The Influence of Digitalization on Security and Peace in Nigeria: Towards Policy and Practical Implications

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Abstract

The integration of digital technology in the 21st century has led to considerable modifications in societal activities, such as security, peace, economics, governance, and social structures. Digital breakthroughs have created unique chances for creativity and economic expansion, promoting interconnectedness and collaboration between different countries. Nevertheless, the digital revolution also presents obstacles to security, and peace as the interconnected digital environment eliminates traditional limitations and generates novel vulnerabilities. Emerging threats such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and disinformation endanger the well-being of individuals, the stability of societies, and the security of nations. The study examines the effects of digitalization on security and peace in Nigeria, specifically addressing the advantages and challenges posed by digital technologies. The statement underscores the importance of a holistic approach that encompasses technological progress, policy updates, and international cooperation to properly tackle the difficulties brought about by digitalization. The research examines the impact of digitalization on communication, data management, education, and early warning systems in Nigeria. It also addresses the security concerns of insurgency, banditry, and terrorism. The report provides policy and practical suggestions to effectively utilize digitalization's advantages while minimizing its risks, with the goal of improving security and peace in Nigeria.

Keywords: Digitalisation, Security, Peace, Technology, Nigeria

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed the reshaping of societal activities such as economics, societies, and governance across the world, and this has been altering the traditional approaches to these activities. The integration of digital technologies in various sectors has presented unparalleled opportunities for innovation, interrelation, and economic prosperity. However, the digital revolution has also presented several challenges, particularly in the areas of security and peace.

The interconnected nature of the digital world has erased conventional boundaries, creating new opportunities for communication, trade, and cultural exchange. The nature of interconnection between nations, states, and individuals offers a comprehensive understanding and, more likely, increased cooperation. Nevertheless, it also brings new vulnerabilities and threats. New types of threats to the peaceful and secure development of societies and states have emerged (Schneier, 2015). In this regard, the formation of cyberbullying, online instigation, and disinformation based on the use of digital technologies have become a considerable problem (Taddeo & Floridi, 2018). These threats not only joepardize the well-being of individual citizens within a society and the integrity and stability of the country form, but their escalation may lead to more conflicts. In this regard, the study of the influence of digitalisation on security and peace and has become an essential area for researchers and professionals. This topic is extremely relevant in the context of rapid changes in which policymakers operate. To effectively tackle the obstacles presented by the digital revolution, it is imperative to adopt a strategy that integrates technology advancements, policy revisions, and global collaboration (United Nations, 2019). The primary objective of this study is to investigate the influence of digitalisation on security and peace by discussing the prospects and obstacles brought about by the digital revolution.

Statement of the Problem

The integration of digital technologies has transformed several facets of human existence, encompassing communication, business, governance, and healthcare. The advent and proliferation of digital technologies present a multitude of advantages and prospects for national progress. However, it also brings forward notable obstacles and escalates cyber dangers, such as hacking, cybersecurity breaches, and data privacy issues (Schneier, 2015; Taddeo and Floridi, 2018). According to Schneier, (2015), these vulnerabilities present significant threats to individuals, organizations, and nations. Additionally, the widespread use of digital platforms and social media has led to the emergence of novel types of cyberbullying, online harassment, and disinformation operations, which erode societal unity and confidence (Taddeo & Floridi, 2018), which now pose significant risks to both personal and financial data, as well as threaten national security, and perhaps develop into international conflicts (United Nations 2019). Moreover, the absence of comprehensive cybersecurity protocols and regulatory frameworks amplifies these hazards, resulting in a precarious setting that is prone to exploitation by malevolent entities (Castells, 2011; World Economic Forum, 2016). Amidst the intricate and ever-changing digital environment, (United Nations, 2019), studies have

focused on peace (Turner, & Wählisch, 2021; Jäger, 2015), security (Chiappetta, 2019), and digitalisation (Novikova et al., 2022), mostly as individual concepts. However, not much attention has been given to the policy and practical implications over the influence of digitalisation on peace and conflict in Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of digitalisation on peace and conflict in Nigeria for the purpose of offering policy and practical implications.

Objective

To offer policy and practical contributions on the influence of digitalization on security and peace in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The body of scholarly work pertaining to the intersection of digitalization, security and peace is vast and diverse, incorporating several theoretical frameworks, empirical investigations, and policy evaluations. This literature review presents a comprehensive summary of the important topics, controversies, and findings that have influenced our comprehension of the intricate connection between these interrelated areas.

