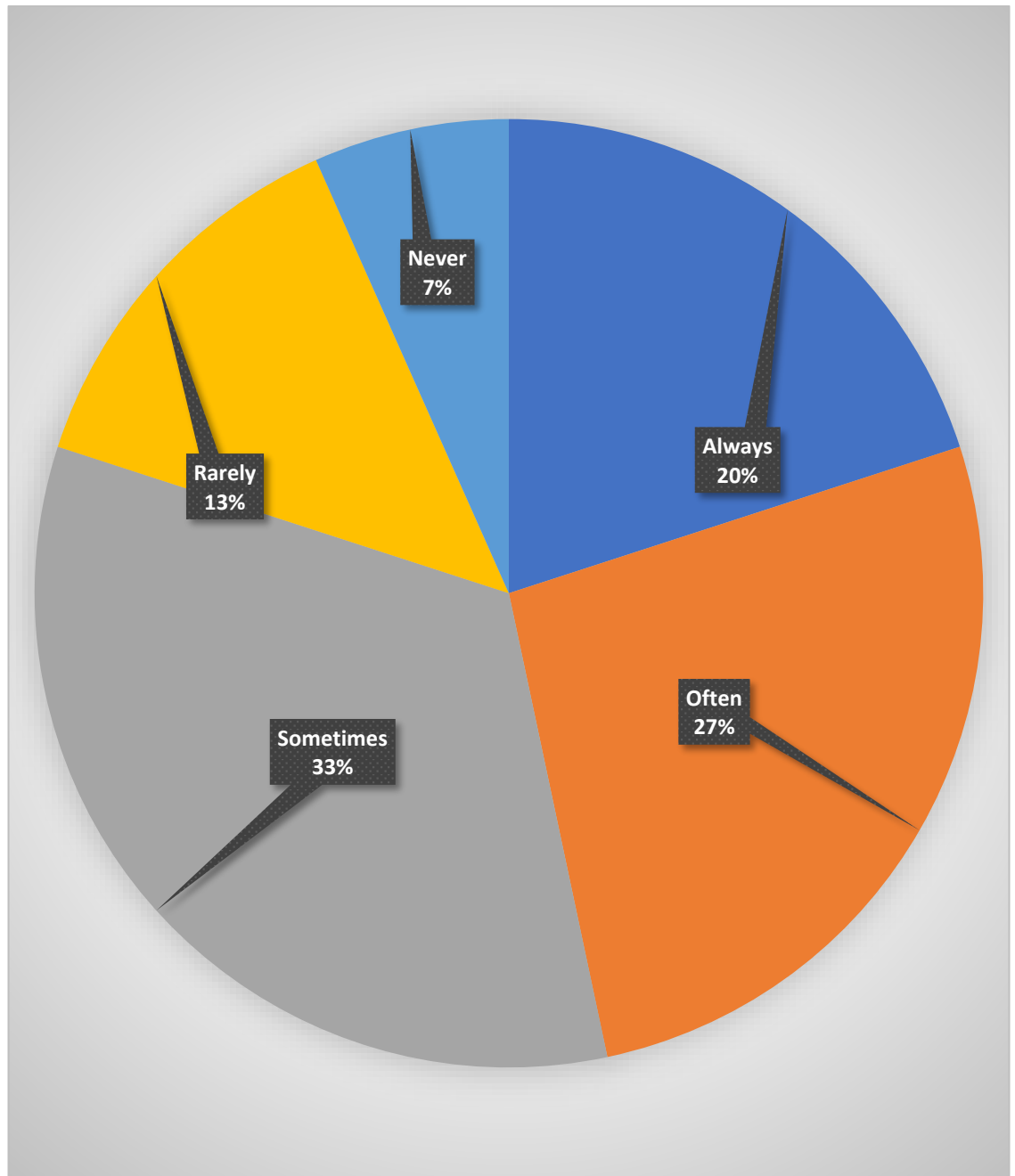


Figure 4.10: Consult healthcare professionals after finding information on social media

