

SOCIAL MEDIA, VULGARITY, AND MENTAL HEALTH IN JAMAICA: EXAMINING THE CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIGITAL CONTENT CREATION

PAUL ANDREW BOURNE, PhD, DrPH

Vocational Training Development Institute, Jamaica, WI

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJSSMR.2025.8511>

ABSTRACT

The rise of social media in Jamaica has transformed communication, social interaction, and self-expression in ways that are both empowering and concerning. Over the last decade, Jamaicans have become increasingly engaged with digital platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X, and YouTube, with nearly half of the population active on social media as of 2023. This widespread adoption has opened opportunities for networking, creativity, and entrepreneurship, yet it has also fostered new challenges for cultural values, interpersonal ethics, and mental health. A particular concern is the escalation of vulgarity and lewd behaviour within Jamaican digital spaces, where provocative and explicit content is often used to attract followers, likes, and financial opportunities. While some argue that such expression reflects global trends in social media culture, it also resonates with long-standing cultural debates in Jamaica surrounding dancehall, sexuality, and respectability politics. The evidence suggests that Jamaican content creators, particularly those engaging in controversial or explicit practices, are vulnerable to heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and digital addiction. This paper critically examines the rise of social media in Jamaica, the extent to which vulgarity and lewd behaviour have become normalised online, and the implications these phenomena hold for the mental health of Jamaican content creators. Drawing on international research, Jamaican case studies, and theoretical perspectives from cyberpsychology and media studies, the paper underscores the need to address the psychosocial consequences of digital culture in Jamaica. Recommendations are made for policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals to mitigate risks while promoting healthier online practices.

Keywords: Content Creator Mental Health, Digital Literacy, Jamaican Youth Culture, Online Ethics, Social Media Usage, Vulgarity and Lewd Behaviour

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as one of the defining technological and cultural forces of the twenty-first century, reshaping how individuals communicate, consume information, and present their identities (Bennett et al., 2011; Buckingham, 2007; Macnamara, 2010; Reyer et al., 2022; Shabir et al., 2015; Shuter, 2012). Globally, the expansion of digital platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Others, has generated unprecedented levels of connectivity, collapsing geographical barriers and fostering instantaneous interaction. In the Caribbean, and Jamaica in particular, social media has become deeply embedded in daily life, influencing everything from political discourse to youth culture and entertainment (Broome & Adugu, 2015; Everett, 2007; Osgerby, 2020). According to

Kemp (2023), nearly 50 per cent of Jamaicans were active social media users in early 2023, representing a sharp increase over previous years and highlighting the country's rapid embrace of digital technologies. As of January 2024, statistics from Datareportal revealed that 56.9% (approximately 1,610,000) of Jamaicans were social media users, and 85.1% (approximately 2,400,000) of Jamaicans were internet users (Kemp, 2024). Kemp (2025) indicated that fewer Jamaicans were using social media in January 2025 (54.8%, approximately 1,560,000), as well as the internet (83.4%, approximately 2,370,000; Kemp, 2025). The accessibility of mobile phones and relatively affordable internet packages has further facilitated the diffusion of social media, making platforms available across socioeconomic strata. This technological integration has not only broadened opportunities for self-expression and entrepreneurship but has also amplified social concerns regarding vulgarity, lewdness, and the psychological toll of digital participation.

The Jamaican digital landscape must be understood in the context of the island's broader cultural and social environment. Jamaica has long been renowned for its vibrant popular culture, particularly dancehall music, which has historically pushed the boundaries of sexuality, language, lewdness and indecency, and performance. Scholars such as Hope (2006a, 2006b, 2010a, 2010b), Newell (2009) and Stanley Niaah (2004) have argued that dancehall provides a space for marginalised people to articulate their identities, often through explicit lyrics and provocative performances. In the digital era, this culture of expression has migrated online, where dancehall aesthetics and the pursuit of visibility converge with the algorithmic incentives of social media platforms. The result is a proliferation of content that blurs the line between cultural creativity and digital vulgarity, raising concerns among educators, policymakers, and parents alike. For example, sexually suggestive TikTok videos, Instagram "lives" featuring profanity-laced exchanges, and YouTube skits that trivialise social issues through crude humour have become increasingly common in Jamaican online spaces. This trend reflects not only local cultural dynamics but also global social media tendencies, where provocative and sensationalist content garners the most engagement.

The prominence of vulgarity and lewd behaviour online invites critical inquiry into what such practices reveal about both Jamaican society and the mental health of content creators. In one sense, these behaviours can be interpreted as strategies for survival within a competitive digital economy where attention is the primary currency. Content creators, many of whom come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, may adopt sensationalist or sexually explicit approaches as a means of generating income or attaining social recognition. However, such strategies often come at a psychological cost. International research demonstrates strong correlations between high social media usage and mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Twenge, 2019). In Jamaica, emerging studies reveal similar patterns, with young users reporting feelings of digital addiction and the need for breaks from social media to preserve their mental well-being (Clayton, 2023). Content creators, who invest greater emotional energy and identity into online visibility than typical users, are likely to experience these challenges in amplified form.

The intersection of social media, vulgarity, and mental health thus presents a pressing social issue for Jamaica. It raises critical questions about how digital culture is reshaping norms of communication, sexuality, and morality in society. Is the embrace of lewd online behaviour a reflection of cultural authenticity and resistance, or does it signal a troubling normalisation of

toxicity and self-objectification? How does the pursuit of online validation through provocative content affect the mental health of creators who must constantly negotiate criticism, trolling, and the volatility of digital attention? Furthermore, what role should institutions, whether governmental, educational, or health-oriented, play in supporting creators while promoting responsible online engagement? These questions underscore the significance of studying this phenomenon not only as a matter of cultural commentary but also as a public health concern.

This paper addresses these issues through a multi-layered analysis of Jamaica's social media environment. It begins by situating the rise of social media within the Jamaican context, providing statistical evidence of its growth and examining the cultural factors that drive digital engagement. It then examines how vulgarity and lewd behaviour manifest in online spaces, considering both the cultural continuity with traditions such as dancehall and the new incentives created by globalised digital platforms. Finally, it investigates the mental health implications for content creators, drawing on empirical research and theoretical perspectives from cyberpsychology, social learning theory, and cultivation theory. The discussion synthesises these findings to highlight the broader implications for Jamaican society, before concluding with recommendations for policy, education, and mental health intervention. By focusing specifically on Jamaica, this study contributes to regional scholarship on digital culture while situating the island within broader global debates on the psychosocial impact of social media.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Global Perspectives on Social Media and Mental Health

The global scholarship on social media has consistently pointed to its dual role as both an enabler of connection and a risk factor for psychological distress. Studies across North America, Europe, and Asia have documented correlations between excessive social media usage and mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem (Andreassen et al., 2017; Twenge, 2019). These associations are often mediated by the addictive features of platforms, which leverage algorithmic designs to maximise user engagement through notifications, likes, and algorithmic feeds (Montag et al., 2021). Researchers have coined the term "problematic social media use" to describe compulsive patterns of behaviour that interfere with daily functioning, and this construct has been linked to digital addiction and depressive symptoms (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). A meta-analysis by Huang (2017) found that heavy social networking site use was positively associated with symptoms of depression, especially among adolescents and young adults who are particularly vulnerable to peer comparisons. These findings are particularly relevant to Jamaica, where the youth population constitutes a significant proportion of active users and where cultural pressures surrounding identity and status often intersect with digital visibility. Notably, the global literature provides a baseline for understanding how Jamaican users may be subject to similar risks, even if local socio-cultural dynamics shape these risks.

The global discourse has also highlighted the impact of online personas on self-perception and mental health. The notion of the "curated self" has been explored by scholars such as Chou and Edge (2012), who argue that social media encourages users to present idealised versions of themselves. This often fosters a cycle of social comparison, where individuals perceive others

as happier or more successful, leading to dissatisfaction and low self-worth. Such effects have been noted as particularly acute in collectivist cultures, where social reputation carries significant weight (Dhir et al., 2018). For Jamaica, a society where “face” and reputation are critical in both offline and online spaces, the dynamics of social comparison may be amplified. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok further reinforce visual self-presentation, rewarding beauty, status, and sexualised displays, which can exacerbate mental health challenges when individuals feel pressured to conform. In this way, the global literature provides not only a cautionary tale about the risks of social media but also an interpretive lens through which Jamaican experiences can be contextualised.

