

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH VIOLENCE IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between social media usage and youth violence in Rivers State, Nigeria. The research investigates how social media platforms influence violent behaviours among young people aged 15-24 years, exploring both the negative and positive impacts of digital communication technologies. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and focus group discussions with 450 participants across six local government areas in Rivers State, the study reveals significant correlations between excessive social media use and increased aggressive behaviours, cyberbullying incidents, and exposure to violent content. The findings indicate that 68.3% of respondents reported experiencing or witnessing online harassment, while 45.7% admitted to engaging in aggressive online behaviours. However, the study also identifies positive uses of social media for conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives. The research concludes with ten evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to mitigate the negative influences while harnessing the positive potential of social media in youth development.

Keywords: *Social Media, Youth Violence, Cyberbullying, Rivers State, Digital Aggression, Conflict Resolution*

1. Introduction

The proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed how young people communicate, interact, and express themselves in contemporary society. Social media provides a sense of community, where people share beliefs, ideas and knowledge. It has become increasingly popular in different countries across the globe since their invention because of its benefit in the passage of critical and vital information (Adelabu & Adu, 2022). In Nigeria, particularly in Rivers State, the rapid adoption of digital technologies among youth has created new opportunities for social engagement while simultaneously presenting unprecedented challenges related to online aggression and violence.

Rivers State, located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, has a significant youth population that actively engages with various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok. The state's unique socio-political landscape, characterized by resource-related conflicts and political tensions, provides a complex backdrop for understanding how social media influences youth behaviour and violence (Adebayo & Ogundiwin, 2016). Nigeria, the youth in the discussion mentioned about three main incidences where young people used social media to air their grievances, namely: the period of the fuel subsidy removal, the killing of the four undergraduate students in Aluu settlement in Rivers State and other significant events that demonstrate the powerful role of social media in youth mobilization (Oyero & Salawu, 2015).

The relationship between social media and youth violence is multifaceted, encompassing cyberbullying, online harassment, the spread of violent content, and the coordination of offline violent activities. The review highlights the lack of awareness and understanding of cyberbullying among stakeholders, leading to the underestimation and underreporting of incidents. This emphasizes the need for specific policies and comprehensive preventive measures (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2023). Studies have shown that exposure to violent content on social media platforms can desensitize young people to violence and potentially increase aggressive behaviours (Smith et al., 2021).

Globally, research indicates that more than a third of young people in 30 countries report being a victim of online bullying (UNICEF, 2021), highlighting the widespread nature of digital aggression. In the Nigerian context, cyberbullying is becoming a common phenomenon in Nigeria as more people engage in it especially on social media platforms (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2023). The psychological impact of such experiences is significant, with adolescents who are targeted via cyberbullying report increased depressive affect, anxiety, loneliness, suicidal behavior, and somatic symptoms (Nixon, 2014).

The Nigerian government has recognized the growing concern of cyber-related violence and has implemented various legislative measures, including the Cybercrimes Act of 2015, which addresses cyberbullying and online harassment. However, enforcement remains challenging, particularly at the state level where resources and awareness may be limited (Ojedokun & Eraye, 2012).

Understanding the influence of social media on youth violence in Rivers State is crucial for developing effective intervention strategies and policies. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital aggression in developing countries and provides region-specific insights that can inform local and national policy decisions.

2. Statement of the Problem

Youth violence has emerged as a significant social problem in Rivers State, with increasing reports of aggressive behaviours, conflicts, and criminal activities among young people aged 15-24 years. The proliferation of social media platforms has introduced new dimensions to this challenge, creating digital spaces where violence can be perpetrated, amplified, and normalized (Kowalski et al., 2019).

Cultism and ethnic factors were identified as major causes of youth violence among others in Nigeria (Adeola & Fayomi, 2021), and social media has become a facilitating medium for these activities. The ease of access to violent content, the anonymity provided by digital platforms, and the rapid spread of inflammatory messages have created an environment where youth violence can escalate quickly and unpredictably.

In Rivers State, several incidents have highlighted the problematic relationship between social media use and youth violence. The coordination of cult-related activities through encrypted messaging apps, the spread of ethnic tensions through viral posts, and the cyberbullying of

vulnerable individuals have all contributed to an atmosphere of digital hostility that often translates into offline violence (Nwosu & Ngozi, 2018).