4.5 Reliability for Health Information from Social Media

4.5.1 Perceived Reliability on Social Media for Health Information

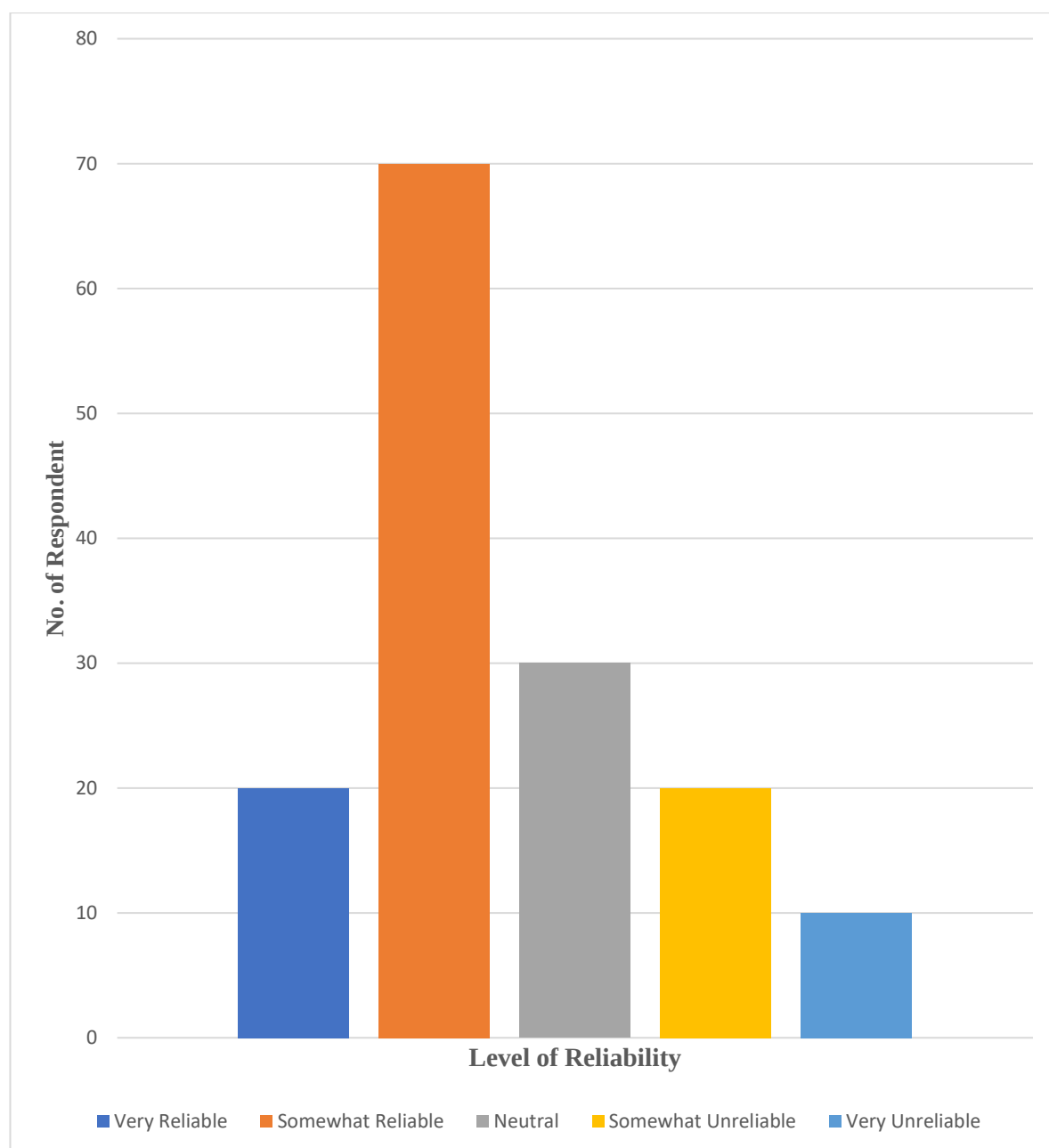


Figure 4.11: Perceived Reliability on social media for Health Information

4.5.2 Criteria for judging reliability

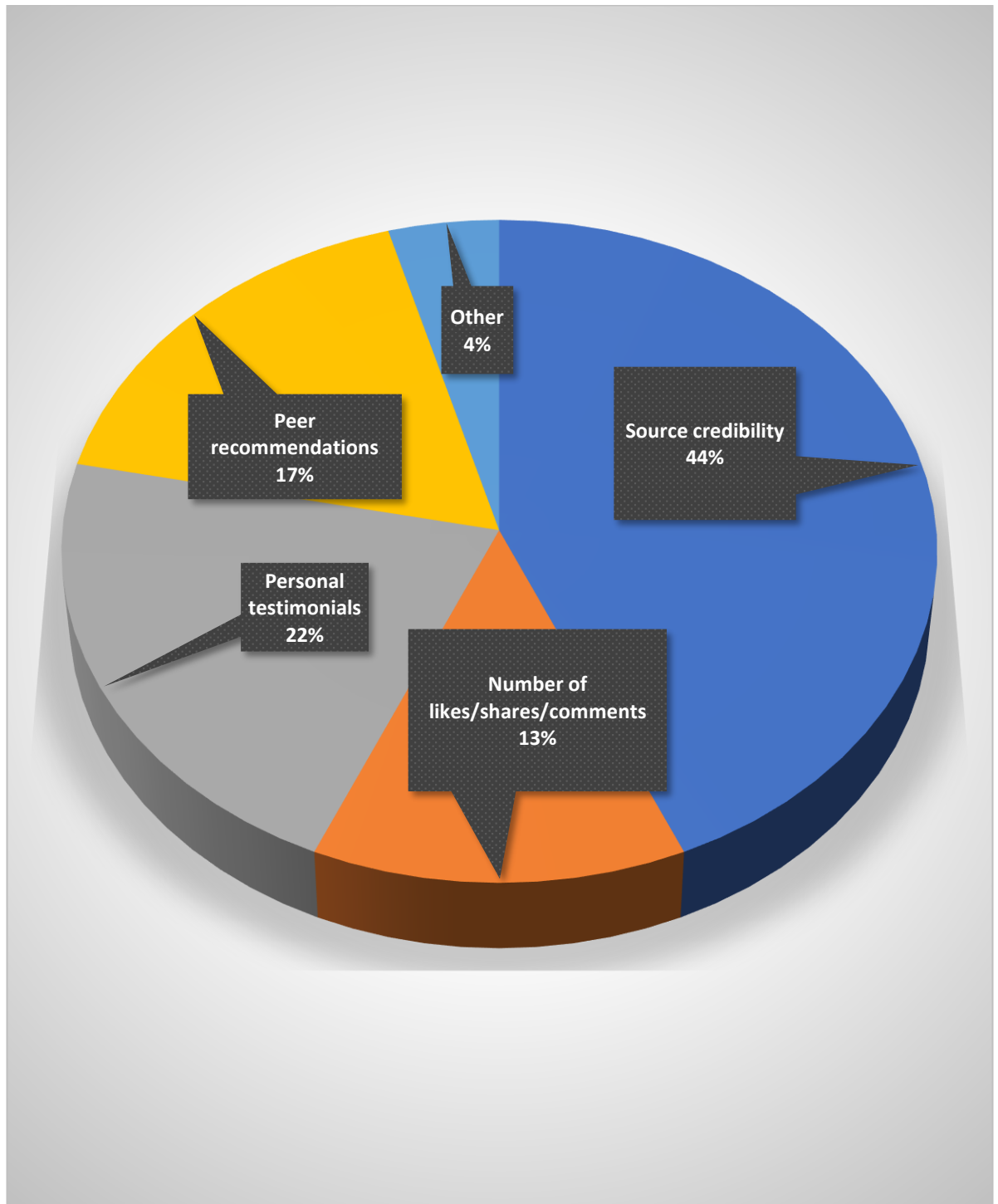


Figure 4.12: Criteria for judging reliability