Digitalisation

Digitalization refers to the process of restructuring various aspects of social life towards technological interactions and media facilities (Brennen and Kreiss 2016). Right here, digitization is discussed in terms of its impact on social interactions and the way people engage with technology. As interactions transition from analog technologies to digital ones like email, chat, and social media, both work and leisure domains are transformed into digital formats. Geada (2023) provides a wider interpretation to digitalisation, refereeing to it as the integration of digital tools and technologies into various aspects of business, society, and everyday life. It involves transforming analog or manual systems, processes, and information into digital formats in order to enhance accessibility, connectivity, and efficiency. These definitions imply that there is no one generally acceptable description to digitalisation, and the concept remains to be provided an acceptable description. However, there is the discussion over a transformative reception or transfer of information via a quicker means. Therefore, this study describes digitalisation as the transfer and wide recipient of timely information through the internet.

According to Nwogu (2018), digitalisation, through ICT can be a valuable resource in promoting enduring peace and serenity by facilitating interactions, accessing data, making sound choices, and fostering mutual understanding. The utilization of mobile phones, and social media platforms during the protests some sections of Nigeria has demonstrated how information and ICT can enhance and reinforce people's rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly (Momen, 2020). Over the years, digitalisation has played a crucial role in greatly enhancing the welfare of individuals and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable. In our contemporary culture, which heavily relies on information, social media play a crucial role in redefining human rights, particularly in relation to freedom of expression and access to information. They facilitate rapid access to knowledge, foster mutual understanding, expose human rights violations, and advocate for transparent governance.

Peace

Having discussed the term "digitalisation", it is also important to establish a clear definition of the term "conflict". A conflict arises when two parties engage in a competition for the same restricted supply of resources, whether they are material or immaterial (Themnér, & Wallensteen 2011). However, the situation becomes highly troublesome when the parties involved in a disagreement resort to using violent methods to advance their objectives. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, peace is defined as a condition or period in which there is an absence of war or violence in a country or territory. It also refers to a state of tranquility, silence, and harmonious living with others (Mustafa et al., 2023). Peace is characterised as a state of tranquilly, calmness, and absence of disturbance. In the presence of peace, individuals will possess the liberty to enhance their social and economic well-being, since they will be unencumbered and devoid of fear. Therefore, security and peace are closely interconnected.

Conflict

Karl Marx (1848): Marx offered a comprehensive examination of conflict at a large scale. He believed that conflict emerges as a result of economic exploitation and the inherent disparities of capitalism. According to Marx, conflict plays a crucial role in pushing social change, ultimately resulting in revolutionary transformations and the eventual construction of a society without social classes. Kilag et al., (2024) provided a definition of conflict as the presence of activities that are incompatible, resulting in one person's actions obstructing those of another. He primarily studied conflict resolution dynamics, with a specific emphasis on the roles of

collaboration and competition. Deutsch emphasized the significance of trust, communication, and interdependence, proposing that effective conflict resolution entails converting competitive relationships into cooperative ones. Kenneth Boulding (1962): Boulding analyzed conflict using systems theory, which suggests that conflicts arise from inherent contradictions and feedback loops inside a system. He perceived conflict as a contest for mutually exclusive future places. According to Boulding, it is essential to comprehend the fundamental causes and patterns of conflict to create successful solutions. John Burton (1990): According to Burton's human needs theory, conflicts arise when essential human wants, such as security, identity, and acknowledgment, are not fulfilled. He contended that these demands are indispensable, and disputes endure until they are resolved. Burton stressed the importance of tackling fundamental needs to achieve long-lasting conflict resolution, arguing for techniques that surpass cosmetic remedies.

Deutsch's Interpersonal Dynamics and Conflict Resolution,

With respect to this study, these interpersonal dynamics explore the changing aspects of relationships between individuals and provide strategies for resolving conflicts. For instance, the digital environment in Nigeria also impacts interpersonal relationships and the process of resolving conflicts. Therefore, it is believed that social media has the potential to facilitate communication and mutual comprehension among many groups, but it may also serve as a medium for disseminating polarising discourse. The #EndSARS movement, propelled by social media, demonstrated the efficacy of digital tools in organising nonviolent demonstrations and the possibility of heightened confrontations when authorities employ aggressive measures in response.