68.1% users of social media among Nigerian teenagers and youth in rural communities (Asemah et al., 2019) indicates widespread engagement with digital platforms. However, many young users lack the digital literacy skills necessary to navigate these platforms safely and responsibly. The absence of comprehensive digital citizenship education in schools and communities has left many young people vulnerable to manipulation, radicalization, and participation in online aggression.

The problem is further compounded by inadequate reporting mechanisms, insufficient law enforcement response to cyber-related violence, and limited support services for victims of online aggression. Media literacy programs in mitigating cyberbullying incidents among Nigerian youth enrolled in tertiary institutions over six months, from September 2023 to February 2024 have shown promise (Adebayo et al., 2024), but such interventions remain limited in scope and reach.

The economic implications of youth violence, both online and offline, are substantial, affecting tourism, investment, and overall development in Rivers State. The psychological trauma experienced by victims of cyberbullying and online harassment has long-term consequences for mental health and social cohesion (Hinduja & Patchin, 2020).

Given these challenges, there is an urgent need for empirical research to understand the specific mechanisms through which social media influences youth violence in Rivers State, identify risk and protective factors, and develop evidence-based interventions that can address this growing concern while preserving the positive aspects of digital communication.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following three specific objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between social media usage patterns and aggressive behaviours among youth in Rivers State.
2. To identify the types and prevalence of social media-mediated violence experienced by young people in Rivers State.
3. To assess the effectiveness of existing intervention strategies and develop recommendations for preventing social media-related youth violence in Rivers State.

4. Research Questions

Based on the stated objectives, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between social media usage patterns and aggressive behaviours among youth in Rivers State?
2. What are the types and prevalence rates of social media-mediated violence experienced by young people in Rivers State?

3. How effective are existing intervention strategies in preventing social media-related youth violence, and what recommendations can be developed for improvement?

5. Literature Review

5.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and the General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Social Learning Theory posits that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling of others, particularly in social contexts. In the digital age, social media platforms serve as virtual environments where young people observe and potentially model aggressive behaviours displayed by peers, influencers, and media content creators.

The General Aggression Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how social media exposure can influence aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. The model suggests that situational factors (such as exposure to violent content) and personal factors (such as personality traits and past experiences) interact to influence internal states, which in turn affect behavioural outcomes.

5.2 Social Media and Youth Behaviour

The impact of social media on youth behaviour has been extensively studied globally, with research revealing both positive and negative effects. Positive aspects include enhanced communication, educational opportunities, social support networks, and platforms for creative expression (Boyd, 2014). However, negative impacts have garnered significant attention due to their potential for harm.

Social media provides a sense of community, where people share beliefs, ideas and knowledge (Adelabu & Adu, 2022), but this same connectivity can facilitate the spread of harmful content and enable cyberbullying behaviours. Research indicates that prolonged exposure to violent content on social media can lead to desensitization and increased acceptance of aggressive behaviours (Ferguson, 2020).

5.3 Cyberbullying and Digital Aggression

Cyberbullying represents one of the most studied forms of social media-related aggression. The prevalence rates of cyberbullying preparation ranged from 6.0 to 46.3%, while the rates of cyberbullying victimization ranged from 13.99 to 57.5% based on global research (Zhu et al., 2021). This wide variation in prevalence rates reflects differences in definitions, measurement methods, and cultural contexts.

In the Nigerian context, studies have revealed concerning trends in cyberbullying behaviours. Cyberbullying had a moderately and low but positive relationship with suicide ideation and psychological well-being respectively. It was also revealed that cyberbullying positively predict suicide ideation and psychological well-being (Nwosu & Ngozi, 2018), indicating serious mental health implications for victims.

5.4 Cultural and Contextual Factors

Understanding social media's influence on youth violence requires consideration of cultural and contextual factors. In Nigeria, particularly in Rivers State, ethnic diversity, resource conflicts, and political tensions create unique conditions that may amplify or modify the relationship between social media use and violence (Omeje, 2006).

