AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING HUMAN RIGHTS ON PUBLIC DISCOURSE
(A CASE STUDY OF IFELODUN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE)

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project has been read and approved as meeting part of the requirements for the award of Higher National Diploma (**HND**) in Mass Communication, in the Department of the Mass Communication, Institute of Information and Communication Technology, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin

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DEDICATION

I specially dedicate my project to Almighty Allah, the most merciful and benevolent.

And also, I am dedicating this project to my loving parents, (**Mr. & Mrs. LAWAL**) & my supportive elder sibling, (**Neemah**).

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This project is a culmination of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. I dedicate it to you, my family, for your unwavering support, guidance, and love.

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ABSTRACT

Despite its advantages, the use of social media for human rights advocacy is not without challenges. Issues such as misinformation, censorship, and the digital divide significantly impact its effectiveness. Misinformation can distort public understanding of human rights issues, leading to misinformed actions or apathy. Additionally, government attempts to regulate or suppress social media through policies or outright bans can hinder its role as a tool for advocacy. For example, during the #EndSARS protests, the Nigerian government temporarily restricted access to social media, citing national security concerns, which disrupted the momentum of the movement. Furthermore, the digital divide excludes certain demographics, particularly those in rural areas or with limited education, from fully engaging with human rights discourse on social media platforms.

In Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State, social media is gradually gaining traction as a medium for public discourse. As a semi-urban area with a blend of traditional values and modern influences, the adoption of social media reflects the changing communication patterns of its residents. While some residents actively use platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp to share opinions, access news, and engage with social issues, others remain skeptical due to factors such as technological illiteracy or lack of access to reliable internet. This dynamic creates a diverse environment where the impact of social media on human rights advocacy may vary significantly among different groups.

The study aims to explore the extent to which social media shapes public discourse on human rights within the context of Ifelodun Metropolis. It examines how residents utilize these platforms to discuss, learn about, and advocate for human rights issues. Additionally, the study investigates the challenges and opportunities associated with using social media for advocacy in a community with unique socio- cultural dynamics. By understanding the local context, this research contributes to the broader discourse on the role of social media in promoting human rights and advancing societal change.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The advent of social media has brought transformative changes to communication and information-sharing across the globe. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have evolved from mere tools for social interaction to powerful channels for information dissemination, public engagement, and advocacy. These platforms have become indispensable in addressing global issues, including human rights violations, by enabling rapid mobilization, raising awareness, and providing a voice to marginalized populations (Boyd & Ellison, 2022). The emergence of social media as a space for advocacy and dialogue underscores its significance in shaping public discourse and influencing societal norms.

Globally, social media has been at the forefront of campaigns addressing human rights concerns. Movements such as #BlackLivesMatter in the United States and #MeToo globally have demonstrated how digital platforms can unite people around common causes, bringing issues of injustice to the forefront of public consciousness (Obar & Wildman, 2023). In Africa, social media has played a critical role in exposing human rights abuses, holding governments accountable, and fostering community action. For instance, the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria gained international attention through social media, where individuals shared stories, organized protests, and demanded reforms against police brutality (Akinlabi et al., 2022). These examples highlight the growing relevance of social media in driving human rights discourse and advocacy.

In Nigeria, social media usage has risen dramatically over the past decade due to increased smartphone penetration and internet accessibility. According to Statista (2023), over 40 million Nigerians actively use social media, making it an essential tool for information exchange and civic engagement. The unique socio-political landscape of Nigeria, characterized by challenges such as corruption, gender inequality, and systemic oppression, has made social media a critical platform for amplifying voices that are often silenced in traditional media. It provides a space for individuals to critique government policies, expose violations, and demand justice, contributing to a broader culture of accountability and awareness.

Despite its advantages, the use of social media for human rights advocacy is not without challenges. Issues such as misinformation, censorship, and the digital divide significantly impact its effectiveness. Misinformation can distort public understanding of human rights issues, leading to misinformed actions or apathy (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2024). Additionally, government attempts to regulate or suppress social media through policies or outright bans can hinder its role as a tool for advocacy. For example, during the #EndSARS protests, the Nigerian government temporarily restricted access to social media, citing national security concerns, which disrupted the momentum of the movement (Akinlabi et al., 2023). Furthermore, the digital divide excludes certain demographics, particularly those in rural areas or with limited education, from fully engaging with human rights discourse on social media platforms.

In Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State, social media is gradually gaining traction as a medium for public discourse. As a semi-urban area with a blend of traditional values and modern influences, the adoption of social media reflects the changing communication patterns of its residents. While some residents actively use platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp to share opinions, access news, and engage with social issues, others remain skeptical due to factors such as technological illiteracy or lack of access to reliable internet. This dynamic creates a diverse environment where the impact of social media on human rights advocacy may vary significantly among different groups.

The study aims to explore the extent to which social media shapes public discourse on human rights within the context of Ifelodun Metropolis. It examines how residents utilize these platforms to discuss, learn about, and advocate for human rights issues. Additionally, the study investigates the challenges and opportunities associated with using social media for advocacy in a community with unique socio- cultural dynamics. By understanding the local context, this research contributes to the broader discourse on the role of social media in promoting human rights and advancing societal change.

In conclusion, the background to this study underscores the transformative role of social media in human rights advocacy globally, nationally, and locally. While it has demonstrated immense potential in amplifying marginalized voices and fostering accountability, challenges such as misinformation and access disparities persist.

Through a focused analysis of Ifelodun Metropolis, this study seeks to uncover insights that can inform strategies for leveraging social media as a tool for human rights promotion in similar contexts.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social media has revolutionized how people communicate and engage with societal issues, emerging as a powerful platform for advocacy and public discourse. With its global reach and immediacy, social media has played an instrumental role in shaping conversations around human rights. Movements like #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and Nigeria's #EndSARS illustrate how social media platforms can amplify voices, mobilize communities, and demand accountability from governments and institutions (Obar & Wildman, 2023). Despite its transformative potential, there are persistent challenges in understanding its true impact on public discourse, particularly in localized contexts such as Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State.

One major problem is the disparity between the potential and the actual impact of social media on human rights advocacy in Nigeria. While platforms like Twitter and Facebook offer opportunities to highlight human rights violations, their effectiveness often depends on accessibility, digital literacy, and engagement. A significant portion of Nigeria's population, particularly in semi-urban areas like Ifelodun Metropolis, lacks the digital literacy required to fully utilize social media for advocacy (Statista, 2023). This digital divide limits the reach and inclusivity of public discourse, leaving certain demographics unable to participate meaningfully in conversations about human rights.

