

Appraising the Role of Social Media in Promoting Gender Equality

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Abstract: *This study is on the role of social media in promoting gender equality. The study made use of both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative research (in-depth interview) method. A total number of 125 respondents in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State who were administered questionnaire while five (5) people were interviewed. A research questionnaire and interview guide were used as research instruments. The result of the study revealed that majority of the respondents agree that tackling violence against women as increased through social media tools ($X = 2.10$, $SD = 0.97$) and Social media has helped to promote hashtag activism bringing women's issues to the forefront of political agendas ($X = 1.99$, $SD = 0.68$). Also, result revealed that majority of the respondents agree that Censorship and harassment ($X = 2.23$, $SD = 1.05$), Lack of awareness among women ($X = 1.84$, $SD = 0.90$) and cyberbullying of women ($X = 1.54$, $SD = 0.62$) are some of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality. The study recommended that policies that protect women against cyberbullying and harassment of women should be put in place.*

Keywords: *Social Media, Gender equality, Media, Discrimination*

Introduction

Social media allude to the utilization of innovation to empower individuals to effortlessly impart online at a reasonable expense (Bonson et al, 2012). It is one of the amazing developing devices over the globe. Different investigations have appeared social media are becoming exceptionally quick (Khasawneh & Abu-shanab, 2013). The rapid development of social media brought about by the intensity of human system in the collaborations, they permit two path communications between the clients as opposed to simply communicating the message.

In addition to social media, multimedia data of all kinds was used to facilitate public communication. Mobile devices, like smartphones and tablets, are made possible by the ease of access to the internet. This enables users to share online assets at any time, anywhere. Simple content creation on mobile devices is possible, including the sharing of audio tapes, sounds, pictures, and messages on different social media platforms. In this way, the availability of cell phones opens the door for the rapid growth of social media use. Due to recent advances in flexible and remote technology, social media has gained more popularity (Sanders, 2010). Nigerian women have questioned their place in society ever since the country gained independence in 1960. The emergence of the women's movement in the nation has fueled the fight for equality for women and helped women's issues gain attention. As a result, a limited number of Nigerian women have been assigned to key positions and a small number of them have won elections. The 2003 elections in the nation did not advance women; instead, they functioned as a line of demarcation between men and women. As a result, the political climate in Nigeria has become divided into two camps due to "gender politics, social and economic life in Nigeria."

Statement of the Problem

It is not a hidden fact that women are under represented in the field of politics, social and economic life in Nigeria. This may be because of the basic assumption that "a women's place is in the kitchen". In other words, her home duties and family responsibilities should be her sole priority, thereby underling her active participation in national development in general. Another assumption militating against female participation is that, female is biologically not designed for energy exerting and hazardous occupation. This argument may not be true because, with the age of automation and revolution in decision making intellectual ability counts more than physical energy. The issue of gender bias too, contributes enormously to the low Promotion of Gender Equality in Nigeria. The society assumes that women should be mothers, school teachers, hairdressers, secretaries, nurse, maids and social workers only, therefore, they do not need education not to talk of taking part in decision making. Many political parties, reflecting the more general conditions in the rest of society, do not easily accept or promote many women into their echelons, let alone permit women's occupation of important positions within these parties. However, the advent of social media has given women voices and opportunity to participate and contribute their quota in different sector such as education, health, economy etc. The likes of Okongo Iweala, who is the present Director-General of the World Trade Organization since March 2021, Dame Virginia Ngozi Etiaba who served as Governor of Anambra State, from November 2006 to February 2007 and was the first woman to serve as governor of a Nigerian state and Late Professor Dora Nkem Akunyili who served as the Director-General of National Agency for Food and Drug

Administration and Control (NAFDAC) of Nigeria from 2001 to 2008. These women and more had contributed immensely to the growth and development of Nigeria and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter had been one of the vehicles through which such women were promoted. Therefore, this study examines the role of social media in promoting gender equality.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine ways in which social media promotes gender equality
- ii. To examine the challenges to the use of Social Media in promoting gender equality

Research Question

- i. In what ways do social media promotes gender equality?
- ii. What are the challenges to the use of Social Media in promoting gender equality?

