

## **Promoting Human Rights through Information Technology: The Role of Social Networking Sites**

**<sup>1</sup>Ugwu Jovita Nnenna, <sup>2</sup>Ugwuozor Samuel Ifeanyi and <sup>3</sup>Eze Chidinma Esther**

**<sup>1</sup>Department of Publication and Extension, Kampala International University Uganda.**

**<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science and International Relations Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu, Emene, Enugu, Nigeria.**

**<sup>3</sup>Department of Educational Foundation, Kampala International University, Uganda.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Human rights are fundamental rights for all individuals, regardless of their status. These rights include life, liberty, freedom from slavery, freedom of opinion, work, and education. Social media plays a crucial role in promoting these rights by exposing and naming violators. Media freedom is often restricted in many countries, making it difficult for reporters to report. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter help channel the democratic movement for freedom of speech and human rights. Publicizing human rights violations has elicited reactions and positive changes, highlighting the importance of human rights and the need for equal opportunities for all. Traditional media faces legal obstacles that hinder its ability to address human rights violations by the incumbent government. Social media can exploit these limitations to highlight human rights issues, making it crucial for social media to serve as a platform for education and freedom of speech on political and human rights.

**Keywords:** Social Networking, Human Rights, Information Technology, Media, Internet

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Human rights are rights that all people have, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or other status. Human rights include, among other things, the right to life and liberty, the freedom from slavery and torture, the freedom of thought and speech, the right to labor and education, and many others [1]. Everyone, without exception, is entitled to these rights. The rights involve participation in the establishment or administration of a government and are typically regarded to entitle the adult citizen to vote, hold public office, and engage in other political activities. Social media has a significant impact on the evolution of human and political rights [2]. The phrase "social media" refers to websites and programs that emphasize communication, community-based input, engagement, content sharing, and collaboration. Citizens are informed about their social and political rights through social media. Social media gives a venue for people to speak out against violations of their human and political rights. Social media is critical in exposing, naming, and shaming human rights offenders in order to effect change [3]. Many governments have severely restricted media freedom, making it dangerous for reporters to do their jobs. As a result, social media raises knowledge about the concept and significance of human rights. Social media should play an ethical role at all levels and throughout the country and the world [4]. Human rights initiatives can also benefit from the use of social media. Many individuals are aware of their political and human rights thanks to social media. Social media also aids in the defense or protection of human rights. The

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fourth pillar of democracy is social media. Despite its late arrival, it altered the world order [5]. Social media serves as a motivator for people to fight for injustice. People can use social media to speak out against injustice. Social media encourages social activism in persons who might otherwise be apolitical. Many social media sites encourage users to participate in political events to combat injustice in society [6, 7]. Social media is free of all restraints and allows people to express themselves freely. The purpose of this article is to assess the role of social media in the promotion of human rights.

### **Social media**

Social media can be characterized as internet-based services that allow a person to engage with the general public, comprehend what others are doing and thinking, and their connections [8]. A social networking service, which is closely related to social media, is concerned with the sharing of information and multimedia material amongst users on similar platforms via electronic networks, particularly the internet and cyberspace. Today, various social media sites are in use in Nigeria [10].

### **Facebook**

Facebook is one of the most widely utilized social media platforms among both young and old people. It is a social media platform that offers a variety of services such as social networking, online advertising, phone calls, instant messaging, video calls, video sharing and viewing, an online market place, virtual gifts, and notes [10]. Since 2006, anyone above the age of 13 has been eligible to register for the website, while the age limit may be higher based on applicable local legislation [10]. Users establish profiles and can add other users as friends after registering on the website. Users can network with friends and friends of friends by joining mutual interest groups.

### **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp is a cross-platform internet-based instant messaging service that allows iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone, and Nokia smart phone users to send free text, image, video, and audio messages. WhatsApp is very popular among end users who do not have limitless text messaging [10]. WhatsApp offers group chat and location sharing features in addition to simple texting. The application is based on a subscription basis. Upon installation, it generates a user account with the user's phone number as the username. All phone numbers in the device's phonebook are immediately compared with the central database of WhatsApp users, and phonebook contacts who are already using the app are added to the user's WhatsApp contact list. WhatsApp released a voice calling capability for its Android, iOS, and Windows apps in January 2015, which helped the software reach an entirely other part of the user population [11].

