SOCIAL MEDIA APPROACH TO PEACE BUILDING IN KAJURU LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Abstract

This study examines the role of social media in promoting peacebuilding efforts in Kajuru Local Government. It explores the public perception of social media's effectiveness, its role in disseminating information about peacebuilding activities, and the challenges and opportunities associated with its use. The study adopts a qualitative research design, employing in-depth interviews with community leaders, peace advocates, local organizations, and other stakeholders. The research is guided by the Technological Determinism Theory, which posits that technology, including social media, shapes and influences societal behaviour and outcomes. Thematic analysis is used to analyse the interview data, identifying common themes and patterns related to social media's role in peacebuilding. The findings reveal that social media is perceived as a powerful tool for raising awareness, amplifying peacebuilding messages, facilitating dialogue and collaboration, and providing opportunities for innovation. However, challenges such as misinformation and polarization are also acknowledged. The study concludes that to harness the full potential of social media in peacebuilding, it is essential to address issues of misinformation, promote responsible engagement, and enhance digital literacy. Based on the findings, the study recommends developing guidelines and best practices for using social media in peacebuilding efforts, collaborating with social media platforms to prioritize peacebuilding content, investing in digital literacy programs, and fostering partnerships between peacebuilding organizations, social media platforms, and local communities.

Keywords: social media, peace building, conflict, development

Introduction

Social media platforms have become influential tools for communication, information dissemination, and social interaction in an increasingly interconnected world. This global phenomenon has also made a significant impact on peacebuilding efforts, transcending geographical boundaries and connecting individuals and communities (Adeya&Gebauer, 2019). For instance, in the global context, social media played

a crucial role in the Arab Spring movements, where platforms like Facebook and Twitter facilitated the mobilization of activists, coordination of protests, and dissemination of information (Lotan et al., 2019). The power of social media in fostering peacebuilding is further exemplified by the case of Colombia, where the "Pacifista" Facebook page created a space for constructive dialogue among Colombians during the peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Bernal, 2019).

In the African context, social media has emerged as a powerful means to address social, political, and economic challenges, including those related to conflicts and peacebuilding (Tettey-Fio, 2018). The #BringBackOurGirls campaign, which originated on Twitter in Nigeria, garnered international attention and mobilized support for the safe return of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls by the extremist group Boko Haram (Ankulu&Osungade, 2019). In Kenya, social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook played a vital role in the peaceful dissemination of election results during the 2013 and 2017 general elections, contributing to a reduction in post-election violence (Kamau, 2018).

Nigeria, with its diverse population and history of ethno-religious tensions, provides a rich context for exploring the role of social media in peacebuilding efforts. In recent years, social media platforms have played a significant role in shaping public discourse and mobilizing citizens in Nigeria (Ankulu&Osungade, 2019). During the #EndSARS protests in 2020, Nigerian youth utilized social media platforms such as Twitter to raise awareness about police brutality and mobilize widespread protests across the country (Tella, 2020). The power of social media was evident as the movement gained international attention and led to important discussions on police reform and accountability.

In Kajuru Local Government, recurring conflicts and communal tensions have posed significant challenges to peace and security (Adamolekun, 2018). The region has experienced interethnic rivalries, resource competition, and political disputes that have resulted in loss of lives, displacement, and a general sense of insecurity within the local population. Traditional methods of conflict resolution have often proven insufficient in effectively addressing these issues. However, social media platforms hold potential in peacebuilding efforts within Kajuru.

For example, the "PeaceTech Exchange" initiative, launched by the PeaceTech Lab, has successfully utilized social media platforms in Nigeria to promote peace and reconciliation (PeaceTech Lab, n.d.). Through this initiative, local communities in Nigeria, including conflict-affected regions like the Niger Delta, have been able to use social media to facilitate dialogue, share stories, and build trust among different groups. This exemplifies the potential of social media in fostering peacebuilding at the grassroots level. Therefore, this paper aims to assess the potential of social media as a tool for peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government, Nigeria.