4.5.3 Type of misleading information encountered

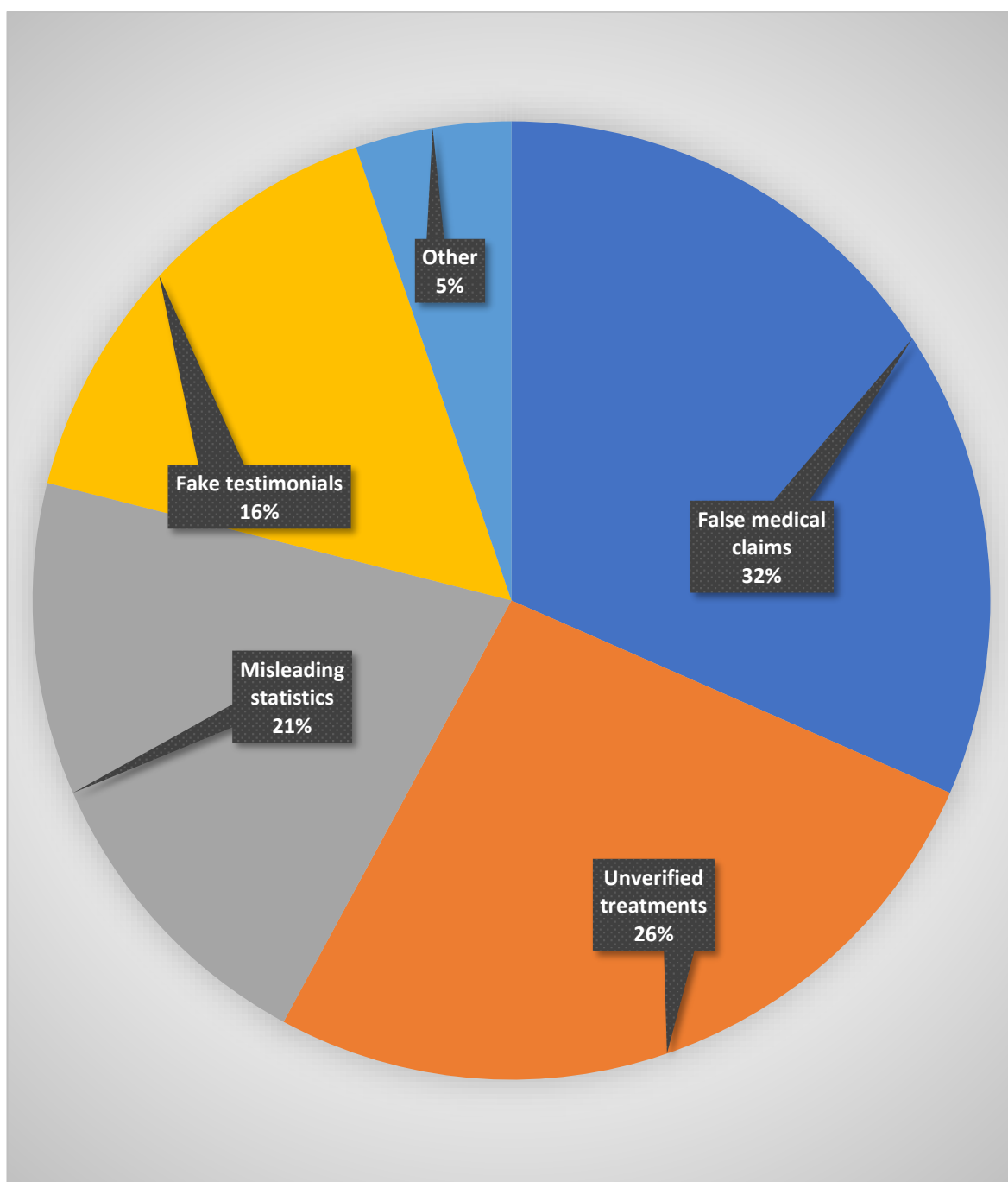


Figure 4.13: Type of misleading information encountered

4.6 Challenges and Opportunities in Using Social Media for Healthcare Decisions

4.6.1 Challenges Identified by Respondents

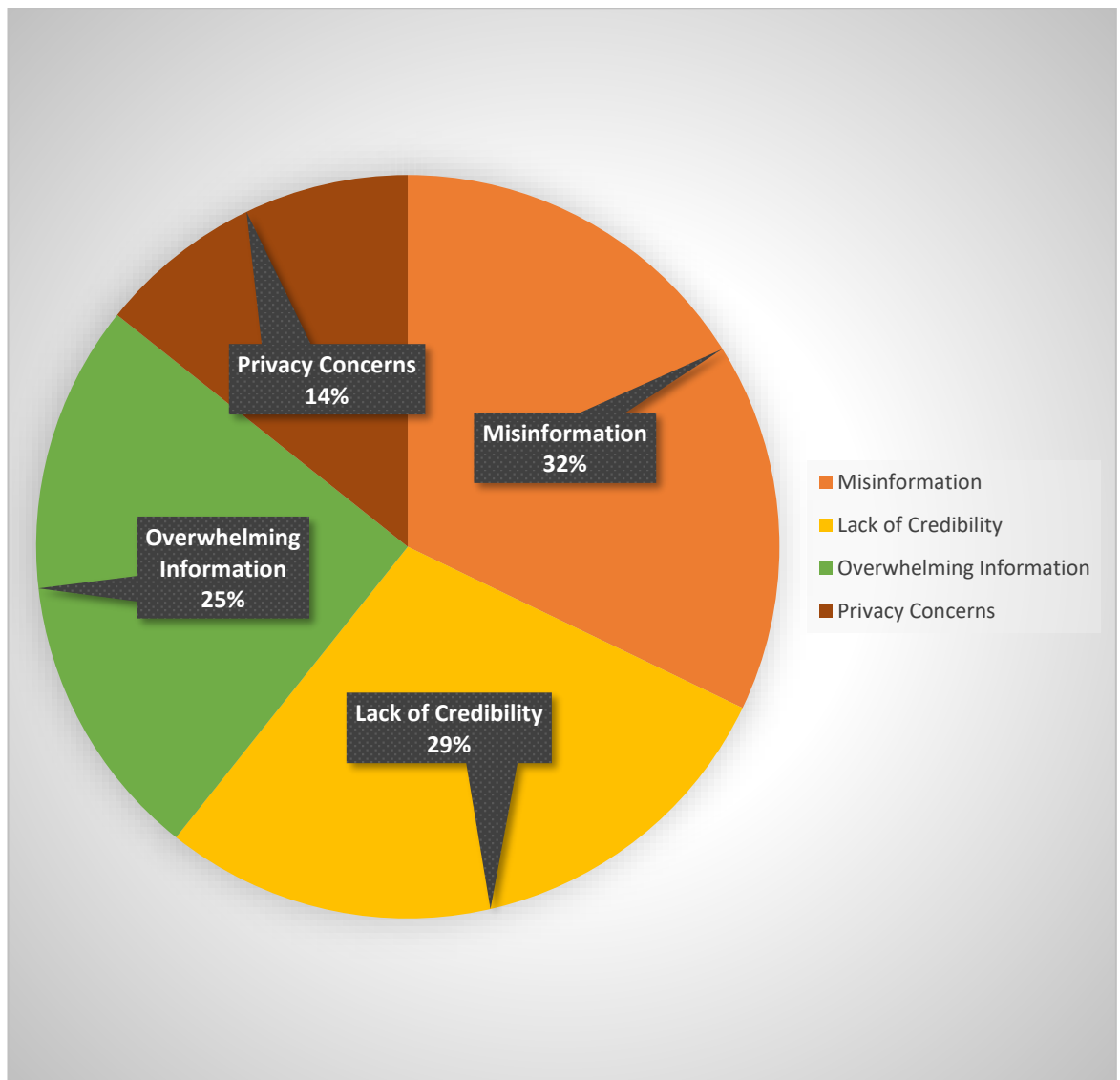


Figure 4.14: Challenges Identified by Respondents