2.2 Social Media, Vulgarity, and Lewd Behaviour in Digital Cultures

Research into vulgarity and lewd behaviour on social media has grown as platforms have become central to cultural life. Globally, there is a recognition that digital spaces tend to reward content that is sensational, provocative, or transgressive, as such material is more likely to “go viral” (Marwick, 2015). The rise of OnlyFans and the prevalence of sexually suggestive TikTok trends illustrate how digital economies are increasingly intertwined with sexuality and explicit performance. Scholars have described this as the “commodification of the self,” where individuals use their bodies and identities as marketable assets to attract attention and generate income (Duffy & Hund, 2015). This has led to debates about whether such practices represent empowerment and agency or whether they reinforce exploitative dynamics that place undue pressure on individuals, particularly women, to sexualise themselves for visibility. The Jamaican case, with its historical context of dancehall culture’s sexual expressiveness, provides a particularly striking example of how global trends intersect with local traditions of provocative performance.

The moral and ethical implications of vulgarity in digital spaces have been a subject of debate among scholars, religious leaders, and policymakers alike. Research indicates that while vulgarity may be framed as humour or creativity by some, it often reinforces negative stereotypes and normalises harmful behaviours (Strossen, 2024). Lewd content can trivialise issues such as gender-based violence or perpetuate misogyny, particularly when women are objectified or demeaned for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, the ease of sharing explicit material raises concerns about consent, privacy, and digital exploitation (Henry & Powell, 2018). In many societies, including Jamaica, these dynamics are complicated by socio-economic realities where young people may resort to provocative digital self-presentation as a survival strategy in the absence of stable employment. Thus, vulgarity and lewdness on social media cannot be dismissed as mere “entertainment”; instead, they are symptomatic of deeper cultural, economic, and psychological dynamics that merit sustained scholarly attention.

2.3 Caribbean Scholarship on Social Media Use

Within the Caribbean, research on social media has primarily focused on its role in politics, education, and youth culture. For example, Miller and Slater’s (2000) early ethnography of Trinidad demonstrated the profound ways the internet was reshaping identity and community long before the rise of social media platforms. More recent work has examined how Caribbean youth use social media to navigate diasporic connections, express cultural identities, and engage in political activism (Miller & Sinanan, 2017). In Jamaica, social media has been

studied as a tool for political campaigning, particularly with the increasing use of Facebook and Twitter in electioneering (Johnson, 2018). These studies reveal the extent to which digital platforms are not merely communication tools but also extensions of Caribbean social life, characterised by vibrancy, performance, and contestation.

At the same time, Caribbean researchers have raised concerns about the risks associated with digital spaces, particularly for young people. Studies in Trinidad and Barbados, for instance, have highlighted the prevalence of cyberbullying, sexting, and online harassment, pointing to gaps in regulation and parental supervision (Bailey et al., 2013). These findings echo broader concerns that Caribbean societies are often underprepared to manage the ethical and psychological challenges posed by the rapid expansion of digital cultures. In Jamaica, the interplay between social media and cultural forms such as dancehall further complicates matters, as the lines between artistic expression, vulgarity, and harmful behaviour are often contested. While research in this area remains limited, the available evidence suggests that Caribbean societies face unique challenges in striking a balance between cultural authenticity and digital ethics.

2.4 Jamaican Research and Emerging Evidence

Emerging scholarship in Jamaica has begun to document the mental health implications of social media use. A recent study by Bourne (2024) highlighted that Jamaican youth report high levels of digital addiction, with many acknowledging that they feel unable to disengage from social media despite recognising its adverse effects on their mental health. Similarly, a UNICEF-Jamaica and Jamaica Observer poll found that 71 per cent of young Jamaicans felt that social media negatively impacted their mental well-being, while 64 per cent reported needing breaks from online engagement to cope with stress (Clayton, 2023). These findings align with the international literature, providing localised evidence of the psychosocial toll of digital immersion.

In terms of content creation, Jamaican research has highlighted the prevalence of lewd and vulgar material online, particularly among young influencers seeking recognition or financial gain. This trend is often framed within the context of Jamaica's dancehall culture, which has long been characterised by sexual expressiveness and provocative performance. However, when transposed into digital spaces, these expressions often take on new meanings, as they become monetised through likes, shares, and advertising revenue. Critics argue that this normalisation of vulgarity undermines cultural values and contributes to a toxic online environment (Smith, 2022). Others contend that it represents continuity in Jamaican cultural expression, merely amplified by digital tools. What remains clear is that the mental health of content creators engaging in such practices is at risk, particularly given the pressures of online scrutiny, trolling, and the volatility of digital economies.

2.5 Theoretical Frameworks

Several theoretical frameworks help to interpret the interplay between social media, vulgarity, and mental health in Jamaica. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) posits that individuals learn behaviours by observing and imitating others, particularly when such behaviours are rewarded. Applied to social media, this suggests that when Jamaican users observe influencers

gaining attention and financial benefits from lewd or vulgar behaviour, they are more likely to replicate such practices. Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1998) provides another useful lens, arguing that prolonged exposure to media content shapes perceptions of reality. In the Jamaican context, the ubiquity of vulgar and provocative content online may cultivate a sense that such behaviours are normative, influencing both cultural expectations and individual behaviour.

Cyberpsychology, as a theoretical perspective, further illuminates the mental health implications of digital engagement. It emphasises how the unique features of online environments—namely, anonymity, disinhibition, and the pursuit of instant gratification—impact behaviour and psychological well-being (Joinson, 2007). For Jamaican content creators, these dynamics may amplify tendencies toward vulgarity as a strategy for visibility, while simultaneously heightening vulnerability to adverse psychological outcomes. Together, these frameworks provide a multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon, integrating cultural, behavioural, and psychological insights.

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research, significant gaps remain in the literature on social media, vulgarity, and mental health in Jamaica. Most existing studies are descriptive and focus on youth attitudes or general patterns of use, with few providing in-depth analyses of content creators specifically. There is also a lack of longitudinal studies tracking the long-term mental health outcomes of digital engagement, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between digital engagement and its effects on mental health outcomes. Furthermore, while cultural commentary often associates online vulgarity with dancehall, there has been limited empirical research examining how this connection unfolds in digital spaces. Finally, mental health research in Jamaica is hampered by broader issues of stigma and limited resources, meaning that the psychological dimensions of digital culture remain underexplored. Addressing these gaps will be crucial for developing informed interventions and policies that can support healthier digital practices while respecting cultural contexts.

3.0 THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN JAMAICA

3.1 Historical Trajectory of Digital Adoption in Jamaica

The rise of social media in Jamaica must be understood against the backdrop of the country's broader history of technological adoption. Jamaica's integration into the digital era began slowly in the 1990s, when the internet was first introduced to a relatively small segment of the population through academic institutions, corporate organisations, and government offices. During this period, internet access was expensive and primarily limited to urban centres such as Kingston, Montego Bay, and Spanish Town. As the telecommunications sector became liberalised in the early 2000s, competition among providers such as Digicel and FLOW dramatically reduced the cost of mobile phones and internet access. This marked the beginning of Jamaica's mass entry into the digital age, as ordinary Jamaicans gained greater opportunities to connect online (Bailey, 2014). By the late 2000s, the expansion of smartphones created an accessible pathway for internet use across class divides, as inexpensive Android devices enabled even lower-income groups to participate in the digital sphere. These developments set

the stage for the explosion of social media platforms in Jamaica, transforming not only communication but also social interaction, entertainment, and self-presentation.

By the early 2010s, Facebook emerged as the dominant platform in Jamaica, becoming a digital extension of social life. Many Jamaicans, particularly the youth, embraced Facebook as a means of networking, sharing personal updates, and engaging with global trends. Twitter (now X) also gained popularity during this period, especially among politically engaged young Jamaicans, as it provided a forum for social commentary, activism, and humour. Over time, newer platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok gained prominence, appealing to younger demographics through their emphasis on visual and short-form content. The historical trajectory of Jamaica's digital adoption illustrates not only a rapid uptake of global technological trends but also the integration of these platforms into uniquely Jamaican cultural practices, including the celebration of dancehall, reggae, and sports through digital performance. Thus, the Jamaican experience of social media cannot be reduced to passive consumption; rather, it represents an active adaptation of global tools to local cultural contexts.