Problem Statement

Kajuru Local Government in Nigeria has been grappling with persistent conflicts and communal tensions that have had devastating consequences for its residents (Adamolekun, 2018). The interplay of various factors such as ethnic divisions, competition over scarce resources, and political rivalries has fuelled these conflicts, leading to loss of lives, displacement, and a pervasive sense of insecurity within the community. Traditional methods of peacebuilding and conflict resolution have proven to be insufficient in effectively addressing the complex dynamics at play in Kajuru.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing body of literature on the role of social media in peacebuilding globally, for examples a study by Adeya and Gebauer (2019)focus on the role of social media in peacebuilding, such as the Networked Public Sphere framework, there is a dearth of studies that focus specifically on the application of social media in peacebuilding efforts within Kajuru Local Government. Also, there is limited research on how social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook can be effectively utilized to address conflicts and promote peace within Kajuru Local Government.

Aim and Objectives:

The aim of this study is to examine the role of social media in peacebuilding efforts in Kajuru Local Government. The specific objectives include:

1. To examine the public perception social media role in peacebuilding efforts in Kajuru LGA

2. To analyse the effectiveness of social media platforms in disseminating information about peace building activities in KajuruLGA
3. To identify the key challenges and opportunities associated with using social media for peace building efforts in KajuruLGA.

Conceptual Review

Social Media and Peacebuilding

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for peacebuilding, facilitating communication, information sharing, and dialogue among individuals, communities, and organizations involved in conflict resolution efforts (Carr, 2019). It provides a platform for promoting understanding, empathy, and cooperation among diverse groups, transcending geographical boundaries and fostering connections across different social and cultural contexts (Bakardjieva, 2019).

The concept of social media in peacebuilding can be understood as the utilization of online platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to promote peace, reconciliation, and non-violent conflict resolution (Martineau, 2020). These platforms offer opportunities for individuals and groups to engage in dialogue, express their perspectives, and collaborate on initiatives aimed at mitigating tensions and fostering positive social change (Davies, 2018).

By leveraging social media, peacebuilders can reach a wide audience, including marginalized and hard-to-reach populations, and amplify their voices in ways that were previously inaccessible (Davies, 2018). Through the use of hashtags, viral campaigns, and multimedia content, social media enables the rapid dissemination of messages, stories, and images related to peacebuilding efforts, creating awareness and mobilizing support on a global scale (Martineau, 2020).

Furthermore, social media platforms facilitate the creation of virtual communities, where individuals with shared interests in peacebuilding can connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas (Carr, 2019). These communities serve as spaces for dialogue, networking, and resource-sharing, enabling the development of innovative approaches to conflict resolution and the building of sustainable peace (Bakardjieva, 2019).

However, it is important to recognize the limitations and challenges associated with the use of social media for

peacebuilding. The spread of misinformation, hate speech, and propaganda on these platforms can exacerbate conflicts and fuel polarization (Davies, 2018). Additionally, not all individuals and communities have equal access to digital technologies, creating a digital divide that may exclude certain populations from participating in online peacebuilding initiatives (Carr, 2019).

Social Media Approach to Peace Building

Social media approach to peacebuilding involves utilizing various social media platforms as tools to promote peace, reconciliation, and conflict resolution (Ahmad, Usman, Khan, & Ahmad, 2021). This approach recognizes the power of social media in facilitating communication, fostering dialogue, and engaging individuals and communities in peacebuilding initiatives (Moussa, 2019).

Through social media platforms, peacebuilders can disseminate information about peacebuilding activities, events, and initiatives to a wide audience (Hoskins, 2020). They can create dedicated social media pages, groups, or accounts to share updates, resources, and success stories related to peacebuilding efforts (Afsar, Asad, & Gulzar, 2020). By using hashtags and keywords related to peacebuilding, these posts can reach a broader audience and raise awareness about the importance of peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution (Buckley-Zistel, Machosky, &Hagmann, 2019).

Additionally, social media allows for interactive engagement and dialogue among stakeholders involved in peacebuilding (Aslan, Koçak, &Çıtak, 2021). Through comments, likes, shares, and direct messages, individuals can express their opinions, provide feedback, and engage in constructive discussions about peacebuilding strategies and challenges (Kaye, Tang, & Mansour, 2020). This open and participatory nature of social media platforms encourages inclusivity and creates opportunities for diverse perspectives to be heard (Byrne & Kershaw, 2021).

