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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Utilization of Social Media Platforms as Awareness Tools on Domestic Violence against Children in Ibadan

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Abstract

This paper canvasses the utilization of social media platforms as awareness tools on domestic violence against children.The objectives of the study were to ascertain how digital media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube among others can serve as the voice of children and todetermine how digital media platforms can enhance social and behavioural change intervention to prevent and respond to violence against children.The theory of Mass Self Communication in the context of the Network Society provided the theoretical framework of this study. The survey method was adopted for the study, using questionnaire to generate data from the respondents. The results showed that social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have created opportunities to report and share pictures and video evidence of abuse against children and mostly social media platforms only create awareness without achieving justice or social change. From the findings of the study, the paper recommends that NGO and human right bodies should see how best to use social media platforms to end violence against childrenand that governments should not neglect activities and reports on social media about domestic violence, especially violence against children.

Keywords: *Awareness, Child Abuse, Digital Media, Domestic Violence, Social Media*

Introduction

Domestic violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights. It includes battering of intimate partners and others, sexual abuse of children, marital rape and traditional practices that are harmful to women. Domestic violence occurs globally (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002) among families from all social, racial, economic, educational and religious backgrounds. Domestic violence comes in different ways. Violence against children includes all forms of violence against people under 18 years old, whether perpetrated by parents or other caregivers, peers, romantic partners, or strangers.

According to the World Health Organization (2020), it is estimated that up to one billion children aged between 2–17 years have experienced one form of physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect. Experiencing violence in childhood impacts lifelong health and well-being. In Nigeria, a high level of child rights violations in the form of domestic violence continues as several thousands of children live with hunger, homelessness and illiteracy, and suffer sexual violence, physical abuse, forced labour and other varied and complex risks.

Some incidences of domestic violence against children abound in Nigeria with some of them receiving media reports. The *New Telegraph* reported the incident of parents beating a 4-year old to death over alleged witchcraft in Akure, the capital of Ondo State. Precious Eze also reported on her blog how a university lecturer in Ekiti State impregnated his 16-year old student. Furthermore, FrontPage reported how police arrested a woman who detained a 10-year old boy in a dog house. Also, it was reported in the *Punch* Newspaper that a girl was impregnated by her father in Ogun State. However, there are several other cases of domestic violence against children across the country that are not reported.

Domestic violence against children can be prevented. Preventing and responding to violence against children require that efforts that systematically address risk and protective factors at all four interrelated levels of risk (individual, relationship, community, society) be explored. With

an estimated seven billion mobile phone subscriptions and a third of the world's population going online, digital information and communication technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet have the potential to contribute significantly to the prevention of domestic violence against children. Therefore, this paper believes it is important to consider how digital media platforms can enhance social and behavioural change intervention to prevent and respond to domestic violence against children in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Several interventions have been explored to address the unending domestic violence against children in Nigeria. However, these interventions appear not to have achieved enough in stemming the menace. These interventions among others include but not limited to advocacy, campaign, education and outright punishment. The preponderance of social media platforms and the ease of access and use among children have made it an attractive consideration to further address the prevention of domestic violence among children. The need to explore this new approach is predicated on the multitude of effect that domestic violence has on children as they grow into adulthood.

As young people attain adolescence, their responses to living with domestic violence are more likely to attract a mental health diagnosis or a label of delinquency. A study by Adebayo Anthony Abayomi (2013) found out that anger, feelings of fear, sadness and loneliness, including suicidal feelings were the most evident trauma symptoms in young people exposed to domestic violence.

The effects of domestic violence can be devastating and long-lasting especially on children. As such it is important to explore various ways of controlling the cankerworm. Several interventions have been explored but none of them has focused on the employment of social media platforms as a means of preventing domestic violence against children. Therefore, this study investigated the utilization of social media platforms as awareness tools on domestic violence against children in South-West, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The study sought to:

1. ascertain how digital media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube among others can serve as the voice of children.
2. determine how digital media platforms can enhance social and behavioural change intervention to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Conceptual Review

