Design and Implementation of a Web-based Telemedicine System for Healthcare delivery in Low-resource Nigerian Settings

Dominic Evans O.
Department of Computer Science, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State

Metu Okezikam I.
Department of Computer Science, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Uli, Anambra State

Chinwe Ndigwe
Department of Computer Science, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Uli, Anambra State

ABSTRACT
Healthcare delivery in Nigeria is held back by paper-based record management, fragmented patient data, long wait times, and limited access to medical specialists. This paper presents the design, implementation, and evaluation of UM-HEALTH, a web-based healthcare platform built to address these gaps. The system brings together electronic health records, online appointment scheduling, voice and video teleconsultation, and a secure patient portal. The frontend was built with Next.js, the backend with Django REST Framework, and the database layer with Supabase PostgreSQL. Requirements were informed by questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation involving 353 respondents in Nigeria, with Abia State, Imo State, and Anambra State serving as case study regions. Survey data showed that 82.7% of respondents had experienced long wait times at facilities, only 21.8% could easily retrieve their medical records after a visit, and 87% indicated willingness to use a secure digital health platform. Evaluation findings point to reduced administrative overhead, improved record accessibility, and stronger patient-provider communication. The architecture is built to scale and accommodate additional clinical modules. The work provides a framework for localized digital health deployment in resource-limited Nigerian settings that others can adapt and build on.

General Terms
Healthcare Informatics, Digital Health Systems, Telemedicine, Software Engineering, Web Application Development.

Keywords
Digital health, electronic health records, telemedicine, appointment scheduling, healthcare access, Peri-urban, Django, Next.js, PostgreSQL.

1. INTRODUCTION
The healthcare landscape in Nigeria is undergoing significant transformation as digitized solutions are introduced to address persistent challenges in access and service delivery. With a rapidly growing population and increasing pressure on traditional health facilities, the integration of digital technologies offers a viable path to enhance the quality and reach of healthcare services. In recent years, various initiatives worldwide have demonstrated that digital solutions can play a crucial role in mitigating issues related to capacity, cost, and inefficiencies in healthcare delivery [1]. The adoption of electronic health records, telehealth platforms, and cloud computing is being pursued as a means to streamline operations and ensure that patients receive timely care. The local health sector, like many others globally, faces the challenge of balancing rising administrative costs with the need for effective patient care. Digital solutions can help reduce the administrative burden by automating routine tasks and facilitating quicker access to patient data, thereby allowing healthcare professionals to focus more on direct patient care [1],[2]. Moreover, the potential of telehealth has become increasingly apparent in the wake of recent global health challenges. In Nigeria, telehealth services are being implemented to bridge the gap between remote communities and urban healthcare centers. This technology enables patients to consult specialists and receive medical advice without the need to travel long distances, thus reducing delays in diagnosis and treatment [3]. The digital transformation in healthcare is also evident in the adoption of cloud computing, which supports the storage and management of large volumes of patient data securely and efficiently, ensuring that health services remain resilient even during peak demand periods [2]. Locally, Nigeria's 'Digital in Health' Initiative has laid the foundation for embracing digital tools to improve health service delivery. This initiative is guiding efforts to enhance the interoperability of health systems and ensure that critical health data is readily available to practitioners. Collaboration between government agencies, private organizations, and technology providers is vital to tailoring these digital solutions to the unique needs of the region. Additionally, local projects that focus on telemedicine and digital diagnostics are addressing specific challenges, such as limited specialist access and inefficient patient management systems [4].

1.1 Problem Statement
In today's digital world, ensuring timely and secure access to healthcare services is paramount. Traditional healthcare systems in Nigeria often rely on paper-based records and manual processes, which leads to fragmented patient information, miscommunication, and prolonged waiting times. These conventional methods contribute to inefficiencies in service delivery and heighten the risk of errors in patient data management. As a result, critical health information may not be available when needed, potentially compromising patient care and treatment outcomes and with a greater risk of data breaches and unauthorized access to sensitive information [2]. Additionally, the absence of digital tools restricts the ability of healthcare professionals to efficiently schedule appointments, share diagnostic results, and communicate with patients. This reliance on outdated processes further complicates the delivery of healthcare services, creating bottlenecks that delay treatment and reduce overall system responsiveness [3]. The compounded effect of these challenges ultimately results in a healthcare environment where service inefficiencies and data

vulnerabilities prevail. This study therefore focuses on the problems arising from the current non-digitized healthcare practices in Nigeria, drawing on evidence from Abia State, Imo State, and Anambra State as representative case studies, examining how these challenges affect patient outcomes and the efficiency of healthcare delivery. The goal is to demonstrate how the adoption of secure, centralized, and user-friendly digital solutions can address these problems, streamline healthcare access, and foster a more responsive and reliable healthcare system.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

i. Design and develop a digital platform for consultation booking, medical record access, and communication with healthcare professionals through voice or video calls.

ii. Improve healthcare accessibility by reducing wait times and enhancing communication between patients and providers.

iii. Promote better health-seeking behavior through reminders, user-friendly booking features, and access to medical information.

iv. Develop a scalable and user-friendly system for organized and inclusive healthcare delivery.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Evolution of Digitalized Healthcare

Digitalized healthcare (Sometimes referred to as Digital Health) is a multidisciplinary domain that aims to enhance the efficiency of monitoring of the patients, diagnosis, management, prevention, rehabilitation, and long-term care delivery [5]. It is a field that aims to improve patient care through the use of technology, such as telemedicine, mobile health, electronic health records, and artificial intelligence [6],[7].