### **Twitter**

Jack Dorsey launched Twitter in March 2006, and it is headquartered in San Francisco. It is a social networking website that allows users to send and receive short character messages known as tweets. Twitter operates on the basis of followers, who are also people who choose to follow another Twitter account in order to view tweets sent by that user [12]. Unregistered users can read tweets, but only registered users can send tweets. Tweets are displayed by default, however users can limit message delivery to followers. These tweets can be re-tweeted by people who forward them via Twitter, and they can be watched to find out which ones are popular and trending. Users can update their profiles by text messages or smart phone apps [10]. Twitter has been used for a variety of purposes since its inception, including serving as a quick communication tool for political protesters, as seen in the 2011 Egyptian protests, as a means of rapidly disseminating information, as used by the Boston Police to announce the arrest of the Boston Marathon Bomber, and celebrities sharing news with their fans, among many others. 2015 [13].

### **Youtube**

Another famous social networking tool is YouTube. It is a video sharing website that allows users to watch other people's videos and contribute their own. With the widespread usage of smartphones, this platform has emerged as the top choice for personal broadcasting and video sharing. Members and website visitors can share YouTube videos via a link or by embedding HTML code [10].

### **Flickr**

Flickr is an image and video hosting website and online services suite founded in 2004 by Ludicorp and acquired by Yahoo in 2005. In addition to being a popular website for users to upload and embed personal photographs, the service is widely utilized by photo academics and bloggers to host images that they embed in blogs and social media [13].

### **Google+**

Google+, which debuted in June 2011, is an interest-based social network owned and maintained by Google Inc. It is a platform that brings all of Google together for users to experience. Google's initiatives in social networking are numerous, and while none have achieved the global popularity that its search, video, and email services have,

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Google's most recent efforts in this field have advanced the status of the industry in some novel ways. Google+ saw rapid growth in its early years, yet usage estimates have varied and user engagement has remained poor [15].

### **Myspace**

In 2002, Chris DeWolfe and Tom Anderson launched Myspace, which is headquartered in Beverly Hills, California. It is a social networking website that provides an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photographs, music, and videos. It was the largest social media site until 2008, when it was surpassed by Facebook. Its influence on pop culture and music was ubiquitous, and it is credited with the establishment of unique URLs for businesses and artists [16]. The inability to construct an efficient spam filter, which led to vandalism, phishing, malware, and spam, was a major factor that contributed to Myspace's decline in popularity. Myspace was relaunched in 2013 and includes services such as bulletin boards, instant messaging, and access to radio stations [10].

### **Social Networking Sites and Human Rights**

In India's 2013-14 revolution, social networking and its use for social and political activity may be seen. The activist and leader effectively used social networking and digital platforms to channel their strength and voice in opposition to their freedom of expression and political activities [17]. New initiatives, such as the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Partnership and the Ethics and Governance of AI Fund, have been launched, and several publications have been released on how to include ethics, justice, and human rights into machine learning and algorithmic decision making. Digital innovations have exposed individuals' human rights to the risk of being critically humiliated, resulting in the emergence of a new need to explore new ways to safeguard human dignity by either creating new rights or determining a shift in perspective in the interpretation of traditional rights and their major issues. Interception of information and Modification of information are two problems that might arise from the security of information transfer when working in computer networks [18]. Wael Ghonim, a Google executive, started the Egyptian Youth Revolution in 2011 by creating a Facebook page with approximately 400,000 followers. Wael Ghonim is a computer engineer, a social entrepreneur, and an Internet activist. He believes that if we can bring civility and intellectual debates to the Internet, it can become the most dominant platform for linking humanity. The internet provides platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for channeling the democratic movement for free expression and human rights. During Kenya's 2010 Constitutional Referendum, people were able to use SMS to alert authorities about voting irregularities and concerns, such as threats, vote purchase, and violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a voice-based communication system known as 'Freedom Fone' provided women with access to pre-recorded information on sexual assaults, such as their legal rights and health, as well as the ability to request a call back. A coalition of organizations was able to enforce the rule requiring the government to devote 4% of its GDP to education by creating a website with links to social media networks that allowed users to write comments and demonstrate support. Some instances are the Green Movement in Iran and the Arab Spring. A similar example can be seen in Libya [19]. According to the Washington Post (blog), Qadhafi's regime used a variety of tactics to suppress free expression online, including maintaining monopoly control over internet infrastructure, blocking websites, engaging in observation, and punishing online critics. 16 As the insurrection against Qadhafi's leadership gathered traction in February 2011, such restrictions became more severe, resulting in an internet blackout until Tripoli was liberated in August 2011. Twitter: During important events, Twitter is being used in various unique ways, such as breaking news during the American military operation that killed Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden [20]. Twitter is still an important instrument for real-time communications all around the world. The Commission might use Twitter to foster positive public opinion, and content with positive comments and high traffic could be re-tweeted to gain widespread awareness and popularity. A series of webinars, chaired by a top expert in the field of human rights, might be recorded live and uploaded on YouTube. An specialist in this field could be a previous Commissioner, a top academic, or any other prominent figure. Depending on the circumstances, the webinar could cover a wide range of topics.