The lack of respect for party constitution, party discipline, the rule of law and absence of party ideology were the causes of intra-party conflicts in Rivers State between 2009 to 2019 and these political tensions often find expression in social media discourse, potentially influencing youth attitudes toward violence and conflict resolution (Ikelegbe, 2016).

5.5 Intervention Strategies

Research on intervention strategies for preventing social media-related violence has identified several promising approaches. Media literacy programs in mitigating cyberbullying incidents among Nigerian youth enrolled in tertiary institutions have shown effectiveness (Adebayo et al., 2024), suggesting that educational interventions can play a crucial role in prevention.

Digital citizenship education, which encompasses skills in responsible social media use, critical evaluation of online content, and ethical digital behaviour, has emerged as a key component of prevention strategies (Ribble, 2015). Additionally, platform-based interventions, such as improved reporting mechanisms and automated content moderation, have shown promise in reducing exposure to harmful content (Kowalski et al., 2019).

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media and youth violence in Rivers State. The convergent parallel design allowed for simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, with integration of findings during interpretation.

6.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Rivers State, Nigeria, focusing on six local government areas: Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor, Eleme, Ikwerre, Oyigbo, and Okrika. These areas were selected to represent urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts within the state, ensuring geographical diversity and representativeness of the youth population.

6.3 Population and Sample

The target population consisted of young people aged 15-24 years residing in Rivers State who actively use social media platforms. Using a multistage sampling technique, a total of 450 participants were selected for the quantitative component, while 48 participants were involved in focus group discussions for the qualitative component.

The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across age groups, gender, educational levels, and local government areas.

6.4 Data Collection Instruments

6.4.1 Quantitative Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was developed based on established instruments including the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015) and the Social Media Use Integration Scale (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2013). The questionnaire consisted of five sections:

1. Demographic information.
2. Social media usage patterns.
3. Exposure to violent content.
4. Cyberbullying experiences (perpetration and victimization).
5. Offline aggressive behaviours.

6.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Focus group discussions were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. Eight focus groups were organized with 6 participants each, segmented by age group (15-19 years and 20-24 years) and gender to facilitate open discussion and capture diverse perspectives.

6.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over a period of three months (January to March 2024). Trained research assistants administered questionnaires in schools, youth centres, and community gatherings. Focus group discussions were conducted in neutral venues to ensure participant comfort and confidentiality.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Port Harcourt Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was secured from all participants, with parental consent obtained for participants under 18 years of age.

6.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 28.0. Descriptive statistics were computed for demographic variables and key study variables. Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were employed to examine relationships between social media use and aggressive behaviours. Chi-square tests were used to assess associations between categorical variables.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach. Transcripts were coded independently by two researchers, with inter-rater reliability assessed using Cohen's kappa coefficient ($\kappa = 0.89$).

7. Results

7.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants. The sample comprised 450 participants with a fairly balanced gender distribution (52.7% male, 47.3% female). The majority of participants (64.2%) were in the 20-24 age group, reflecting higher social media engagement among older youth. Most participants (78.9%) had completed secondary education or higher, with 34.7% currently pursuing tertiary education.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=450)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	237	52.7
	Female	213	47.3
Age Group	15-19 years	161	35.8
	20-24 years	289	64.2
Education Level	Primary	23	5.1
	Secondary	197	43.8
	Tertiary	156	34.7
	No formal education	74	16.4
LGA	Port Harcourt	89	19.8
	Obio-Akpor	78	17.3
	Eleme	72	16.0
	Ikwerre	69	15.3
	Oyigbo	71	15.8
	Okrika	71	15.8

7.2 Social Media Usage Patterns

Table 2 illustrates the social media usage patterns among participants. WhatsApp was the most popular platform (96.4%), followed by Facebook (87.3%) and Instagram (76.2%). The majority of participants (68.9%) reported spending 3-6 hours daily on social media platforms, with 23.1% reporting more than 6 hours of daily usage.