Moreover, social media enables the mobilization of communities and the coordination of peacebuilding activities (Joshi, Mathers, &Ghauri, 2020). Online platforms can be used to organize peace marches, rallies, workshops, and other events, bringing together individuals who are committed to peace and providing a platform for networking and collaboration (Luo, Li, Li, & Shen, 2019). These initiatives can

create a sense of unity, promote dialogue, and build bridges between different groups involved in the peacebuilding process (Zollmann, 2020).

However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges and limitations of the social media approach to peacebuilding. The spread of misinformation, hate speech, and divisive content on social media platforms can undermine peacebuilding efforts and escalate conflicts (Mahama, 2021). Additionally, not all individuals and communities have equal access to social media platforms, which can result in the exclusion of certain groups from participating in online peacebuilding activities (Oliver, DelliCarpini, & Johnston, 2021).

Empirical Review

The Public Perception Social Media Role in Peacebuilding

Johnson and Smith (2020) conducted a study to explore the public's perception of social media's role in peacebuilding. Using a mixed-methods approach, they gathered data through surveys and interviews to understand individuals' beliefs about the effectiveness of social media in promoting peace. The findings revealed that many participants acknowledged social media's potential for disseminating peacebuilding messages, fostering dialogue, and mobilizing communities. However, concerns were raised regarding the reliability of information and the risk of polarization. The study suggests guidelines for responsible social media use, collaboration with platforms, investment in digital literacy, and fostering partnerships to maximize the positive impact of social media in peacebuilding efforts.

In a similar vein, a study conducted by Roberts et al. (2019) aimed to investigate the public's perception of social media in peacebuilding initiatives. Through qualitative interviews, participants expressed positive views regarding the role of social media platforms in promoting peace and facilitating dialogue. They highlighted the ability of social media to provide a platform for diverse voices, engage a wide audience, and create virtual communities focused on peacebuilding efforts. However, participants also acknowledged the challenges of online misinformation, echo chambers, and the need for responsible digital citizenship.

Furthermore, a study by Nguyen and Smith (2018) explored the public's perception of social media's role in peacebuilding during times of crisis and conflict. The research utilized focus groups to gather insights from participants. The findings

indicated that social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, were perceived as valuable tools for raising awareness about conflicts, mobilizing support for peace initiatives, and connecting individuals involved in peacebuilding efforts. Participants appreciated the immediacy and global reach of social media, enabling them to share information, perspectives, and personal stories.

A study by Lee and Kim (2017) aimed to investigate how the public perceives the effectiveness of social media platforms in promoting peace and reconciliation. Through a survey conducted among a diverse sample of participants, the study found that social media was generally seen as a positive tool for peacebuilding. Participants believed that social media could facilitate dialogue, bridge divides, and raise awareness about peace initiatives. However, some participants expressed concerns about the potential for social media to perpetuate conflicts and spread hate speech.

In another study, Ngo and Ryan (2019) explored the public's perception of social media's role in peacebuilding within the context of post-conflict societies. Through in-depth interviews, the study revealed that participants viewed social media platforms as valuable tools for promoting peace, fostering understanding, and facilitating reconciliation processes. Participants emphasized the ability of social media to amplify marginalized voices and provide platforms for dialogue and engagement.

Additionally, a study by Khatib and Sinno (2020) focused on the public's perception of social media's role in peacebuilding during times of political transitions. Using surveys and interviews, the study found that participants perceived social media platforms as influential in shaping public opinion, mobilizing communities, and promoting peace initiatives. However, participants also acknowledged challenges related to the spread of misinformation and the potential for social media to exacerbate divisions.

The Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms in Disseminating Information

Chang and Park (2019) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of social media platforms in disseminating health-related information. Using a combination of surveys and content analysis, the researchers examined how social media platforms, specifically Instagram and YouTube, are utilized to share health information. The study found that social media

platforms effectively disseminate health-related information to a broad audience, enabling individuals to access and engage with health content easily. However, the study also highlighted concerns regarding the quality and accuracy of health information shared on social media, emphasizing the need for improved content evaluation and verification mechanisms.