Potentials of Digitalization, Maintenance of Peace, and Management of Conflict in Nigeria

The process of digitalization presents numerous opportunities for promoting peace and effectively managing conflicts in Nigeria. By harnessing technology, persistent problems can be addressed, leading to a more stable and secure environment. These potentials can be roughly classified into categories such as communication, data management, education, and early warning systems. According to Nwogu, (2018), Digital platforms provide instantaneous communication and coordination among different parties engaged in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Social media and messaging apps serve as platforms for communication, facilitating the connection between communities and government agencies. During crises, these channels

can be utilized to distribute precise information, combat misinformation, and advance peace initiatives.

For Agbu (2007), the utilisation of digital tools in data collection enables the acquisition of more precise and prompt information regarding conflict zones and potential flashpoints. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other data analytics tools have the capability to accurately depict conflict patterns and areas of intense activity, thereby facilitating more effective distribution of resources and strategic planning. Utilizing data in this method improves the capacity to observe and assess peacebuilding endeavors and adapt techniques properly. Muhammad, (2022) asserts that educational campaigns and advocacy are facilitated by digitalization, which aids in the promotion of peace and tolerance. Virtual workshops, seminars, and e-learning modules can be hosted on online platforms to provide education to citizens on conflict resolution, human rights, and the significance of peaceful coexistence. These educational projects have a high potential for success in addressing young individuals who are more inclined to interact with digital content.

Early warning systems greatly benefit from the advancements in digital technologies. Mobile phone networks, social media analytics, and other digital techniques have the capability to identify early indications of conflict, such as atypical army movements or sudden increases in hate speech on social media platforms. These systems offer prompt notifications to authorities and communities, enabling them to take proactive measures to prevent escalation (Odote, 2016). Advancement of Inclusivity and engagement: Digital platforms have the potential to enhance the inclusivity of peace processes by facilitating broader engagement from many segments of society. Women, young people, and disadvantaged communities have the opportunity to express their concerns and participate in discussions by using online forums and virtual town hall meetings (Enos, & Buba, 2023). This inclusivity enhances the likelihood that peacebuilding efforts will be more comprehensive and enduring.

Security

The security challenges in Nigeria are complex and arise from multiple origins, such as insurgency, banditry, and socio-political disputes. Here is a comprehensive summary of these problems, including in-text citations and references.

Insurgency, Banditry terrorism

The primary security concern in Nigeria is the insurgency spearheaded by the Islamist faction Boko Haram, which commenced in 2009. Boko Haram, a militant group whose name translates to "Western education is forbidden," has carried out multiple assaults on government facilities, civilians, and military personnel. The group's efforts have resulted in substantial relocation and casualties. The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (2024) assessment states that Boko Haram's insurgency has resulted in the fatalities of more than 35,000 individuals and the displacement of over 2 million people. The violence has been further exacerbated by the involvement of the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), which is a splinter group of Boko Haram. ISWAP has seized control of several regions that were previously under the authority of Boko Haram and has persistently launched assaults on both military and civilian objectives, hence adding complexity to the security situation (Barkindo, 2023). Banditry has emerged as a major security issue in northern Nigeria. Militant factions, commonly known as bandits, have been involved in large-scale abductions, theft, and homicides. The emergence of these organizations can be ascribed to circumstances such as destitution, joblessness, and insufficient law enforcement. An up-to-date investigation underscores the fact that there has been a significant increase in banditry in the northern states of Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto. Reports indicate that hundreds of kidnappings and a substantial number of fatalities occur on a yearly basis (Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect 2024).

Government's Reaction and Difficulties

The Nigerian government has adopted a range of strategies to tackle these security concerns, such as deploying military operations and implementing community policing. Nevertheless, their endeavors have frequently faced criticism due to their ineffectiveness and tendency to worsen the issue. The Nigerian military's strategy has been accused of committing human rights violations and lacking effective collaboration with other security forces (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Digitalisation and Security in Nigeria

As stated by Corbett, (2016) the term "Internet" refers to an Interconnected Network that allows computers worldwide to establish connections and exchange information. The internet was primarily established for military intelligence purposes (Naughton, 2016). Regrettably, the internet has been employed to exacerbate crises in certain regions of the world, where terrorists and terrorist groups utilize and persistently exploit the internet as a means to disseminate their

anti-social ideologies, thus leading to the radicalization of the populace. According to Anderson, (2018), many individuals have been influenced by the frequent dissemination of offensive and explicit content, which occasionally takes the shape of advocating violence, religious and ethnic bigotry, xenophobia, genocide, racial aggression, and the eradication of those with differing and conflicting beliefs. As a result, there have been instances where disruptions and disputes in the impacted communities have escalated.