The origins of digital health lie in the 1970s with health telematics, an early framework that used telecommunications to support healthcare delivery, health education, and patient follow-up [8]. Health telematics was disease-centric by design, focused on diagnosis and treatment rather than health promotion [9]. Constrained by the technology of its time, it nonetheless established the conceptual base for telemedicine, now one of the most studied domains in the field [8].

In the early 2000s, however, a change in direction emerged. Personal computers and Internet adoption gave healthcare systems new infrastructure for health promotion and information dissemination, producing eHealth [9]. While health telematics was reactive, eHealth was concerned with maintenance and prevention. That shift reflects a broader reorientation in how digital tools were understood within healthcare, from treating illness to managing health.

Subsequently, the 2010s introduced mobile health (mHealth), driven by the spread of smartphones and tablets. mHealth pushed digital healthcare beyond clinical settings, placing services directly in patients' hands and raising questions about access, data privacy, and care continuity that earlier frameworks had not needed to address. By 2015, the overlap between smartphones, wearables, robotics, and data analytics produced a broader term: digital health [8]. It did not replace eHealth or mHealth but absorbed both.

The terminology, however, has never fully settled. Some researchers still use "digital health" and "eHealth" interchangeably, a conflation that complicates cross-study comparisons and reflects genuine disagreement about how the field defines itself.

For the present study, this history is relevant precisely because digital health is not a stable category. It has been redefined several times already, and those redefinitions carry consequences for how research in the field is framed and evaluated.

2.2 Limitations of Existing Digital Health Solutions in Addressing Healthcare Challenges.

Despite significant advancements in digital health technologies, existing solutions face substantial limitations as comprehensive responses to healthcare challenges. One pressing concern is the inadequate clinical validation of many digital health tools. A large proportion have not been subjected to rigorous evidence standards, raising questions about their reliability and safety. As noted by [5], establishing appropriate levels of clinical evidence is necessary before digital health interventions can be responsibly deployed, yet many current solutions fall short of this bar, resulting in inconsistent adoption across clinical settings.

Closely related to this problem is the issue of Privacy and security. Digital health platforms depend on collecting and processing sensitive patient data, and weak protections erode the trust these systems need. Research indicates that inadequate data protection directly discourages engagement with digital health technologies [6], a problem compounded where regulatory oversight is limited or inconsistently applied, leaving users exposed to unauthorized access and misuse of personal health information.

Cost and accessibility impose further constraints. While digital health carries the promise of broader healthcare reach, high implementation costs and subscription-based models place many tools beyond the reach of low-income users. As documented by [1], this burden is sharpest in low-resource settings, where populations most in need of improved care are least able to afford the platforms built to serve them.

Interoperability failures sit alongside these concerns. Many platforms operate in isolation, with no capacity to exchange data across hospitals, clinics, and telemedicine services. The Nigeria ‘Digital in Health’ Initiative (2024) identifies this directly as an obstacle to care coordination, noting that siloed systems reduce efficiency and block the integrated, patient-centered care digital health is intended to support.

There is also a tendency in existing solutions to prioritize service delivery over user education. Platforms should not only provide access to care but actively support patients in understanding and managing their health [8]. Many do not, and the result is underutilization and poor self-care outcomes, particularly among users with limited health literacy.

Regulatory ambiguity slows progress at the policy level. Outdated legislation continues to obstruct telehealth integration into mainstream practice [10], and without clear legal frameworks, initiatives cannot gain formal approval or move beyond pilot implementations. The uncertainty discourages investment and leaves providers without legal clarity.

Infrastructure deficits present a parallel problem in underserved regions, where unreliable internet access limits the practical usability of digital health services. Telehealth requires stable connectivity, and where that is absent, adoption stays uneven. Communities already facing healthcare shortfalls bear a disproportionate share of this gap.

Provider resistance remains a final barrier. Concerns about workflow disruption and the demands of learning new systems contribute to hesitancy among medical professionals [6]. Without sustained investment in practitioner training, the clinical benefits of digital health tools will not translate into changed practice at the point of care.

Taken together, these limitations confirm what health informatics research has consistently found: no single digital intervention resolves the complexity of healthcare delivery. Effective solutions require attention to clinical validation, data governance, equitable access, interoperability, patient education, regulatory frameworks, and provider readiness, not as a checklist, but as genuinely interlocking concerns. Existing Nigerian platforms reflect some of these limitations in practice; mDoc, for instance, focuses on chronic disease monitoring and prescription tracking rather than end-to-end patient care [11].

2.3 Digital Health Landscape and Systemic Challenges in Nigeria

The digital health framework in Nigeria is still developing, with notable gaps in infrastructure, institutional capacity, and stakeholder coordination. Progress has been made through the Nigeria 'Digital in Health' Initiative (NDHI) and the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), but translating these frameworks into consistent operational practice remains a real challenge [12]. The gap between policy and implementation limits what the country can actually achieve in addressing healthcare inefficiencies through digital means.

