

**A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE 1ST STAKEHOLDERS VIRTUAL SUMMIT FOR YOUTH –
ACTIVISTS IN SOCIAL AND DEMOCRATIC ACTIVISM**

By

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INTRODUCTION

This year event, the theme of this year event is “Youth Activist as Promoters of Integrity, Democracy and Good Governance” and it places emphasis on youth in social and democratic activism. It focuses on how young people through their voice are influencing the social and democratic narratives in Nigeria. It also focusses on enhancing the capacity of young people in activism by discussing strategies in social and democratic activism, challenges usually met by young people in activism and how identified challenges can be addressed when encountered how youths can properly, strategically and constructively place arguments for their voice to be heard.

The event will bring together a network of young activist from different localities across the country. Experienced persons in activism and stakeholders from government institutions have been hinted to speak on critical topics in relations to the year’s theme. The programme will encourage involvement, capacity building, sharing of ideas and networking.

Objective

The event of this year is being organized to enhance youths capacity to participate in social and democratic activism.

TOPIC: CARRYING OUT VISIBLE ACTIVITISM AS YOUNG ACTIVIST

Definition Concept

Activism it is a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous actions especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue. e.g Demonstration, protest other word are: involvement, advocacy, militancy, striking etc. it is the pursuit for change, it is the pursuit for social, economic, political or environmental reform. Activist fight for civil rights, for justice, for freedom etc.

Role of Activism: Activism has played a major role in ending slavery, challenging dictatorship, protecting workers from exploitation, protecting the environment, promoting equality for women, opposing racism and many others. It can also be used for aims such as attacking minorities or promoting war.

Types of Activism

1. **Letter-writing and petition:** These are two of the most common forms of activism. They are used to pressure public officials, corporations and other power holders. The more letters or signatures on a petition, the more likely it is that people will pay attention.
2. **Social Media Campaigns:** Social media activism is a new form of activism taking the world by storm. Also known as “hashtag activism” it brings activism to social media networks like twitter, facebook, telegram, Instagram users raises community awareness and sensitization of certain issues, organizations, and actions through the use of graphics, videos and more. The reach of social media activism became clear in 2020 with the hashtag “black lives matter”. According to data from few research, the hashtag was used over 47 million times on twitter between May 26 and June 7. Despite its popularity, many are skeptical about social media activism. It often stops at simply sharing a post, so there’s no real-world action. It becomes performative. However, when paired with other strategies, social media activism is a very effective way to share information and broaden an issues reach, especially among the young according to few research the number of 18-29 years old using social media for social and political issues has doubled since 2018. The first step to activism is engagement and while many people will stop at sharing posts, others will take what they have.
3. **Demonstration and Protests:** Demonstrations are arguably the best known type of activism. During a demonstration or a protest, people united by a common on belief meet together. They might march along a specific route, sit in at a specific place to draw attention to the cause, or hold a vigil to honor someone’s life. Time and place are often important many demonstrations take place on the anniversaries of certain events, like the birthday/death of someone important to the movement or the birthday/death of a victim of injustice. Organizers often also pick a location that’s meaningful, like outside a capital to protest a law.
4. **Boycotts:** Boycotts are designed to economically impact a “target” like a business that’s engaging in exploitative practices. Like with protests, boycotts are most successful when large groups of people participate.
5. **Strike:** When workers deal with unfair or dangerous work conditions, low wages, or other issues, they might refuse to work when negotiations are refused or they fail. Strikes were a feature of the industrial revolution as there were few work protections and companies depended on mass labor. Many countries made strike illegal to deter workers from engaging in them. While strikes are most associated with businesses, they are also used to pressure government to change certain policies.

How Does Activism Work?

Activism seeks to influence political outcomes by mobilizing citizens who are not political insiders to take actions that generates wide spread or well targeted public attention around specific issues or demands, usually through generating media coverage of events like protests, confrontations, or strikes.

How do I become an Activist and Advocate?

Activism is about making people listen, but advocacy is working on identifying solutions and limiting all parties to listen to each other's problems. Advocacy allow one to educate for change, thus, as is commonly mistaken, being an advocate is not difficult and something anyone, regardless of age, can get involved in.

How Can Someone Start an Activism or Campaign?

1. Build yourself with necessary skills
2. Be determined and self-oriented
3. Be purpose driven
4. Be clear of the vision/mission
5. Learn everything you can about the issue
6. Collaborate with as many people as you can
7. Choose your battles wisely
8. Watch the news
9. Have a mentor/role model
10. Apply social media activism strategy.

Few tips on becoming a well-known activist?

1. Leadership oriented
2. Result oriented
3. Be skillful and educated
4. Be out spoken
5. Join local group
6. Commit to small actions
7. Get educated in human rights issues
8. Get involved social, political and economic process
9. Be flexible and willing to go where you are needed.

Characteristics of Successful Community Activism?

Motivation and commitment of personal time and energy to social involvement, a willingness to take risks, and the belief in power and efficacy of groups to effect change are common characteristics among community activist.

Note, that activism on social media includes promoting awareness of social justice's issues and sharing solidarity through the use of hashtags, posts, and campaigns. Genuine social media activism is supported by concrete actions directions and measurable commitment to change.

What are the challenges that activists face that hinders/suppresses their voice?

How can they manage the challenges?

Some challenges include emotional attachments to issues resulting in sentiments and hate statements/speeches and pushing away the whole ideas of activism.

- ❖ Lack of recognition and support
- ❖ Failed policy and inability of government agency to take actions.
- ❖ Persecution when they stand against government.

Solution to some of the challenges

- ❖ Activism should be a hobby than work
- ❖ Enjoy what you do
- ❖ Written articles can be developed and sent to media houses for publications
- ❖ Social media is a great tool if utilized appropriately.
- ❖ Apply the 3c consultation, confrontation and consolidation.
- ❖ Activist should not work alone. They should belong to a group that can speak for them and extend protection services.
- ❖ Apply the 4 factors of leadership is idealized, influence, inspirational and intellectual.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Young people should start with themselves looking towards and changing attitude and mindset that need changing and imbibing new, better ones. Young people need to be innovative and creative this way they can assert themselves in the society, their contributions will speak a lot which in turn bring about recognition, impact and greater opportunities. Aspiring to do greater things and not having a limited mindset about achieving goals and aspirations change the structure of leadership and governance.

They must learn to influence, generate policies and programmes. Participate in decision making process, solicit for leadership roles and representation. Agitate for development and social wellbeing. avoid indiscipline and sabotage.