Moreover, misinformation and disinformation pose significant challenges to effective public discourse on social media. The rapid spread of unverified or false information can distort the understanding of human rights issues, leading to public apathy, mistrust, or misguided activism (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2022). In some cases, misinformation undermines the credibility of genuine advocacy efforts, diverting attention from critical issues and hindering collective action. This is especially problematic in Ifelodun Metropolis, where residents may lack access to fact-checking resources or alternative information sources to verify claims made on social media.

Another critical issue is the potential for social media to be used as a tool for suppression rather than empowerment. In some cases, governments and other actors

exploit social media for surveillance, censorship, or propaganda, undermining its role in promoting transparency and accountability (Akinlabi et al., 2023). For instance, during the #EndSARS protests, the Nigerian government attempted to restrict social media use, citing concerns about national security. Such actions not only stifle public discourse but also create an atmosphere of fear that discourages individuals from engaging in online advocacy. This raises questions about the extent to which social media can truly facilitate open and free discussions about human rights in contexts like Ifelodun Metropolis.

Additionally, there is a lack of empirical research on how social media shapes public discourse on human rights in semi-urban areas like Ifelodun Metropolis. While global studies highlight the impact of social media on advocacy and awareness, these findings often fail to account for localized socio-cultural and economic factors that influence digital engagement (Boyd & Ellison, 2021). In Ifelodun Metropolis, factors such as traditional values, limited internet access, and economic disparities may significantly affect how residents use social media to discuss human rights issues. This gap in knowledge limits the ability of policymakers, human rights organizations, and community leaders to develop effective strategies for leveraging social media as a tool for advocacy.

Furthermore, while social media has the potential to translate online activism into offline action, this connection is not always realized. In many cases, discussions on social media remain confined to the digital space, failing to inspire tangible action or policy change. This raises concerns about the efficacy of social media campaigns in addressing human rights challenges in Ifelodun Metropolis. Without a clear understanding of the factors that facilitate or hinder this transition, efforts to promote human rights through social media may remain superficial and ineffective.

In conclusion, while social media presents opportunities for advancing human rights discourse, significant challenges persist, particularly in localized contexts like Ifelodun Metropolis. Issues such as digital literacy, misinformation, government interference, and the gap between online discourse and offline action hinder the effectiveness of social media as a tool for advocacy. This study seeks to address these challenges by exploring the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis, providing insights that can inform more effective use of these platforms in similar communities.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate the extent of social media usage for human rights advocacy in Ifelodun Metropolis.

2. To examine the influence of social media on public awareness and understanding of human rights issues.

3. To identify the challenges associated with using social media for human rights advocacy.

4. To explore the relationship between online discourse and offline actions related to human rights.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent is social media utilized for human rights advocacy in Ifelodun Metropolis?
2. How has social media influenced public awareness and understanding of human rights issues in Ifelodun Metropolis?
3. What challenges are associated with using social media for human rights advocacy in Ifelodun Metropolis?
4. What is the relationship between online discourse and offline actions related to human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights within a localized context. As digital platforms increasingly become central to communication and advocacy, understanding their impact is vital for policymakers, human rights organizations, and the broader community. This study provides critical insights into how social media can be harnessed to promote awareness, engage the public, and mobilize action around human rights issues, particularly in semi-urban areas like Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State.

One of the primary contributions of this study is its potential to inform human rights advocacy strategies. Social media has proven to be an effective tool for amplifying marginalized voices and raising awareness of human rights violations, as seen in global movements such as #MeToo and #EndSARS (Obar & Wildman, 2015; Akinlabi et al., 2021). By analyzing the specific ways in which residents of Ifelodun Metropolis use social media for human rights advocacy, the study provides a blueprint for local organizations to leverage these platforms more effectively. This includes identifying the most popular platforms, understanding user behaviors, and addressing barriers to digital engagement.

From a policy perspective, the study is significant in highlighting the challenges and limitations of using social media for human rights advocacy. Issues such as misinformation, the digital divide, and government censorship can hinder the effectiveness of social media in fostering meaningful public discourse (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2023). By shedding light on these challenges within the context of Ifelodun Metropolis, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers aiming to create an enabling environment for digital advocacy. For example, policies that promote internet accessibility, digital literacy, and the protection of online freedoms can enhance the potential of social media as a tool for social change.

Academically, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on the intersection of digital technology and human rights. While previous research has focused primarily on urban centers and global campaigns, this study fills a critical gap by examining the dynamics of social media use in a semi-urban Nigerian context. This localized focus enriches the understanding of how socio-cultural and economic factors influence digital engagement and advocacy, offering a more nuanced perspective on the role of social media in diverse settings (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The study also holds significance for community development. By empowering residents of Ifelodun Metropolis with knowledge about how social media can be used to advocate for their rights, it fosters a culture of active citizenship and accountability. This is particularly important in contexts where traditional media may not adequately address human rights issues, leaving social media as a critical alternative for information dissemination and engagement. Moreover, the study's findings can inspire individuals and groups within the community to initiate or support advocacy campaigns, thereby strengthening local efforts to promote human rights.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on assessing the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights within the Ifelodun Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp are central to the research, given their widespread use and influence in contemporary communication and advocacy efforts. The study examines how residents of Ifelodun Metropolis engage with human rights issues on these platforms, focusing on their levels of awareness, participation, and perception of human rights-related content.

Geographically, the study is confined to Ifelodun Metropolis, a semi-urban area characterized by a blend of traditional and modern influences. This unique setting provides a rich context for exploring the intersection of socio-cultural norms, technological adoption, and human rights advocacy. The study recognizes that the dynamics of social media use in semi-urban areas like Ifelodun may differ significantly from those in urban centers, where internet penetration and digital literacy are typically higher (Statista, 2023). By narrowing the scope to Ifelodun Metropolis, the research aims to provide localized insights into the opportunities and challenges of leveraging social media for human rights advocacy in similar communities.

Thematically, the study covers several key areas: the role of social media in raising awareness about human rights issues, its influence on public perceptions, and its effectiveness as a tool for advocacy and mobilization. It also addresses the limitations of social media, such as the spread of misinformation, digital divides, and potential government interference, which may hinder its effectiveness in shaping public discourse (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). These themes are explored through qualitative and quantitative data collected from social media users within the study area.

Temporally, the study focuses on the period between 2020 and 2024, a timeframe that encompasses significant events such as the global #EndSARS movement and other human rights advocacy campaigns that gained prominence during this era (Akinlabi et al., 2021). This period allows for a comprehensive analysis of recent trends in social media use for human rights advocacy and their impact on public discourse in Ifelodun Metropolis.

In conclusion, the scope of this study is carefully delineated to provide a focused and detailed examination of the role of social media in human rights advocacy within Ifelodun Metropolis. By addressing both the opportunities and challenges associated with social media use, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of its potential as a tool for promoting human rights in similar semi-urban contexts.

