

Perceived Influence of Social Media Use on Child-Rights Advocacy in Ondo State

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceived influence of social media use on child-rights advocacy in Ondo State. The study is guided by five objectives and is anchored on the Agenda-Setting Media Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and Social Marketing Theory (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). A survey method was adopted, with a population of 1,440 and a sample of 360 respondents. Findings revealed that respondents are well aware of child-rights advocacy through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, which are more frequently used than traditional communication channels like radio, television, and newspapers. The study established that social media platforms provide opportunities for users to participate in discussions, expose children to their rights, and enlighten adults on child-rights violations. However, challenges such as the cost of smartphones, data expenses, power outages, internet service failures, and lack of interest from some bloggers were identified (Oyero & Salawu, 2018). Recommendations include increased enlightenment on child-rights, stronger justice systems to address violations, and policy measures to reduce import duties on smartphones and improve power supply (UNICEF, 2017).

Keywords: Social media, Child-rights advocacy, Digital activism, Human rights, Policy intervention, Ondo State, Media influence

Introduction

The influence of social media on various aspects of human life continues to attract attention (Nehaluddin, 2018). Social media, as a product of information and communication technology, serves as a platform for development communication despite occasional misuse. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have transformed human

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interaction, creating spaces for discourse on social issues, including child-rights advocacy (UNICEF, 2016).

Child-rights advocacy has gained global recognition, prompting organizations to push for the protection and promotion of children's rights. However, conventional advocacy mechanisms have proven insufficient, necessitating an exploration of social media as an alternative platform. The current study seeks to investigate the role of social media in advocating for child rights in Ondo State, assessing both its impact and challenges (Johnson, 2003).

Review of the Literature

Concept of Child-Rights Advocacy Child rights are an integral part of human rights, with specific provisions for the protection and care of minors. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) provides a framework for ensuring children's well-being, emphasizing their right to survival, development, protection, and participation (UNCRC, 1989).

Role of Social Media in Advocacy Social media serves as a tool for awareness creation, information dissemination, and mobilization. Studies indicate that social media platforms enhance advocacy efforts by providing real-time communication, interactive discussions, and opportunities for mass participation (Bhandari, 2005).

Challenges of Social Media Advocacy Despite its benefits, social media advocacy faces constraints such as accessibility, digital literacy, misinformation, and policy restrictions (Molvor, 2002). These challenges necessitate regulatory frameworks and strategic interventions to maximize the effectiveness of social media for advocacy (CRIN, 2018).

Methodology

The study employed a survey research design. The population comprised 1,440 individuals, with a sample of 360 respondents selected using a stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, and the analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics (Longe & Longe, 2009).

Findings

Awareness of child-rights advocacy through social media is high among respondents (Oyero & Salawu, 2018).

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp are the most frequently used platforms for advocacy (Social Bakers, 2011).

- ❖ Social media facilitates discussions, awareness creation, and mobilization of support for child-rights advocacy (Adedokun, 2013).
- ❖ Challenges include the high cost of smartphones, data expenses, power outages, and internet connectivity issues (Maplecroft, 2013).
- ❖ Respondents suggested expanding advocacy beyond social media and implementing policies to reduce digital accessibility barriers (UNICEF, 2017).

Conclusion and Recommendations

- ❖ The study concludes that social media plays a significant role in child-rights advocacy in Ondo State. However, addressing digital barriers is crucial for maximizing its impact. The study recommends the following:
- ❖ Increased awareness campaigns on child-rights advocacy through both digital and traditional media (UNICEF, 2016).
- ❖ Government intervention to reduce import duties on smartphones and improve power supply (UNICEF, 2017).
- ❖ Strengthening the justice system to ensure enforcement of child-rights laws (UNCRC, 1989).
- ❖ Encouraging social media influencers and bloggers to engage more actively in child-rights advocacy (CRIN, 2018).

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