Theoretical Review

Digitalization is a concept that centres on the conversion of information via digital technology. This is the latest phase of humanity's socioeconomic development, which comes after the technical revolutions in material and energy transformation. Digitalization refers to the process of transforming data into practical knowledge using algorithms. It has resulted in a substantial rise in the quantity of digitally stored information in technical format (Hilbert, 2020). The theory examines the effects of the widespread adoption of digital technologies on different parts of society, such as the economy, social interactions, politics, and security. Within the Nigerian context, the process of digitalization has exerted a substantial impact on peace and security through several means. Below is an in-depth analysis of this impact:

Digital platforms enhance communication and coordination among security services. Real-time communication tools and secure messaging apps facilitate rapid information exchange and coordination of operations (Kira 2024). Command and control centers that have sophisticated digital infrastructure are capable of efficiently overseeing and addressing security incidents (Mughal, 2022). Cybersecurity Threats: With the increasing digital connectivity in Nigeria, the likelihood of cyberattacks rises. Cybercriminals can focus their attacks on vital infrastructure, financial institutions, and government systems, resulting in disruptions and potentially causing major security breaches (Lis, and Mendel, 2019). The proliferation of internet fraud, identity theft, and hacking presents significant risks to both personal and national security (Pomerleau, and Lowery, 2020).

Another significant issue with social media and digital platforms is the rapid dissemination of misinformation, fake news, and hate speech. This can have serious consequences, such as inciting violence and worsening conflicts (Ngwainmbi, 2019). In times of heightened tension, the dissemination of false or misleading information can exacerbate conflicts and weaken attempts to establish peace (Gbaje et al., 2023). The absence of robust regulation and vigilant monitoring of internet content poses significant difficulties in managing the dissemination of detrimental information. Mobilization and Advocacy: Digital platforms

offer a medium for civil society organizations and activists to gather support, increase consciousness, and promote peace and security. Nwafor, and Nwabuzor, (2021) asserts that social media campaigns and online petitions could garner attention towards security issues and have influence on policy changes. Grassroots movements and community-based organizations could utilize digital resources to advance peace and resolve conflicts (Union, 2020).

The process of digitalization has a significant impact on the maintenance of peace and security in Nigeria, presenting various possibilities as well as difficulties. Although digital technologies have the potential to improve security operations, empower civil society, and stimulate economic growth, they also bring forth new security risks and worsen pre-existing imbalances. An all-encompassing strategy that incorporates strong cybersecurity measures, efficient regulation of digital content, and initiatives to close the gap in digital access is crucial for maximizing the advantages of digitalization while minimizing its hazards.

Methodology:

This research employs a desk-review methodology to examine the various influences of digitalization on peace and security. It involves synthesizing and critically analyzing current literature, studies, and reports. Although this method enables a thorough examination of the study issue, it is crucial to recognize any constraints, such as the possibility of prejudice in the choice and analysis of materials (Smith, 2020).

Method of Data Analysis

Content Analysis

The study adopts content analysis as its method for analysis the data. According to Serafini, and Reid, (2023), content analysis is defined as a "method for interpreting written, spoken, or graphic contents." Content analysis is the examination of documented interactions between people, through the determination of the specific question that research aims to answer (Parveen, & Showkat, 2017). Having stated that, data will be collected through current literature, studies, and reports, which will be synthesized and critically analyzed to arrive at findings with respect to the identified research objectives of the study.

The Influence of Digitalization on Peace and Security in Nigeria

The process of digitalization has had a substantial impact on peace and security in Nigeria, resulting in both beneficial and detrimental effects. The emergence of digital technology has fundamentally transformed communication, government, and social interactions, thereby impacting the nation's security and peace framework in both positive and negative manners.

