

Human Rights on Digital Platforms

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Abstract : Digital platforms are arenas for dialogue, various kinds of political debates, information and news gathering, policymaking, and social change processes. Human rights serve as examples of social and political issues that are universally noted as principles and yet often violated on digital platforms as well as in the analog world. Digital platforms in this study are different Internet sites, blogs, discussion platforms, social media apps, and gaming. Various actors, from human rights activists and non-governmental organizations to individual people, governments, and corporations, use digital platforms along with analog arenas to discuss and defend human rights, while violators can find new victims and continue violating rights on the same platforms. Digital platforms create opportunities for various women and minorities to empower themselves and others and to be active in various arenas of society and policymaking. At the same time, digital platforms pose threats to human rights globally, especially to women, girls, and minorities. The results of this meta-study of n=120 academic case studies indicate that more research is needed to determine the framework of human rights and human rights on digital platforms. A broad discussion must be had on what human rights require in the digital realm and how ICTs may enhance or threaten our ability to respect, protect, and fulfill a wide variety of human rights while various digital platforms pose multiple threats to human rights. This relates to the willingness of political decision-makers to act upon various crimes committed on and with online platforms. More research is needed to determine the framework of digital human rights and human rights on digital platforms in relation to political communication and decision-making. It is important to develop a framework in which these are defined. It must be discussed who participates in this process: those whose rights are violated, companies that profit by selling our personal data, activists, governments, and some unknown actors. In the end, the question comes back to who has the power to define what we talk about, when, and where. This use of power plays a big role. Digital platforms illustrate the darker side of technological progress, which, on the one hand, has given various people the possibility to engage in society, empower themselves, and take ownership of their rights globally. At the same time, the platforms enable others to use the same platforms to find victims, abuse them, and exploit them. Bullying, harassment, and violence are rampant on various digital platforms, where minorities and people with limited support are victims. There is indeed a need for a discussion of normative values in the era of fake news, the power of influencers, Trumpism, and institutionalized disregard for human rights, gender equality, and the elimination of gender-based violence online. Attention and obligations must be placed on politicians and internet architecture, such as corporations, and their roles in human rights and their violations online.

Keywords : human rights, digital platforms, violations, internet, social media

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