Chapter 6
Utilisation of Social Media for Child Abuse Prevention in Nigeria

Desmond Onyemechi Okocha
iD https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5070-280X
Bingham University, Nigeria

Sienne Ozioma Okpor
Bingham University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of social media on child abuse prevention in Nigeria. The objectives were to discover the level of cognizance social media has created on the issue of child abuse, child abuse prevention, and if social media is really a tool in preventing child abuse in Nigeria. The study was anchored on technology determinism theory. Using the purposive sampling technique, 30 discussants were selected for focus group discussion on the subject matter. The study found that social media alone is not effective enough in preventing child abuse in Nigeria. Research findings further revealed that although the information given about child abuse on social media platforms are believable and acceptable, there has been no significant influence of social media on child abuse prevention in Nigeria. To this end, the researcher recommended that there should be public enlightenment programs that reach the grassroots to create public awareness on child abuse prevention, its effects on children, and the legal consequences.

INTRODUCTION

Globally it is estimated that up to 1 billion children, ages 2-17 years old, have experienced different forms of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse over the last year (Hillis, Mercy, Amobi, and Kress, 2016). In 1979, the United Nations declared the year as the 'international year of the child' and went ahead to develop a list of children's rights. Among the rights as articulated by the United Nations are that every

child is entitled to the rights to be loved and understood, to be provided with adequate food and healthcare, free education, play, and an identity, however many people are not aware or rather nothing is done to offenders that is why child abuse is still very rampant in most countries of the world including Nigeria.

In Nigeria today, many children are being used to beg for alms, exposing them to harmful and inhuman circumstances at incredibly early ages. The Child Right Acts of 2003 was made to end the menace but sadly, it has not been effectively enforced by our legal system. The lapses are clearly observable by the number of children that are seen on the streets hawking items and being exposed to dangers of all kinds and to assume that they are responsible for themselves at that tender and vulnerable age calls for serious concerns. With the number of children on the streets begging or hawking instead of going to school, one still wonders if these children are the ones, we call leaders of tomorrow. It is obvious that Parents/guardians and relatives of these children most times are not aware of the legal implications of their actions, Section 30 (3) of the Child's Right Act provides that a person who contradicts the provisions of Subsection (1) of this section commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of ten years. Parents/guardians of such children have disrespected the law and yet the legal system has failed to enforce the required punishment to end this menace.

The effects of child abuse may include increased fear, guilt, self-blame, distrust of adults or difficulty in forming relationships with others, mental health disorders, learning disorders, drug, and alcohol abuse, etc. Despite the attention and the interest, it has won from the media, the hassle nonetheless has remained a largely forgotten area wherein proper steps that may be taken to fight it hasn't been agreed upon (Carballo, 1995).

Anuoluwapo (2018) expressed that the world of Information and Communication Technology is yet to experience something more phenomenal than social media. She added that social media has indeed become a trend in media study such that many researchers have turned towards researching and assessing its influence and impact on society. This is so as several decades saw the dominance of the traditional media in society especially in exercising the responsibility of information, education, and entertainment. But with the turn of events in the new century, the evolution of technology and the ubiquitous power of the information and communication technology (ICT) has converged the world so much so that Marshall McLuhan's global village philosophy is no longer a mere expression but a startling reality. (Ikpe & Olise, 2010) have observed that "social media are new communication technologies which are used as means of information dissemination to diverse audiences without time crunch, space or distance". With social media, one can easily send or receive information to or from anyone and at any time regardless of geographical location.

In recent times there has been lots of social media campaigns directed towards child abuse, these campaigns are to increase the public knowledge of child's rights and child's abuse, to influence people's attitudes towards children positively, and to change behaviors that contribute to the problems of child abuse in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Child abuse has become one of the social epidemics disturbing the global society in Nigeria. UNICEF reported in 2015 that six out of ten children in Nigeria have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse before the age of eighteen with half experiencing physical violence. Despite all of the provisions of extant legal guidelines, many Nigerian children are still subjected to various forms of child abuse

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