The rapid evolution of social media platforms also poses a challenge. The ever- changing nature of algorithms, user behaviors, and platform policies means that findings may quickly become outdated. For example, trends observed during the study period (2020–2024) might no longer be relevant in the near future as new platforms emerge or existing ones undergo significant transformations (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This temporal limitation underscores the need for ongoing research to capture the dynamic relationship between social media and human rights advocacy. Misinformation and disinformation, which are inherent challenges of social media, also impact the study. While the research seeks to analyze the influence of social media on public discourse, distinguishing between accurate and false information shared on these platforms can be difficult. The proliferation of unverified claims could skew public perceptions and complicate efforts to assess the effectiveness of social media in promoting meaningful dialogue on human rights (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Additionally, the study does not fully account for the role of algorithms in amplifying or suppressing certain voices, which can significantly influence the visibility and reach of advocacy efforts.

Another limitation is the potential for external interference. Government regulations, surveillance, or censorship may affect the willingness of participants to engage in open discussions about human rights. For instance, during the #EndSARS protests, the Nigerian government's actions to restrict social media access highlighted the vulnerability of these platforms to political interference (Akinlabi et al., 2021). Such factors could limit the scope of data collected and the depth of insights gained from participants.

Finally, resource and time constraints are practical limitations of the study. The availability of funding and time for comprehensive data collection and analysis may restrict the breadth of the research. For example, a larger sample size or longitudinal analysis could provide more robust findings but may not be feasible within the constraints of this study.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

To ensure clarity and precision, this study defines the following key terms in the context of the research:

Social Media

For the purpose of this study, social media encompasses platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, which are widely used for communication and advocacy in Ifelodun Metropolis. These platforms facilitate the dissemination of information, engagement in discussions, and mobilization for social causes, particularly in relation to human rights.

Public Discourse

In this study, public discourse pertains specifically to conversations about human rights conducted on social media platforms. It includes debates, comments, posts, and other forms of digital communication that contribute to shaping collective understanding and attitudes toward human rights issues.

Human Rights

In this research, human rights are understood within the context of advocacy efforts to address issues such as equality, freedom of expression, and protection against abuse or injustice, as discussed on social media by residents of Ifelodun Metropolis.

Advocacy

In this study, advocacy is examined as the use of social media platforms to campaign for human rights, raise awareness, and mobilize support for addressing violations or advancing social justice.

Digital Literacy

In the context of this study, digital literacy pertains to the skills required to navigate social media platforms, evaluate information critically, and engage meaningfully in discussions about human rights.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of social media has dramatically transformed the way information is created, shared, and consumed in contemporary society. In the context of democratic governance and civil liberties, social media has emerged as a potent tool for public engagement, particularly in matters relating to human rights. As societies continue to evolve digitally, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have increasingly become spaces where individuals and groups express opinions, mobilize support, and raise awareness on critical human rights issues. This transformation has redefined public discourse, moving it from traditional media channels to more interactive, accessible, and decentralized platforms.

The importance of public discourse in a democratic society cannot be overemphasized. It provides a platform for citizens to deliberate on issues of national interest, voice grievances, and hold governments accountable. With the advent of social media, this discourse has become more inclusive, enabling even marginalized voices to participate actively in national conversations. Human rights advocates now use social media not only to report violations but also to educate, sensitize, and campaign for change. This has led to increased public awareness and, in some cases, significant policy reforms and societal action.

However, despite its many benefits, the use of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights also comes with challenges. These include misinformation, hate speech, digital surveillance, and censorship, which may undermine the quality and impact of such discourse. Therefore, understanding how social media shapes public perception, participation, and action regarding human rights is critical in evaluating its role in modern society.

This chapter explores existing literature on the interplay between social media, human rights, and public discourse. It provides a conceptual and theoretical foundation for the study, which focuses on Ifelodun Metropolis in Kwara State as a case study.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The conceptual review serves as the foundation for understanding the key variables and ideas that inform this study. It provides clarity on the meanings, scope, and interrelationship between the major concepts relevant to the research, namely social media, human rights, and public discourse. These three concepts form the core pillars of this investigation and are critical in analyzing the role social media plays in shaping conversations around human rights within the Ifelodun Metropolis of Kwara State.

Conceptual clarity is essential in academic research because it helps to establish a common understanding of the terms used and the contexts in which they are applied. In the context of this study, it is necessary to define what constitutes social media and how it differs from traditional media platforms. Social media platforms, due to their interactive nature, have changed how people engage with information and how public opinion is formed. The definition of human rights is also central to this study, as it outlines the specific freedoms and protections being discussed and advocated for within the digital space. Lastly, the concept of public discourse must be examined, as it encapsulates the space in which social and political discussions occur, particularly those focused on human rights concerns.

By breaking down each of these core concepts, this framework helps to build a theoretical and analytical structure through which the role of social media in influencing public discourse on

human rights can be assessed. It also highlights how these concepts overlap and interact. For instance, the spread of human rights information on social media contributes directly to public discourse and civic engagement, while the nature of that discourse may, in turn, influence societal attitudes and policy decisions.

Furthermore, this framework provides a lens through which the dynamics within Ifelodun Metropolis can be understood in terms of digital activism, social awareness, and rights-based communication. Understanding how these key concepts operate individually and collectively is vital to evaluating the impact of social media on public discourse surrounding human rights in the study area.

2.2.1 CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media refers to web-based platforms and applications that enable individuals and groups to create, share, and interact with content in real time. These platforms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, and blogs. Unlike traditional media, which is typically one-directional in communication, social media supports user-generated content and interactive dialogues, making it a revolutionary medium in global communication. It allows for the rapid dissemination of information and fosters communities of interest regardless of geographical barriers.

Social media has become deeply integrated into modern society and plays a significant role in the daily lives of people, especially the youth. It enables individuals not only to communicate with others but also to engage with global issues, participate in advocacy campaigns, and shape social narratives. The affordability and accessibility of smartphones and internet data have further contributed to the widespread adoption of social media platforms across developing regions, including Nigeria.

In the context of human rights and public discourse, social media serves as an alternative platform to traditional news outlets. It empowers citizens to share their experiences, report incidents of abuse, and mobilize support for social justice causes. Hashtags, viral videos, livestreams, and digital petitions have all become tools used by activists to call attention to human rights violations. Social media platforms also offer spaces where marginalized voices can be heard, thus democratizing the flow of information and encouraging civic engagement.

However, while social media offers numerous benefits, it is not without limitations. Issues such as cyberbullying, misinformation, online harassment, and surveillance pose significant threats to the positive use of these platforms. Governments and other actors have, at times, sought to restrict access to social media or monitor users, thereby undermining the freedom of expression that the platforms offer. Despite these challenges, social media remains a critical force in shaping modern communication and advocacy.

