SOCIAL MEDIA AND WOMEN MOBILIZATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The study explored the potential of social media for women's mobilization to attain community development. Social media has become a powerful platform that informs and educates users. Community development is the advancement and progress of a particular community. Women play a vital role in community development. The study seeks to know the effects of social media in mobilizing women as well as examining how social media can help in women's empowerment for community development. For the purpose of this study, the Diffusion of Innovation theory was employed to further expatiate the impact of social media on community development. Conclusively, it can be seen as though social media is essential in mobilizing women for community development. Social media plays a vital role in enhancing community development. However, the government should support programs that empower women. It is recommended that Development Agencies and the State Ministry of Women Affairs should increase advocacy visits to women in the communities.

Keywords: Social Media, Women Empowerment, Community Development.

Introduction

The advancement of our country is significantly influenced by social media. Social media's primary purposes are education, entertainment, information dissemination, and enlightenment. Social media acts as a conduit, enabling people to view both their own and other people's associations while facilitating connections between people (Bruns, 2012). Social media facilitates this interaction between individuals from various spheres of life, including cultures, religions, and ethnicities. The well-known social media landscape is home to several platforms, as Nwabueze (2014) noted, including Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Google+. MySpace, Pinterest, Tumblr, Foursquare, and WeChat are added to

this list by Dauda et al. (2017) since each of them has sizable Nigerian user bases. It is undeniable that social media has permeated every aspect of life and now stands as an indispensable communication tool (Obar 2015), scholars across domains frequently engage with social media (SoMe), with Twitter being a notable platform, in their professional endeavors (Ross, Terras 2011), and other platforms like palmchat, Imo, 2go, and Meetme are also used in Nigeria, albeit not as prolifically as the aforementioned ones, as highlighted by Targema (2020).

Understanding social media's ability to improve community development is essential as it gets more interwoven in our lives. Community development encompasses a community's identity, values, and beliefs and represents its growth, transformation, and maturation. In essence, community development involves people who live in a particular area or are connected by common interests and are primarily motivated by development goals (Ohaeghuchi, 2014). For instance, social development encourages a positive outlook, political development entails active community involvement, and economic community development encourages trade and employment. In order to solve pollution and neglected areas, another aspect called environmental community development aims to improve housing conditions, recreational amenities, and municipal services (Bawa et al., 2010). Women are regarded as contributors to national and human development, therefore the participation of women's voluntary organisations gains relevance in this framework (Effah, 2017).

A key element in ensuring people's wellbeing is community development. This emphasizes how important it is to recognize women's potential contributions through social media. Women's active participation is essential for advancing community development. However, women have a unique and important role in society. Women are encouraged to perform multiple roles, including motherhood, effective home management, meeting their husbands' emotional and physical needs, caring for infants, and most importantly, providing complementary support to men's roles, which are frequently designated as the caretakers of households (Hibert, 2014). The proverb "educate a woman, educate a nation" and the saying "behind every successful man is a woman" highlight the important responsibilities that women play in societal advancement.

Olajide (2016) contends that community development programs must actively incorporate women and the community in order to succeed. Development does not happen by accident. Social media, a

forum for knowledge and education, is essential for empowering women. According to Cogen and Sharpe (2016), women's mobilization is still an essential part of community development since it gives people the chance to participate in democratic processes and influence decisions. Women's actions and positions were frequently governed by historical cultural biases.

A powerful channel for spreading awareness of women's rights to a wider audience is social media. It has been noted as a potential tool for enabling women to take advantage of community initiatives. Social media encourages and empowers women to take action by bringing attention to women's issues, giving voice to their opinions, and raising awareness of them. However, because of the abundance of alternative information on social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, including gossip and fashion blogs, not all women are equally knowledgeable about community development content. As a result, some women receive less information on community development. Additionally, because many social media groups promote content other than community development subjects, some women find it difficult to mobilize for community development using social media efficiently. Leveraging is required to combat this circumstance.

This study intends to educate women on the value of community development and practical strategies to use social media for encouraging development, realizing its potential to empower women.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following specific objectives:

1. Determine the role of social media in community development.

2. Understand the reason for social media use amongst women.

3. Examine how social media can aid towards mobilizing women for community development.

Conceptual Framework

Community Development

The difficulty in defining the term "development" stems from the fact that, despite having different connotations, it is frequently associated with economic expansion. Adekola (2016) asserts that due to its broad scope, community development defies clear definition. Conceptually, it can be described as "planned and organized efforts by community individuals, utilizing their skills and initiatives, to address their perceived needs through voluntary

democratic involvement in solving specific community challenges, prioritized accordingly" (Bensman, 2016). A thorough description of community development provided by the UN describes it as a process whereby people of the community work together to address common problems and create solutions. Its overarching objective is to advance social justice, equality, sustainable progress, and participatory democracy (International Association of Community Development, 2016). Eleberi et al. (2014) underline community development's role in anticipating community enhancement and advancement to address developmental concerns.