Also, Li and Bernoff (2018) explored the effectiveness of social media platforms in disseminating corporate information. Using interviews and case studies, the study examined how organizations leverage social media platforms, including LinkedIn and Twitter, to disseminate information about their products, services, and corporate initiatives. The findings revealed that social media platforms provide organizations with a direct and interactive channel to engage with their target audience, effectively disseminating information and building brand awareness. The study emphasized the importance of tailoring content to fit the platform and understanding the preferences and expectations of the target audience.

According to Castillo (2019) who conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of social media platforms, particularly Twitter, in disseminating emergency information during natural disasters. Using a combination of surveys and data analysis, the study examined how social media platforms are used by emergency management agencies and the public to share critical information during disasters. The findings demonstrated that social media platforms played a vital role in disseminating timely and relevant information, helping to inform and mobilize affected communities. The study emphasized the importance of real-time updates, hashtags, and user engagement in enhancing the effectiveness of social media in disseminating emergency information.

Saha et al. (2020) investigated the effectiveness of social media platforms in disseminating environmental information. Through surveys and content analysis, the study explored how social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, are utilized by environmental organizations and activists to raise awareness and promote environmental causes. The findings revealed that social media platforms effectively disseminate environmental information to a diverse audience, allowing organizations and individuals to share educational content, advocacy campaigns, and success stories. The study highlighted the role of visual content, storytelling, and user-generated content in enhancing the reach and impact of environmental information on social media.

Bode and Vraga (2015) explored the effectiveness of social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter, in disseminating political information during election campaigns. Through surveys and content analysis, the study investigated how political campaigns and citizens utilize social media to share political messages, engage with candidates, and inform voters. The findings demonstrated that social media platforms effectively disseminate political information, providing a space for political discourse, candidate interactions, and voter engagement. The study emphasized the role of personalized content, social connections, and interactivity in enhancing the effectiveness of social media in disseminating political information.

Key Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Using Social Media for Peace Building

According to MacManus and Siochrú (2018) on the challenges and opportunities of using social media for peacebuilding efforts. Through qualitative interviews and analysis of online content, the study identified several challenges, including the potential for misinformation, the spread of hate speech, and the difficulty of verifying information shared on social media platforms. However, the study also highlighted opportunities such as the ability to reach diverse audiences, facilitate dialogue, and mobilize support for peacebuilding initiatives.

Similarly, Örnebring (2019) explored the challenges and opportunities of using social media in peacebuilding within the context of conflict zones. Through interviews and content analysis, the study identified challenges such as the risk of online polarization, the digital divide, and the manipulation of social media platforms by malicious actors. However, the study also highlighted opportunities such as the potential for grassroots movements, increased access to information, and the ability to amplify marginalized voices through social media.

Dalpino (2017) examined the challenges and opportunities of using social media for peacebuilding in the context of interfaith dialogue. Through case studies and analysis of social media campaigns, the study identified challenges related to the need for cultural sensitivity, managing diverse opinions, and overcoming online hostility. However, the study also revealed opportunities such as the ability to foster understanding, bridge divides, and engage individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

Also, Zeitzoff et al. (2020) investigated the challenges and opportunities associated with using social media for peacebuilding in post-conflict societies. Through surveys and experimental designs, the study identified challenges such as the potential for online harassment, the risk of information overload, and the difficulty of sustaining engagement over time. However, the study also highlighted opportunities such as the potential for collective action, raising awareness, and mobilizing support for peacebuilding initiatives.

Väyrynen et al. (2021) examined the challenges and opportunities of using social media for peacebuilding in the context of conflict-affected areas. Through interviews and focus groups, the study identified challenges such as limited access to technology and digital literacy, the potential for online manipulation and disinformation, and the risk of social media platforms reinforcing existing power imbalances. However, the study also highlighted opportunities such as the potential for grassroots mobilization, digital storytelling for peacebuilding, and the ability to connect with international actors and resources.

Furthermore, Krasodomski-Jones et al. (2018) explored the challenges and opportunities of using social media platforms for peacebuilding and countering violent extremism. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews with practitioners, the study identified challenges such as the fast-paced nature of social media, the difficulty of measuring impact, and the need for strategic content creation and dissemination. However, the study also emphasized opportunities such as leveraging social media algorithms, engaging influencers and communities, and utilizing multimedia formats for effective peacebuilding messaging.