Domestic Violence in Nigeria

According to Krug, James, Dahiberg and Zwi (2002), domestic violence against children has for a long time been recorded in literature, art and science in many parts of the world. Reports of infanticide, mutilation, abandonment and other forms of violence against children date back to ancient civilizations. The historical record is also filled with reports of unkempt, weak and malnourished children cast out by families to fend for themselves and of children who have been sexually abused. For a long time also there have existed charitable groups and others concerned with children's wellbeing who have advocated the protection of children. Nevertheless, the issue did not receive widespread attention by the medical profession or the general public until 1962, with the publication of a seminal work, 'the battered child syndrome', by Alexander, Macdonald, and Paton (2005). The term 'battered child syndrome' was coined to characterize the clinical manifestations of serious physical abuse in young children. Now, four decades later, there is clear evidence that child abuse is a global problem. It occurs in a variety of forms and is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices. Solving this global problem, however, requires a much better understanding of its occurrence in a range of settings, as well as of its causes and consequences in these settings.

Fayoyin (2011) argues for substantial media mobilization in contributing to the human rights agenda, specifically the promotion of children's rights. International development institutions also emphasise the critical importance of the mass media in enhancing supportive public attitude to human

rights issues. In 1978, UNESCO came up with a Declaration on the fundamental contribution of the mass media to the promotion of human rights and other aspects of international peace and understanding. Article IV states that media institutions are critical in educating young people towards promoting the spirit of peace, justice, freedom, mutual respect as well as facilitating the realization of human rights of all peoples and nations (Fayoyin, 2011).

Within contemporary international development, the framework for holistically addressing children's needs and concerns is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Its 54 Articles embody the fundamental human rights for children, including the principles of inclusion, equality and participation of the children. Article 17 establishes the importance of media engagement in promoting children's rights. From a marketing perspective, Gillin (2009) refers to them as "new influencers" because of their role in creating brands and promoting engagement of corporate organisations and their clients in ways never experienced before.

This stems from their pervasiveness and ability to facilitate new approaches to connecting business with clients. According to Blanchard (2011), in a globalized age, commercial organisations must maximise the power of the 'social media and viral technologies to supercharge customer service'. Within the domain of politics, the digital media, especially social media has become critical tools for 'improbable victory', especially because of their role in contributing to the success of President Obama election, which was largely attributed to digital influence (Harfoush, 2009).

The optimistic disposition on the digital media in politics and marketing has also been transferred to health and social development. New media could play a major role in social development interventions. For example, an analysis on the use of social media within the UN context notes that the integration of web and mobile technologies can transform the monologue associated with traditional broadcast media into social dialogue with the potential of promoting the democratization of information. Ultimately, this is expected to transform various categories of people from content consumers to content producers (United Nations, 2010). It is also argued that through multiple platforms, including text, images, audio, and video, the digital media is capable of promoting public engagement for social development. Wilson and Murby (2010,p.33) argue that the merger of social media and communication into social media is changing a vital part of life. They argue that with so many people "blogging, tweeting, uploading, downloading, crowd-sourcing, wiki-in, linking in, geo-referencing, i-chatting, skyping, flipping, videotaping and many more" a new social enterprise is being facilitated and from these arguments and agreements, social media can have facilitated awareness tool for domestic violence against children in Ibadan.

Social media platforms as intervention agent in the campaign on violence against children

Despite over two decades of concerted effort and advocacy such as legislature's response, community intervention, improving the criminal justice system, stress campaigns and mass media advocacy against domestic violence on children, fundamental failures persist in the justice system's response to domestic violence. The seeming gap in the previous intervention efforts propels this paper to seek how social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, 2Go, BBM, LinkedIn Messenger, Myspace, Google talk, Badoo, YouTube and a host of others (Busari, Ajibola & Busari, 2020) can be explored as alternative channels in the campaign against domestic violence against children. The preponderance of the use of these social media platforms among children makes their use appealing as fora of advocacy against the cankerworm. Although literature abounds on the negative impacts of the misuse of social media platforms on children these negative impacts can be overcome with a directional and purposive usage of the platforms, especially when they are explored to end domestic violence on children (Dike, Eke,& Babarinde, 2013; Richards, 2015).