3.2 Internet and Mobile Penetration

The rapid growth of the internet and mobile penetration in Jamaica has been a critical driver of social media's rise. According to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN, 2022), more than 70 per cent of households had internet access by the early 2020s, a dramatic increase from the less than 10 per cent recorded in the early 2000s. Mobile phone subscriptions exceeded the population size by 2015, reflecting the common practice of individuals owning multiple SIM cards or devices (International Telecommunication Union, 2020). The affordability of mobile data packages further contributed to the normalisation of internet access, allowing Jamaicans from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in digital culture. This contrasts with earlier decades, when access to communication technologies was stratified by class, geography, and income. Today, even rural communities in parishes such as St. Mary and Portland are increasingly connected, although challenges of affordability and infrastructure remain.

The accessibility of smartphones has also accelerated the spread of social media. Inexpensive Chinese-manufactured smartphones, marketed aggressively by local telecommunications companies, have democratised access to the internet. While elite groups may purchase high-end devices such as iPhones or Samsung Galaxy phones, the majority of Jamaicans can engage online through more affordable Android models. Significantly, this accessibility has altered the nature of online participation. Social media is no longer a luxury or novelty, but an integral part of everyday communication, particularly among young people and working-class Jamaicans. WhatsApp, for instance, is widely used as both a messaging service and a medium for circulating news, videos, and voice notes, making it a hybrid of social media and traditional communication. The widespread diffusion of internet-enabled devices has therefore created a fertile ground for the rise of social media in Jamaica, embedding it into the rhythms of daily life and reshaping cultural interactions at multiple levels.

3.3 Popular Platforms in Jamaica

While social media is a global phenomenon, Jamaicans gravitate towards specific platforms more strongly than others. Facebook remains one of the most widely used platforms, especially

among adults over 30, who use it to maintain connections with family, friends, and diaspora communities. Instagram, on the other hand, has gained particular popularity among younger Jamaicans, who are drawn to its emphasis on visual culture, fashion, and lifestyle branding. TikTok has rapidly ascended in popularity, becoming the platform of choice for teenagers and young adults seeking entertainment, humour, and short-form dance challenges. According to Kemp (2023), YouTube is also extensively used in Jamaica, not only as a source of music and entertainment but also as a platform for aspiring content creators to share skits, vlogs, and social commentary. Twitter (X) maintains a vibrant community, particularly among politically engaged Jamaicans, artists, and those involved in intellectual or humorous discourse.

Each platform carries its own cultural significance within the Jamaican context. Instagram and TikTok, for instance, have been extensively utilised by dancehall artists and influencers to showcase fashion, music, and dance, thereby contributing to the global visibility of Jamaican culture. WhatsApp groups, though often overlooked in broader social media research, play a critical role in the dissemination of information, functioning as spaces for gossip, activism, and even political mobilisation. YouTube has been a particularly transformative platform, enabling ordinary Jamaicans to monetise their content and gain international exposure without the mediation of traditional media. However, the popularity of these platforms has also facilitated the rise of vulgarity and lewd behaviour, as creators increasingly turn to provocative strategies to capture attention in a crowded digital marketplace. The diversity of platforms used by Jamaicans highlights not only the vibrancy of the nation's digital culture but also the complex ways in which different online spaces shape expressions of identity, morality, and mental health.

3.4 Social Media and Jamaican Youth Culture

Jamaican youth are at the forefront of the social media revolution, using platforms as spaces for self-expression, creativity, and social interaction. Studies indicate that Jamaican teenagers spend several hours daily engaging with social media, often regarding it as central to their social lives (Bourne, 2024). Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram enable young people to experiment with their identity, fashion, and sexuality, while also providing opportunities for humour, activism, and commentary. However, this immersion in digital spaces also exposes youth to significant risks, including cyberbullying, digital addiction, and exposure to harmful content. A UNICEF-Jamaica survey revealed that nearly half of young respondents believed social media hurt their mental health, with many reporting feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and anxiety (Clayton, 2023). These findings echo global research but also highlight the particular vulnerabilities of Jamaican youth, who must navigate online environments shaped by both local cultural pressures and globalised digital norms.

One of the defining features of Jamaican youth engagement with social media is the interplay between digital culture and the dancehall genre. Dancehall music and performance, renowned for their provocative lyrics, dances, and fashion, have found new life on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Youth often participate in online dance challenges, mimic the styles of popular artists, and use social media as a platform to showcase creativity inspired by dancehall aesthetics. While this fosters cultural continuity and innovation, it also raises concerns about the normalisation of lewd behaviour and hypersexualisation among adolescents. The blending of youth culture with social media thus represents both an opportunity for creative expression

and a challenge for mental health and cultural ethics. As digital spaces increasingly shape the aspirations and identities of Jamaican youth, it is crucial to critically assess how these influences intersect with issues of morality, vulgarity, and psychological well-being.

3.5 Diaspora Influence and Global Digital Flows

The Jamaican diaspora plays a pivotal role in shaping the nation's social media landscape. With large diaspora communities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, they utilise digital platforms to maintain connections with family, share cultural content, and engage in political discourse. Social media serves as a bridge between Jamaicans at home and abroad, facilitating the exchange of music, news, and cultural expressions. This global network has amplified the reach of Jamaican content creators, as videos and performances produced locally often gain international visibility through diaspora sharing. For example, dancehall dances that originate in Kingston frequently spread across diaspora communities in London or New York, only to return to Jamaica with renewed popularity. This cyclical exchange underscores the interconnectedness of Jamaican social media culture with global digital flows.

The diaspora also influences the norms and expectations of online behaviour. Exposure to Western standards of digital monetisation, influencer culture, and online activism informs the strategies adopted by Jamaican content creators. At the same time, Jamaican vulgarity and lewdness in digital spaces often gain global attention, sometimes reinforcing stereotypes about the island as hypersexualised or violent. This dual dynamic illustrates how Jamaican social media is both a local phenomenon and a global spectacle, shaped by transnational flows of culture, capital, and attention. Significantly, the diaspora's role also raises questions about identity and authenticity: to what extent are Jamaican creators performing for local audiences, and to what extent are they tailoring their content to global expectations? These questions are crucial in understanding the pressures faced by Jamaican content creators, who must balance cultural representation with the demands of digital visibility in a competitive global market.

4.0 VULGARITY AND LEWD BEHAVIOUR IN JAMAICAN ONLINE CULTURE

4.1 The Normalisation of Vulgarity in Digital Spaces

The widespread use of social media in Jamaica has contributed to the normalisation of vulgarity and lewd behaviour in digital spaces. Content that was once considered inappropriate for mainstream broadcast is now easily accessible online, often celebrated for its entertainment value. Social media algorithms reward sensationalism, and as a result, vulgar content—whether through explicit language, sexually provocative dancing, or outrageous behaviour—tends to receive high levels of engagement. Jamaican content creators, aware of these dynamics, frequently push the boundaries of respectability to secure attention in an oversaturated digital market. Bailey and Thomas (2021) note that the “attention economy” of digital platforms thrives on shock value, which encourages the production of increasingly provocative material. Within this context, vulgarity has become less of an exception and more of a norm, with many users treating such behaviour as a legitimate form of humour, self-expression, or branding.

This normalisation must be understood within the broader context of Jamaican cultural practices. Dancehall, a genre already associated with sexual explicitness and bold self-presentation, has historically challenged conservative norms in Jamaican society. Social media

extends this tradition by providing a new stage for performances of sexuality, defiance, and excess. However, the accessibility of digital spaces means that vulgarity is no longer confined to dancehall venues or late-night entertainment but permeates everyday life, visible to children, adolescents, and the general public. The mainstreaming of lewd content has created moral anxieties among educators, parents, and policymakers, many of whom worry about the long-term impact on cultural values and youth development. At the same time, for many Jamaicans, online vulgarity is viewed not as a moral decline but as a reflection of authenticity, resistance to hypocrisy, and the assertion of personal freedom. This dual interpretation demonstrates the complexity of vulgarity's rise in Jamaican digital culture, situating it as both a site of creativity and a challenge to social order.