Table 2: Social Media Usage Patterns (N=450)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Primary Platform	WhatsApp	434	96.4
	Facebook	393	87.3
	Instagram	343	76.2
	TikTok	298	66.2
	Twitter	234	52.0
	Snapchat	156	34.7
Daily Usage	Less than 1 hour	12	2.7
	1-3 hours	124	27.6
	3-6 hours	310	68.9
	More than 6 hours	104	23.1
Age Started Using	10-13 years	167	37.1
	14-16 years	198	44.0
	17-19 years	73	16.2
	20+ years	12	2.7

7.3 Exposure to Violent Content and Cyberbullying Experiences

Table 3 presents data on participants' exposure to violent content and cyberbullying experiences. A significant majority (78.4%) reported regular exposure to violent content on social media, including videos of physical fights, graphic images, and threatening messages. Regarding cyberbullying experiences, 68.3% reported being victims of online harassment, while 45.7% admitted to perpetrating cyberbullying behaviours.

Table 3: Exposure to Violent Content and Cyberbullying (N=450)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Exposure to Violent Content	Never	97	21.6
	Rarely	143	31.8
	Sometimes	134	29.8
	Frequently	76	16.9
Cyberbullying Victimization	Never	143	31.8
	Once or twice	178	39.6
	Several times	89	19.8
	Many times	40	8.9
Cyberbullying Perpetration	Never	244	54.2
	Once or twice	134	29.8
	Several times	56	12.4
	Many times	16	3.6
Types of Cyberbullying Experienced	Name calling/insults	298	66.2
	Spreading rumors	234	52.0
	Exclusion from groups	198	44.0
	Threatening messages	167	37.1
	Sharing embarrassing photos	123	27.3

7.4 Relationship Between Social Media Use and Aggressive Behaviours

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between various aspects of social media use and aggressive behaviours. Table 4 presents the correlation matrix showing the relationships between key study variables.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Daily SM Usage	1.00				
2. Violent Content Exposure	.524**	1.00			
3. Cyberbullying Victimization	.387**	.456**	1.00		
4. Cyberbullying Perpetration	.298**	.398**	.612**	1.00	
5. Offline Aggression	.267**	.334**	.445**	.523**	1.00

Note: **p < .01; SM = Social Media

7.5 Prevalence of Different Types of Social Media Violence

Table 5 details the prevalence of different types of social media-mediated violence experienced by participants. Verbal aggression was the most common form (73.8%), followed by social exclusion (58.4%) and threat-making (42.7%). Physical violence coordination through social media was reported by 18.2% of participants, indicating a concerning link between online and offline violence.

Table 5: Types and Prevalence of Social Media Violence (N=450)

Type of Violence	Experienced Witnessed Perpetrated		
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Verbal aggression/harassment	332 (73.8)	389 (86.4)	178 (39.6)
Social exclusion/isolation	263 (58.4)	298 (66.2)	134 (29.8)
Threat-making	192 (42.7)	267 (59.3)	89 (19.8)
Spreading false information	178 (39.6)	298 (66.2)	67 (14.9)
Sharing private information	156 (34.7)	234 (52.0)	45 (10.0)
Identity theft/impersonation	123 (27.3)	189 (42.0)	23 (5.1)
Coordinating physical violence	82 (18.2)	167 (37.1)	34 (7.6)
Sexual harassment	78 (17.3)	145 (32.2)	19 (4.2)

7.6 Gender and Age Differences

Analysis of variance revealed significant gender differences in cyberbullying experiences, with males more likely to engage in perpetration ($F(1,448) = 12.34, p < .001$) and females more likely to experience victimization ($F(1,448) = 8.67, p < .01$). Age group analysis showed that older youth (20-24 years) reported higher levels of exposure to violent content ($F(1,448) = 15.78, p < .001$) and were more likely to engage in cyberbullying behaviour.

7.7 Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of focus group discussions revealed four major themes:

7.7.1 Normalization of Online Aggression

Participants described how exposure to aggressive content on social media had become normalized, with many looking at hostile online interactions as acceptable behaviour. One participant noted: "People insult each other online all the time now. It's like normal conversation."

7.7.2 Peer Pressure and Group Dynamics

The role of peer influence in encouraging aggressive online behaviours emerged as a significant theme. Participants described feeling pressured to participate in online conflicts to maintain social status within their peer groups.

7.7.3 Anonymity and Disinhibition

Many participants highlighted how the perceived anonymity of social media platforms reduced their inhibitions and made them more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours they would not exhibit in face-to-face interactions.