A community's development involves a number of factors, including advancements in the agricultural, economic, and socio-economic spheres, among others. It's critical to recognize that these development factors work together to propel economic change, expansion, and success within a community. Central to community development is facilitating efficient communal functioning. Diverse interest groups, stakeholders, and participants must actively participate in community development procedures and practices. This comprises community members aiming to better their standard of living, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, financial agencies, project experts, and implementers (Akande, 2010; Nseabasi, 2012).

Community development is defined as a collaborative process that combines individual efforts with governmental measures to improve the economic, social, and cultural aspects of communities in a 2012 United Nations report (Ad-hoc Group of Experts' Report). Through this alignment, communities are to be woven into the fabric of the country and given the tools to make meaningful contributions to its development. Notably, careful planning, mobilization, participation, and resource allocation are required for sustainable development. Setting priorities for identified needs is crucial. Community development, according to Batten (2018), is any initiative performed by community members to improve their quality of life.

However, the following aspects are included in the fundamental characteristics of community development:

1. An initiative by community members to find solutions to problems facing the whole group.

2. Make an effort to use internal resources as efficiently as possible.

3. If it is deemed necessary, taking into account outside assistance to bolster local efforts.

Social Media

Social media includes the use of technical tools for information sharing and discussion. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are just a few of the well-known social media sites. On the other hand, social networking refers to the activity of forging connections among individuals within a communal setting among groups of people who have common interests (Stelzner, 2009; Hartshorn, 2010). The emergence of social media has fundamentally changed how information is shared throughout the world and changed the relationship between citizens and governments (Shirky, 2011). Beyond serving as a medium for social networking, social media enables users to share content and opinions with others throughout the world, bypassing traditional media and other established channels for the dissemination of information (European Parliament, 2023).

A large online audience can now watch activists live-stream events thanks to well-known websites like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook (Pew Research Centre, 2012). Social media is a platform for sending and receiving data and is widely recognized as the best channel for information exchange.

The definition of social media given by Shaw (2016) is "the digital means of interaction among individuals, wherein they generate and exchange information, concepts, and viewpoints within virtual communities and networks" (p. 2). People who depend on the media for news and information are catered to by social media (Obono, 2016). It involves the sharing and creation of ideas in a network that includes photos, videos, texts, rumors, and more. Social media encourages user contact with one another. The five crucial characteristics of social media, according to Obono (2016), are participation, openness, dialogue, community, and connectedness. More specifically, he divides social media into a number of genres, including collaborative projects (Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (Twitter), content communities (YouTube), social networking sites (Facebook), virtual gaming worlds (World of Warcraft), and virtual social domains (Soundlife).

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Everett Rogers developed the Diffusion of Innovation Theory in 1962, which is one of the earliest social science theories attempting to explain the spread, rate, and causes of the adoption of novel

concepts and technology. Diffusion, according to Rogers, is the process by which invention spreads among individuals in a social context. The result is that individuals within the system adopt a novel concept, style of conduct, or item, which demands their perception of novelty.

The integration of technology in educational settings, especially higher education, is particularly well-suited for investigation using Rogers' theory (Medlin, 2001; Parisot, 1995). Technology, according to Rogers, is "a blueprint for practical action that reduces uncertainty concerning cause-and-effect associations in achieving desired outcomes" (p. 13). Rogers frequently uses the terms "technology" and "innovation" interchangeably. According to Rogers, a novel idea's dissemination is shaped by four key factors: the invention itself, communication pathways, time, and the social structure.

The goal of innovation diffusion study is to identify the factors that influence how users adopt new informational channels, such as the internet. In his 2003 book Innovation, Rogers emphasizes that "an innovation is a concept, practice, or object perceived as novel by an individual or another unit of adoption" (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). Communication channels serve as a mechanism for people to exchange information and create understanding among themselves (Rogers, 2003). According to this model, the message is created at the source and is transmitted from there to the recipient through the channel. The temporal component of diffusion research, according to Rogers, is a noteworthy strength. A temporal component is inevitably involved in the transmission of innovations, adoption rates, and categories of adopters. The idea of a social system is relevant to interconnected entities collaborating in collective problem-solving toward a shared objective (Rogers, 2003).