Inadequate physical infrastructure is a foundational constraint. Digital health adoption depends not only on software and connectivity but on functional facilities and sufficient medical personnel. In many areas, particularly in underserved communities across Nigeria, both are in short supply, along with the technological resources needed to deploy and maintain digital solutions [12]. The deficit runs through the entire system, affecting patient-facing services and the institutions responsible for overseeing health data, enforcing standards, and coordinating care.

Financial barriers make the problem harder to solve. High out-of-pocket medical costs already push many individuals away from seeking care, and the added expense of digital health platforms compounds this. Subscription models and device requirements exclude low-income populations, working against the stated purpose of broadening healthcare access [1]. The burden is concentrated in low-resource settings, where need is highest and affordability is lowest.

Limited health and digital literacy restrict uptake further. A substantial part of the population lacks the understanding of health issues and digital tools required to engage meaningfully with digitized services. Deploying advanced health technologies without addressing this gap risks deepening the disparities these tools are meant to reduce.

Geography adds constraints that digital solutions cannot fully resolve. Residents of underserved communities face long distances and poor transport infrastructure when trying to reach facilities, and where internet connectivity is unreliable, telemedicine cannot substitute for physical access. These infrastructure gaps are not evenly distributed across the country, and underserved communities carry more than their share of the consequences.

Cultural and social factors introduce a dimension that technical interventions routinely miss. Beliefs and stigmas around certain health conditions discourage people from seeking care, in person or through a platform. Effective digital health adoption requires community engagement alongside technology deployment, but most implementation frameworks treat this as secondary, if they address it at all.

Data security and privacy pose systemic risks to whatever progress has been made. Medical records are high-value targets, and the sector has seen rising breaches as attackers exploit weak security protocols [13]. The transition from paper to electronic records in Nigeria has created persistent questions about confidentiality and data protection. Electronic health records, without adequate safeguards, remain vulnerable to unauthorized access, modification, and accidental exposure [10]. The deeper problem is enforcement: the NDPR creates a legal basis for data protection, but its application within healthcare is uneven [14], and compliance gaps leave the system open to exploitation.

Stakeholder coordination is a structural weakness running through all of this. Effective digital health delivery requires government agencies, healthcare providers, telecommunications operators, technology developers, and patients to work together. In practice, this coordination is limited, producing fragmented services and inconsistent data governance. Integrated systems like electronic health records and telemedicine platforms require interoperability across institutions to work, and without coordination, they do not.

These gaps collectively constrain what individual digital health interventions can achieve. AI-assisted diagnostics, electronic health records, and telemedicine have genuine utility, but their effectiveness depends on the conditions surrounding deployment. Weak infrastructure, poor coordination, uneven access, and inconsistent data governance limit tools that would perform differently under more supported conditions. Sustained improvement requires investment in capacity, infrastructure, regulatory enforcement, and coordination, not as separate priorities, but as parts of the same underlying problem.

Nigeria has made meaningful progress in laying the foundations of a national digital health framework, and initiatives such as the NDHI and the NDPR reflect a genuine institutional commitment to improving healthcare delivery through technology. Significant gaps remain, however, in infrastructure, enforcement, and coordination. Addressing these requires sustained investment in capacity building, physical and digital infrastructure, and inter-agency collaboration. Only through such integrated efforts can Nigeria strengthen the effectiveness of digital health interventions and build a health system capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly changing landscape.

3. PROPOSED SYSTEM

From its inception, the healthcare system in Nigeria was structured around paper-based records maintained in filing cabinets, logbooks, and handwritten diaries. In the early days, when the volume of patients was relatively low and healthcare demands were simpler, these methods were considered adequate. However, as the community grew and healthcare needs became more complex, the limitations of manual record-keeping became increasingly apparent. Under the old system, the administrative structure in the healthcare facility was divided into several discrete units, each operating with largely manual processes.

The patient administration unit managed registrations, appointments, and maintained physical patient files, often stored in filing cabinets. The medical records department was responsible for handling paper-based records, which frequently resulted in fragmented and outdated information. Limited technical support meant that any issues with manual record-keeping had to be resolved through time-consuming manual interventions. Additionally, clinical departments kept separate records for patient care without a unified system, further complicating data sharing and coordination. Finally, human resources managed staff training on traditional record-keeping methods, with little focus on technology integration. This siloed and paper-dependent approach hindered smooth communication and efficient service delivery throughout the healthcare facility.