4.7 Opportunities Identified by Respondents

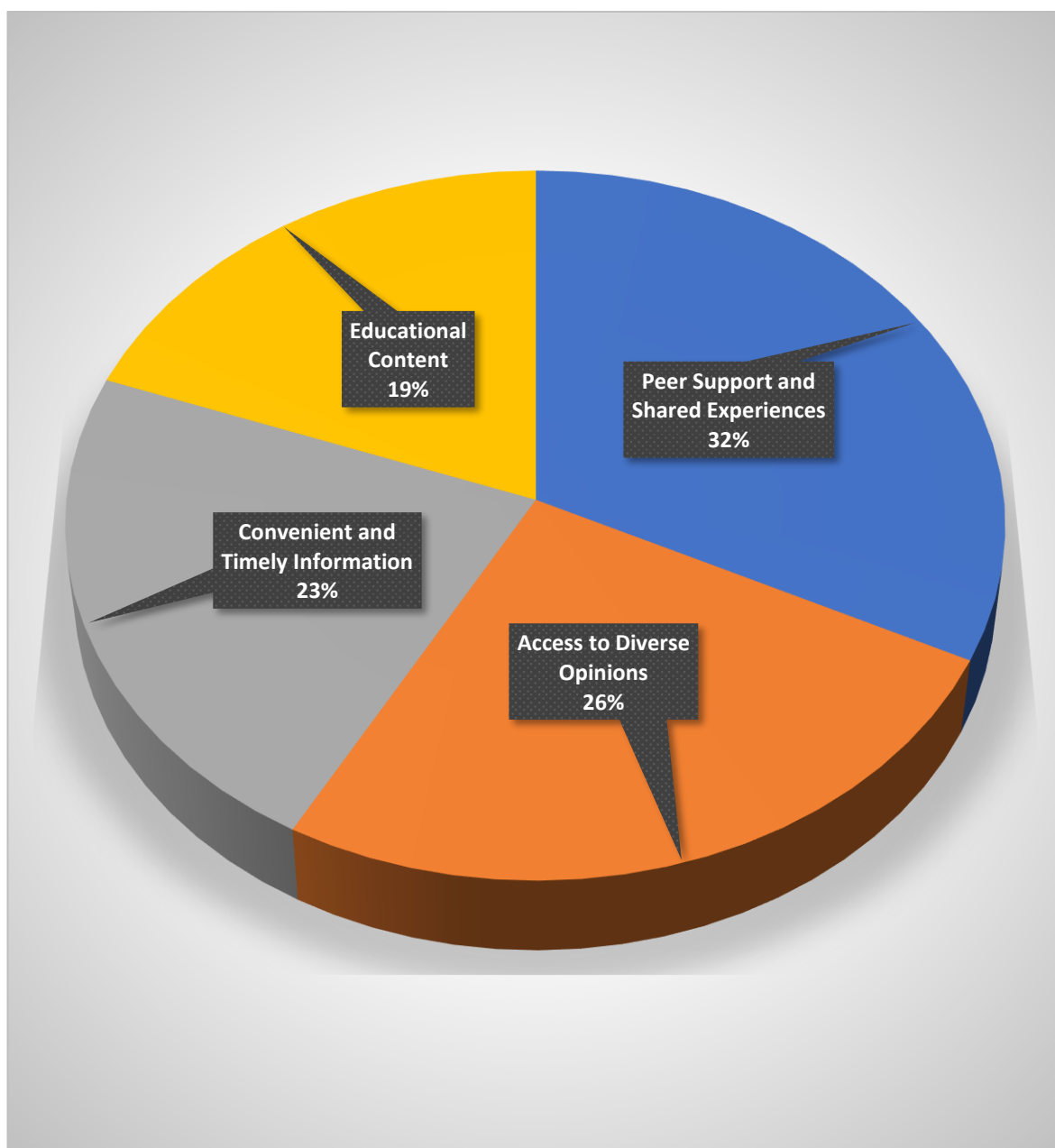


Figure 4.15: Opportunities Identified by Respondents

4.8 Patient Engagement and Communication

4.8.1 Comfort level discussing social media information with healthcare provider

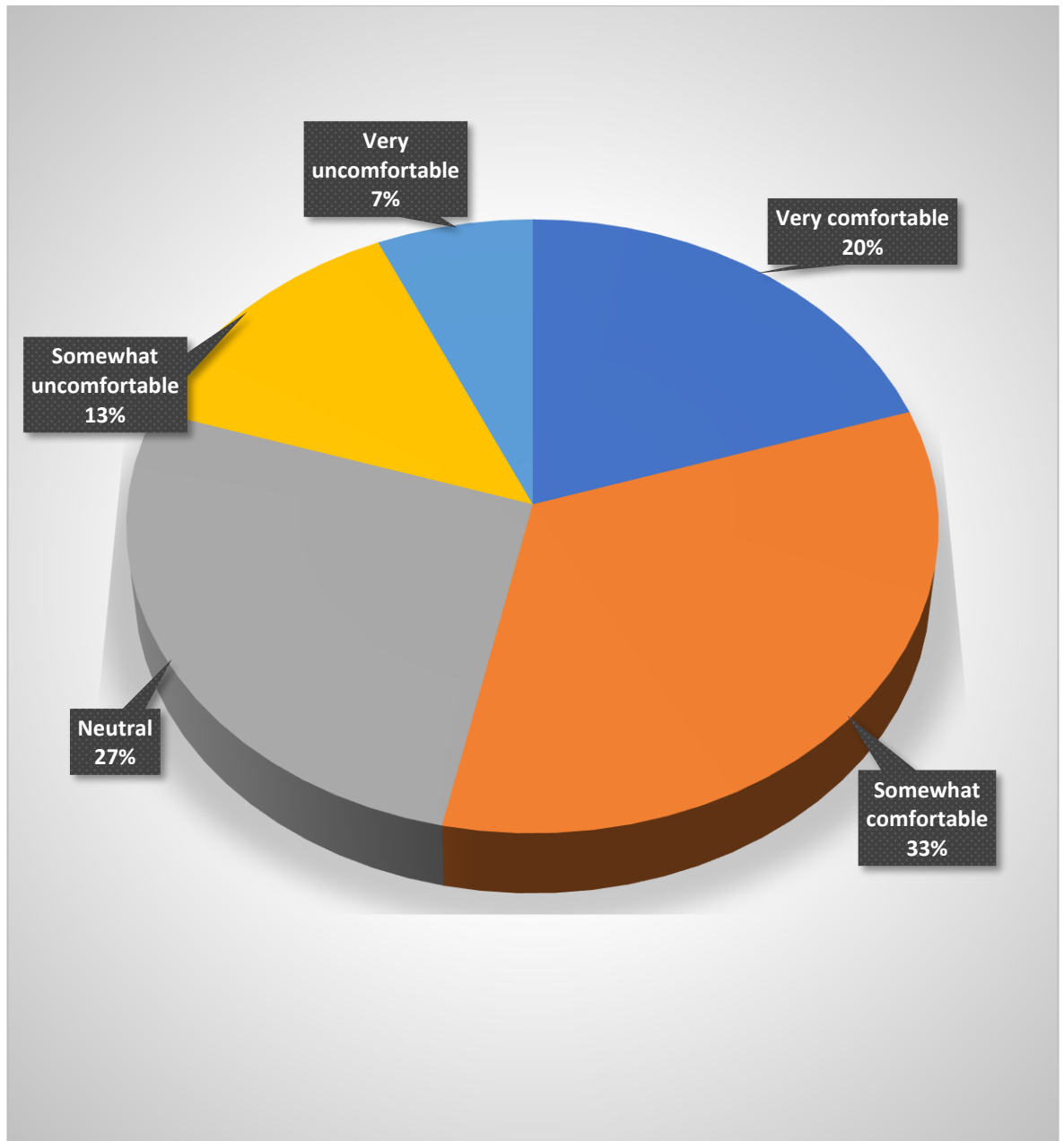


Figure 4.16: Comfort level discussing social media information with healthcare provider