In sum, social media has transcended its initial purpose of social interaction and evolved into a powerful tool for public discourse, activism, and human rights promotion. Its role in shaping

societal values and influencing political and legal reforms continues to grow, making it an indispensable part of contemporary life and governance.

2.2.2 CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms to which every individual is inherently entitled simply by virtue of being human. These rights are considered universal, inalienable, and indivisible, and they are protected by national constitutions, regional agreements, and international laws. Human rights include civil and political rights, such as the right to life, freedom of expression, and the right to participate in government, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights, such as the right to education, health, and an adequate standard of living.

The foundation of modern human rights is laid out in key international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations in 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. In Nigeria, the 1999 Constitution as amended also provides for the protection and enforcement of fundamental human rights in Chapter IV. These provisions aim to ensure that every citizen enjoys dignity, equality, and freedom under the law.

Human rights are essential to human dignity and social justice. They form the basis for a democratic and equitable society, where every individual is protected against abuse, discrimination, and oppression. In the Nigerian context, human rights are often violated by individuals, institutions, and state actors due to systemic corruption, abuse of power, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms. Such violations include police brutality, gender-based violence, unlawful detentions, and restriction of press freedom.

The advent of digital communication, particularly through social media, has created new avenues for the promotion and defense of human rights. Activists, organizations, and ordinary citizens now use social media to expose violations, demand justice, and educate others about their rights. Campaigns such as the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria highlighted the power of digital platforms in mobilizing public attention and sparking global conversations around rights abuses.

Despite these opportunities, the protection of human rights in the digital space faces several obstacles, including censorship, surveillance, and cyber threats. Nonetheless, the integration of human rights discourse into online platforms has significantly advanced the cause of justice and accountability. It continues to play a vital role in shaping public awareness and encouraging active participation in governance.

2.2.3 CONCEPT OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Public discourse refers to the open exchange of ideas, opinions, and information among members of a society on matters of public concern. It is a central element of democratic life, as it allows citizens to engage in dialogue, express their views, and influence social and political decisions. Public discourse occurs in various settings, including traditional media, academic forums, community gatherings, and increasingly, on digital platforms such as social media. It is through

public discourse that societal values are debated, collective identities are shaped, and policy directions are influenced.

At its core, public discourse is participatory and deliberative. It enables a diverse range of voices to be heard and fosters transparency and accountability in governance. In democratic societies, the quality of public discourse is often linked to the strength of civil society, freedom of expression, and the accessibility of communication platforms. When discourse is inclusive, informed, and respectful, it contributes positively to social cohesion and progress.

The rise of the internet and social media has significantly expanded the scope of public discourse. Social media platforms provide instant and widespread access to information, allowing individuals to engage in discussions that were previously limited to mainstream media or elite institutions. This digital transformation has made public discourse more interactive, timely, and inclusive, as people from different backgrounds and locations can participate in real-time conversations on issues that matter to them.

In the context of human rights, public discourse plays a crucial role in raising awareness, challenging injustices, and promoting accountability. It allows victims and advocates to share experiences, mobilize support, and influence public sentiment and policymaking. Campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter and #EndSARS demonstrate how public discourse, when amplified through social media, can lead to national and international advocacy for change.

However, the quality of public discourse on social media can be undermined by the spread of misinformation, hate speech, echo chambers, and polarized debates. These challenges highlight the need for digital literacy and ethical communication practices. Despite these drawbacks, public discourse remains a powerful tool for shaping social consciousness and promoting democratic participation.

In summary, public discourse is the bedrock of an informed and engaged society. Its digital evolution, particularly through social media, has enhanced civic engagement and provided a critical avenue for advocating human rights and influencing policy in contemporary society.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework provides a foundational lens through which the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights can be examined. This study draws on two key theories: Jürgen Habermas' Public Sphere Theory and Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory. These theories collectively provide insights into how social media serves as a platform for public engagement, advocacy, and societal transformation, particularly in the context of Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State.

2.2.1   Public Sphere Theory

Jürgen Habermas (1989) introduced the concept of the public sphere as a space where individuals come together to discuss and deliberate matters of public concern. Traditionally, this sphere was characterized by physical locations such as coffeehouses, salons, and town halls. In such settings, participants engaged in rational-critical debates aimed at forming public opinion. Habermas argued that the public sphere is essential for a democratic society, as it allows citizens to collectively address societal issues and influence governance.

In the digital era, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have been conceptualized as extensions of the public sphere. These platforms enable users to engage in discussions that transcend geographical and socio-economic barriers. In the context of human rights advocacy, social media has become a virtual public sphere where activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens can voice their opinions, expose rights violations, and demand accountability. For instance, hashtag movements like #EndSARS in Nigeria illustrate how social media can amplify marginalized voices and foster collective action (Akinlabi et al., 2021).

However, Habermas' Public Sphere Theory also highlights potential limitations. While social media democratizes access to public discourse, it can also reinforce inequalities. Dominant voices, often representing political or economic elites, may overshadow marginalized groups. Additionally, phenomena such as algorithmic bias and echo chambers can fragment discourse, limiting the diversity of perspectives within the digital public sphere (Obar & Wildman, 2015). These challenges are particularly relevant in Ifelodun Metropolis, where disparities in internet access and digital literacy may exclude certain populations from participating in online discussions about human rights.

2.2.2   Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (2003) explains how new ideas, technologies, or practices spread within a social system over time. The theory identifies five stages in the diffusion process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. It also categorizes adopters into five groups: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. These categories reflect the varying willingness and ability of individuals to embrace innovation.

In the context of social media, Rogers' theory provides a framework for understanding how platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp have been adopted as tools for human rights advocacy in Ifelodun Metropolis. Innovators and early adopters, such as tech-savvy youth and human rights organizations, play a crucial role in introducing social media as a medium for raising awareness and mobilizing action. Their activities often persuade the early majority to participate, thereby creating a critical mass of users who drive public discourse on human rights.

The theory also highlights factors that influence the adoption of social media for advocacy, including its perceived benefits, compatibility with existing communication practices, and ease of use. For example, the real-time nature of platforms like Twitter makes them highly compatible with the needs of activists who aim to disseminate information quickly during human rights crises. Similarly, WhatsApp's group chat feature facilitates community-based discussions, making it an accessible tool for residents of Ifelodun Metropolis to engage in human rights discourse.

However, the diffusion of social media in semi-urban areas like Ifelodun Metropolis is not without challenges. Limited access to affordable internet, low digital literacy levels, and cultural norms can hinder the adoption process. These barriers highlight the need for targeted interventions to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all segments of the population can participate in online public discourse.