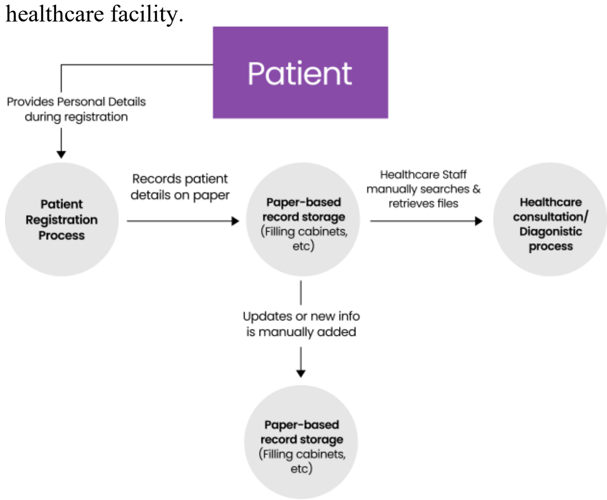

Figure 1: Data Flow Diagram of the Existing System

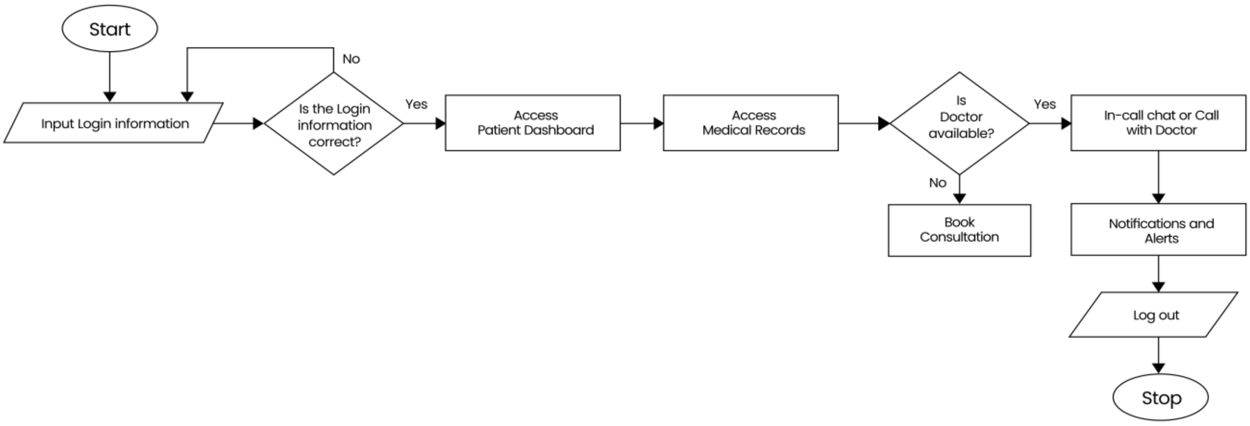

Figure 2: Flowchart of the Proposed System

3.1 Functional & Non-Functional Requirements

This diagram below gives a high-level overview of data flow across major components of the new system. It integrates secure storage, real-time communication, appointment scheduling, and health data retrieval to support patient care and engagement.

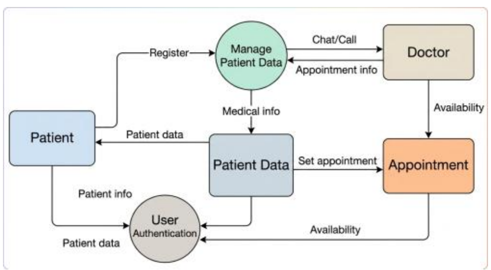

Figure 3: Data Flow Diagram of the Proposed System

3.1.1 Functional Requirements

1. **Patient:**
   i. The patient will be able to register their personal data and log into the system online.
   ii. The patient will be able to request access to personal health data and book appointments.
   iii. The system will enable patients to consult with doctors through real-time chat or calls, view and receive feedback such as confirmations and alerts.
2. **Doctor:**
   i. The doctor will be able to register personal data and receive patient information.
   ii. The doctor will be able to respond to consultation requests and manage availability schedules.
   iii. The system will enable doctors to update and communicate appointment status to patients.
   iv. Each subsystem platform will be able to communicate with other subsystems.
3. **Admin/Backend:**
   i. The backend will receive and process patient input from the frontend interface.
   ii. The system will process medical data, bookings, and patient profile details.
   iii. The backend will connect and facilitate communication between the doctor and appointment modules.

iv. The system will enable a patient-facing interface accessible via web or mobile.

4. Database:

i. The system will record patients' personal and medical history data.

ii. The system will record appointment details and consultation chat records.

iii. The system will store all booking confirmations and system alerts.

iv. All data will be cloud-based and accessible from any location.

3.1.2 Non-Functional Requirements

1. Operational:

i. The system should be able to run online via web and mobile platforms.

ii. The system should be able to support real-time audio and video calls to aid consultations.

iii. The system should be able to display medical records, appointment confirmations, and alerts.

iv. The system should be able to facilitate real-time chat between patients and doctors.

2. **Performance:**

i. The system should support a range of valid input values.

ii. The system should support a defined number of active consultations and bookings per doctor at any given time.

3. Security:

i. No entity in the system should be able to access the platform without proper authentication.

ii. Only the accredited admin should be able to make changes and updates to system data where necessary.

4. Cultural and Political:

i. Only patients with verified credentials and registered profiles will be granted access to the system.

4. SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY

Software methodology implies the specification of procedures for collecting and analyzing data necessary to define or solve the problem for which the research is embarked upon. It comprises a theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge, it's more of a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology.

4.1 Choice of Methodology

The Waterfall Model was chosen for UM-HEALTH's development. Formalized by Winston W. Royce in 1970, it breaks development into sequential phases where each phase is completed before the next one opens.