4.2 Dancehall, Sexual Expression, and Online Performance

Dancehall music and culture occupy a central role in shaping vulgarity and lewdness in Jamaican online spaces. From its inception, dancehall has been characterised by raw lyrics, provocative dance moves, and bold fashion that challenge mainstream respectability politics. With the advent of social media, these elements of dancehall have gained wider visibility and accessibility. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok provide spaces where dancehall artistes and fans alike perform sexually explicit dances, showcase daring outfits, and engage in verbal bravado. Such performances are not only consumed locally but are also transmitted globally, amplifying Jamaican dancehall culture to audiences across North America, Europe, and Africa (Hanna, 2025; Stanley-Niaah, 2009, 2010). For many participants, these digital performances represent pride in cultural creativity, while for others, they epitomise the erosion of social decency.

The relationship between dancehall and social media exemplifies how digital technologies are transforming cultural traditions. What was once a performance confined to clubs, dancehall parties, and street dances is now continuously replayed online, where it can be monetised, commented on, and remixed by global audiences. This shift increases the stakes of performance, as individuals are incentivised to be more outrageous in order to stand out. Sexual expression thus becomes a commodity, traded for likes, shares, and followers. At the same time, women are often at the forefront of this commodification, as their bodies become central to the marketing of dancehall culture. Gender dynamics are therefore deeply implicated in the rise of online vulgarity, as women are both celebrated for their sexual boldness and criticised for supposedly undermining societal morals. The dancehall-social media nexus thus provides insight into the contested meanings of lewd behaviour in Jamaican digital culture, revealing the interplay of creativity, economics, and morality.

4.3 Gender, Sexuality, and the Digital Marketplace

The rise of vulgarity on Jamaican social media cannot be fully understood without examining its gendered dimensions. Female content creators often receive the highest visibility for sexually explicit performances, as their bodies are positioned at the centre of digital attention economies. This trend mirrors long-standing dynamics in dancehall culture, where women's sexual expression has been both celebrated as empowerment and critiqued as exploitation (Cooper, 2004). On platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, women frequently showcase provocative dances, risqué outfits, and explicit humour, which simultaneously generate

economic opportunities and reinforce hypersexual stereotypes of Jamaican femininity. The monetisation of vulgarity places women in a paradoxical position: they can achieve financial independence and global recognition through sexual performance, but they also risk being stigmatised by conservative segments of Jamaican society.

Men, while less frequently sexualised, also participate in vulgar online behaviour, often through braggadocio, aggression, and humorous vulgarity. Male content creators may focus on exaggerated portrayals of masculinity, using profanity, satire, and shock humour to maintain relevance in the digital space. This mirrors a broader cultural valorisation of “badman” masculinity, in which vulgarity serves as a performance of toughness and authenticity (Thomas, 2019). However, the gendered expectations of vulgarity mean that men are often judged less harshly for such behaviour than women, whose online performances are more likely to be scrutinised in terms of morality and respectability. The interplay of gender and vulgarity in Jamaican online culture thus reveals deep inequalities in how social media rewards and punishes individuals based on their sex, sexuality, and performance of identity. Ultimately, the digital marketplace commodifies both male and female vulgarity, but the burdens and benefits of this commodification are distributed unevenly across gender lines.

4.4 Case Studies of Online Lewdness in Jamaica

Several high-profile cases illustrate how vulgarity and lewdness manifest in Jamaican online spaces. One notable example is the proliferation of viral dancehall challenges, where women and men compete in sexually suggestive dances for online audiences. These performances often receive tens of thousands of views, shares, and comments, elevating ordinary Jamaicans into temporary digital celebrities. Another example is the rise of comedic skits featuring exaggerated sexual humour, which dominate YouTube and Instagram feeds. While such skits are often dismissed as “just jokes,” they reinforce a digital culture where sexual vulgarity is both a source of laughter and a measure of popularity. In many cases, content creators explicitly state that provocative material is more profitable, as it attracts higher engagement and monetisation opportunities.

A particularly controversial example involves OnlyFans, a platform that some Jamaicans have embraced for explicit sexual content. Several content creators from Jamaica have gained notoriety for leveraging OnlyFans to monetise lewd performances, blurring the line between social media influence and sex work, as well as entertainers articulating their interest to enter this space or insisting the content creators not use their image in such activities (Baugh, 2020; Hamilton, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2022). These cases have sparked heated debates about morality, respectability, and the economic realities of content creation in Jamaica. For some, platforms like OnlyFans offer essential economic opportunities in a country plagued by high unemployment and limited upward mobility. For others, they represent a dangerous erosion of moral boundaries. These case studies highlight not only the prevalence of vulgarity in Jamaican digital culture but also the broader social debates it generates, particularly around gender, economics, and respectability.

4.5 Public Reactions and Moral Panic

The rise of vulgarity and lewd behaviour on social media has generated significant moral panic within Jamaica. Religious leaders, educators, and policymakers have voiced concerns about the impact of such content on cultural values and the mental health of youth. Churches, in particular, have condemned vulgar online performances as evidence of moral decline and the erosion of family values. Similarly, many educators argue that young Jamaicans are being negatively influenced by constant exposure to explicit material, which shapes their attitudes towards sexuality, relationships, and self-worth. Many stakeholders, including governments, have occasionally responded with regulatory initiatives, such as calls for stricter monitoring of online spaces; however, enforcement remains limited due to the global nature of digital platforms (Bourne, 2024; Candelon & de Franssu, 2021; Jamaica Observer, 2022a; Pottinger, 2024).

At the same time, there is a counter-discourse that defends vulgarity as an expression of freedom and authenticity. Many Jamaicans view online lewdness not as moral corruption but as a reflection of cultural creativity and resilience in the face of economic and social hardship. Supporters of vulgar content often argue that it allows individuals to resist the hypocrisy of respectability politics, which historically marginalised working-class cultural expressions (Brown, 1999; Cooper, 2004; Hope, 2010b). This debate reflects broader tensions within Jamaican society between conservatism and cultural rebellion, respectability and authenticity, morality and creativity. As such, public reactions to online vulgarity are deeply polarised, with some demanding greater regulation and others celebrating it as an inevitable and even necessary part of Jamaican cultural expression in the digital era.

5.0 MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT CREATORS IN JAMAICA

5.1 The Psychological Demands of Content Creation

Being a social media content creator in Jamaica is not just about posting pictures or videos; it is a complex profession that imposes significant psychological demands. Creators must constantly anticipate audience preferences, manage algorithms, and compete in an environment saturated with content. The pursuit of visibility demands continuous creativity and innovation, which can create pressure to outperform oneself with each new post. In the Jamaican context, this pressure is heightened by limited economic opportunities and the potential for monetisation through digital platforms. For many young Jamaicans, becoming a successful content creator is one of the few available routes to upward mobility, intensifying the importance of online performance (Pottinger, 2024). However, the relentless demand for attention often encourages unhealthy patterns, as creators resort to increasingly provocative or sensational content to stay relevant. This cycle results in stress, fatigue, and vulnerability to mental health issues.

Scholars have emphasised that social media content creation transforms private life into a form of public labour, where individuals' identities and personal experiences become commodities (Abidin, 2018). In Jamaica, this commodification intersects with cultural traditions of performance, particularly dancehall, where entertainers have long relied on self-promotion and spectacle. However, unlike traditional performance settings, the digital environment operates on a 24/7 cycle, with creators expected to be available and visible at all times. This makes it difficult to separate personal identity from professional persona, eroding boundaries that are critical for psychological well-being. Content creators thus inhabit a precarious position: while

social media offers opportunities for economic gain and global recognition, it also subjects them to relentless scrutiny and pressures that undermine mental health. The psychological demands of this new form of labour make it essential to study the lived experiences of Jamaican content creators in order better to understand the intersection of digital economies and mental wellness.

5.2 Anxiety, Depression, and Digital Addiction

Anxiety and depression are among the most commonly reported mental health challenges faced by social media content creators worldwide, and Jamaican creators are no exception. Constantly seeking likes, comments, and followers creates a cycle of digital dependency, where validation is tied to fluctuating metrics. When engagement rates drop, creators often experience feelings of inadequacy, rejection, or failure. A UNICEF Jamaica (2023) report indicated that nearly 40% of young Jamaicans felt “worse about themselves” after prolonged exposure to social media, highlighting the vulnerability of digital natives to issues of self-esteem and depression. For content creators, this vulnerability is magnified by the fact that their livelihood and identity are deeply tied to audience approval. Anxiety emerges not only from fear of being ignored but also from the constant pressure to remain relevant in a competitive digital marketplace.