The five separate steps of the decision-making process for adopting an invention, according to Rogers (2003), are knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. In order to find out the "what," "how," and "why" of the innovation, people gather knowledge at the knowledge stage. The creation of a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation occurs at the persuasive stage. An individual's mindset changes after they are informed about the invention. According to Rogers, the knowledge stage is cognitive in nature, while the persuasive stage is affective.

Individuals decide whether to adopt or reject the invention during the decision stage. Rejection indicates a conscious choice not to embrace the innovation, whereas adoption shows the full

exploitation of the innovation as the best course of action. Rogers distinguishes between two sorts of rejection: active rejection, in which a person initially considers adoption but ultimately decides against it, and passive rejection, in which a person chooses not to even try adoption. The implementation stage is when the innovation is put into practice. Given the novelty of an innovation, a level of uncertainty accompanies its diffusion. The confirmation stage involves seeking reinforcement for the chosen decision. This stage is characterized by exposure to conflicting messages regarding the innovation (p. 189).

The following five characteristics of innovations are also listed by Rogers: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The innovation's relative advantage is a measure of how much better it is than the concept it replaces. The degree to which an invention is compatible with the needs, values, and experiences of potential adopters is measured. Trialability relates to the ability to test an invention before committing to its adoption, whereas complexity refers to how easy it is to understand the idea.

Rogers also identified the following five qualities of innovations: relative benefit, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The relative advantage of the innovation indicates how much superior it is than the idea it replaces. It is determined to what extent an invention is compatible with the requirements, principles, and experiences of potential users. Trialability refers to the ability to evaluate an invention before deciding whether to use it, whereas complexity refers to how simple the concept is to comprehend.

Despite its advantages, the theory has some drawbacks. It ignores a person's capacity for learning new habits and is more effective for behavior adoption than prevention. It wasn't intended to apply to the acceptance of health innovation, either.

The diffusion of innovations theory is helpful in this study because it demonstrates the role that social media, a new technology, plays in spreading knowledge and inspiring women to get involved in community development. Particularly among women who are socially constrained by culture, social media adoption is not at the same level. As opposed to older women who must learn to use new media, the younger generation tends to absorb new technologies more quickly. The hypothesis only explains how quickly technologies spread. This demonstrates how social media has evolved into a crucial instrument for the empowerment of women.

The Role of Social Media on Community Development

Global identity is significantly shaped by social media, which acts as a platform for the dissemination of slogans, names, and trends in transformational activism as well as collective movements that have been crucial in some societal upheavals (Gerbaudo and Trere, 2015). This is clear from campaigns like #Stayhome (2020), started by Greta Thunberg after the original Covid-19 lockout and intended to increase public awareness of the condition on the planet. Through movements like "Bring Back Our Girls" (2014), "Me Too" (2017), and "Black Lives Matter" (2020), social media mobilizes people to fight for justice and human rights by drawing attention to transgressions.

Social media use has grown over time, and users now spend a lot of time on these sites. Social media websites account for 20% or so of people's online engagement (Timimi, 2012). Social networking is one aspect of social media's attraction, but it also promotes interpersonal communication. Facebook has distinguished itself among these platforms as a massive international network. Facebook is the oldest and most popular social networking platform, with over 200 million users in less than a year. However, it's interesting to note that despite Facebook users having a sizable number of followers and friends in their network, finding these connections in their local area or neighborhood can frequently be difficult.

Companies like "Keep Britain Tidy" are good examples of how social media, especially websites like Facebook and Twitter, can be used to foster community growth. These platforms have been crucial in promoting engagement and inspiring group actions for societal improvement.

Sonia (2017) came to the conclusion that a sizeable percentage of respondents displayed significant empowerment, with 85% having the final say in matters relating to their healthcare and 90% making decisions related to hiring household help. Her study, "A Study on the Role of Media in Women Empowerment in India," was published in 2017. These numbers show that women have a substantial degree of empowerment. According to Anderson's (2007) theory, the World Wide Web's evolution culminated in its shift into a more interactive phase known as social media. Information consumers must undergo this metamorphosis in order to become information creators, organizers, and sharers. As a result, social media has grown into a comprehensive platform that can disseminate a variety of information.