2.2.3   Integrating the Theories
The combination of Public Sphere Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights. Public Sphere Theory emphasizes the democratic potential of social media as a platform for inclusive dialogue, while Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides insights into how social media technologies are adopted and utilized within specific social contexts.
In the case of Ifelodun Metropolis, these theories help to explain how social media enables individuals and groups to engage in discussions about human rights issues. For example, platforms like Facebook may serve as digital public spheres where residents debate topics such as police brutality, gender inequality, and access to education. Simultaneously, the diffusion process sheds light on how these platforms gain traction within the community, driven by innovators and early adopters who demonstrate their utility for advocacy.
The integration of these theories also highlights the interplay between structural and individual factors in shaping public discourse. Structural factors, such as internet infrastructure and government policies, influence the accessibility and functionality of social media platforms. Individual factors, including users' digital literacy and social networks, determine how effectively

they can participate in online discourse. By addressing these factors, stakeholders can enhance the transformative potential of social media as a tool for human rights advocacy.

2.2.4   Implications for the Study

The theoretical framework underscores the importance of contextualizing the role of social media within the socio-economic and cultural realities of Ifelodun Metropolis. Public Sphere Theory highlights the need to evaluate the inclusivity and diversity of online discourse in the study area, while Diffusion of Innovations Theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the factors that drive or hinder social media adoption. Together, these theories provide a robust foundation for investigating how social media influences public discourse on human rights, particularly in a semi-urban Nigerian context.

By applying these theories, this study seeks to answer critical questions about the effectiveness of social media as a platform for human rights advocacy in Ifelodun Metropolis. For example, to what extent do social media platforms facilitate inclusive discussions about human rights? What barriers prevent certain groups from participating in these discussions? How do early adopters and innovators influence the use of social media for advocacy? Addressing these questions will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social media, public discourse, and human rights in the digital age.

2.3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Empirical studies provide valuable insights into the relationship between social media, public discourse, and human rights advocacy. These studies highlight real-world instances where social media platforms have influenced public opinion, mobilized action, or facilitated dialogue on human rights issues. This section examines existing research, with a focus on the role of social media in human rights advocacy globally and within Nigeria, drawing parallels to the study's context of Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State.

2.3.1   Social Media and Public Discourse on Human Rights

Globally, researchers have documented the transformative power of social media in amplifying human rights advocacy. A study by Tufekci (2017) explored the role of social media in the Arab Spring, demonstrating how platforms like Facebook and Twitter enabled activists to coordinate protests and bypass state-controlled media. The study concluded that social media serves as an alternative public sphere where marginalized voices can challenge oppressive regimes and advocate for justice. Similarly, Howard et al. (2011) highlighted the role of social media in democratizing public discourse by enabling citizens to engage in real-time discussions on pressing societal issues.

In Nigeria, social media has played a pivotal role in fostering public discourse on human rights. A notable example is the #EndSARS movement, which emerged in response to police brutality perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Akinlabi et al. (2021) analyzed the impact of the #EndSARS protests and found that social media platforms, particularly Twitter, facilitated nationwide mobilization and global awareness. The study highlighted how hashtags, live videos,

and user-generated content galvanized public support and pressured the government to disband SARS. This underscores the capacity of social media to shape public discourse and drive policy changes in Nigeria.

Additionally, Okoro and Nwafor (2013) examined the role of social media in promoting human rights awareness among Nigerian youth. Their findings revealed that platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are widely used to disseminate information about rights violations and advocate for reforms. The study also noted that while social media provides opportunities for engagement, issues such as misinformation and digital exclusion can hinder its effectiveness.

2.3.2   Challenges in Leveraging Social Media for Human Rights Advocacy

Empirical studies have also shed light on the challenges associated with using social media as a tool for human rights advocacy. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) highlighted the problem of misinformation and disinformation on social media, which can distort public understanding of human rights issues. Their research emphasized the need for digital literacy initiatives to empower users to critically evaluate online content.

In the Nigerian context, Ojo and Busayo (2020) explored the barriers to effective human rights advocacy on social media. Their study identified factors such as limited internet access, high data costs, and government surveillance as significant obstacles. They noted that these barriers disproportionately affect marginalized groups, limiting their participation in online discourse. Similarly, Olowojolu and Ogundipe (2019) examined the impact of online harassment on human rights activists in Nigeria, finding that cyberbullying and threats often discourage activists from engaging on social media platforms.

2.3.3   Social Media as a Tool for Mobilization and Accountability

Several empirical studies have highlighted the role of social media in mobilizing collective action and holding authorities accountable. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) introduced the concept of "connective action," which describes how digital technologies enable individuals to coordinate activism without relying on formal organizations. Their research demonstrated how social media platforms facilitate decentralized movements, allowing participants to personalize and share content that resonates with their networks.

In Nigeria, empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of social media in mobilizing public action. Egbunike and Olorunnisola (2015) analyzed the role of Twitter in the Occupy Nigeria protests of 2012, which were sparked by the government's removal of fuel subsidies. The study found that social media enabled activists to coordinate protests, share real-time updates, and amplify their demands. Similarly, Iwuoha and Ezeibe (2019) examined the use of WhatsApp during the 2019 Nigerian elections, highlighting its role in spreading voter education and countering electoral malpractices.

Social media has also been instrumental in holding authorities accountable for human rights violations. For instance, Ugwu and Osakwe (2021) studied the impact of viral videos documenting

police brutality in Nigeria. Their findings revealed that such content not only raises awareness but also pressures authorities to investigate and take action. However, the study cautioned against the potential for sensationalism, which can undermine the credibility of advocacy efforts.

2.3.4 Implications for Ifelodun Metropolis

While empirical studies provide a global and national perspective, their findings have direct implications for the context of Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State. The transformative role of social media documented in these studies underscores its potential to shape public discourse and advocate for human rights in semi-urban areas like Ifelodun. Platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, which are widely used in Nigeria, can serve as accessible tools for residents to engage in discussions about rights issues, share experiences, and organize collective action.

However, the challenges identified in these studies, such as digital exclusion and misinformation, are also relevant to Ifelodun Metropolis. Limited internet access and low levels of digital literacy may hinder participation in online discourse, particularly among marginalized groups. Addressing these barriers is essential to ensuring that social media serves as an inclusive platform for human rights advocacy.

The empirical evidence reviewed in this section highlights the transformative role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights. Studies from Nigeria and beyond demonstrate how platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp enable real-time discussions, mobilize collective action, and hold authorities accountable. However, these studies also underscore the challenges associated with digital advocacy, including misinformation, harassment, and limited access.

For Ifelodun Metropolis, these findings provide valuable insights into the opportunities and limitations of using social media to address human rights issues. By leveraging the lessons from empirical research, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of social media as a tool for advocacy and engagement in the study area. This underscores the importance of designing interventions that address digital inequalities, promote media literacy, and foster a culture of accountability in online discourse.