Social media aid in exposing domestic violence

(Oxfam Infamy International, 2019).For instance in Benue State, some students of the state's polytechnic were emboldened to express their experience, through online platforms, in the hands of one of their lecturers after he was arrested for allegedly defiling his niece. Likewise, after the report of BBC international on the 'cold room experience' at the University of Lagos, Nigeria came other expositions on the social media platforms across Nigerian universities about other lecturers who have been involved in similar unwholesome practice with students under their care.

Oxfam Infamy International (2019) further states that social media can be employed to fight injustice against children. Also in Lagos State, Nigeria a woman was reported to have locked up her stepson in a dog house for a day without food because he disobeyed her order. This incident was exposed via the Twitter handle leading to the woman's arrest after the agitation mounted on several twitter handles. Social media can also be used to challenge norms. One of the root causes of violence against children is discriminatory social norms, such as child spanking. A traditional campaign method in this regard can become effective when combined with social media intervention. A key component of social norm change is providing space for debate and deliberation, which the social media readily make possible when explored for such purpose.

Furthermore, social media can provide a platform for the key influencer (celebrities, politicians, sport-people) to publically challenge domestic violence. For instance, in South Africa, many high-profile individuals endorsed the #menaretrash, including high profile men whose tweet can be important in influencing strategies and interventions on violence against children, for instance, the #bringbackourgirls campaign. Equally, social media facilitate cross-border solidarity to challenge violence against children. By acting together, both online and offline, campaigners can bring to end violence against children by synergizing through social platforms.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored in mass self-communication theory propounded by Manuel Castells (2008). The theory posits that communication is self-directed in the elaboration and sending of the message, self-selected in the reception of the message, and self-defined in terms of the formation of the communication space. With the diffusion of the Internet, and the explosion of wireless technology/communication around the globe the technology of communication has dramatically changed, and with this change comes a new phase of communication.

However, Castells (2008) noted that the change did not manifest only in numbers but in the quality of communication. This new form of communication is based on interactive horizontal networks that convey messages from place to places, from many to many, from local to global and global to local, in real-time or chosen time. Because of the deliberate design of the Internet by its creators, the flow of communication is difficult to control, albeit surveillance is widespread. So, messengers may be repressed, but messages go on. The Internet is a global public space. And through the convergence between Internet and wireless communication, communication power is diffused through society and becomes a personal tool for everybody with access to the Internet.

Sikken (2015) calls this new world of communication mass self-communication because it reaches tens of millions, as much or more than television and radio, and certainly more than specific outfits of the print press. It is self-communication because it is self-directed in the elaboration and sending of the message, self-selected in the reception of the message, and self-defined in terms of the formation of the communication space.

This theory is relevant to this study as we try to provide social media as an intervention to fight domestic violence against children in Ibadan as the theory shows how communication can be self-directed, self-defined and self-selected, the digital media have made it possible that an individual can package information in the way he/she wants,

determine the channel to use and to whom the message gets to. Children between ages of 12- 18 years are active users of these digital media like Facebook, WhatsApp and these platforms can be used as channels where they can complain or share issues they faced at home like which organisation like NGOS can use these platforms to reach out to these children too.

Methodology

The research adopted survey research method. The instruments of data collection for the study was the questionnaire. The area of study was Oluyole Local Government Area of Oyo State, selecting SSS 3 students of Methodist High School Toll Gate area of the Local Government Area. Methodist High School has a total population of 764 for 2019/2020 academic session according to the Principal of the high school. The simple random sampling was used to select 100 students among the SSS 3 students to form the sample size for the study. After the administering of the questionnaire, 92 were found valid for analysis.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This segment deals with the presentation and analysis of data collected during the field survey. One hundred (100) copies of questionnaires were administered to respondents and Ninety-Two (92) were completed, returned and valid.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube among others can serve as the voice of children.

Table 1: Responses on the use of social media platforms

Social media platforms	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Yes	92	100
No	Nil	0
Total	92	100

From table 1 all the respondents 92(100%) use social media

Table 2: Responses on exposure to social media platforms

Social media platform	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Facebook	52	56.2
Twitter	13	14.1
Instagram	27	29.3
Others	Nil	Nil
Total	92	100

Table 2 shows that 52(56.2%) of the respondents are exposed to Facebook, 13(14.1%) of the respondents are exposed to Twitter, 27(29.3%) of the respondents are exposed to Instagram, while none is exposed to others.