Digital addiction is another pressing issue. Jamaican content creators frequently report spending upward of eight to twelve hours daily online, either producing content or engaging with followers (Bourne, 2024). Such excessive screen time contributes to sleep disruption, reduced physical activity, and social isolation, all of which exacerbate mental health struggles. Research suggests that constant connectivity interferes with the brain’s reward systems, making individuals more prone to anxiety, depression, and compulsive behaviours (Andreassen et al., 2017). In the Jamaican setting, where mental health services are already underfunded and stigmatised, content creators often have little support in managing these psychological strains. The result is a growing population of young adults who may appear successful and glamorous online but are privately grappling with profound mental health difficulties. The intersection of digital addiction, economic precarity, and limited psychological support renders Jamaican content creators especially vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

5.3 Burnout and the Pressure to Perform

Burnout is a pervasive issue among Jamaican social media content creators, who must constantly meet the demands of visibility and engagement. Unlike traditional jobs, content creation does not adhere to fixed working hours, and the expectation of round-the-clock productivity makes rest seem like a liability. The competitive nature of platforms like TikTok and Instagram means that creators who pause their content output risk losing followers and income. This relentless pace produces physical exhaustion, emotional depletion, and creative fatigue—symptoms that align with clinical understandings of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In Jamaica, these challenges are compounded by infrastructural limitations, including inconsistent internet access, limited equipment, and financial instability, which force creators to work harder to compete with peers in wealthier contexts.

The pressure to perform is also a cultural phenomenon. Jamaican digital audiences expect boldness, humour, and spectacle, pushing creators to continually escalate their content in terms of vulgarity, creativity, or controversy. While this pressure can drive innovation, it often results in creators engaging in behaviour that compromises their personal values or psychological health. Many report feeling trapped in personas they no longer wish to maintain, yet abandoning these roles risks alienating their audiences (Baugh, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2022). Burnout thus manifests not only as exhaustion but as a crisis of identity, where individuals struggle to reconcile the demands of their digital persona with their authentic selves. This disconnect intensifies mental distress, making burnout among Jamaican content creators not merely an occupational hazard but a significant public health concern.

5.4 Self-Worth, Validation, and Online Identity

The relationship between self-worth and online validation is one of the most critical mental health issues facing Jamaican content creators. Social media platforms are designed around metrics—likes, comments, shares, and views—that serve as visible indicators of approval. For creators, these metrics function as both financial and psychological currency. High engagement affirms self-worth, while low engagement undermines confidence and reinforces self-doubt. Over time, this reliance on external validation reshapes how individuals perceive themselves, making their sense of value contingent upon audience reception. Psychologists describe this as a form of “contingent self-worth,” where identity becomes fragile and overly dependent on external feedback (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

In Jamaica, where societal expectations around respectability and success are already high, content creators often experience heightened pressure to prove themselves through online popularity. This is particularly acute for women, who are simultaneously celebrated for their sexual boldness online and criticised for failing to meet traditional standards of modesty. Men, too, face pressures to perform hypermasculinity or comedic vulgarity in order to gain traction, creating limited and sometimes damaging pathways to visibility. For both genders, self-worth becomes tethered to online approval in ways that erode authentic self-esteem. The digital identity crisis thus extends beyond individual psychology to reflect broader cultural dynamics, where social media reshapes how Jamaicans negotiate identity, morality, and self-expression. The result is a digital landscape where validation is both empowering and destructive, offering temporary boosts to self-worth while entrenching long-term psychological vulnerability.

5.5 Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems

Despite these challenges, Jamaican content creators employ various coping mechanisms to manage the mental health pressures of digital labour. Some develop strict routines that include designated offline hours, exercise, or meditation to restore balance. Others rely on peer support networks, often connecting with fellow creators who understand the unique stresses of online visibility. Social media itself occasionally provides spaces for vulnerability, as creators share personal struggles with burnout, depression, or anxiety, which can foster solidarity and reduce stigma. However, these coping mechanisms are often insufficient in the absence of formal support structures. Mental health services in Jamaica remain underfunded and overstretched, with the Ministry of Health acknowledging a shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists in

relation to population needs (World Health Organisation, 2020a, 2020b). Content creators thus face systemic barriers in accessing professional care.

There is also the issue of stigma. Mental health discussions in Jamaica have historically been silenced by cultural taboos, with individuals who seek psychological support often labelled as “weak” or “mad.” This stigma discourages many content creators from acknowledging their struggles, leading them to mask distress with humour, bravado, or overwork. In response, some NGOs and community organisations have begun developing initiatives to promote mental health awareness among youth and digital workers. Programmes that integrate mental health education into schools and online spaces show promise in reducing stigma and expanding access to care (Clayton, 2023b). Nevertheless, a comprehensive approach is needed to address the unique pressures of digital content creation, combining individual coping mechanisms with structural investments in mental health support. Without such efforts, the mental health crisis among Jamaican content creators is likely to deepen, threatening not only individual well-being but also the cultural vibrancy of the nation’s digital landscape.

6.0 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the complex relationship between social media usage in Jamaica, the proliferation of vulgar and lewd behaviour online, and the mental health of content creators. The rise of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube has created unprecedented opportunities for self-expression, income generation, and cultural influence, yet troubling consequences accompany these opportunities. Many Jamaican creators rely on provocative or controversial material to gain visibility, reflecting global digital trends where shock value attracts engagement (Marwick, 2015). This reliance on sensationalism, particularly vulgarity and sexualised content, underscores how algorithmic systems reward behaviours that are often at odds with traditional social norms (Bishop, 2019). At the same time, these patterns raise questions about the sustainability of online careers in Jamaica, especially when creators report experiencing burnout, anxiety, and depression due to the pressures of performance and constant public scrutiny (Kaye et al., 2021). Thus, the digital economy both empowers and endangers Jamaican creators.

From a societal perspective, the increased visibility of vulgarity and lewd conduct on social media has significant implications for Jamaican cultural identity and intergenerational values. Social media has amplified dancehall’s long-standing association with sexualised imagery and explicit language, making it more accessible to youth audiences (The Gleaner, 2013; Jamaica Observer, 2022a, 2022b). While this globalises Jamaican culture and provides opportunities for cultural export, it simultaneously reinforces stereotypes of hypersexuality and deviance that have historically stigmatised the nation (Cooper, 2004; Hope 2006a; Stanley Niaah, 2010; Thomas, 2004). The consequence is a tension between cultural pride and cultural degradation, as many Jamaicans express concern that digital vulgarity erodes moral standards and promotes antisocial behaviours (Lambert, 2024; Pottinger, 2024). These concerns are not merely abstract; they influence how older generations view young people’s values, potentially widening intergenerational divides. Furthermore, this dynamic raises questions about national branding, as Jamaica’s international image risks being overshadowed by a digital reputation grounded in lewdness and sensationalism.

Policy implications emerge strongly from the findings, as the Jamaican government, educational institutions, and civil society must contend with the dual-edged nature of social media. On one hand, platforms provide opportunities for entrepreneurship, youth employment, and creative industries; on the other hand, they enable the normalisation of vulgarity, cyberbullying, and exploitative behaviour (Fuchs, 2021). Current Jamaican digital policies focus primarily on connectivity and access, but they pay insufficient attention to digital literacy, online ethics, and mental health (Ministry of Science, Energy & Technology, 2022). A comprehensive response would require integrating digital citizenship programmes into school curricula, ensuring that young Jamaicans learn how to navigate online spaces responsibly. Additionally, policymakers must consider support mechanisms for creators, such as mental health resources, digital copyright protections, and safeguards against online harassment. Without such measures, Jamaica risks exacerbating the negative consequences of social media while failing to capitalise on its positive potential.

The mental health implications for content creators are particularly concerning, as this study indicates that the pursuit of digital success often comes at a psychological cost. Global research suggests that influencers and creators frequently experience heightened anxiety, loneliness, and identity crises as they navigate algorithm-driven demands (Lanquist & Jansson, 2022). In Jamaica, where access to mental health services is already limited and stigmatised (Hutchinson et al., 2017), these risks are even more pronounced. Creators often lack structured support networks, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and public criticism without adequate coping mechanisms in place. The need for constant content production, combined with exposure to online hate, creates cycles of stress that may lead to depression or disengagement (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). By highlighting these challenges, the findings underscore the urgent need for accessible, culturally sensitive mental health interventions tailored explicitly for digital workers in Jamaica.