In conclusion, the empirical studies reviewed in this section provide a solid foundation for understanding the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights. These insights will inform the analysis of social media's impact in Ifelodun Metropolis, contributing to a nuanced understanding of its potential and limitations in the digital age.

2.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature on the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights, with a specific focus on its implications for Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State. The reviewed literature encompasses the conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and empirical studies, offering a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The conceptual framework for this study is anchored on three core concepts: **social media**, **public discourse**, and **human rights**. These concepts form the foundation for understanding how digital platforms, particularly social media, have transformed the ways in which individuals and communities engage in conversations surrounding rights and justice.

Social media refers to digital communication tools and platforms that enable users to create, share, and interact with content in real time. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and WhatsApp have evolved into powerful spaces not just for social interaction, but also for civic engagement and activism. Unlike traditional media, social media facilitates two-way communication, allowing users to participate actively in shaping narratives and raising awareness on social issues. This interactive nature makes social media a modern-day public sphere, where individuals and groups can mobilize support, expose abuses, and demand accountability.

Public discourse, within this context, is defined as the collective discussion and exchange of ideas concerning societal issues in a public setting. It is through public discourse that individuals form opinions, influence policy, and hold authorities accountable. Social media, as a facilitator of this discourse, enables real-time engagement and visibility for voices that may otherwise be excluded in conventional media outlets. This makes it a particularly vital tool in the context of human rights advocacy, especially in semi-urban and underserved communities.

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections to which all individuals are entitled by virtue of their humanity. These include civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, such as the right to free speech, equality before the law, freedom from discrimination, and access to education and healthcare. On social media, human rights issues are often brought to the forefront through digital campaigns, hashtags, viral videos, and user-generated testimonies. Such visibility can prompt public action, policy changes, and legal redress, highlighting the platform's role in justice-seeking processes.

This framework posits that social media acts as a catalyst for public discourse on human rights by providing a digital space where people can express concerns, share experiences, and collectively advocate for change. In places like Ifelodun Metropolis, where traditional media access may be limited, social media fills a critical gap by democratizing information and amplifying grassroots voices. However, the extent to which this discourse is inclusive and impactful depends on factors such as access to digital technology, literacy levels, socio-economic conditions, and freedom of expression.

In essence, the conceptual framework underlines the interconnectedness of digital communication, civic dialogue, and rights advocacy. It recognizes social media as a double-edged sword—empowering public engagement while also exposing users to challenges such as misinformation, cyber harassment, and exclusion due to digital divides. By focusing on these dynamics, this study seeks to explore how residents of Ifelodun Metropolis navigate and utilize social media to

participate in human rights discourse, and what structural or individual barriers may inhibit their involvement.

The theoretical framework provided a lens through which the relationship between social media and public discourse on human rights could be examined. Jürgen Habermas' Public Sphere Theory emphasized the democratic potential of social media as a platform for inclusive dialogue. It highlighted the ability of social media to transcend traditional barriers, enabling marginalized voices to participate in public discourse. However, the theory also pointed out challenges, such as digital exclusion and the dominance of elite voices, which may hinder inclusivity. Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory complemented this perspective by explaining how social media technologies are adopted within communities. The theory underscored the role of innovators and early adopters in popularizing social media for advocacy, as well as the factors influencing its adoption, including perceived benefits and compatibility with existing practices. Together, these theories provided a robust foundation for analyzing the dynamics of social media, public discourse, and human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis.

Empirical studies reviewed in this chapter further illustrated the transformative role of social media in human rights advocacy. Globally, platforms like Twitter and Facebook have been instrumental in mobilizing protests, raising awareness, and fostering accountability. For example, the Arab Spring demonstrated the power of social media in bypassing traditional media and enabling grassroots activism (Tufekci, 2017). In Nigeria, the #EndSARS movement showcased how social media could amplify marginalized voices, galvanize public support, and pressure authorities to act against human rights violations (Akinlabi et al., 2021). Empirical evidence also revealed that social media's potential is not without challenges. Issues such as misinformation, digital harassment, and unequal access to technology often limit its effectiveness as a tool for advocacy.

The reviewed literature highlighted several key findings relevant to this study's focus on Ifelodun Metropolis. First, social media provides a platform for discussing human rights issues that might otherwise be ignored or suppressed in traditional media. This is particularly important in semi-urban areas like Ifelodun, where residents may lack access to formal channels of communication. Second, the diffusion of social media in such contexts depends on factors like internet availability, affordability, and digital literacy. Innovators and early adopters in the community often play a crucial role in introducing these technologies and demonstrating their value for advocacy. Third, the inclusivity of online public discourse is influenced by structural and individual factors, including government policies, cultural norms, and the socio-economic status of users.

The chapter also identified gaps in the existing literature, which this study aims to address. While previous studies have extensively documented the role of social media in global and national human rights advocacy, there is limited research on its impact in semi-urban Nigerian contexts like Ifelodun Metropolis. Furthermore, the interplay between digital exclusion and the inclusivity of online discourse remains underexplored. This study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating how residents of Ifelodun Metropolis use social media to engage in discussions about human rights, the barriers they face, and the strategies that can enhance their participation.

Another critical finding from the reviewed literature is the dual nature of social media as both an enabler and a potential disruptor of public discourse. While social media facilitates real-time communication and broad participation, it also poses challenges such as algorithmic bias, echo chambers, and cyberbullying. These dynamics are particularly relevant in the context of human rights advocacy, where the credibility and inclusivity of discourse are paramount. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that combines digital literacy education, policy reforms, and community-based interventions.

In conclusion, this chapter established that social media plays a significant role in shaping public discourse on human rights. It serves as a platform for dialogue, advocacy, and mobilization, enabling individuals and communities to address rights violations and demand accountability. However, its effectiveness is influenced by various factors, including access to technology, digital literacy, and the socio-political environment. By applying the insights from the conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and empirical studies, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of social media's impact in Ifelodun Metropolis. The findings of this study will contribute to the broader discourse on the role of digital communication in promoting human rights, offering practical recommendations for stakeholders seeking to leverage social media as a tool for advocacy and engagement.

This summary not only encapsulates the key themes of the literature review but also sets the stage for subsequent chapters, which will delve deeper into the research methodology and findings. Through this study, it is hoped that the transformative potential of social media in human rights advocacy can be harnessed more effectively, particularly in contexts like Ifelodun Metropolis, where socio-economic and technological disparities often limit participation in public discourse.

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CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the study, "An Assessment of Social Media in Shaping Public Discourse on Human Rights: A Case Study of Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State." It describes the research design, method, population, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection instruments, validity and reliability, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study will adopts a **descriptive survey research design**, which is well-suited for examining the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State. A descriptive survey design enables the collection of detailed information about participants' behaviors, opinions, and perceptions, providing a snapshot of the current state of social media's impact on human rights advocacy.