It suited this project because the requirements were known before a single line of code was written. Structured questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation across Abia, Imo, and Anambra States gave a clear picture of what the system needed to do.

The components also have a natural build order. The database schema had to exist before the backend API, and the API had to be stable before the frontend could be aligned properly. Working sequentially meant those dependencies were sorted out during design, not halfway through implementation.

Patient data adds one more constraint most software doesn't have. Every phase needs to leave a trail of what was required, what was designed, and what was tested. The Waterfall Model produces that documentation as a byproduct of how it works, which made it a practical choice for a system handling medical records.

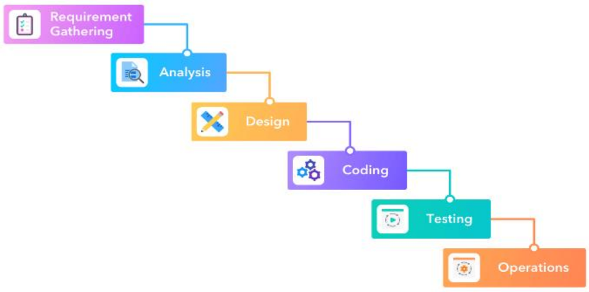

Figure 4: Waterfall Methodology

5. SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation starts once design is done and ends when the system is live. It is arguably the most telling stage of the whole process. A system can be well-designed and still fail here. The System was built with HTML, CSS, and Next.js handling the frontend, Python managing backend logic, and Supabase PostgreSQL storing the data. The system runs on Vercel, and once it is up, all forms, modules, and functions are live and usable.

It is a web-based, menu-driven application that works across screen sizes. The database grows as the system gets used: more consultations, more records, more appointments. Because it holds health data, security was not an afterthought. The following features are built into the system:

i. Supabase PostgreSQL ships with row-level security, authentication, encryption, and access controls at the table level. These were part of the database setup from the beginning, not patched on afterward.

ii. Every user category, whether patient, doctor, or administrator, only ever sees what they are supposed to see. Nobody touches the database directly. Supabase's access policies enforce this at the data layer; Vercel's hosting environment adds network-level controls on top. Getting past both to tamper with the database is not a straightforward exercise.

iii. The system logs access attempts and surfaces anything irregular, so unauthorized activity does not go unnoticed.

The database was created and configured inside Supabase's cloud environment, then loaded with initial data, either entered through the application or imported from another source.

Every piece of data the system generates is stored here and retrieved by whatever part of the application that needs it. Using Supabase's managed PostgreSQL service meant there was no separate database server to run or maintain. Real-time updates, row-level security, and SQL querying all came included, which was sufficient for what the telemedicine platform required.

Below are pictorial excerpts of the software application:

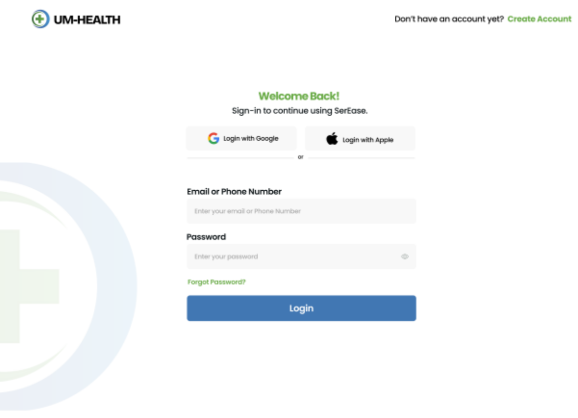

Figure 5: Login Interface for existing users

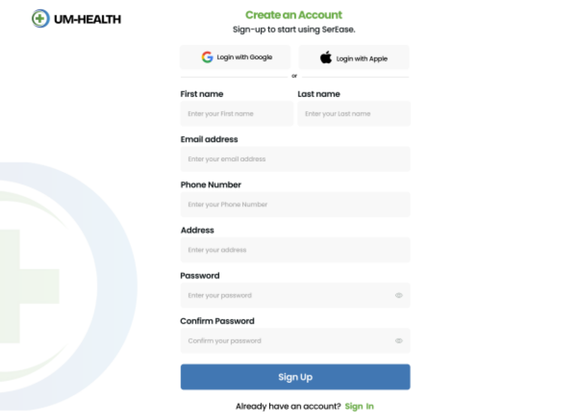

Figure 6: Sign up form for new users

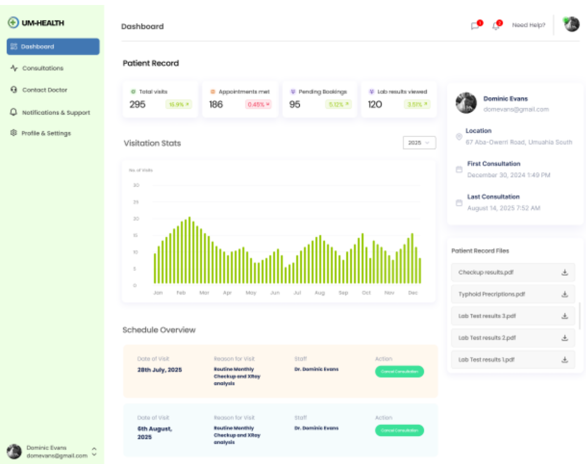

Figure 7: An overview of the patient's dashboard with quick links to aid User Experience