Positive Impacts

Improved Communication and Coordination: Digital technology has enhanced communication and coordination among security services. For example, the use of mobile phones and internet services has facilitated the instantaneous exchange of information, which is essential for prompt reactions to security risks (Oju *et al.,* 2023). Messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram are commonly utilized for swift distribution of information among security officers and people of the community.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have emerged as influential tools for promoting public awareness and advocacy. The #EndSARS movement, which advocated for the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) owing to their violent methods, mostly utilized these digital channels for coordination (Uwalaka, 2024). These platforms have empowered marginalized communities and enhanced government transparency.

The process of digitalization has also improved e-governance, hence fostering transparency and accountability. The adoption of platforms like the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) has effectively mitigated corruption by promoting accountable administration of public finances and resources (Folorunso, and Simeon, 2021).

Adverse Effects

Cybercrime and digital fraud: Digitalization has contributed to the increase in cybercrime and digital fraud in Nigeria. The prevalence of internet scams, usually referred to as "Yahoo Yahoo," has significantly increased, impacting individuals both inside the local community and across international borders (Ugwu, and Mgbechi, 2024). This not only erodes economic stability but also damages the country's international brand.

The dissemination of false information and misleading content has been facilitated by digital platforms, leading to the potential for inciting violence and social instability. During the 2019 general elections, the dissemination of incorrect information via social media exacerbated

tensions and had a role in inciting electoral violence in specific areas (Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al., 2023).

Terrorism and extremist propaganda: Terrorist organizations like Boko Haram have utilized digital channels to disseminate their message and enlist new recruits. They utilize social media platforms and encrypted messaging applications to engage in communication, strategize assaults, and distribute extremist content (Aro, 2013). This has impeded endeavors to counter terrorism and uphold peace.

Concrete Illustrations

The #BringBackOurGirls Campaign: This social media campaign, which arose in reaction to the kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls by Boko Haram in 2014, serves as a prime example of the constructive utilization of digital channels. The campaign attracted worldwide attention and exerted pressure on the Nigerian government to initiate measures (Ibi, 2023). The Nigerian military has progressively incorporated digital surveillance technologies, such as drones, to observe and counter insurgencies in the Northeast region. These technologies have enhanced the acquisition of vital information and increased the efficiency of military operations (Okpaleke et al., 2023; Gambo, and Ibrahim, 2022).

In conclusion, the process of digitalization has had a significant and far-reaching effect on the state of security and peace in Nigeria, presenting various advantageous prospects as well as obstacles. Although it has improved communication, public awareness, and government transparency, it has also enabled cybercrime, the dissemination of false information, and extremist actions. To achieve a balance between these effects, it is necessary to implement strong digital policies, provide public education, and foster international cooperation. This will allow us to take advantage of the benefits of digitalization while minimizing its risks.

Summary

The incorporation of digital technologies into societies has resulted in significant and profound changes in different sectors, presenting both advantageous possibilities and difficulties. Although digitalisation brings about improvements in creativity, connectivity, and economic growth, it also introduces new vulnerability, especially in the areas of security and peace. While the interconnectivity of the digital world has eroded conventional barriers, enabling communication, commerce, and cultural interchange. However, it has also made society

vulnerable to cyber threats such as hacking, cyberbullying, and disinformation. Therefore, the study concludes with the following recommendations:

Policy and Practical Implications

Implications for policy

National Cybersecurity Strategy: This approach is aimed at safeguarding vital infrastructure, government networks, and individuals from cyber risks. This approach should incorporate frequent updates to effectively tackle changing threats and technology.

Regulation of Digital Platforms: Implement measures to enforce accountability for the content hosted by digital platforms such as social media and messaging applications. This may involve implementing strategies to address misinformation, hate speech, and internet radicalization. Statewide Digital Literacy Initiatives implement statewide digital literacy initiatives to educate consumers about safe internet activities, enhance their ability to identify misinformation, and safeguard their personal data. These initiatives should cater to diverse groups, encompassing students, professionals, and rural areas.

Practical Implications

Offer assistance for research and development efforts that concentrate on cybersecurity, digital forensics, and the societal consequences of digitalization. This can be achieved through grants, partnerships with academic institutions, and innovation clusters.

Implement public awareness efforts to educate the public about the significance of cybersecurity and the potential hazards linked to digital technologies. These campaigns can encompass guidance on safeguarding oneself against phishing, internet fraud, and identity theft.

Implement strong monitoring and evaluation procedures to evaluate the efficacy of digitalization policies and initiatives. This will aid identify areas for refinement and ensure the ongoing enhancement of security measures.

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