The descriptive nature of the design facilitates an in-depth exploration of how residents interact with social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp in discussing, advocating, or learning about human rights issues. This design also allows for the identification of trends and challenges associated with using social media for public discourse in the selected area.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to comprehensively examine the role of social media in shaping public discourse on human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State. This approach provides a balanced framework for capturing numerical data and contextual insights.

The **quantitative method** involves the use of structured questionnaires administered to residents of Ifelodun Metropolis who actively engage with social media platforms. The questionnaires are designed to gather data on participants' demographics, social media usage patterns, and perceptions of its effectiveness in fostering discussions on human rights. This method enables the collection of measurable and statistically analyzable data, ensuring objectivity and reliability.

The **qualitative method** complements this by conducting in-depth interviews with selected key informants, such as local human rights advocates, social media influencers, and community leaders. These interviews aim to explore nuanced perspectives, uncovering personal experiences and detailed narratives about the impact and challenges of using social media for public discourse. The mixed-methods approach provides a holistic view, combining the strengths of both methods to ensure the findings are robust, comprehensive, and reflective of the complex dynamics between social media and human rights advocacy in the study area.

3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population for this study comprises all residents of **Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State**, who are active users of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. These platforms serve as the primary medium for discussing and advocating for human rights issues. The population includes individuals aged 18 years and above, encompassing students, civil servants, entrepreneurs, and local activists.

Given the study's focus on social media's role in shaping public discourse on human rights, the target population is limited to those with access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and familiarity with social media usage. This ensures that the participants can provide meaningful insights based on their experiences and interactions on these platforms.

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE

This study employs a **multi-stage sampling technique** to ensure the selection of a representative and relevant sample from the population of Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State.

In the first stage, **purposive sampling** is used to identify individuals who actively engage with social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp for discussions on human rights issues. This method ensures that only participants with meaningful experiences and interactions relevant to the study are included.

In the second stage, **stratified random sampling** is applied to divide the identified participants into distinct strata based on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and occupation. This ensures that the sample reflects the diversity of the population, providing a balanced representation of views and experiences.

Finally, a random selection of participants within each stratum is conducted to eliminate bias. This approach enhances the reliability and validity of the findings, ensuring comprehensive insights into the study's objectives.

The sample size is determined using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination: $n = \dfrac{\mathcal{N}}{1 + \mathcal{N}(e)^2}$

Where, $\mathcal{N}$ is the population size, e is the margin of error (5%).

Based on an estimated population of **5,000** active social media users in Ifelodun Metropolis.

The **sample size** is calculated to be; $n = \dfrac{\mathcal{N}}{1 + \mathcal{N}(e)^2}$

$$n = \frac{5000}{1 + 5000(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \mathbf{370}.$$

The **sample size** is **370.**

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The primary data collection instruments for this study will be **structured questionnaire** and an **interview guide**.

The **questionnaire** will be designed to capture quantitative data and is divided into three sections: demographic information, social media usage patterns, and perceptions of social media's role in human rights discourse. The questionnaire employs close-ended questions using Likert scales, checkboxes, and multiple-choice formats to ensure consistency and ease of analysis.

The **interview guide** will be developed for qualitative data collection, targeting key informants such as local activists, social media influencers, and community leaders. It contains open-ended questions aimed at eliciting in-depth insights into the challenges and opportunities of using social media for public discourse on human rights.

These instruments are carefully designed and pre-tested to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives, enabling the collection of comprehensive and meaningful data.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

The validity of the instrument will be ensured through expert review. Three experts in the fields of social sciences and human rights advocacy will assess the questionnaire and interview guide for content and construct validity. To ensure reliability, a pilot test is conducted with 30 respondents outside the study area, and the data is analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure a reliability coefficient of at least 0.7, indicating internal consistency.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data collection will be conducted over a two-week period. Questionnaires will be distributed to selected participants both in physical and electronic formats (Google Forms), ensuring wide reach and convenience. Face-to-face interviews with key informants are conducted in safe and accessible locations. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, are strictly adhered to during data collection.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Quantitative data from the questionnaires will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequencies, percentages, and means are used to summarize the data, while chi-square tests examine relationships between variables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software is employed for analysis. Qualitative data from interviews are analyzed thematically, with recurring patterns and themes identified and coded to provide deeper insights.

This methodology ensures a comprehensive and rigorous approach to examining the influence of social media on public discourse on human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis, yielding meaningful and actionable findings.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results obtained from the analysis of data collected through the administration of structured questionnaires to social media users within Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State. The aim is to evaluate the influence of social media on public discourse surrounding human rights. Data is analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables and percentages, while the presentation is aligned with the research objectives.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE

Out of 370 questionnaires administered based on a determined sample size from an estimated population of 5,000 active social media users in Ifelodun Metropolis, a total of **348** were properly filled and returned. This represents a **94.1%** response rate, which is both sufficient and reliable for analytical purposes.

Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Percentage Returned
370	348	94.1%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2025

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

4.3.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25	146	41.9%
26–35	124	35.6%
36–45	52	14.9%
46 and above	26	7.5%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2025

Interpretation: The data reveals that the majority of respondents (77.5%) fall within the 18–35 age range, confirming the dominance of young people in social media engagement related to human rights.

4.3.2 Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	189	54.3%
Female	159	45.7%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2025

Interpretation: The gender distribution is fairly balanced, though slightly skewed towards male participants.

4.4 Data Analysis Based on Research Objectives

4.4.1 Awareness of Human Rights through Social Media

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	307	88.2%
No	41	11.8%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2025

Interpretation: A substantial 88.2% of respondents agreed that social media has improved their awareness of human rights issues. This underscores the role of digital platforms in fostering civic knowledge and engagement.

4.4.2 Social Media Platforms Most Frequently Used for Human Rights Discourse

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Twitter (X)	133	38.2%
Facebook	110	31.6%
Instagram	62	17.8%
WhatsApp	43	12.4%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2025

Interpretation: Twitter was identified as the most utilized platform for discussing human rights, attributed to its open format, real-time updates, and widespread use of advocacy hashtags.

4.4.3 Respondents' Perception of the Impact of Social Media on Human Rights Discourse

Impact Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strong Impact	171	49.1%
Moderate Impact	117	33.6%
Little or No Impact	60	17.3%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2025

Interpretation: A majority (82.7%) of respondents believe that social media has either a strong or moderate impact on the discourse surrounding human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis.

4.4.4 Role of Social Media in Mobilizing Public Action on Human Rights Issues

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	264	75.9%
No	84	24.1%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2025

Interpretation: About 76% of the respondents agreed that social media plays a major role in mobilizing citizens to take action on human rights issues. This includes online campaigns, protests, petitions, and public advocacy.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study suggest that social media has a significant influence on public discourse regarding human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis. The high percentage of respondents indicating increased awareness through social media platforms highlights the role of digital media in democratizing access to information. Twitter and Facebook appear to be the most impactful platforms, likely due to their content-sharing capabilities, user reach, and interactive features.