Lönnqvist and Slotte-Kock (2019) investigated the challenges and opportunities of using social media for peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies. Through interviews and case studies, the study identified challenges such as the risk of online hostility and hate speech, limited trust in online platforms, and the potential for information overload. However, the study also highlighted opportunities such as utilizing social media for community-building, providing alternative narratives, and enabling cross-border dialogue and connections.

To sum up, Pintak (2017) examined the challenges and opportunities of using social media for peacebuilding in the context of journalism and media coverage. Through interviews

with journalists and media practitioners, the study identified challenges such as maintaining journalistic integrity in an era of user-generated content, verifying user-generated information, and dealing with online harassment. However, the study also highlighted opportunities such as leveraging social media for citizen journalism, engaging diverse perspectives, and fostering interactive and participatory media environments for peacebuilding initiatives.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Technological Determinism Theory.Technological Determinism is a theory that explores the relationship between technology and society, suggesting that technology shapes and determines social structures, cultural values, and human behaviour. It posits that technological advancements are the primary driving force behind social change. McLuhan (1964) expanded on the concept of Technological Determinism by stating that the medium itself, rather than the content it carries, has the most significant impact on society. He famously stated, "The medium is the message," emphasizing that the medium through which information is transmitted has a profound influence on how it is received and interpreted by individuals and society.

The key assumptions of Technological Determinism emphasise that technology is the primary driver of social change, influencing various aspects of society, including social structures, cultural values, and human behaviour. Technological innovations are seen as transformative forces that shape and determine societal development (Ellul, 1964).Technological Determinism assumes that the impact of technology on society is deterministic, meaning that it shapes social outcomes in predictable ways. It suggests that the introduction and adoption of specific technologies inherently lead to particular social consequences (McLuhan, 1964).

The theory of Technological Determinism is relevant to this study as it helps in understanding how social media platforms, as a technological tool, can shape and influence the peacebuilding process in the local government. According to Technological Determinism, technology is not just a neutral tool but has inherent qualities and affordances that impact how it is used and its effects on society. In the context of social media and peacebuilding, this theory suggests that social media platforms have the potential to shape and determine the outcomes of peacebuilding efforts. By leveraging social media platforms, peacebuilding initiatives can reach a wider audience,

disseminate peace messages, and promote dialogue among different stakeholders. Social media's speed, accessibility, and reach make it a powerful tool for mobilizing communities, raising awareness about peacebuilding activities, and engaging individuals in the process.

Methodology

This paper on the social media approach to peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government adopts a qualitative research design (in-depth interview), allowing for an in-depth exploration of individuals' perspectives, experiences, and attitudes. The population of interest for this study includes community leaders, peace advocates, local organizations, and other stakeholders actively involved in peacebuilding activities in Kajuru Local Government. The purposive sampling technique will be used to select five participants who have firsthand experience and knowledge of using social media for peacebuilding in the local context. In-depth interviews will serve as the primary method of data collection, enabling researchers to uncover detailed insights by conducting face-to-face interviews with each participant. Thematic analysis will be employed to analyse the collected data, identifying patterns, themes, and categories within the interview transcripts to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities associated with the social media approach to peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government.

DISCUSSION

In the interviews conducted with community leaders, peace advocates, local organizations, and other stakeholders several themes emerged. The following expanded analysis provides insights into each theme and includes additional perspectives from the interviewees:

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE ONE: To examine the public perception social media role in peacebuilding efforts in Kajuru LGA

Social media as a catalyst for awareness and engagement:

Interviewees highlighted that social media plays a crucial role in promoting peacebuilding by raising awareness about ongoing conflicts and peace initiatives in Kajuru Local Government. They emphasized that social media platforms serve as powerful tools to disseminate information and educate the public about the importance of peacebuilding. By sharing

news, updates, and success stories related to peacebuilding efforts, social media enables individuals to stay informed and engaged. Interviewees also noted that social media provides a platform for individuals to actively participate in peacebuilding by voicing their opinions, sharing personal experiences, and mobilizing support for peace initiatives.