Gender Inequality

Men were viewed as being noble, definitive, independent, honourable, kind, and able to safeguard others. They were also thought to be capable of facing challenges, ready to take risks and win, thirsty for liberty, and ready to make sacrifices. Men are often effective and hold significant roles in society, according to interviewees, and they portray everything that is attractive and strong. Men also have a wider knowledge and understanding than women in these areas. Unlike men, women are described by their position in the family.

Men are urged to focus on what they view as "great" or "essential" issues, while women are expected to handle "negligible" tasks like feeding the family, maintaining the house clean, caring for the kids, and other such duties. The societal achievements made by women via their regular household duties were not valued by either men or women. Men are anticipated to persevere in the face of defeat, but the notion that men are unable to admit their mistakes would point to the significance of including women in the decision-making process.

Because good judgment requires more than just strength, it stands to reason that women's propensity for consensus and men's aggressiveness would complement each other well. Even in wasting time and money, men are seen as being magnanimous in their behavior and interpersonal interactions. When a man lacks generosity, he is viewed as not only being narrow-minded but also being dangerous. While being thrifty is a virtue in women, it is viewed negatively in men; men are allowed to waste money in part because they have the capacity to do so.

Obviously, there is a lot of conflict due to the very differing views that men and women have in this area and the worries that women have about supporting their families solely on their husbands' income. Numerous men believe that freedom is a man's birthright. Men are thought to be cumbersome, incapable of providing for others, and untrained in the art of cooking. They are therefore excused from performing household tasks. Women are also not given enough credit for having such skills. Women are under a lot of peer pressure to not point to those "typically male operations" just as men are under a lot of pressure to go out drinking and gambling. Peer pressure also makes it very challenging for men who truly desire to assist their wives at home by staying at home. Gender training starts young, with boys learning, among other things, to be independent and generous/extravagant, and girls to be family-oriented, eager to sacrifice, and careful with money. From when they are small boys, males have more freedom than their sisters.

Culture and Gender Equality

The entire package of distinctive spiritual, material, and intellectual attributes that describe a community or social group is now recognized to be culture, based on the definition provided by the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT), which was hosted in Mexico City. It includes the human rights movement, as well as the arts, literature, and various worth, belief, and custom frameworks. It defines the roles that men and women play across every society.

Gender stereotypes that are supported by cultural norms, belief systems, and tactics that endorse gender inequality and the marginalization of women are prevalent in patriarchal systems. While there are doubtlessly some parts of matriarchal culture, our society as a whole is paternal heritage, with women having limited or no human rights. It is disheartening to learn that gender inequality still exists despite significant international attention being given to women's rights and gender studies in the home, the workplace, and advancement. Women are expected to play a subservient role, which encourages male dominance, a minimal social status for women, and a high degree of dependence. Similar to how race or ethnicity serve as necessary prerequisites for society, gender does so because of the cultural connotations associated with being male or female. This is illustrated by the division of labor based on gender. There are clear tendency that "women's work" and "men's work," in the home and in the broader community, and

there are cultural explanations for why this should be the case. Every society has its own perspectives and patterns, which change over time.

Women and Social Media

Modern advancements in information technology play a significant role in the international communication network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on women's behavior, openness, and private preferences. Social media has the capacity to significantly increase its dedication to the advancement of women in all spheres of life. More women are presently engaged with conveying to others through internet, visits however the issues they face are very (Velmurugan, 2015).

In addition, images of sex amusement that are aggressive and degrading have a negative impact on women's commitment to social norms. On the other hand, social media helps women by improving their skills, knowledge, and technology accessibility. Women can find assurance on social media from a variety of sources and perspectives. Women use social media in greater numbers, and there is more cooperation overall. For instance, Twitter extend among women may be marginally greater than among men, according to ComScore (2012). Although there are slight differences in how people use twitter, women are using it more frequently than men. Studies clearly shows that Facebook, You Tube, and Twitter are more widely used on the continent's mainland. Due to the proliferation of cell phones and the availability of the internet, people can now connect with one another in remote areas (Pfeiffer et al 2014).