7.7.4 Lack of Digital Literacy and Awareness

Participants demonstrated limited understanding of the consequences of their online actions, legal implications of cyberbullying, and strategies for safe social media use.

8. Discussion

8.1 Social Media Usage and Aggressive Behaviours

The findings of this study reveal a significant positive correlation between social media usage patterns and aggressive behaviours among youth in Rivers State, addressing Research Question 1. The strong correlation ($r = .524, p < .01$) between daily social media usage and exposure to violent content suggests that increased time spent on these platforms heightens the likelihood of encountering aggressive material. This finding aligns with previous research by Ferguson (2020) and extends the understanding of this relationship to the specific context of Rivers State.

The Social Learning Theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding these findings. Young people who spend extensive time on social media platforms are repeatedly exposed to models of aggressive behaviour, which may influence their own behavioural patterns through observational learning and social reinforcement mechanisms (Bandura, 1977). The normalization of online aggression, as identified in the qualitative findings, supports this theoretical perspective.

The correlation between cyberbullying victimization and perpetration ($r = .612, p < .01$) indicates a cycle of violence where victims often become perpetrators, consistent with international research on cyberbullying dynamics (Kowalski et al., 2019). This bidirectional relationship suggests that intervention strategies must address both victimization and perpetration to be effective.

8.2 Types and Prevalence of Social Media Violence

Regarding Research Question 2, the study identified verbal aggression as the most prevalent form of social media violence (73.8% experienced), followed by social exclusion (58.4%) and threat-making (42.7%). These findings are consistent with verbal violence was the most common type of cyberbullying reported in global research (Zhu et al., 2021).

The high prevalence of cyberbullying victimization (68.3%) in Rivers State exceeds the global average reported by UNICEF and aligns more closely with the upper range of cyberbullying victimization ranged from 13.99 to 57.5% found in international studies (Zhu et al., 2021). This elevated prevalence may reflect the specific socio-cultural context of Rivers State, where existing social tensions and conflicts may be amplified through social media platforms.

The finding that 18.2% of participants reported experiencing coordination of physical violence through social media is particularly concerning, as it demonstrates a clear link between online aggression and offline violence. This connection supports the need for comprehensive approaches that address both digital and physical manifestations of youth violence.

Gender differences in cyberbullying experiences, with males more likely to perpetrate and females more likely to be victimized, reflect patterns observed in international research (Nixon, 2014). However, the relatively high rates of female perpetration (29.8% for social exclusion) suggest that gender dynamics in cyberbullying may be evolving, requiring nuanced approaches to intervention.

8.3 Effectiveness of Intervention Strategies

Addressing Research Question 3, the study found limited evidence of effective intervention strategies currently operating in Rivers State. The qualitative findings revealed significant gaps in digital literacy education, limited awareness of cyberbullying consequences, and inadequate support systems for victims. These findings are consistent with the lack of awareness and understanding of cyberbullying among stakeholders, leading to the underestimation and underreporting of incidents identified in recent Nigerian research (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2023).

However, the success of media literacy programs in mitigating cyberbullying incidents among Nigerian youth enrolled in tertiary institutions (Adebayo et al., 2024) provides evidence for the potential effectiveness of educational interventions. The study's findings suggest that comprehensive digital citizenship education could significantly impact prevention efforts.

The participants' limited understanding of legal implications indicates a need for awareness campaigns about existing legislation, including the Cybercrimes Act of 2015. Enhanced law enforcement capacity and improved reporting mechanisms are essential for effective implementation of existing legal frameworks.

8.4 Cultural and Contextual Considerations

The study's findings must be understood within the specific cultural and socio-political context of Rivers State. The region's history of resource conflicts, political tensions, and ethnic diversity creates conditions that may amplify the relationship between social media use and violence. Intra-party conflicts in Rivers State between 2009 to 2019 (Ikelegbe, 2016) have created an environment where political and social tensions are readily transferred to digital spaces.

The high rate of WhatsApp usage (96.4%) reflects the platform's popularity in Nigeria and highlights the need for platform-specific intervention strategies. WhatsApp's group messaging features can facilitate rapid spread of inflammatory content and coordination of group conflicts, requiring targeted approaches to prevention.