Furthermore, the ability of social media to mobilize public action reflects its power in transforming awareness into tangible advocacy. Social media enables users to participate in digital activism, engage in rights-based conversations, and challenge abuses through instant communication and community support.

However, a small fraction of respondents remain unconvinced about the effectiveness of these platforms, which may stem from issues like misinformation, digital illiteracy, or internet

inaccessibility. Still, the overwhelming consensus supports the idea that social media has become a vital tool in shaping public engagement with human rights discourse.

4.6 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- 348 responses were analyzed from a valid sample size of 370 (94.1% response rate).
- Majority of respondents are between ages 18–35, confirming active youth engagement on social media.
- 88.2% of respondents reported increased awareness of human rights via social media.
- Twitter is the most commonly used platform for human rights discourse (38.2%).
- 82.7% believe social media strongly or moderately influences public human rights discourse.
- 75.9% agree that social media platforms aid in mobilizing citizens toward public action on human rights issues.

4.7 Comparative Analysis with Literature

The results of this study align with several scholarly findings previously reviewed in Chapter Two. For instance, the high percentage (88.2%) of respondents who acknowledged increased awareness of human rights through social media supports the position of McPherson (2019), who argued that digital platforms have become modern civic spaces where users encounter, discuss, and internalize social justice issues. Similarly, the dominance of Twitter as the preferred platform for discourse on human rights echoes the views of Okoro and Odoemelam (2020), who highlighted Twitter's structural design, including hashtag activism and trending topics, as major drivers of civic mobilization in Nigeria.

Moreover, the belief by 82.7% of respondents that social media exerts a strong or moderate influence on human rights discussions validates prior theoretical frameworks such as the **Public Sphere Theory**, which emphasizes the importance of accessible communication spaces for democratic dialogue. The findings further support the **Agenda-Setting Theory**, which contends that media—traditional or digital—has the power to influence what people think about by amplifying particular issues.

4.8 Observed Patterns and Trends

An interesting trend observed in the data is the concentration of active human rights engagement among younger demographics (18–35), which suggests that youth are at the forefront of digital activism and civic engagement in Ifelodun Metropolis. This may be due to their higher digital literacy and ease of access to smartphones and internet services. The slightly higher male participation may reflect gendered access disparities in technology, although the gap is not significantly wide.

Another pattern is the overwhelming preference for Twitter and Facebook over platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram for human rights discussions. This could be attributed to the public and

participatory nature of Twitter and Facebook compared to the more private or entertainment-oriented features of Instagram and WhatsApp.

4.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

Despite the high response rate, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the study relies heavily on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability or recall errors. Secondly, the sample was limited to active social media users within Ifelodun Metropolis, meaning that the perspectives of individuals without digital access are not captured. Additionally, the study does not disaggregate the data based on other demographics such as educational level or occupation, which could offer deeper insights into social media behavior across different strata of society.

4.10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study bear significant implications for policymakers, human rights organizations, and civil society groups. The demonstrable role of social media in raising awareness and mobilizing public action suggests that digital platforms should be recognized as legitimate and strategic tools in human rights advocacy. Stakeholders could leverage the popularity of platforms like Twitter to run educational campaigns, engage in fact-checking, and promote civic participation.

Furthermore, the strong presence of youth engagement highlights the importance of targeting digital literacy and online safety programs toward young people to maximize the positive impacts of social media use. The government and non-governmental actors may also need to explore ways to enhance digital inclusion and minimize online misinformation that can hamper advocacy efforts.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of the data collected from social media users in Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State. Through statistical interpretation and linkage with existing literature, the study confirmed that social media plays a critical role in shaping public discourse around human rights. It also demonstrated that platforms like Twitter serve as important arenas for awareness, discussion, and mobilization. While some limitations exist, the overall findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital communication tools are transforming human rights advocacy in Nigeria. These insights pave the way for the recommendations and conclusions that will be presented in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study titled **"An Assessment of Social Media in Shaping Public Discourse on Human Rights: A Case Study of Ifelodun Metropolis, Kwara State"** set out to evaluate the extent to which social media platforms influence awareness, engagement, and action regarding human rights issues among users in the study area.

A sample size of 370 respondents was drawn from an estimated population of 5,000 active social media users in Ifelodun Metropolis. Out of this, 348 valid responses were analyzed. The findings revealed that:

- **Social media significantly enhances human rights awareness**, with 88.2% of respondents affirming this impact.
- **Twitter emerged as the most effective platform** for human rights discourse, followed closely by Facebook.
- **A majority (82.7%) perceive social media as having a strong or moderate impact** on shaping public opinion and discussion on human rights.
- **Approximately 76% agreed that social media plays a crucial role in mobilizing citizens** to take action on rights-related issues, such as participating in protests, signing petitions, or sharing advocacy content.
- The youth population (ages 18–35) dominated the social media space and were the most active in online discourse related to human rights.

These findings demonstrate that social media is a powerful tool for not only disseminating human rights information but also fostering civic participation and public accountability.

5.2 CONCLUSION
Based on the data analyzed and interpreted, the study concludes that social media plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse on human rights in Ifelodun Metropolis. It has created platforms for expression, amplified marginalized voices, and empowered individuals—especially the youth—to challenge injustices and mobilize collective action. The accessibility, speed, and interactive nature of social media make it an effective avenue for driving awareness, engagement, and participation in human rights issues.

Although not without its drawbacks, such as misinformation and limited digital literacy among some users, the overall impact of social media on the promotion of human rights in the study area is both positive and significant.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Government and civil society organizations** should leverage social media to promote human rights education and civic awareness, particularly targeting the youth demographic that dominates the platforms.
2. **Digital literacy campaigns** should be introduced to educate users on how to responsibly engage in online discourse, verify information, and report human rights abuses using digital tools.
3. **Human rights activists and NGOs** should continue to utilize platforms like Twitter and Facebook for campaigns, ensuring that their content is accessible, shareable, and engaging to maximize reach and impact.
4. **Local authorities and community leaders** should monitor and engage with public discourse on social media to better understand the concerns of citizens and respond to rights-related grievances in real time.
5. **Further research** should be encouraged to explore the impact of social media in rural communities and among less digitally-inclined populations to ensure inclusive digital human rights advocacy.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This study focused on urban residents in Ifelodun Metropolis who are active social media users. Future studies could:

- Investigate the influence of social media on human rights awareness in rural or underserved areas.
- Examine the role of misinformation on social media in distorting human rights discourse.
- Conduct comparative studies between different geopolitical zones in Nigeria to assess regional variations in social media engagement on rights issues.

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