Youth Perceptions, Use and Effects of Social Media on Peace and Conflicts in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The article focused on examining how youth perception and use of social media (SM) influences peace and conflicts among Tanzanians, using the Dar es Salaam region as a case study. A qualitative approach was used to collect and analyse data. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents, whereby youth, local government officers and community residents were interviewed. The findings revealed that SM has both advantages and disadvantages in promoting peace and activating conflicts, depending on users' perceptions and interests. SM facilitates conflicts due to the Social Media Networks (SMNs) ability to spread fake news quickly, unfounded claims, and rumours. These promote conflicts between political opponents as well as causing mistrust among citizens and their leaders. Some artists, especially comedians, instigate conflicts in society by editing political and religious leaders' messages. On the other hand, it was revealed that SM promotes peace due to quicker transfer of relevant information that nurtures positive unit values, solidarity, respect and love among the group, society members, and citizens. These values promote good deeds, such as worshipping God, working and living together amicably. However, the study found out that lack of appropriate education on SM's use and importance among many youths on youth development seems to have hindered SM use in peace promotion. The study calls for strengthening stakeholders' initiative to educate and mobilise improved use of SM among youth to sustain peace and security, which is a pre-condition for their self-development and prosperity of their country.

Keywords: social media, peace, conflicts, youth, Tanzania