The Role of the Media in Promoting Gender Equality In Nigeria

Since its inception, men have controlled Nigerian media, and the machinery of bias and gender inequality is all over the organization. According to Anyanwu (2001), very little consideration is given to real concerns that shape the quality of life, things that influence the minds and hearts of the public. She asserted that women's problems belong to a category of information that is regarded as light weight. This is a condemnation of the Nigerian media. According to Anyanwu (2001), publications that showcase a large number of women are seamlessly labeled as women's publications (200 1). The media continues to be selective in its coverage of news, demoting and concealing women's experiences. In Nigeria, media coverage of women's issues has been underwhelming. The growing media criticism stems from the need to optimize news coverage and reporting in order to be fair and reliable. The question of whether Nigerian media practitioners are fulfilling their responsibilities as the people's mouthpiece, devoted solely to looking at all issues without preconceived notions of favoring one gender over the other, is debatable.

The Technology Acceptance Model

The technology acceptance model (TAM) is a theory of information systems that describes how users learn to recognize and use technology. The actual system use is the point at which people interact with technology. People use technology because of their behavioral intentions. The attitude (A), which is the general perception of the technology, influences the behavioral intent (BI). According to the model, when users are confronted with new technology, a range of factors that affect their decision about how and when to use it, most prominently:

Perceived usefulness (PU) - This was described by Fred Davis as "the level to which an individual believes that using a specific system would improve their employee productivity". It denotes whether or not someone considers that technology to be beneficial for the task at hand.

Davis described perceived ease-of-use (PEOU) as "the extent to which an individual believes that using a specific system would be free of effort" (Davis 1989). If the technology is simple to use, the constraints will be overcome. No one is going to like it if it is difficult to use and has a complex interface.

Research Methodology

This study was carried out in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The population of study included the entire population of women who fall within the labour force population aged (18-64) who were residents in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The study made use of multi-stage sampling which involves both probability and nonprobability sampling techniques. The study made use of both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative research (in-depth interview) method. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 125 respondents for the study while five (5) people were interviewed. The quantitative data was processed, computed and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency tables were used to present the data. The interviews were analyzed using manual thematic

and content analysis.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percent
18-25 years	28	22.4
26-35 years	31	24.8
36-45 years	39	31.2
46-55 years	27	21.6
Education		
Primary School Certificate	9	7.2
SSCE/GCE	12	9.6
NCE/OND	24	19.2
First Degree	80	64.0
Tribe		
Yoruba	112	89.6
Igbo	7	5.6
Hausa	6	4.8
Religion		
Christianity	72	57.6
Islam	53	42.4
Total	125	100.0

Table 1 showed that 39 (31.2%) of the women were within the age category of 36-45 years, 31 (24.8%) were within the age category of 26-35 years, 28 (22.4%) were within the age category of 18-25 years while 27 (21.6%) were within 46-55 years. Based on educational qualification, 80 (64.0%) had First degree educational qualification, 24 (19.2%) had NCE/OND educational qualification, 12 (9.6%) had SSCE/GCE certificate while 9 (7.2%) had Primary School Certificate. Based on tribe/ethnicity, 89.6% were Yoruba, 5.6% were Igbo and 4.8% were Hausa while on religion, 57.6% were Christians while 42.4% were Muslims.

Research Question One: In what ways do social media promotes gender equality?

Table 2: Ways in which social media promotes gender equality

S/No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand. Dev
1.	Tackling violence against women as increased through social media tools	53 (42.4%)	65(52.0%)	7(5.6%)	-	2.10	0.97
2.	Social media has helped to promote hashtag activism bringing women's issues to the forefront of political agendas	51 (40.8%)	66 (52.8%)	8 (6.4%)	-	1.99	0.68
3.	Social media has helped to promote public accountability towards gender equality	25 (20.0%)	80 (64.0%)	16 (12.8%)	4 (3.2%)	1.54	0.62

Table 2 shows that 53 (42.4%) strongly agree, 65(52.0%) agree while 7(5.6%) disagree that tackling violence against women as increased through social media tools, 51 (40.8%) of the respondents strongly agree, 66 (52.8%) agree while 8 (6.4%) disagree that Social media has helped to promote hashtag activism bringing women's issues to the forefront of political agendas. Furthermore, 25 (20.0%) of the respondents strongly agree, 80 (64.0%) agree, 16 (12.8%) disagree while 4 (3.2%) strongly disagree that social media has helped to promote public accountability towards gender equality. The statement tackling violence against women as increased through social media tools has the highest mean score value ($X = 2.10$, $SD = 0.97$) followed by Social media has helped to promote hashtag activism bringing women's issues to the forefront of political agendas ($X = 1.99$, $SD = 0.68$).