Table 3: Responses on the experience of abuse

If abused at any point in time	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Yes	64	69.6
No	28	30.4
Total	92	100

From Table 3 above 64(69.6%) of the respondents affirm that they have been victims of abuse, while 28(30.4%) of the respondents say they have not been victims of abuse at any point in time.

Table 4: Responses on Category of Abuse

Category of Abuse	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Sexual	7	7.6
Physical	54	58.7
Verbal/Emotional	28	30.4
Neglect/psychological	3	3.3
Total	92	100

Table 4 shows that 7(7.6%) of the respondents have been sexually abused, 54(58.7%) of the respondents have been physically abused, 28(30.4%) of the respondents have been verbally/emotionally abused, while 3(3.3%) of the respondents have been neglected.

Table 5: Responses on awareness of the campaign against domestic violence on social media platforms

The campaign against Domestic Violence on social media	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	76	82.6
No	16	17.4
Total	92	100

Table 5 shows that 76(82.6%) of the respondents affirm that they have come across campaign against Domestic Violence on social media, while 16(17.4%) of the respondents say they have not come across campaign against Domestic Violence on social media.

Table 6: Responses on social media platforms the respondents are exposed to

Social media platform	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Facebook	42	45.7
Twitter	24	26.1
Instagram	26	28.3
Others	Nil	Nil
Total	92	100

Table 6 shows that 42(45.7%) of the respondents said they have come across messages against Domestic Violence on Facebook, 24(26.1%) of the respondents say they have come across messages against Domestic Violence on Twitter, 26(26.1%) of the respondents say they have come across messages against Domestic Violence on Instagram, while none of the respondents picks others.

Social media platforms can enhance social and behavioural change intervention to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Table 7 shows that 47(51.1%) of the respondents frequently come across campaigns against domestic violence on social media, 25(27.2%) of the respondents often come across campaigns against domestic violence on social media, 7(7.6%) of the respondents come across campaigns against domestic violence on social media once in a while, while 13(14.1%) of the respondents have not come across campaigns against domestic violence on social media.

Table 7: Responses on the frequency of access to campaign

How often	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Frequently	47	51.1
Often	25	27.2
Once in a while	7	7.6
Not at all	13	14.1
Total	92	100

Table 8: Responses on social media platforms creating room for exposure to violence

Social Media Create Room	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agreed	56	60.9
Agreed	25	27.2
Disagreed	7	7.6
Strongly disagreed	4	4.3
Total	92	100

Table 8 revealed that 56(60.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed that social media create room for the voice of the domestic violence victims to be heard, 25(27.2%) of the respondents agreed that social media create room for the voice of the domestic violence victims to be heard, 7(7.6%) of the respondents disagreed that social media create room for the voice of the domestic violence victims to be heard, while 4(4.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that social media create room for the voice of the domestic violence victims to be heard.

Table 9 shows that 29(31.5%) of the respondents said that to a large extent behavioural changes can occur in parents/guardians positively through constant fight against Domestic Violence on social media. 41(44.6%) of the respondents said that to some extent behavioural changes can occur in parents/guardians who can change positively through constant fight against Domestic Violence

on social media. 13(14.1%) of the respondents said behavioural changes can not at all occur in parents/guardians positively through constant fight against Domestic Violence on social media, while 9(9.8%) of the respondents do not really believe behavioural changes can occur in parents/guardians positively through constant fight against Domestic Violence on social media.

Table 9: Responses to behavioural changes through social media platforms

Behavioural changes	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Yes to a large extent	29	31.5
Yes to some extent	41	44.6
Not at all	13	14.1
Not really	9	9.8
Total	92	100

Table 10: Responses on Parents/Guardians are well educated on violence

Parents/Guardians are well educated on violence	No of Respondents	Percentage%
Yes very well	39	42.4
Yes to some extent	31	33.7
Not really	12	13.0
Not at all	10	10.9
Total	92	100

Table 10 shows that 39(42.4%) of the respondents said that Parents/Guardians are very well educated on violence against children through social media platforms, 31(33.7%) of the respondents agreed that to some extent Parents/Guardians are well educated on violence against children through social media platforms.12(13.0%) of the respondents do not really believe that Parents/Guardians are well educated on violence against children through social media platforms, while 10(10.9%) of the respondents do not believe at all that Parents/Guardians are well educated on violence against children through social media platforms.