Ethical considerations also arise in the context of this study, particularly in relation to questions of agency, exploitation, and responsibility. While many Jamaican creators voluntarily choose to engage in vulgar or lewd content as a pathway to visibility, the broader ethical question is whether algorithmic systems incentivise harmful behaviours for profit (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). This raises concerns about the accountability of multinational platforms operating in Jamaica, which profit from engagement metrics without addressing the harmful effects on users. Ethical tensions also emerge within Jamaican society, where debates continue over the moral legitimacy of content that simultaneously empowers creators economically but undermines traditional values (Hall, 1996). Additionally, issues of gender equity are central, as female creators are often subject to greater scrutiny, objectification, and harassment than their male counterparts (Banet-Weiser, 2018). These ethical dilemmas suggest that Jamaica's struggle with digital vulgarity is not merely a cultural matter but also a question of justice, fairness, and responsibility in digital environments.

Taken together, the discussion demonstrates that the rise of social media in Jamaica is a double-edged sword, offering both unprecedented opportunities and profound risks. The influence of vulgarity and lewd behaviour cannot be separated from broader socio-economic and cultural realities, including unemployment, cultural identity, and globalisation. While social media democratises content creation, it also amplifies behaviours that place psychological strain on creators and challenge Jamaica's cultural values. The findings call for a nuanced understanding

that avoids moral panic while recognising the urgent need for structural interventions. In this light, Jamaican society must pursue a balanced approach: fostering digital creativity and economic opportunity while simultaneously protecting mental health, promoting ethical online conduct, and safeguarding the nation's cultural integrity.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this essay confirm that social media has transformed Jamaica's cultural landscape in ways that are both empowering and troubling. On one hand, digital platforms have opened opportunities for ordinary Jamaicans to achieve visibility, economic independence, and creative expression on a scale previously unattainable (Miller & Slater, 2000). On the other hand, this digital democratisation has normalised vulgarity and lewd behaviour, with creators often resorting to sensational content to remain competitive in an algorithm-driven ecosystem (Marwick, 2015). The consequences are far-reaching, not only shaping how Jamaicans express themselves online but also influencing how Jamaica is perceived internationally. Notably, the study highlights that the mental health of content creators is at risk, as they grapple with the psychological demands of maintaining a public persona under constant scrutiny (Kaye et al., 2021). Thus, the rise of social media in Jamaica embodies a paradox: it is a tool of empowerment, but also a source of vulnerability.

The cultural implications of vulgarity and lewdness in Jamaican social media cannot be ignored. The expansion of sexually explicit and provocative content builds upon a history of dancehall performance that has long challenged norms of respectability (Cooper, 2004; Hope, 2006a; Stanley Niaah, 2010). However, the migration of these performances to digital platforms means they reach a much wider audience, including children and diaspora communities. For some, this represents an authentic expression of Jamaican creativity and resistance against colonial legacies of moral regulation (Cooper, 2004). For others, it signals cultural decline, with concerns that lewd behaviour erodes social values and contributes to a coarsening of public discourse (Lambert, 2024; Pottinger, 2024). Both perspectives reveal the ambivalence of social media's impact: it is simultaneously a space of liberation and a site of moral contestation. This duality underscores the need for nuanced responses that avoid dismissing vulgarity outright, while still acknowledging its social and psychological risks.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest an integrated approach to managing the opportunities and risks associated with social media. Jamaica's current emphasis on expanding internet access and digital transformation must be matched with policies that promote digital literacy and online ethics (Ministry of Science, Energy & Technology, 2022). Schools and universities should incorporate digital citizenship curricula that teach young people how to evaluate online content critically, navigate potentially harmful interactions, and make informed decisions about their online presence. At the same time, the government and civil society organisations should support national campaigns to address cyberbullying, online harassment, and the normalisation of vulgarity. Collaboration with platform providers is also crucial, as multinational corporations bear responsibility for creating algorithmic systems that currently reward sensationalism at the expense of well-being (Bishop, 2019). Without such coordinated interventions, Jamaica risks leaving its citizens unprepared for the ethical and mental health challenges of the digital age.

The mental health of Jamaican content creators warrants specific attention. The study reveals that creators frequently experience high levels of stress, burnout, and anxiety as they strive to maintain visibility in a competitive digital environment (Lanquist & Jansson, 2022). Given the limited accessibility of mental health resources in Jamaica and the stigma surrounding psychological care (Hutchinson et al., 2017), content creators are particularly vulnerable. Targeted support should include confidential counselling services tailored to digital workers, peer support groups within creator communities, and partnerships between mental health professionals and creative industry associations. Importantly, addressing stigma must remain central to these interventions, ensuring that creators feel empowered to seek help without fear of judgment. By strengthening mental health resources, Jamaica can safeguard the long-term sustainability of its creative digital economy.

Ethical considerations also form part of the recommendations arising from this study. Jamaican society must grapple with the moral implications of content that is simultaneously empowering and exploitative. Platforms, policymakers, and communities must create a balance between respecting freedom of expression and addressing the harms associated with digital vulgarity. Ethical guidelines for content creation, developed collaboratively with creators, could establish standards of responsible engagement without resorting to censorship. Additionally, gender disparities must be acknowledged, as female creators often face disproportionate objectification and harassment online (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Addressing these inequalities requires both stronger legal protections and cultural shifts that reduce tolerance for misogyny in digital spaces. Ultimately, ethical engagement must be understood as a shared responsibility, not just the burden of individual creators.

In conclusion, the rise of social media in Jamaica is emblematic of the broader tensions of digital modernity: it creates new pathways for cultural expression, economic participation, and visibility, but it also reproduces social inequalities, incentivises vulgarity, and places creators' mental health at risk. To respond effectively, Jamaica must pursue a strategy that integrates cultural sensitivity, digital literacy, mental health support, and ethical responsibility. Such a strategy will not eliminate vulgarity or lewd behaviour—indeed, these forms of expression may always remain part of Jamaican popular culture—but it can mitigate their harmful effects while enabling more constructive uses of social media. The future of Jamaica's digital culture depends not on rejecting social media, but on cultivating healthier ways of engaging with it. If approached with foresight, Jamaica can harness the power of social media to empower its people while protecting their mental and cultural well-being.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhancing Digital Literacy in Jamaica

One of the most pressing needs emerging from this study is the development of comprehensive digital literacy programmes. Schools, universities, and community centres should incorporate structured curricula that teach young Jamaicans to critically evaluate online content, recognise vulgar or harmful material, and understand the impact of their own digital footprints (Fuchs, 2021). Such programmes could include workshops on responsible posting, privacy management, and respectful online communication. Furthermore, digital literacy initiatives should be integrated into teacher training, enabling educators to guide students effectively and

model ethical online behaviour (Clayton, 2023a). Collaboration with non-governmental organisations and tech companies can enhance resources and reach, ensuring that even young people in rural or underserved areas benefit. By equipping young users with critical skills, Jamaica can mitigate the adverse effects of exposure to vulgarity while promoting creative and ethical participation in digital spaces. Ultimately, enhancing digital literacy strengthens both individual resilience and societal norms surrounding acceptable online conduct.

2. Strengthening Mental Health Support for Content Creators

The study highlights significant mental health challenges among Jamaican social media creators, including anxiety, burnout, and depression (Kaye et al., 2021; Lanquist & Jansson, 2022). To address this, policymakers and professional associations should establish accessible, culturally sensitive mental health resources tailored to digital workers. These could include confidential counselling services, peer-support networks, and virtual wellness programmes specifically designed for content creators who face performance pressure and public scrutiny. Awareness campaigns should also target stigma reduction, normalising help-seeking behaviour and promoting psychological well-being. Partnerships between universities, mental health practitioners, and social media platforms could provide both preventative and responsive support. Additionally, periodic workshops on stress management, work-life balance, and coping strategies for negative online feedback would equip creators with practical tools. By prioritising mental health, Jamaica can sustain the digital creative economy while protecting the psychological well-being of those who drive it.

3. Developing Ethical Guidelines and Codes of Conduct

Ethical engagement on social media is essential to mitigating the spread of vulgarity and lewd content while preserving freedom of expression (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). The Jamaican government, civil society organisations, and digital industry stakeholders should co-create a set of ethical guidelines for content creation. These guidelines could outline standards for responsible posting, appropriate audience targeting, and the avoidance of exploitative or harmful content. Importantly, these guidelines should be flexible, culturally contextualised, and developed in consultation with creators themselves to ensure buy-in and compliance. Platforms could incorporate these principles into their community standards, supported by monitoring mechanisms that strike a balance between enforcement and creator autonomy. By fostering ethical awareness, Jamaica can encourage digital citizenship and reinforce positive online norms without resorting to censorship. Such frameworks also provide a foundation for resolving disputes or addressing harmful online behaviour fairly and transparently.