4.8.2 Shared social media information with healthcare provider

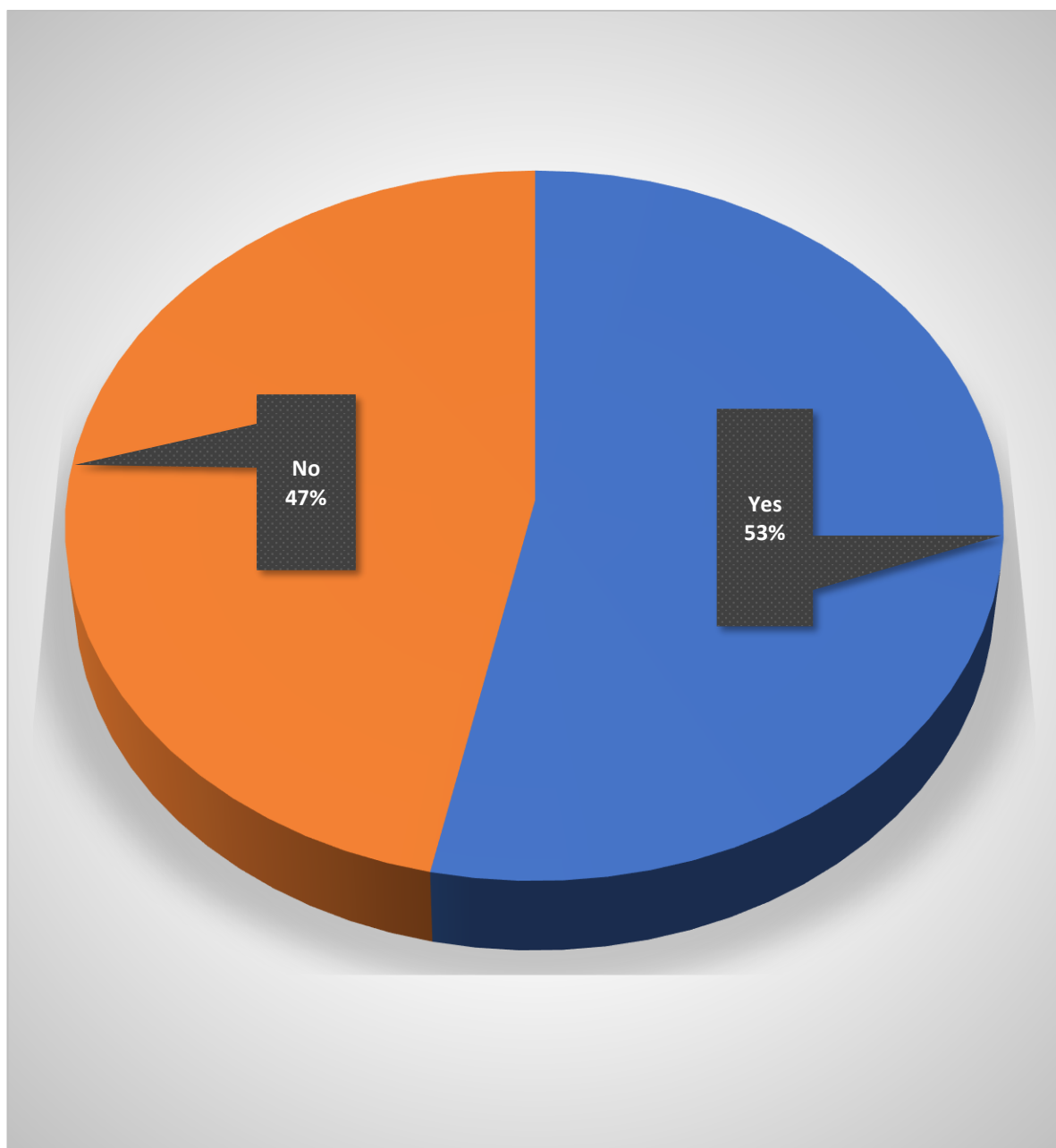


Figure 4.17: Shared social media information with healthcare provider

4.8.3 Healthcare providers should use social media to communicate with patients

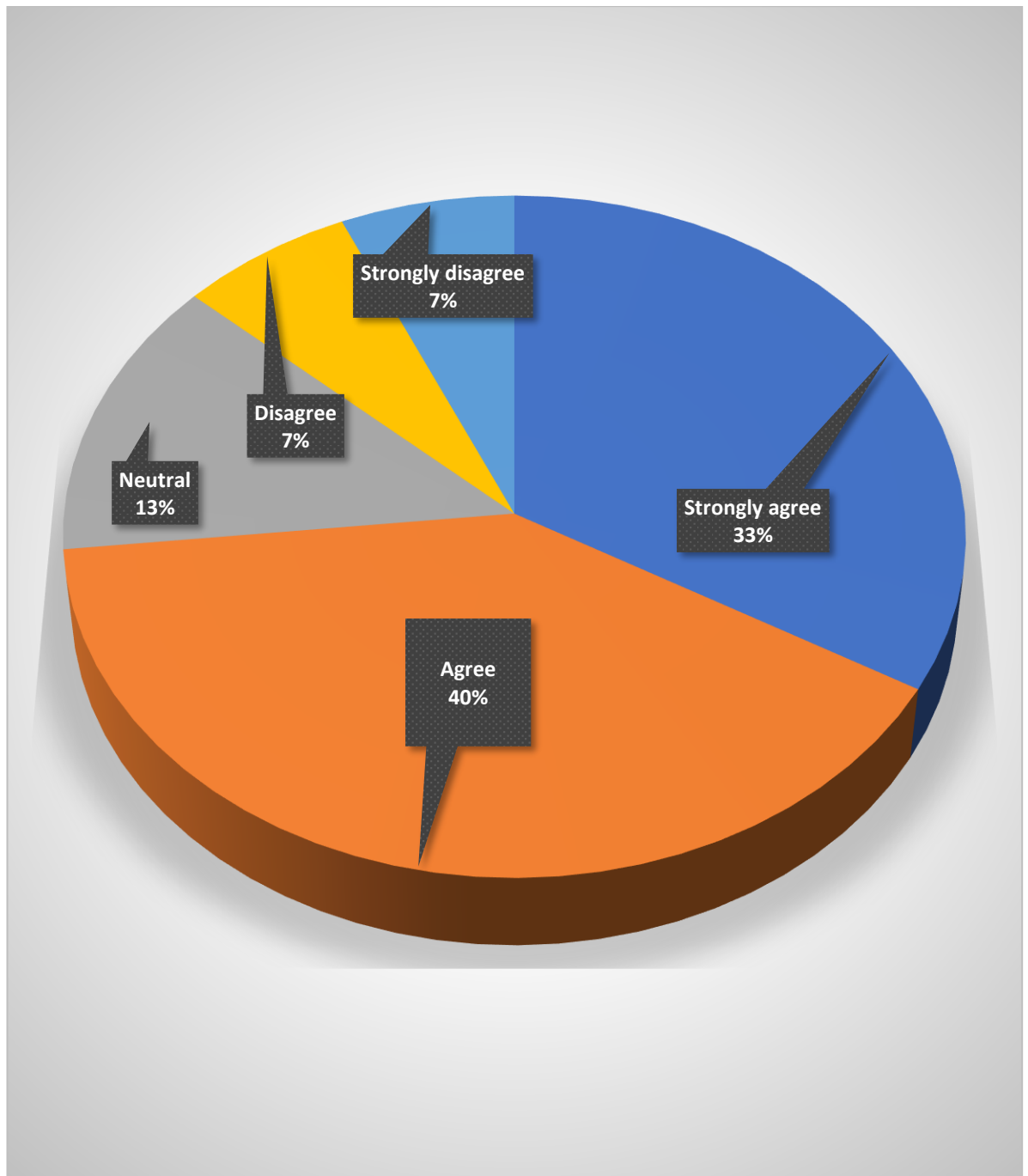


Figure 4.17: Healthcare providers should use social media to communicate with patients

4.8.4 Effectiveness of social media in enhancing patient engagement (scale 1-5)

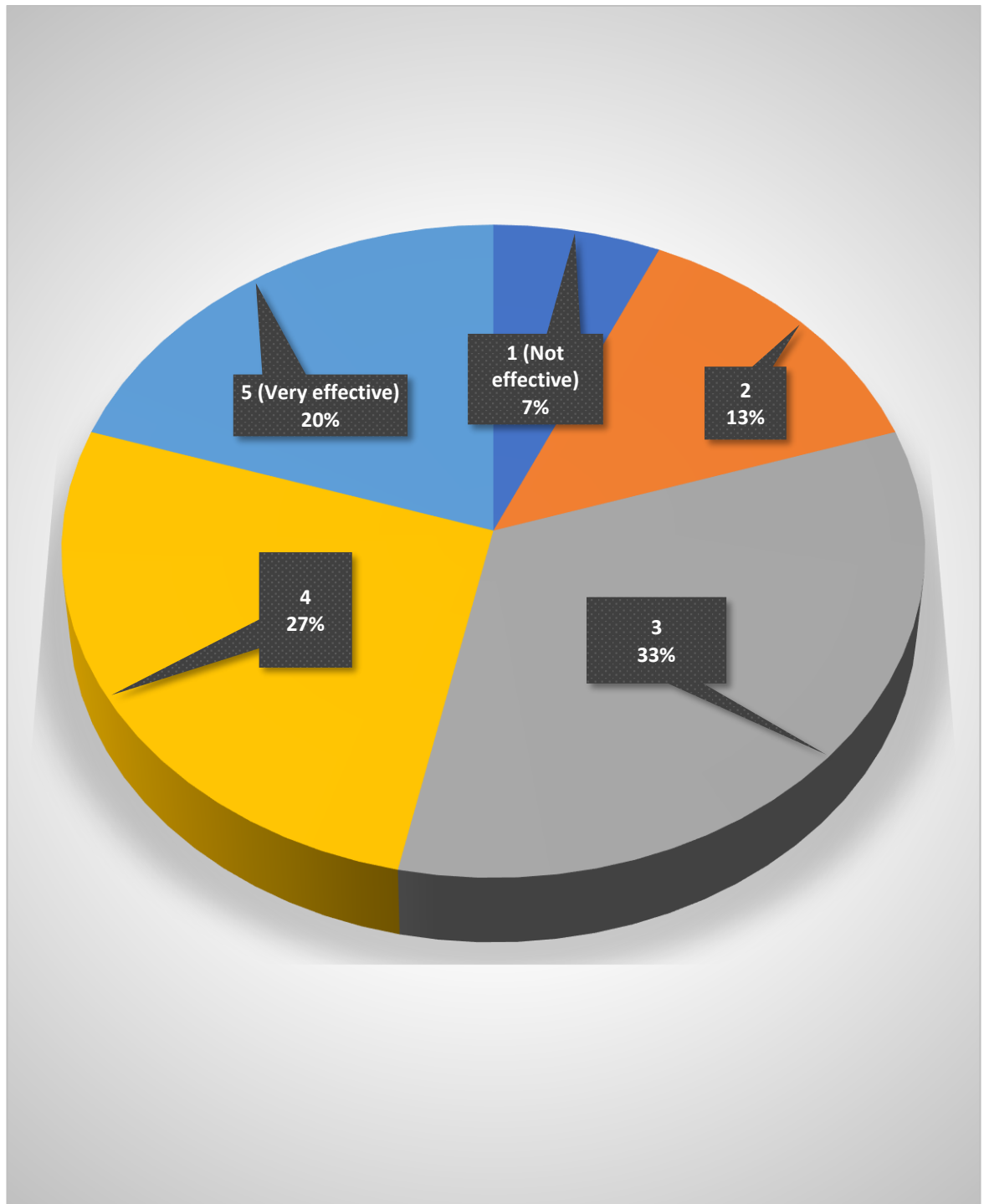


Figure 4.18: Effectiveness of social media in enhancing patient engagement (scale 1-5)