This finding was also confirmed by the qualitative data where one of the respondents that was interviewed stated that:

Through the help of social media, women voices are being heard. Also, women like Okonjo-Iweala had been promoted through social media channels like facebook, Twitter etc. Likewise, the incidence of violence against women is now frequently reported on social media. An example was the case of the singer "Osinachi" that was molested and maltreated by her husband. It is a pity that she died as a result of injury sustained through the maltreatment but at least one, social media is now of the fastest medium through which such ill-treatment can be reported.

IDI I, Respondent 1

Research Question Two: What are the challenges to the use of Social Media in promoting gender equality?

Table 3: The challenges to the use of Social Media in promoting gender equality

S/No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand. Dev
1.	Censorship and harassment is one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality	54 (43.2%)	50 (40.0%)	19 (15.2%)	2 (1.6%)	2.23	1.05
2.	Lack of awareness among women is one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality	56 (44.8%)	35 (28.0%)	34 (27.2%)	-	1.84	0.90
3.	Cyberbullying of women is one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality	62 (49.6%)	42 (33.6%)	21 (16.8%)	-	1.54	0.62

Table 3 showed that 54 (43.2%) of the respondents strongly agree, 50 (40.0%) agree, 19 (15.2%) disagree while 2 (1.6%) strongly disagree that censorship and harassment is one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality, 56 (44.8%) strongly agree, 35 (28.0%) agree while 34 (27.2%) disagree that lack of awareness among women is one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality, 62 (49.6%) of the respondents strongly agree, 42 (33.6%) agree while 21 (16.8%) disagree that cyberbullying of women is one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality.. Censorship and harassment as one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality has the highest mean score ($X = 2.23$, $SD = 1.05$), Lack of awareness among women as one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality has a mean score ($X = 1.84$, $SD = 0.90$) while cyberbullying of women as one of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality has a mean score ($X = 1.54$, $SD = 0.62$).

This finding support the qualitative data where one of the respondents that was interviewed stated that:

So many women are not aware especially those that are uneducated that social media is a major platform that can promote them. Many women still prefer conventional way of communication and doing things. So lack of awareness among women is one of the challenges. Another challenge is poverty and lack of funding. In order to communicate on social media, at least an internet phone is required and presently, the cost of phones especially a smartphone is quite high, so a poor person may not be able to afford such.

IDI II, Respondent 2

Conclusion

This study is based on the role of social media in promoting gender equality. The study made use of both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative research (in-depth interview) method. A total number of 125 respondents were administered questionnaire while five (5) people were interviewed. The result of the first research question revealed that majority of the respondents agree that tackling violence against women as increased through social media tools ($X = 2.10$, $SD = 0.97$), Social media has helped to promote hashtag activism bringing women's issues to the forefront of political agendas ($X = 1.99$, $SD = 0.68$) and it has helped to promote public accountability towards gender equality ($X = 1.54$, $SD = 0.62$). The result of the second research question showed that majority of

the respondents agree that Censorship and harassment ($X = 2.23$, $SD = 1.05$), Lack of awareness among women ($X = 1.84$, $SD = 0.90$) and cyberbullying of women ($X = 1.54$, $SD = 0.62$) are some of the challenges associated with the use of social media in promoting gender equality. This finding supports the study of Velmurugan (2015) who reported that women are presently engaged with conveying to others through internet. Also, it was reported by ComScore (2012) that the quantity of women in utilizing social media is higher and the cooperation is wherever and twitter reach is just possibly higher among women than among men.

Recommendations

- i. More awareness should be created among women on gender equality.
- ii. Policies that protect women against cyberbullying and harassment of women should be put in place.

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