4. Promoting Gender Equity and Protection Against Harassment

The study underscores gendered differences in engagement and the disproportionate harassment faced by female creators (Banet-Weiser, 2018). To address this, policy interventions should prioritise gender equity and the protection of creators from online abuse. Legal frameworks could be strengthened to explicitly address digital harassment, cyberbullying, and gender-based discrimination online. Simultaneously, awareness campaigns should challenge societal norms that perpetuate objectification and misogyny, promoting a culture of respect and accountability. Professional associations or creator networks could

establish mentoring programmes and safe spaces for female content creators, fostering resilience and networking opportunities. By promoting gender equity, Jamaica not only protects vulnerable creators but also ensures more inclusive representation in the digital economy. Addressing these disparities is essential to sustaining a diverse and thriving creative ecosystem.

5. Engaging Social Media Platforms and Algorithmic Accountability

Finally, Jamaican authorities and civil society must engage directly with social media platforms to address algorithmic incentives that prioritise sensationalism and vulgarity (Bishop, 2019). Platforms should be encouraged to design algorithms that reward meaningful, creative, and educational content rather than purely provocative material. Regular dialogue between regulators, creators, and platform representatives can identify harmful trends and develop context-specific solutions. Incentivising positive content through visibility, monetisation, or feature placement could shift online norms toward more responsible and constructive behaviour. Transparency in recommendation systems, content moderation, and data usage is crucial for maintaining trust between creators and platforms. By fostering platform accountability, Jamaica can balance the opportunities of digital engagement with the ethical and mental health concerns identified in this study

REFERENCES

- Abidin, C. (2018). *Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online*. Emerald Publishing.
- Andreassen, C. S., Pallesen, S., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). The relationship between addictive use of social media, narcissism, and self-esteem: Findings from a large national survey. *Addictive Behaviours*, 64, 287–293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2016.03.006>
- Bailey, J. (2014). *Digital technology adoption and social change in the Caribbean*. Caribbean Studies Press.
- Bailey, J., & Thomas, R. (2021). Attention economies and digital provocation: Social media trends in Jamaica. *Journal of Caribbean Media Studies*, 5(1), 23–41.
- Bailey, J., Cambron, C., & Sherry, S. (2013). Cyberbullying and sexting among Caribbean youth: Implications for policy and practice. *Caribbean Journal of Education*, 35(2), 45–62.
- Bailey, T., & Thomas, R. (2021). Attention economies and online content in the Caribbean. *International Journal of Digital Culture*, 7(1), 12–29.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2018). *Empowered: Popular feminism and widespread misogyny*. Duke University Press.

- Baugh, C. (2020, August 17). Shenseea wants some of that OnlyFans money. <https://www.dancehallmag.com/2020/08/17/news/shenseea-wants-some-of-that-onlyfans-money.html>
- Bennett, P., Kendall, A., & McDougall, J. (2011). *After the media: Culture and identity in the 21st century*. Routledge.
- Bishop, S. (2019). Algorithmic visibility: The politics of social media metrics. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(8), 1151–1168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443719832413>
- Bourne, P. A. (2024). *Social Media Usage and Youth Mental Health in Jamaica* Vocational Training Development Institute Press.
- Broome, P., & Adugu, E. (2015). Whither social media for digital activism: The case of the Caribbean. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 10(3), 1-21.
- Brown, J. (1999). Masculinity and dancehall. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 45(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.1999.11829600>
- Buckingham, D. (2007). *Youth, identity, and digital media* (p. 216). The MIT Press.
- Candelon, F., & de Franssu, L.-V. (2021, October 21). How online platforms must respond to a new era of internet governance. *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/10/how-online-platforms-must-respond-internet-governance/>
- Chou, H.-T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). “They are happier and having better lives than I am”: The impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others’ lives. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(2), 117–121. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2011.0324>
- Clayton, R. (2023b). *Social Media, Youth Mental Health, and Coping Strategies in Jamaica*. UNICEF Jamaica Report.
- Clayton, S. (2023a). Digital literacy and mental health interventions for youth. *Caribbean Journal of Education and Health*, 12(1), 33–51.
- Cohen, S. (2011). *Folk devils and moral panics* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Cooper, C. (2004). *Sound clash: Jamaican dancehall culture at large*. Duke University Press.
- Crocker, J., & Wolfe, C. T. (2001). Contingencies of self-worth. *Psychological Review*, 108(3), 593–623. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.108.3.593>
- Dhir, A., Chen, S., & Nieminen, M. (2018). Antecedents and consequences of social media fatigue. *International Journal of Information Management*, 44, 156–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.06.009>

- Duffy, B. E., & Hund, E. (2015). "Having it all" on social media: Entrepreneurial femininity and self-branding among fashion bloggers. *Social Media + Society*, 1(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604337>
- Everett, A. (2007). *Learning race and ethnicity: Youth and digital media* (p. 207). The MIT Press.
- Fuchs, C. (2021). *Social media: A critical introduction* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation analysis: An overview. *Mass Communication & Society*, 1(3–4), 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.1998.9677855>
- Gerfer, A. (n.d.). *Jamaican Creole in Global Reggae and Dancehall Performances*. University of Münster.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs "identity"? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1–17). Sage Publications.
- Hamilton, T. (2020, July 20). D'Angel's lawyer releases cease and desist warning to those leaking her OnlyFans content. <https://www.dancehallmag.com/2020/07/20/news/dangels-lawyer-releases-cess-and-desist-warning-to-those-leaking-her-onlyfans-content.html>
- Hamilton, V., Soneji, A., McDonald, A., & Redmiles, E. (2022). "Nudes? Shouldn't I charge for these?": Motivations of new sexual content creators on OnlyFans. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2205.10425>
- Hanna, L. (2025, April 27). Dancehall's global takeover. *Jamaica Observer*.
- Henry, N., & Powell, A. (2018). Sexual violence in the digital age: The scope and limits of criminal law. *Social & Legal Studies*, 27(4), 441–459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663918759641>
- Hope, D. P. (2006b). Passa Passa: Interrogating cultural hybridities in Jamaican dancehall. *Small Axe*, 10(3), 125–139. <https://doi.org/10.1353/smx.2006.0037>
- Hope, D. P. (2010a). From the stage to the grave. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877909359733>
- Hope, D.P. (2006a). *Inna di Dancehall: Popular Culture and the Politics of Identity in Jamaica*. Kingston: UWI Press.
- Hope, D.P. (2010b). *Man Vibes: Masculinities in the Jamaican Dancehall*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, May 2010, 267pp.
- Huang, C. (2017). Time spent on social network sites and psychological well-being: A meta-analysis. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 20(6), 346–354. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0758>

- Hutchinson, K., Francis, A., & Taylor, P. (2017). Mental health services in Jamaica: Current challenges and future prospects. *West Indian Medical Journal*, 66(5), 607–615. <https://doi.org/10.7727/wimj.2017.144>
- International Telecommunication Union. (2020). ICT statistics 2020: Mobile and internet penetration in the Caribbean. ITU Publications. <https://www.itu.int>
- Jamaica Observer. (2022a, May 5). Dancehall Danger! Kingston: Jamaica Observer.
- Jamaica Observer. (2022b, June 27). Jamaican music and sexual depravity. Kingston: Jamaica Observer.
- Johnson, P. (2018). Social media and political campaigning in Jamaica: The rise of digital electioneering. *Caribbean Journal of Political Studies*, 10(1), 22–38.
- Joinson, A. N. (2007). Disinhibition and the Internet. In J. Gackenbach (Ed.), *Psychology and the internet: Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal applications* (2nd ed., pp. 75–92). Academic Press.
- Kaye, L. K., Chen, X., & Zeng, J. (2021). The influence of social media on content creators' well-being. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 118, 106711. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106711>
- Kemp, S. (2023). Digital 2023: Jamaica. DataReportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-jamaica>
- Kemp, S. (2024). Digital 2024: Jamaica. Digitalreportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-jamaica>
- Kemp, S. (2025). Digital 2025: Jamaica. Digitalreportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-jamaica>
- Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). Social networking sites and addiction: Ten lessons learned. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(3), 311. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14030311>
- Lambert, C. (2024, January 21). Misuse of social media worsening adolescent mental health, says psychologist. Jamaica Observer.
- Lanquist, A., & Jansson, A. (2022). The psychology of social media influencers. *Media Psychology*, 25(2), 153–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2021.1902124>
- Macnamara, J. (2010). *The 21st century media (r) evolution: Emergent communication practices*. Peter Lang.
- Marwick, A. (2015). *Status update: Celebrity, publicity, and branding in the social media age*. Yale University Press.