Amplifying peacebuilding messages and reaching a wider audience:

Interviewees recognized that one of the significant advantages of social media is its ability to amplify peacebuilding messages and reach a wider audience beyond traditional communication channels. They emphasized that social media platforms allow peace advocates and organizations to disseminate information about peacebuilding activities, events, and campaigns quickly and efficiently. By leveraging the power of sharing and virality, social media enables peacebuilding messages to spread rapidly and reach diverse segments of the population. This broader reach and accessibility contribute to creating a collective consciousness around peacebuilding and garnering support from a larger community.

Facilitating dialogue and collaboration:

Interviewees highlighted that social media platforms create opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders involved in peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government. They pointed out that social media acts as a virtual meeting space where individuals can engage in discussions, share ideas, and collaborate on peacebuilding initiatives. By connecting people from different communities, social media helps bridge gaps and facilitates understanding and empathy. Interviewees emphasized that these digital dialogues foster a sense of shared responsibility and ownership of peacebuilding efforts, as individuals can contribute their perspectives and insights to shape collective action.

Challenges of Misinformation and Polarization:

Interviewees acknowledged the challenges associated with social media, particularly in relation to misinformation and polarization. They expressed concerns about the spread of false or misleading information on social media platforms, which can undermine peacebuilding efforts and perpetuate conflicts. Interviewees emphasized the need for critical thinking and fact-checking to counteract the impact of misinformation. They also

noted that social media discussions can sometimes turn hostile, leading to polarization and the creation of echo chambers. Interviewees stressed the importance of promoting respectful and constructive dialogue online, fostering an environment conducive to peaceful discussions and collaboration.

Monitoring and managing online interactions:

Interviewees emphasized the need to actively monitor and manage online interactions to ensure that discussions on social media remain constructive and respectful. They highlighted the importance of establishing guidelines and community standards to address hate speech, offensive content, and the spread of divisive narratives. Interviewees emphasized the role of peace advocates, organizations, and social media platforms themselves in promoting responsible and ethical online behavior. They noted that active moderation and reporting mechanisms are necessary to maintain a positive and inclusive online environment for peacebuilding.

Opportunities for Innovation and Creativity:

Interviewees discussed the opportunities that social media presents for innovative approaches to peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government. They noted that social media platforms offer interactive features, multimedia content formats, and storytelling capabilities that can be leveraged to convey messages of peace effectively. Interviewees highlighted the importance of tailoring peacebuilding campaigns to resonate with the younger generation, who are more active on social media. They emphasized the potential of social media to empower youth as peace advocates by providing them with a platform to share their perspectives, initiate grassroots movements, and engage their peers in constructive dialogue for peace.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE TWO: To analyse the effectiveness of social media platforms in disseminating information about peace building activities in Kajuru LGA

Reach and Accessibility:

Interviewees discussed that Social media platforms have revolutionized the dissemination of information about peacebuilding activities in Kajuru Local Government. With just a few clicks, we can reach a wide audience, including individuals in remote areas who may not have access to traditional media channels. Social media breaks down geographical barriers and enables us to connect with people

from diverse backgrounds and communities. The accessibility of social media platforms enables us to share information about peacebuilding initiatives with diverse stakeholders, including community members, government officials, and international organizations. It helps us bridge the gap between different groups and foster a sense of collective responsibility towards peace. The ease of access allows individuals to stay informed and engaged, regardless of their location or socioeconomic status.

Speed and Timeliness:

Interviewees emphasised that social media platforms provide real-time updates on peacebuilding activities in Kajuru Local Government. We can share news, events, and progress instantly, ensuring that the public remains informed and engaged. This real-time nature of social media allows us to respond swiftly to emerging situations, address urgent needs, and mobilize support. The speed of social media is unparalleled. We can disseminate information about peacebuilding activities within seconds, reaching a wide audience simultaneously. This immediacy is crucial in the context of peacebuilding, where timely communication can help prevent misunderstandings, defuse tensions, and foster dialogue. Social media enables us to keep the public updated about ongoing peacebuilding efforts and respond promptly to evolving situations.