Discussion of Findings

In solving the problem statement of this paper, two research questions were posed. A10-item questionnaire was drawn from these research questions to get data to answer the research questions. The data obtained from the respondents are presented in tables 1 to 10 above. It is from these data that the researchers provided answers to each research question in relation to the theories and the relevant pieces of literature used for this study.

How do Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and so on serve as the voice of children?

From the data gotten from the answers of the respondents, all the respondents 92(100%) of the respondents use social media. Respondents use social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A majority 64(69.6%) of the respondents affirm that they have been victims of abuse. A high number 54(58.7%) of the respondents have been physically abused. 76(82.6%) of the respondents affirm that they have come across campaigns against Domestic Violence on social media. A majority 76 (82.6%) of the respondents affirm that they have come across campaigns against Domestic Violence on social media and the respondents said they have come across messages against Domestic Violence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Thus, it can be said that senior secondary school students use social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Most of the students are victims of domestic violence especially physical abuses and students have come across campaigns against Domestic Violence on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These findings are supported with the work of Krug, James, Dahiberg and Zwi, (2002),who stated that domestic violence against children has for a long time been recorded in literature, art and science in many parts of the world. Reports of infanticide, mutilation, abandonment and other forms of violence against children date back to ancient civilizations. Also Article IV of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that media institutions are critical in educating young people towards

promoting the spirit of peace, justice, freedom, mutual respect as well as facilitating the realization of human rights of all peoples and nations (Fayoyin, 2011).

How do Social media platforms enhance social and behavioural change intervention to respond and prevent violence against children?

From the data gotten from the answers of the respondents, a majority 72(78.3%) of the respondents frequently come across campaigns against domestic violence on social media. A high number 81(88.1%) of the respondents agreed that social media create room for the voice of the domestic violence victims to be heard. 41(44.6%) of the respondents said that behavioural changes can occur to some extent in parents/guardians positively through a constant fight against Domestic Violence on social media. 70(76.1%) of the respondents said that Parents/Guardians are very well educated on violence against children through social media platforms.

Thus, it can be said that students come across campaigns against domestic violence on social media frequently, that social media create room for the voice of the domestic violence victims to be heard, that behavioural changes can occur in parents/guardians positively through constant fight against Domestic Violence on social media and that Parents/Guardians are well educated on violence against children through social media platforms. These findings are in line with the work of Dike, Eke and Babarinde (2013) and Richards (2015) who say that although literature abounds on the negative impacts of the misuse of social media platforms on children these negative impacts can be overcome with a directional and purposive usage of the platforms, especially when they are explored to end domestic violence on children. Also the work of Oxfam Infamy International (2019) states that social media can be employed to fight injustice against children. Also in Lagos State, Nigeria a woman was reported to have locked up her stepson in a dog house for a day without food because he disobeyed her order. This incident was exposed via the Twitter handle leading to the woman's arrest after the agitation mounted on several twitter handles. Social media can also be used to challenge norms.

Conclusion

This research work has shown that senor secondary school students use social media especially Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Most students are victims of domestic violence and most have been physically abused. Also children have come across campaigns against Domestic Violence on social media.

The researchers also discovered that children come across campaigns against domestic violence on social media frequently, that social media create room for the voice of the domestic violence victims to be heard, that behavioural changes can occur in parents/guardians positively through constant fight against Domestic Violence on social media and that parents/guardians are well educated on violence against children through social media platforms.

Recommendations

Having analysed, discussed and interpreted the data collected in this study, the researchers, therefore, recommend the following:

1. NGOs, and government should come up with campaigns that will encourage victims to report any form of abuse on the social media platforms that will lead to the clampdown of perpetrators of such acts.
2. Various awareness programmes should be promoted via these social media platforms that would enable parents/guardians as well as victims to get the essential knowledge since most of them are very active on these platforms.

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