4.9 Recommendations for Improved Engagement and Decision-Making

4.9.1 Helpful content from healthcare providers on social media

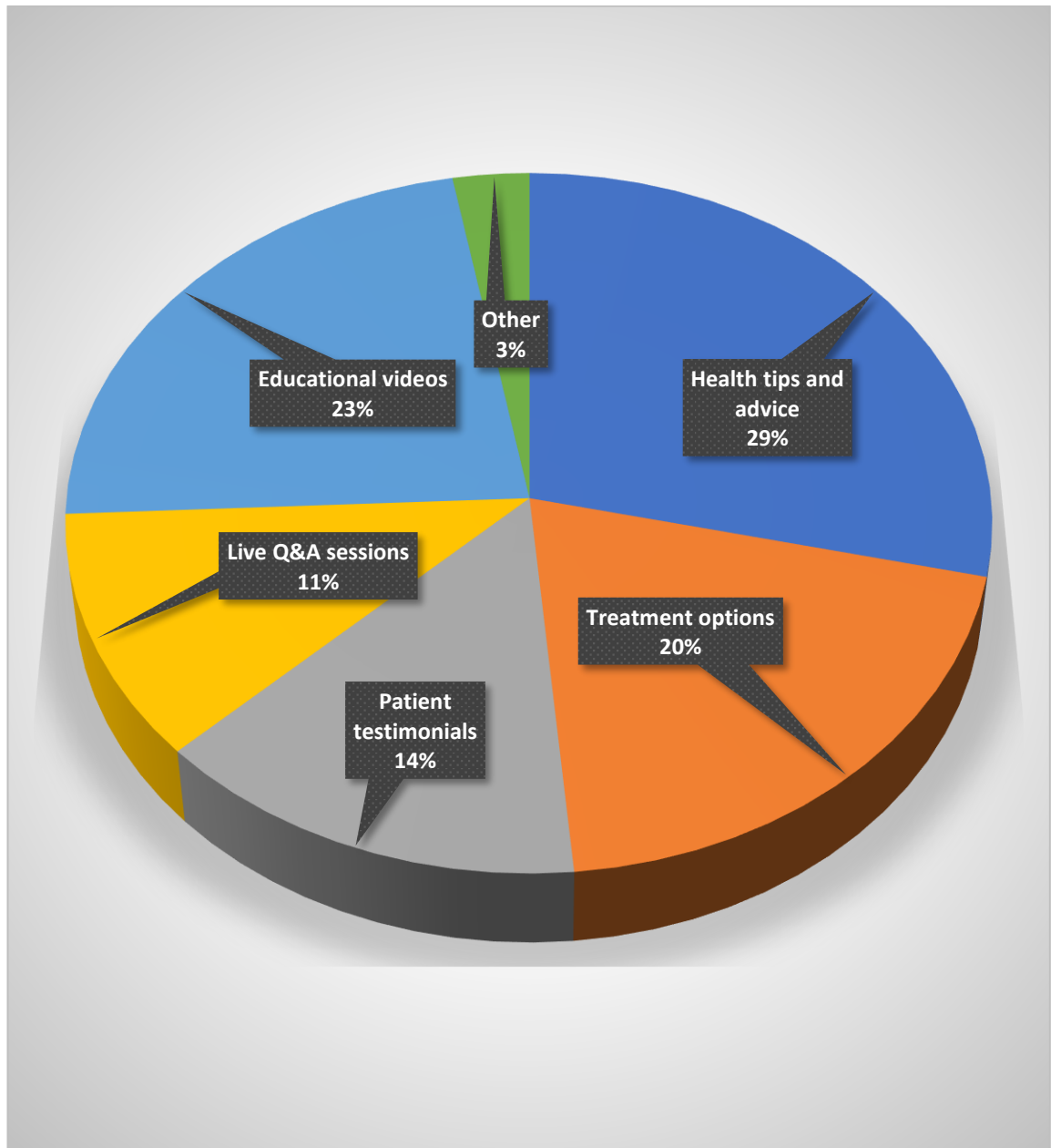


Figure 4.19: Helpful content from healthcare providers on social media

4.9.2 Likelihood of following health-related social media accounts managed by professionals

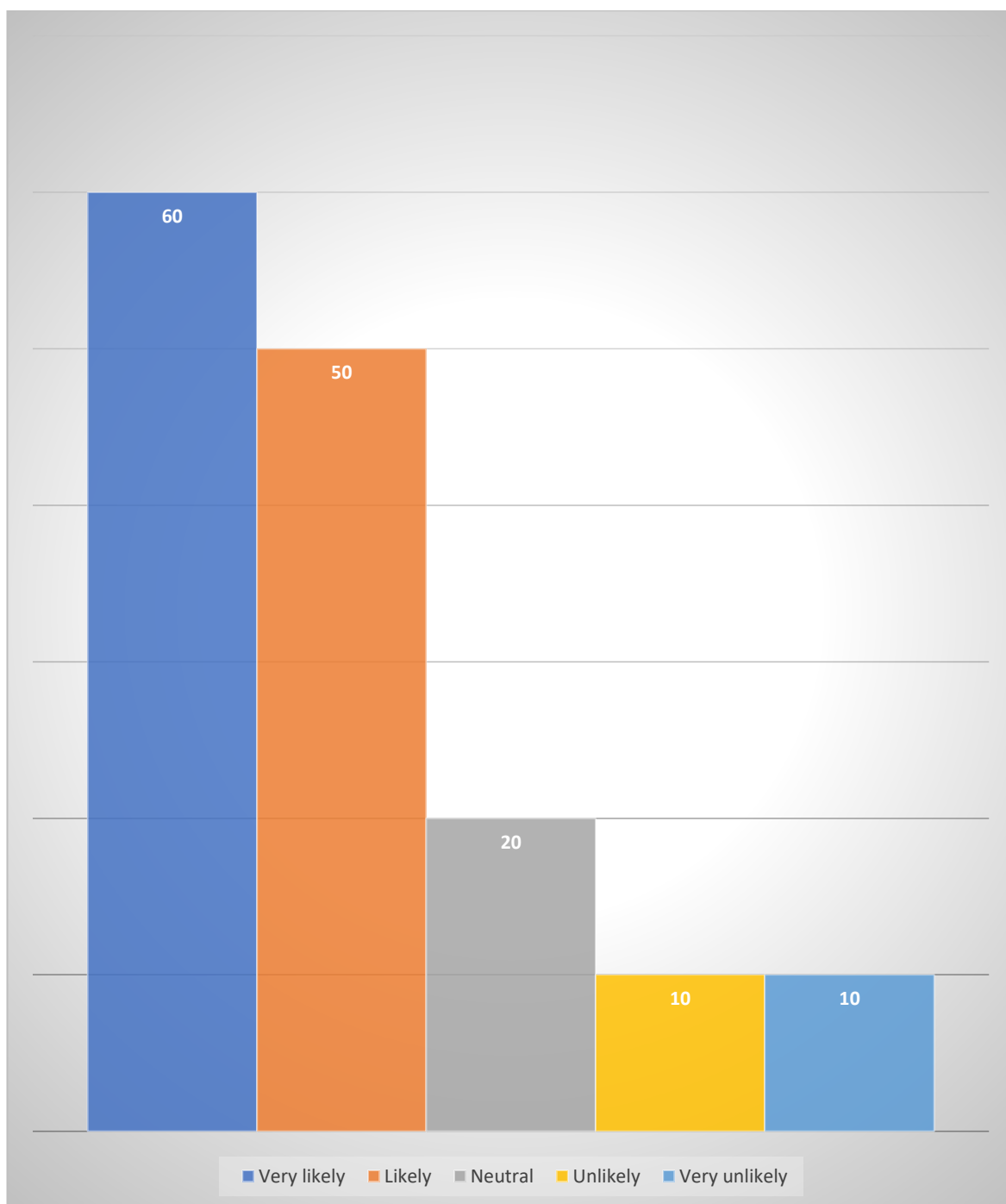


Figure 4.20: Likelihood of following health-related social media accounts managed by professionals