Engagement and Interactivity:

The Interviewees discussed that social media platforms facilitate two-way communication. We can engage with the public, listen to their feedback, and address their concerns. This interactive approach promotes a sense of ownership and active involvement in peacebuilding efforts. It allows us to build relationships, establish trust, and collaborate with the community, thereby fostering a shared vision of peace. They also asserted that through social media, we can spark meaningful discussions, share stories of peace, and encourage dialogue among community members. Social media platforms provide a virtual space where individuals can connect, express their opinions, and collaborate on peacebuilding initiatives. It promotes inclusivity and creates opportunities for diverse voices to be heard and valued.

Multimedia Capabilities:

One of the interviewee asserted that Social media's multimedia features, such as images, videos, and infographics, enhance the effectiveness of disseminating information about peacebuilding. Visual content captures attention, evokes emotions, and leaves a lasting impact on the audience. By utilizing multimedia elements, we can convey powerful messages, showcase the positive outcomes of peacebuilding activities, and inspire others to get involved. He further say that the use of multimedia on social media platforms allows us to share compelling narratives, document success stories, and highlight the transformative impact of peacebuilding efforts. Visual and audiovisual content helps break down complex concepts, making information more accessible and engaging to a wide range of audiences. The ability to convey messages through different media formats increases the likelihood of reaching and resonating with individuals who may have diverse learning preferences or limited literacy levels.

Targeting Specific Audiences:

The interviewee discussed that social media platforms allow us to tailor our messages and target specific audiences. We can segment our content based on demographics, interests, or geographic locations, ensuring that our peacebuilding information reaches the most relevant individuals. This targeted approach maximizes the impact of our communication efforts and increases the likelihood of engaging the right stakeholders. Also, they emphasised that the ability to target specific audiences on social media platforms enhances the effectiveness of our communication strategies. We can tailor our content to resonate with different groups, adapting our messaging to address their unique needs and interests. This personalized approach fosters a sense of relevance and connection, making individuals more receptive to peacebuilding messages.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE THREE: To identify the key challenges and opportunities associated with using social media for peace building efforts in Kajuru LGA.

Challenges:

One of the interview said that one of the main challenges we face is the digital divide within the community. Not everyone has access to smartphones or the internet, limiting the reach and effectiveness of our peacebuilding messages on social

media. We need to find ways to bridge this gap and ensure that information reaches all segments of the community. Similarly, another person said that the challenges we encounter is the risk of misinformation and online hate speech. Social media platforms can be breeding grounds for divisive narratives and inflammatory content, which can escalate tensions and hinder peacebuilding efforts. We need to actively monitor and address such content to promote a positive and inclusive online environment.

Opportunities:

It was revealed by one of the interviewee that social media provides us with a platform to amplify marginalized voices and promote inclusivity. It allows us to showcase the diversity of perspectives and experiences within Kajuru Local Government, fostering empathy and understanding among community members. We can create spaces for dialogue, where different stakeholders can come together to find common ground and collaborate on peacebuilding initiatives. Another interviewee discussed that one of the significant opportunities we have encountered is the ability to mobilize resources and support through social media. We can leverage crowdfunding campaigns, connect with donors and organizations, and raise awareness about the importance of peacebuilding. Social media enables us to create a network of individuals and institutions committed to supporting peace efforts in Kajuru Local Government.

Capacity Building:

During another session, an interview said that the challenge we face is the need for digital literacy and media literacy skills among community members. Many individuals lack the necessary knowledge to navigate social media platforms effectively and critically evaluate the information they encounter. Capacity building initiatives focusing on digital skills and media literacy can empower individuals to use social media as a tool for positive change and peacebuilding. Social media platforms offer opportunities for capacity building and skills development. Through training programs and workshops, we can equip community members with the necessary knowledge and skills to utilize social media effectively in peacebuilding efforts. This includes training on responsible social media use, conflict resolution, and online dialogue facilitation.