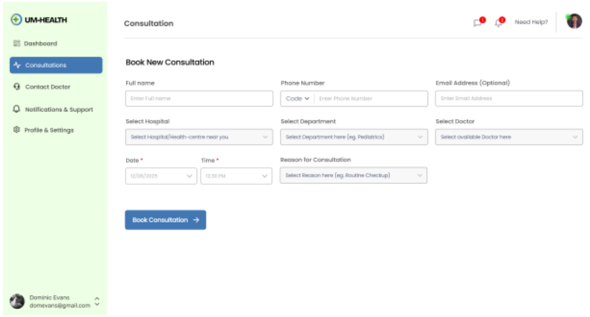

Figure 8: Consultation Booking Form

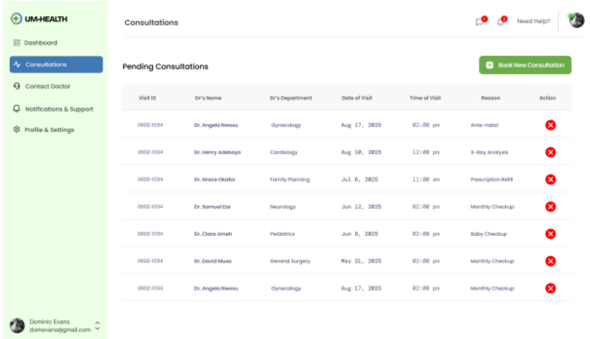

Figure 9: Patient's pending Consultations list

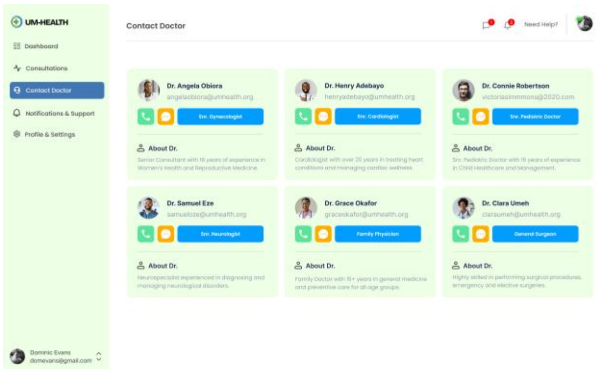

Figure 10: Available Medical Doctors dashboard

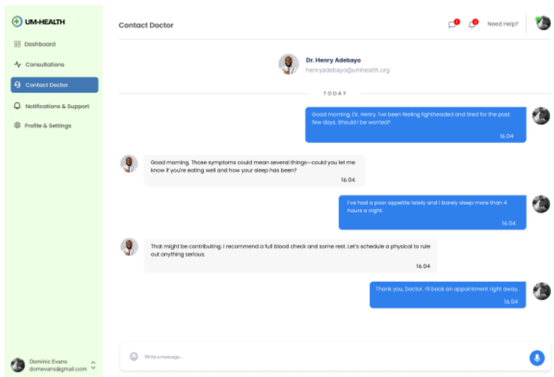

Figure 11: In-app doctor-patient text interface

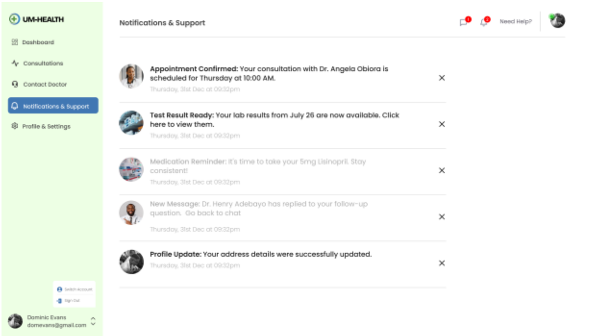

Figure 12: Notification Page (To alert users on confirmations, reminders and more)

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Baseline Assessment of Healthcare Access and Digital Health Readiness in Nigeria

To establish a baseline understanding of healthcare access challenges and receptiveness to digital health solutions in Nigeria, a structured questionnaire was administered to 353 respondents within the study area. The findings reflect the pre-intervention state of healthcare engagement among the sampled population and form the empirical basis against which the proposed solution is assessed.

The data points to persistent problems in the current healthcare experience. Most respondents, 82.7%, had experienced long wait times at healthcare facilities. This figure is not incidental. It is consistent with what health informatics research has documented as a systemic characteristic of paper-dependent, manually administered healthcare facilities, where patient queues grow because registration, record retrieval, and consultation scheduling all compete for the same limited human capacity [1]. In settings like the ones studied here, long wait times are not a service quality problem that better staff attitudes can fix. They are a process problem, and they require a process-level response.

Record access after visits was similarly poor: only 21.8% found it easy, 56.4% found it difficult, and 21.8% said they do not receive their records at all. Taken together, nearly 78% of respondents face meaningful barriers to retrieving their own health information after a clinical encounter. This has direct consequences for continuity of care. When patients cannot access their records, subsequent providers work without clinical history, diagnostic results are repeated unnecessarily, and treatment decisions are made on incomplete information [2]. For most patients in the study area, reliable continuity of care is not the norm, and the data makes clear this is a structural feature of the system, not an edge case.