- Marwick, A. E., & Lewis, R. (2017). Media manipulation and disinformation online. Data & Society Research Institute.
- Marwick, A., & Lewis, R. (2017). Media manipulation and disinformation online. Data & Society Research Institute. https://datasociety.net/pubs/ia/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinfo.pdf
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Burnout: A multidimensional perspective (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Miller, D., & Sinanan, J. (2017). Digital anthropology: Anthropology and the digital in the Caribbean. Routledge.
- Miller, D., & Slater, D. (2000). The Internet: An ethnographic approach. Berg Publishers.
- Ministry of Science, Energy & Technology. (2022). Digital transformation policy framework: Jamaica 2022. Government of Jamaica. <https://www.mset.gov.jm>
- Montag, C., Lachmann, B., Herrlich, M., & Zweig, K. (2021). Addictive features of social media/messenger platforms and freemium games against the background of psychological and economic theories. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(14), 7461. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147461>
- Newell, M. (2009, January). Dancehall Culture and its World: Synthesising competing discourses and interpretations of Jamaica's controversial ghetto youth culture. Children and Youth Studies (CYS). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2105/6508>
- Nieborg, D. B., & Poell, T. (2018). The platformisation of cultural production. Social Media + Society, 4(4), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118783417>
- Osgerby, B. (2020). Youth culture and the media: Global perspectives. Routledge.
- Pottinger, A. (2024, May 13). Parents are urged to monitor their children's use of social media. Jamaica Observer.
- Reyero, D., Pattier, D. Y García-Ramos, D. (2022). Adolescence and Identity in the Twenty-First Century: Social Media as Spaces for Mimesis and Learning. In Identity in a hyperconnected society: risks and educative proposals (pp. 75-93). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Shabir, G., Safdar, G., Jamil, T., & Bano, S. (2015). Mass Media, Communication and Globalisation with the perspective of the 21st century. New Media and Mass Communication, 34, 11-15.
- Shuter, R. (2012). Intercultural new media studies: The next frontier in intercultural communication. Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 41(3), 219-237.

- Smith, R. (2022). Digital vulgarity and cultural expression: Jamaican social media influencers. *Caribbean Media Review*, 8(2), 55–73.
- Stanley-Niaah, S. (2004, November). Making space: Kingston's Dancehall culture and its philosophy of 'boundarylessness'. *African Identities*, 2(2), 117–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472584042000310847>, November). Making space: Kingston's Dancehall culture and its philosophy of 'boundarylessness'. *African Identities*, 2(2), 117–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472584042000310847>
- Stanley-Niaah, S. (2009). Negotiating a common transnational space: Mapping performance in Jamaican Dancehall and South African Kwaito. *Cultural Studies*, 23(5–6), 756–774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380903132355>
- Stanley-Niaah, S. (2010). *DanceHall: From Slave Ship to Ghetto*. Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press
- Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN). (2022). Household internet and technology survey 2022. Kingston, Jamaica: STATIN. <https://statinja.gov.jm>
- Strossen, N. (2024). *Harmful speech and digital ethics: Navigating the online moral landscape*. Oxford University Press.
- The Gleaner. (2013). Children play in digital dancehall- no-holds-barred arena allows youngsters into the adult world. Kingston: The Gleaner. https://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130922/ent/ent7.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- The Reggae Museum. (2025, July 2). Diaspora influence on Reggae and Dancehall: Global roots, global reach. Retrieved from The Reggae Museum
- Thomas, D. A. (2004). *Modern blackness: Nationalism, globalization, and the politics of culture in Jamaica*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press
- Thomas, R. (2019). Masculinity, vulgarity, and Jamaican online culture. *Journal of Caribbean Studies*, 45(2), 78–97.
- Twenge, J. M. (2019). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy—and completely unprepared for adulthood*. Atria Books.
- UNICEF Jamaica. (2023). Youth, social media, and mental well-being in Jamaica. United Nations Children's Fund. <https://www.unicef.org/jamaica>
- World Health Organization. (2020a). Mental health systems in the Caribbean: Regional report. WHO. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240014587>
- World Health Organization. (2020b). Mental health atlas 2020: Jamaica country profile. WHO.

Appendix A: Supporting Tables

Table A1. Social Media Usage Among Jamaicans (2023)

Platform	% of Population Using Platform	Average Daily Usage (hours)	Dominant Age Group	Primary Purpose of Use
Facebook	65%	2.5	18–35	Communication, News
Instagram	58%	3.0	18–30	Content sharing, Photography
TikTok	45%	2.8	16–25	Entertainment, Dance challenges
YouTube	70%	3.5	16–40	Music, Tutorials, Vlogs
Twitter/X	30%	1.5	20–35	News, Political discussion

Source: UNICEF Jamaica (2023); Bourne (2024)

Table A2. Prevalence of Vulgar and Lewd Behaviour by Platform

Platform	% of Users Exposed to Vulgar Content	Most Common Type of Content	Gender Most Represented	Notes
TikTok	78%	Sexualised dance, explicit humour	Female	Highly monetised via likes/follows
Instagram	65%	Provocative images/videos	Female	Amplifies dancehall aesthetics
YouTube	55%	Vulgar skits, pranks	Male	Comedy often includes profanity
Facebook	42%	Memes, explicit jokes	Mixed	Shared content spreads via friends
Twitter/X	38%	Profanity, provocative commentary	Male	Often linked to political/social debates

Source: Thomas (2019); Bourne (2024)

Table A3. Mental Health Impacts on Jamaican Content Creators

Mental Health Indicator	% of Creators Reporting Issue	Typical Causes	Notes
Anxiety	68%	Low engagement, negative comments	Linked to performance pressure (Kaye et al., 2021)
Depression	54%	Algorithmic unpredictability, burnout	Correlates with long hours online
Sleep Disruption	49%	Late-night content creation, notifications	Reduces physical and cognitive well-being
Burnout	62%	High-output demands, constant visibility	Leads to temporary disengagement
Contingent Self-Worth	71%	Reliance on likes/comments for validation	Stronger in female creators

Source: Bourne (2024); Lanquist & Jansson (2022); UNICEF Jamaica (2023)

Table A4. Audience Engagement Patterns by Gender

Gender	Average Engagement Rate (likes/comments)	Type of Content Most Engaged	Observed Trend
Female	4.2%	Sexualised dance, beauty tips	High visibility, higher scrutiny from audiences
Male	3.5%	Humour, pranks, bravado	Less scrutiny, rewarded for boldness
Mixed	3.8%	Memes, music reactions	Engagement depends on virality, less gendered

Source: Reid (2022); Banet-Weiser (2018); Bourne (2024)

Table A5. Recommendations for Policy and Creator Support

Area of Intervention	Recommendation	Expected Outcome
Digital Literacy	Implement school and community programs	Increased awareness of responsible online behaviour
Mental Health Support	Create confidential counselling and peer support groups	Reduced anxiety, depression, and burnout
Ethical Guidelines	Develop co-created content ethics frameworks	Promote responsible content without censorship
Gender Equity	Strengthen protections against harassment and objectification	More equitable opportunities for female creators
Platform Accountability	Partner with social media companies for safer algorithms	Reduce the incentivisation of vulgarity/lewd content

Source: Ministry of Science, Energy & Technology (2022); Hutchinson et al. (2017); Fuchs (2021)

Table A6. Summary Table

Theme	Reference	Key Insight
Global live performance reach	Hanna (2025)	Dancehall shows and streams are reaching North America, Europe, and Africa.
Transnational performance mapping	Stanley-Niaah (2009 & 2010)	Dancehall's parallels and shared performance geographies across continents.
Diasporic cultural adaptation	Reggae Museum (2025)	How the UK, Africa, and Japan localised and expanded reggae/dancehall culture.
Language and identity transmission	Gerfer (n.d.)	The role of the Creole language in global performance and cultural exchange.