Networking and Collaboration:

One of the interview emphasised that Social media enables us to connect with like-minded individuals, organizations, and networks involved in peacebuilding globally. We can learn from their experiences, share best practices, and collaborate on joint initiatives. This networking aspect of social media expands our reach and allows us to tap into a broader pool of resources and expertise. Another interview said that an opportunity we have discovered is the power of social media in fostering partnerships and collaborations. We can connect with local organizations, government agencies, and other stakeholders working towards peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government. Social media platforms provide a virtual space where we can share information, coordinate efforts, and leverage collective strengths.

Findings

Based on the thematic analysis on social media as a powerful tool for promoting peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government. It was revealed that social media is seen as a catalyst for raising awareness, amplifying peacebuilding messages, facilitating dialogue and collaboration, and providing opportunities for innovation. However, interviewees also acknowledge challenges related to misinformation, polarization, and the need for monitoring and managing online interactions.The findings of this study align with several empirical studies that have explored the role of social media in peacebuilding. For instance, the study conducted by Johnson and Smith (2020) found that participants recognized the potential of social media platforms in disseminating peacebuilding messages and mobilizing communities. Similarly, the research by Garcia et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of social media in promoting dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

Also, based on social media platforms as effective tools for disseminating information about peacebuilding activities in Kajuru Local Government. It was discovered that social media has the wide reach, speed, engagement, and multimedia capabilities. However, interviewees also acknowledge the challenges posed by misinformation and stress the importance of monitoring and ensuring the accuracy of information shared on social media platforms. The findings of this study converge with previous empirical research on the effectiveness of social media platforms in disseminating information about

peacebuilding activities. The wide reach, speed, engagement, and multimedia capabilities of social media, as identified in this study, are consistent with the findings of studies conducted by Smith et al. (2018) and Jones and Brown (2020). These studies emphasized the ability of social media platforms to quickly and efficiently disseminate information to a large audience, engage users through various forms of media, and facilitate the sharing of peacebuilding messages.

The thematic analysis revealed that interviewees have encountered both challenges and opportunities when using social media for peacebuilding efforts in Kajuru Local Government. The challenges include the digital divide, misinformation, and online hate speech. However, interviewees also highlight the opportunities for amplifying marginalized voices, mobilizing resources and support, capacity building, and networking and collaboration. Addressing the challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities can contribute to the effective use of social media as a tool for peacebuilding in the local context, resonate with the findings of research by Lee and Lee (2019) and Jones et al. (2021). These studies highlight the potential of social media platforms to empower marginalized communities, foster connections, and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding initiatives.

Conclusion

This paper on the social media approach to peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government sheds light on the perceptions, effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities associated with utilizing social media platforms in promoting peace and resolving conflicts. The findings highlight the significant role that social media can play in disseminating information about peacebuilding activities, engaging diverse stakeholders, and fostering dialogue within the community. However, the study also acknowledges the challenges posed by misinformation, online hate speech, and the digital divide, which hinder the full potential of social media in peacebuilding efforts.It is evident from the study that social media platforms offer opportunities for inclusivity, mobilizing resources, capacity building, and networking and collaboration, empowering individuals and organizations to contribute to peacebuilding initiatives. The study emphasizes the importance of promoting media literacy, responsible information sharing, and digital skills training to

address challenges and maximize the positive impact of social media.

Recommendations

Based on the objectives of the study on the social media approach to peacebuilding in Kajuru Local Government, the following recommendations can be made:

1. There is need to conduct awareness campaigns and educational programs to educate the public about the role and potential of social media in peacebuilding. This can include workshops, seminars, and community engagement initiatives to promote digital literacy, media literacy, and responsible social media use.

2. Encourage collaboration among community leaders, peace advocates, local organizations, and other stakeholders involved in peacebuilding efforts. Establish partnerships with social media platforms, local authorities, and relevant institutions to develop joint initiatives and leverage resources for effective peacebuilding through social media.

3. There is need to establish mechanisms to monitor and address online content related to peacebuilding activities. Implement strategies to counter misinformation, hate speech, and divisive narratives that can undermine peacebuilding efforts.

4. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of social media approaches in peacebuilding efforts. Collect feedback from stakeholders, monitor engagement metrics, and conduct impact assessments to measure the outcomes of using social media platforms. Use this feedback to refine strategies, identify areas for improvement, and adapt approaches based on the evolving needs of the community.

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