Once perceived primarily as platforms for leisure, social media technologies like blogs and Twitter have undergone a transformative evolution, adapting to become interactive tools for engaging with learners (Jones, 2015). In line with Menkhoff et al. (2014), Twitter has emerged as a potent educational tool, offering students various benefits including the empowerment of their voices, thereby cultivating deeper engagement and unfettered interaction with peers and instructors. This unfurling of knowledge-sharing and discourse encourages active participation and dialogue among students.

The significance of student feedback cannot be overstated, as it serves as a valuable yardstick for instructors to assess the clarity and efficacy of the course material presented. By establishing this iterative feedback loop, educators can promptly pinpoint areas of misunderstanding and promptly address them, as noted by Menkhoff et al. (2014). This underscores the indispensable role that social media platforms, such as Twitter, play in fostering heightened engagement and the establishment of effective feedback mechanisms within the educational milieu

Social Media Usage by Women

Narayana and Ahmad (2016) brought attention to the considerable potential of media in empowering women; however, women's utilization of media remains limited. They emphasized the need to bolster the influential and positive role that media can play in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. Their findings illuminated how media can magnify women's involvement, enabling them to express themselves and partake in decision-making.

Smith and Anderson (2018) conducted a study delving into the social media behaviors of adults in the United States. Their research uncovered the supremacy of Facebook and YouTube in the American social media landscape. The study disclosed that approximately three-quarters of users interacted with Facebook on a daily basis. The researchers noted the paradoxical attitudes that individuals have developed towards social media and advocated for fostering awareness among adults regarding responsible usage to counter potential adverse effects.

Odine (2013) examined the role of social media in disseminating empowering messages to women during the Arab Spring. The study

documented a substantial increase in women's engagement with social media in 2011 and emphasized its pivotal contribution to mobilizing women's participation in the movement.

Velmurugan (2015) observed the escalating involvement of women in transmitting messages through the internet, indicative of an evolving trend. Social media also serves as a platform for women to enhance their skills, acquire knowledge, and access information technology. However, Schuster (2013) contends that while social media offer various avenues for feminist engagement, specific groups such as older or differently abled women might face exclusion from participation.

The multifaceted contributions of women to economic development are gaining prominence, underscoring their central roles. The empowerment of women profoundly influences the social dynamics of families and communities. Across many regions, including Africa, women's responsibilities encompass aspects like production, reproduction, and communal activities, making them integral to the comprehensive advancement of society. Given that the economic sphere often serves as a catalyst for other developmental factors, the importance of empowering women in these realms is further magnified.

Social Media and Women Mobilization for Community Development

Social media helps women connect with others online and be part of groups that work together to improve their communities. They share their ideas and goals to make their communities better. Social media also lets them spread the word about important issues. It's like a tool that helps women work together for their community's progress.

Kumari (2020) talks about how social media is important for discussing women's rights. It helps raise awareness and supports women coming together to make a change. Hashtag activism, which is like using special words with hashtags to talk about issues, also gets people to pay attention to women's problems and rights. Women are very active on social media, using it to talk about their own experiences. Akhtar and Naheed (2014) found that women who use social media are more aware of their roles in society. This is a good way to spread the word about women's empowerment. Asif (2013) says that when women are empowered, it also helps their communities develop, and social media gives them a way to share things online.

Subhash (2015) looked at how different types of media, including social media, have helped empower women. Khan and Moin (2013) suggest that when women have the internet at home, they use it for many things. They often talk about issues related to their rights and show a lot of interest in those topics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, social media plays a significant part in promoting community development. Its networking and usage skills support the principles of community building. This instrument has the power to support fundamental societal ideals and promote women's empowerment. Women use social media to spread information and increase awareness, effectively aiding in the growth of their communities. Utilizing social media for community development has gone from being a choice to an absolute need in modern-day Nigeria. The participation of women is essential for the socioeconomic development of communities.

The results confirm that social media is a powerful tool for empowering women. Government backing for initiatives that give women more power is therefore essential. The empowerment of women has the potential to spur societal and economic development. To strengthen advocacy actions, it is advised that social media campaigns and regional women's movements work together. The Ministry of Women Affairs should also teach women in the use of digital technology for media and communication. To encourage women's engagement in Community and Social Development Projects (CSDP), the advice extends to Development Agencies and State Ministries of Women Affairs boosting advocacy and sensitization visits to women in communities. This coordinated strategy has the potential to revitalize community development initiatives.

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