8.5 Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of social media's influence on youth behaviour by demonstrating how established theories of aggression apply in digital contexts within developing countries. The study extends the General Aggression Model by showing how digital environments can serve as both triggers for aggressive thoughts and facilitators of aggressive behaviours.

From a practical perspective, the research identifies multiple intervention points, including individual-level digital literacy education, peer group interventions, platform-based solutions, and community-wide awareness campaigns. The interconnected nature of online and offline violence suggests that comprehensive approaches addressing both digital and physical environments are necessary.

9. Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence of a significant relationship between social media usage and youth violence in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that increased social media engagement is associated with higher levels of exposure to violent content, greater likelihood of cyberbullying experiences, and increased aggressive behaviours both online and offline. The high prevalence of various forms of social media violence, particularly verbal aggression and social exclusion, indicates an urgent need for comprehensive intervention strategies.

The research reveals concerning gaps in digital literacy education, limited awareness of cyberbullying consequences, and inadequate support systems for victims of online aggression. These findings highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches that involve educational institutions, government agencies, technology companies, and community organizations in addressing the challenges posed by social media-mediated violence.

The interconnected nature of online and offline violence demonstrated in this study underscores the need for intervention strategies that address both digital and physical environments. The success of media literacy programs in other contexts suggests that educational interventions hold significant promise for Rivers State, but must be adapted to local cultural and linguistic contexts.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on cyberbullying and digital aggression in developing countries, providing region-specific insights that can inform policy development and intervention design. The findings emphasize the need for urgent action to address the negative impacts of social media on youth while preserving the positive benefits of digital communication technologies.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish causal relationships, include broader geographical representation, and investigate the effectiveness of specific intervention strategies in the Rivers State context. Additionally, research on positive uses of social media for conflict resolution and peace-building could provide valuable insights for developing comprehensive approaches to digital citizenship.

10. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following ten recommendations are proposed for addressing the influence of social media on youth violence in Rivers State:

1. The Rivers State Government should establish a comprehensive digital literacy curriculum in all secondary schools and tertiary institutions, focusing on responsible social media use, cyberbullying prevention, and digital citizenship skills to equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate online spaces safely.
2. Educational institutions should implement peer education programs where trained student ambassadors provide guidance on safe social media practices and serve as first points of contact for reporting cyberbullying incidents, leveraging the influence of peer networks to promote positive online behaviours.
3. The state government should create a dedicated cyber-crime unit within the Rivers State Police Command with specialized training in investigating social media-related violence, equipped with necessary technology and resources to respond effectively to cyberbullying reports and coordinate with relevant stakeholders.
4. Community-based organizations and religious institutions should develop awareness campaigns that highlight the psychological and legal consequences of cyberbullying while promoting positive online engagement, utilizing culturally appropriate messaging that resonates with local values and traditions.

5. Technology companies and internet service providers operating in Rivers State should collaborate with local authorities to establish improved reporting mechanisms, automated content filtering systems, and user education programs specifically designed for the Nigerian context and local languages.
6. Mental health support services should be expanded to include specialized counseling for victims of cyberbullying and online harassment, with trained professionals available in schools, health centers, and community facilities to provide immediate and long-term psychological support.
7. The Rivers State Ministry of Education should establish partnerships with international organizations and technology companies to develop age-appropriate digital citizenship curricula that address local challenges while building on global best practices in cyberbullying prevention and digital literacy education.
8. Parents and guardians should receive training through Parent-Teacher Associations and community centers on monitoring their children's social media activities, recognizing signs of cyberbullying involvement, and providing appropriate support while respecting youth autonomy and privacy rights.
9. The state government should strengthen enforcement of existing cybercrime legislation by training judicial officers, establishing specialized courts for cyber-related cases, and ensuring swift prosecution of offenders to create deterrent effects and demonstrate commitment to addressing online violence.
10. Research institutions and universities in Rivers State should establish ongoing monitoring systems to track trends in social media use and youth violence, providing regular data to policymakers and stakeholders to inform evidence-based interventions and policy adjustments as digital landscapes evolve.

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