### **Promoting Human Rights Using Information Technology**

Human rights promotion efforts include knowledge collecting and dissemination through workshops, seminars, and symposia, as well as the formulation of principles to address legal concerns of human rights and collaboration with international human rights agencies. It also comprises the collection and dissemination of documents and information, as well as the establishment of a global network of partner institutions [21]. Promotional efforts can take a variety of forms and can be carried out using various social media technologies, which can be coordinated at all levels by the Commission on its own or in collaboration with partners such as governments, government agencies, or civil society organizations. These techniques can be used to target people from various walks of life. Other promotional tasks include information translation, publication, and dissemination, promotion through the development and dissemination of Commission activities and other information resources, and promotion through

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research and education. Because of the volume of the assignment, as well as a lack of time and money, many of these operations have had little impact. The tenacity in promoting human rights is founded on the concept that if people are unaware of their rights, they cannot safeguard them. Any than the dictator, there is no evidence of any actors being involved in digital threats to citizens. It also suffers from a type of circular reasoning: having previously characterized authoritarian regimes as states that fail to hold free and fair elections, political actors beyond those nations are now included. This definition of the topic excludes authoritarian practices that occur outside of authoritarian regimes [22]. People who were previously merely passive consumers of information now have a say because of ICT tools such as personal websites, blogs, and discussion forums. The bottom line is to raise an alarm and discourage attempts by various national governments to muzzle the people's voice through ICTs, as well as arbitrary actions that resort to blocking ICT outlets whenever people seek to exercise their offline and online rights. As [23] points out, "the Internet and the world wide web has reached the point where nobody can afford to ignore it, at their own peril." A globalized society must employ ICT to uncover the latent potential to improve people's living standards as one of the primary forces affecting economic growth. [24] emphasizes how ICT can readily guide in numerous technological advancements while also causing calamities if not managed quickly. ICTs have been found to strengthen people's voices, particularly those of the underprivileged in society, and to provide a voice that allows the poor and those with disabilities to use their knowledge to avoid poverty. The usage of ICTs and the Internet can aid in the promotion of human rights. Human rights education, training, and public information have been identified as essential components for promoting human rights and achieving stable and harmonious community relations. Although ICTs are not the ultimate solution in and of themselves, their successful use enables people to become self-sufficient in satisfying their basic needs in everyday life and to attain their full potential. If the main concerns of democracy and good governance are not addressed, examining the links between ICTs and human rights is of limited benefit. One can aid in the spread of the other, and both must be contextualized as byproducts of the same system. The main impact of ICTs on democratic systems is the ability to strengthen the public sphere by increasing information resources, electronic communication channels, and networking capacity for interest groups, social movements, NGOs, transnational policy networks, and political parties with the technical know-how and organizational flexibility to adapt to the new medium [25, 26, 27, 28, 29].

#### CONCLUSION

Social media has the potential to provide more open reporting on human rights issues in a country, a shift from traditional media that relies on legal obstacles to highlight violations and encourage positive change. This lack of regulation allows social media to exploit the lack of regulations to highlight human rights issues, making it crucial for human and political rights. Social media has helped change numerous human rights and promote ideas related to these rights, making it an essential tool for promoting human and political rights. Social media should serve as a continuous platform for education on political and human rights, promoting freedom of speech and expression on these rights-related matters.

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