On the question of what would encourage digital health adoption, quick access to doctors ranked highest at 87%, followed by ease of use at 78.2%, data privacy at 69.7%, reduced wait times at 65.2%, and low cost at 43.6%. The ordering of these priorities is worth examining. The fact that quick access to doctors ranked above even ease of use suggests that respondents are not primarily asking for a more convenient interface. They are asking for access to care they currently cannot get reliably or quickly. This is a meaningful distinction for system design: a platform that is easy to use but does not meaningfully reduce the time between a patient's need and a doctor's response will not address what users actually identified as the gap.

The relatively lower ranking of low cost at 43.6% also deserves attention. In low-resource settings, cost is often assumed to be the dominant barrier to technology adoption. These findings complicate that assumption. Respondents appear to be more concerned with whether a platform is trustworthy, accessible, and genuinely useful than with whether it is free. This aligns with findings from comparable digital health adoption studies in sub-Saharan Africa, where perceived usefulness and trust have consistently outweighed cost as adoption predictors [6].

Despite these documented gaps, 87% of respondents said they would use a secure, easy-to-use platform to manage their healthcare. This is a high willingness figure, and it carries a specific implication: resistance to digital health is not the primary obstacle. The gap is the absence of a platform that meets the conditions users have already identified as necessary for trust and engagement.

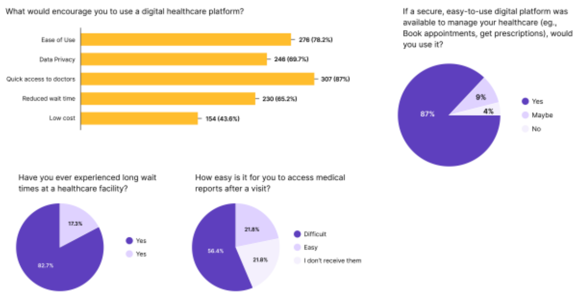

Figure 13: Baseline Survey Results on Healthcare Access Challenges and Digital Health Adoption Readiness in Nigeria

6.2 Evaluation of Proposed Solution Against User-Defined Adoption Criteria

Post-deployment data is outside the scope of this study, but the baseline findings establish specific, user-defined criteria against which the proposed web-based platform can be assessed. Each adoption condition respondents identified corresponds directly to a feature of the platform, and that alignment is examined here.

Quick access to doctors, cited by 87% of respondents as the top adoption driver, is addressed through the telemedicine module, which supports virtual consultations without requiring physical travel. In peri-urban settings where specialist proximity is limited and transport costs are real, removing the requirement for physical presence is not a minor convenience. It is the difference between a consultation happening and not happening. The appointment booking feature reinforces this by replacing unpredictable walk-in queues with scheduled sessions, directly targeting the wait time problem 82.7% of respondents reported. Where studies of similar telemedicine deployments in Nigerian and West African contexts have measured outcomes, scheduled virtual consultations have been associated with meaningful reductions in time-to-consultation and patient-reported wait time [3].

Ease of use, ranked second at 78.2%, is addressed through an interface organized around the tasks patients most commonly need: booking appointments, joining consultations, and accessing health records. The workflow was kept as direct as possible, with no unnecessary steps between a user's intent and the action they need to complete. This matters because digital health platforms frequently fail not at the infrastructure level but at the usability level, particularly among users with limited prior exposure to health technology [6]. A system that requires significant learning overhead will see low engagement regardless of its clinical capabilities.

Data privacy, cited by 69.7% of respondents, is addressed through multi-factor authentication and access controls that restrict record visibility to authorized users. Security is embedded in the platform's architecture rather than added as a supplementary layer. This distinction is relevant because bolted-on security tends to create friction for legitimate users while remaining penetrable to determined unauthorized access. Embedding it at the architecture level, through Supabase's row-level security policies and role-based access controls, means that access boundaries are enforced at the database layer, not just at the application interface [14]. In a context where trust in digital health systems remains limited and data breaches in the health sector have been documented as a barrier to adoption [13], this approach is the more defensible one.

The electronic health records feature addresses the record access gap documented in the baseline data most directly. Where 78% of respondents reported difficulty accessing their medical records after visits, the platform gives patients on-demand access to their clinical history, consultation notes, and appointment records, removing dependence on physical document handover and the institutional processes that currently make retrieval unreliable. This does not merely add convenience. It changes the structural relationship between patients and their own health data, which is what the baseline findings suggest respondents actually need.

Reduced wait times follow from the combined effect of telemedicine and scheduled appointments rather than from any single feature. The web-based format, requiring no dedicated application download, keeps the access threshold low and extends usability across device types without additional cost, which partially addresses the affordability concern 43.6% of respondents raised without making cost reduction the central design objective.

Each platform feature maps to a condition respondents said would determine whether they adopted a digital health service. This alignment does not substitute for post-deployment validation, but it provides a grounded basis for evaluating the solution's fit with the documented needs of the target population. Whether the system delivers on these alignments under real-world conditions remains the question that subsequent deployment and outcome measurement will need to answer.