4.9.3 Suggested improvements for healthcare providers on social media

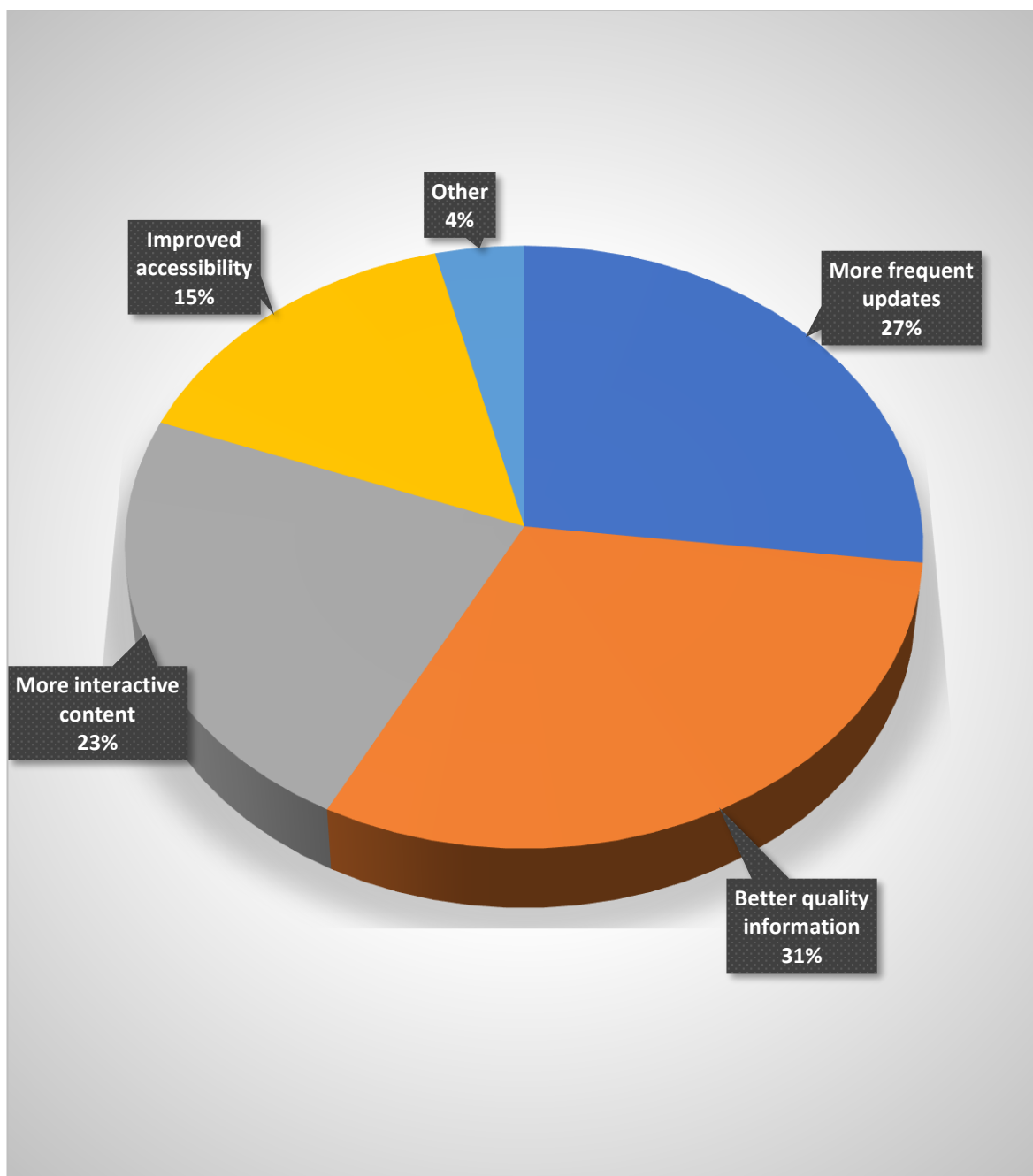


Figure 4.21: Suggested improvements for healthcare providers on social media

4.9.4 Currently receiving treatment at Prem Niketan Hospital

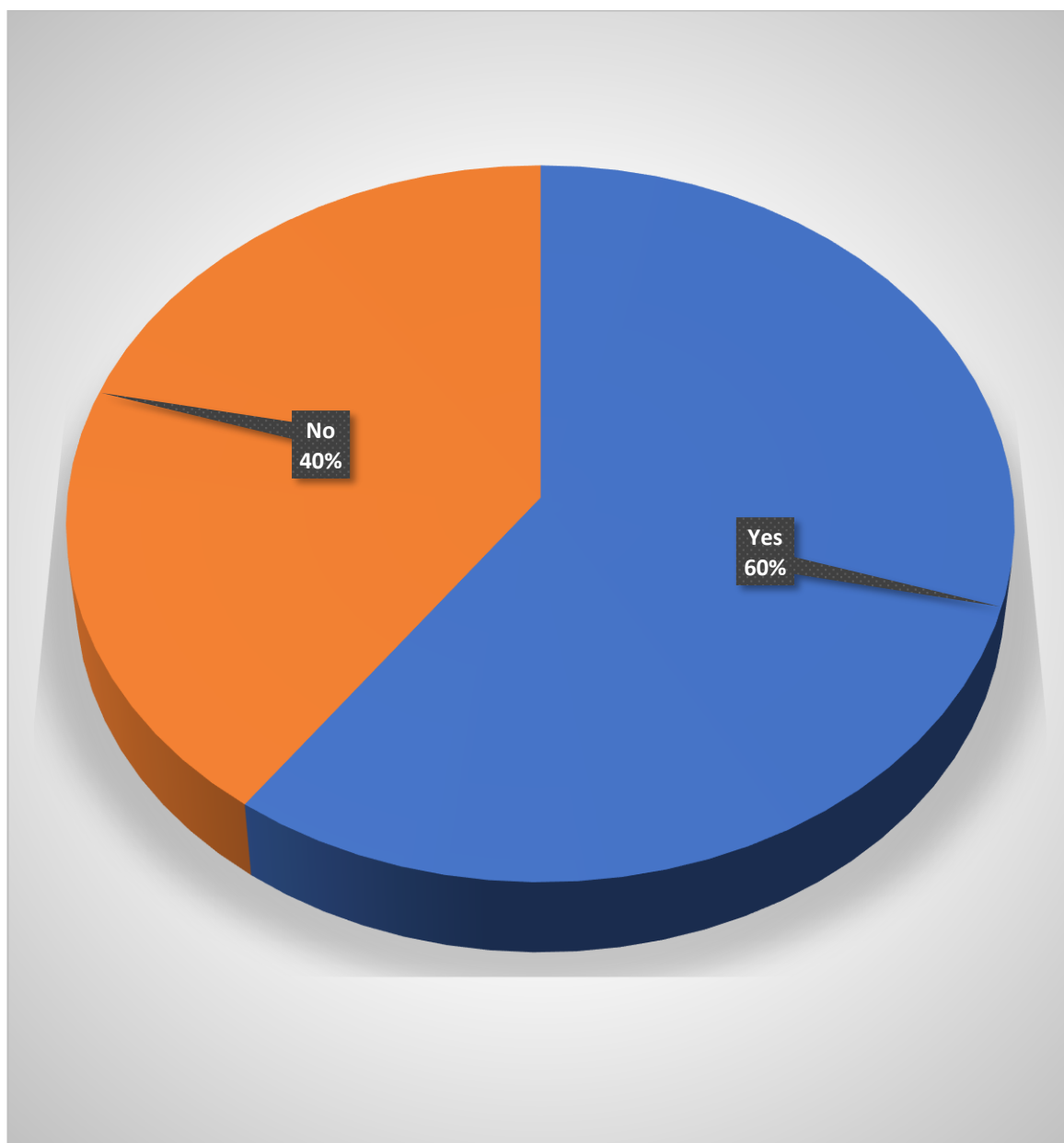


Figure 4.22: Currently receiving treatment at Prem Niketan Hospital

4.9.5 Social media usage for health information compared to before treatment

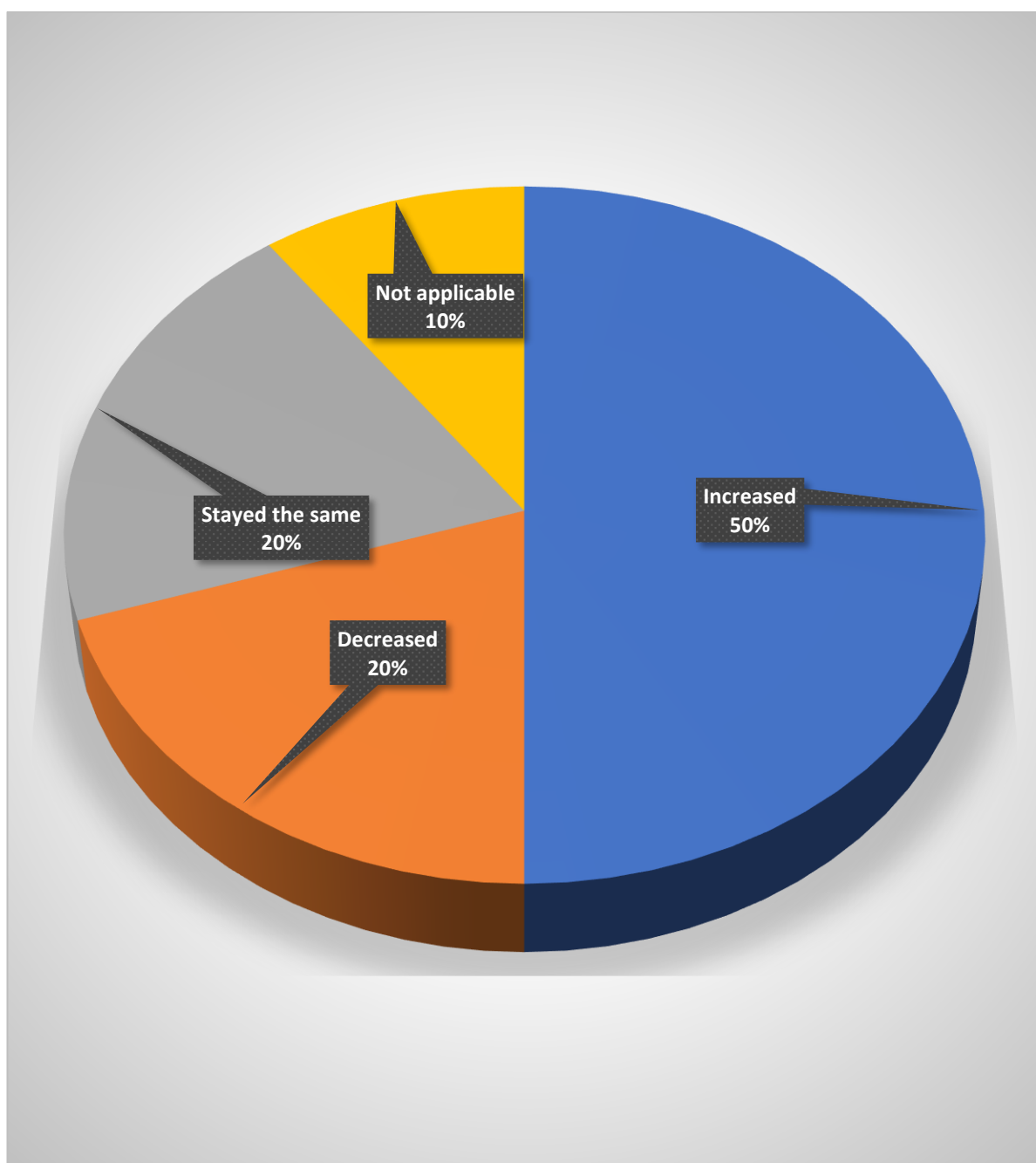


Figure 4.23: Social media usage for health information compared to before treatment

4.9.6 Influence of social media information on healthcare decisions while treated at the hospital

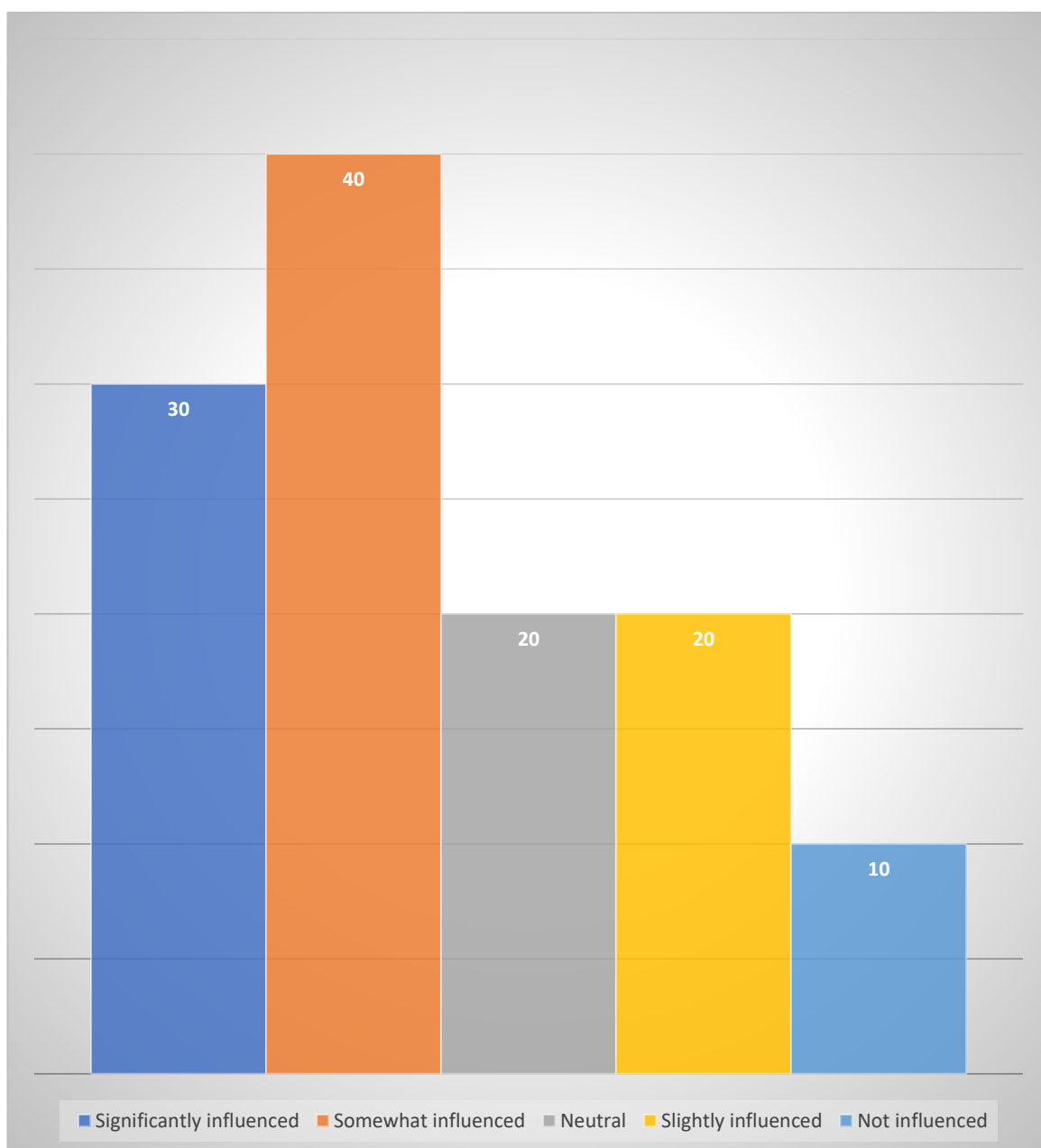


Figure 4.24: Influence of social media information on healthcare decisions while treated at the hospital

4.8 Recommendations for Improved Patient Engagement and Informed Decision-Making

Based on the analysis of the data, several recommendations can be made for improving patient engagement and informed health care decision-making.

1. Promotion of health literacy is paramount by raising accurate facts using validated social media channels by the treating healthcare providers and organizations.
2. Develop guidelines for finding and sharing trustworthy health information in social media, which would lead the patient through an ocean of available information.

4.8 Summary of Findings

The results of the survey show a strong influence of social media on patients' healthcare decisions across Jaipur. The responses to the questions about treatment decisions, choice of provider, and health behaviours ideas on social media were in the affirmative. However, concerns related to the reliability and credibility of the available health information on social media remain. Such challenges can be improved by health literacy, reliable information dissemination, and improved engagement of health care providers leading to better patient engagement and decision-making.

Chapter-5

Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Influence of Social Media on Healthcare Decision-Making

The results of the survey indicate that there is immense social media influence on health decision-making among patients in Jaipur. A majority of the responses stated that social media played a major role in their treatment decisions, choice of healthcare practitioners, and health practices. This replicates previous research about the critical role of social media as an instrument of health information and support for patients.

Patients often turn to social media for peer support and shared experiences, which provide comfort and practical advice for their emotional well-being. At the same time, health decisions that are guided by the information flowing from these sources bring into sharp focus concerns pertaining to accuracy and reliability. Indeed, according to the survey, some respondents were somewhat confident regarding the reliability of health information on social media, indicating that more credible sources and verified content should be used.

5.1.2 Reliability of Health Information on Social Media

Major findings of the study include: patients frequently use social media to look for health-related information but have a scoop of skepticism regarding the reliability of such information. Great factors, in major cases, that determined one's perceived credence included credibility of source, user reviews and comments, the number of shares and likes, and quality of visual content. These findings reflect concerns that have been pointed out in the literature regarding the proliferation of misinformation on social media and thus challenges for patients and healthcare providers.

It is the ability of patients to vet credible sources from less credible sources of information. The need for effective strategies to improve credibility of health information on social media seems to be a serious requirement according to this finding. To put it another way, there is a need for increased engagement in the provision and vetting of content by healthcare professionals.

5.1.3 Challenges and Opportunities

The findings indicated that the main challenges among others of using social media for healthcare decisions include misinformation, a lack of credibility, overwhelming information, and privacy concerns. These challenges underline the complex nature of social media as a health information resource.

However, the opportunities offered by social media cannot be ignored. The access to diverse opinions, timely information, and peer support is a large gain that could potentially bring about better engagement and empowerment for patients. It will become incumbent on this scientific community to grasp such opportunities while channeling associated challenges in the best possible manner to optimize the role of social media in health care.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Although this paper provides essential interfacing of insights relating to the participatory role of social media in healthcare decision-making, certain limitations are noteworthy.

- **Sampling Bias:** Convenience sampling may give way to bias and generalize the findings, as it may not truly depict the population of interest. The part taken as a sample may not truly represent the larger universe of patients in Jaipur or other places.
- **Self-reported data:** Because the study is based on self-reported data, it is thereby more prone to response biases or inaccuracies in the way respondents answer. Participants either under- or overestimated their social media use and influence on them in making decisions.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** It was a cross-sectional study, and the information reflected one point in time; thus, this limited possibilities for assessment of change across time and Michel269 did not permit establishment of causality.

5.3 Scope for Future Research

Further research should be conducted that would reduce the limitations of this study and add further dimensions related to the influence of social media on healthcare decision-making.

Chapter-6

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