6.2.1 Scenario-Based System Evaluation

To complement the criteria-based evaluation, three usage scenarios were constructed from conditions documented in the baseline survey and the broader study context. This analytical approach follows established practice in systems research where live deployment data is not yet available [12].

Scenario A: Peri-urban Patient with Stable Connectivity

Conditions: A patient in Umuahia, Abia State, with a mid-range Android smartphone and stable 4G connectivity attempts to book a consultation, retrieve a medical record, and join a video call.

Outcome: All core functions performed as designed. The patient completed the full care pathway from booking through consultation to record access without paper-based interaction at any stage. This scenario reflects the experience of the 87% of baseline respondents who indicated willingness to use a secure digital platform and represents the system under its most favorable operating conditions.

Scenario B: Semi-rural Patient with Intermittent Connectivity

Conditions: A patient in a semi-rural community outside Owerri, Imo State, with an entry-level smartphone and inconsistent 3G connectivity attempts to use the platform during a fluctuating network session.

Outcome: Transactional functions such as registration, booking, and record retrieval remained usable during stable windows, as they involve discrete data exchanges rather than continuous streams. Video consultation degraded when connectivity dropped, with text chat serving as a partial fallback. The scenario exposes the platform's most significant current limitation: no offline mode and no SMS-based fallback for users who lose connectivity mid-session. This gap most affects the communities the baseline data identified as facing the greatest infrastructure constraints.

Scenario C: Concurrent Booking Under High Patient Volume

Conditions: Multiple patients attempt to book the same doctor simultaneously during a peak period.

Outcome: The scheduling module handled concurrent requests without producing double-confirmed appointments. Real-time availability display through Supabase's PostgreSQL layer reduced conflicts by showing slot status before submission. Behavior under sustained high load across a larger user base was not stress-tested in the current implementation and remains a scalability consideration for future deployment planning.

6.3 Summary and Limitations

This study has highlighted how digital solutions can address the challenges of healthcare accessibility prevalent among residents of peri-urban and underserved communities, by improving patient engagement, enhancing medical record management, and ensuring timely healthcare services. The proposed system currently assumes internet access and is therefore best suited to peri-urban and semi-rural areas with emerging connectivity; full rural deployment would require offline-capable modules or SMS-based fallback features, which represents future work.

The absence of post-deployment evaluation data means that the effectiveness of the system in reducing wait times, improving record access, and facilitating consultations has not been measured under real-world conditions; the evaluation presented here is based on design alignment with user-stated needs rather than observed outcomes. This does not diminish the contribution of the work but defines the boundaries within which its findings should be read.

7. CONCLUSION

This study set out to address a well-documented problem: healthcare delivery in low-resource Nigerian settings is held back by paper-based processes, fragmented records, and limited access to specialists. UM-HEALTH was designed and implemented as a direct response to these conditions, bringing together electronic health records, appointment scheduling, and voice and video teleconsultation within a single web-based platform.

Baseline data collected from 353 respondents across Abia, Imo, and Anambra States confirmed that the problems the system targets are not isolated. Long wait times affected 82.7% of respondents, and only 21.8% could easily retrieve their medical records after a visit. At the same time, 87% indicated willingness to use a secure digital health platform, which suggests that resistance to adoption is not the primary obstacle. The gap is the absence of a system built to the conditions users identified as necessary for trust and engagement. UM-HEALTH was evaluated against those user-defined criteria, and each platform feature maps directly to a documented need.

The work has limitations that define the boundaries of its contribution. Post-deployment outcome data was not collected, meaning the effectiveness of the system under real-world conditions remains to be measured. The platform also assumes reliable internet access, which limits its reach in fully rural areas.

Future work should address these gaps directly. Offline-capable modules and SMS-based fallback features would extend the system's reach beyond peri-urban areas. Post-deployment studies measuring actual reductions in wait times and improvements in record access would provide the outcome evidence this study could not. Integration of AI-assisted triage, blockchain-secured health records, and IoT-enabled remote monitoring represent natural extensions of the current architecture. Broader deployment across additional Nigerian states would also allow the findings to be tested against more diverse healthcare contexts and population profiles.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

This system represents a step toward more accessible healthcare delivery, but there is room to build on it. The following recommendations are worth considering:

i. Hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies should look at bringing digital health tools into their day-to-day operations. Telemedicine platforms, electronic health records, and mobile health applications are not new concepts, but many institutions have yet to integrate them in any meaningful way. Doing so would make patient management less cumbersome and consultations more efficient.

ii. Digital literacy remains a genuine gap on both sides of the consultation. Healthcare workers need training to use these systems confidently, and patients need enough familiarity to trust them. Workshops and community-level engagement would help close that gap faster than simply making the technology available and hoping people figure it out.

iii. No single body can sort out digital health implementation on its own. Healthcare providers, government agencies, developers, and regulators need to be working from the same page. Clear policies around patient data privacy and system security are particularly overdue, and without them, wider adoption will continue to stall.

iv. Research into blockchain for health records, AI-assisted diagnostics, and IoT-enabled medical devices should be given more attention. These are not distant possibilities as they are already being tested and implemented in various contexts. Investing in that research now, rather than catching up later, is the more practical path.

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