

Cyberspace Abuse and the Proliferation of Poverty in Nigeria: Investigating the Paradox of Social-Economic Development

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Abstract

Cyberspace has become highly instrumental for socio-economic development, however, this study argues that it is not enough for the citizens to have access to cyberspace when emphasis should be placed on the ability of people to effectively and legitimately utilise their access for the overall well being of themselves, and society. In the case of Nigeria, this is true because widespread of poverty has become more evident due to increased cyber abuse by youth, who constitutes the majority in the country. Thus, it is argued here that cyberspace for non-productive activities such as online sport betting, cyber prostitution, cyber frauds, cyber violence, and related cyber crimes hinder government capacity to alleviate poverty, and additionally, such activities damage the country's image and prevent access to national socio-economic and political opportunities.

Keywords: cyberspace, cyberspace abuse, poverty, poverty alleviation

Introduction

Considering the significant importance of cyberspace to social, political and economic interaction among the people and countries around the world, the access to cyberspace/internet has remained on the front burner in driving the notion of the exchange and dissemination of ideas, resolving international conflicts emanating from communication gaps, and in the promotion of good governance and in the fostering the advancement of global trade.

As observed by Alvin Toffler (1980), the surge of the Internet has greatly propelled societies into an 'infosphere' in which technology driven information and communication have increasingly altered the social, political, economic and work environment in the contemporary world. And in this context, it is imperative to note that, since the beginning of this millennium, Africa has witnessed significant growth of Internet connectivity, which is mainly due to the availability of undersea cables and the surge of mobile telephony, wherein today, more than 341 million people have access to the Internet (International Telecommunication Union, 2016). In summary, there were 147 million Facebook users in Africa as of June 2016 (<https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/facebook>), other Internet users represents 334,000,000 while Mobile subscribers were approximately 557,000,000 (ITU Facts and Figures 2016).

Despite the growing access to cyberspace and proliferation in the use of social media, the opportunities abound for socio-economic development have not been widely harnessed by the youths who are predominant users of cyberspace to advance learning, economics and other productive activities. The foregoing and other factors accounts for widespread of poverty and poor economic growth in Nigeria. This situation thus suggests a critical evaluation of the difference between general access to cyberspace and its actual utilisation. This is true because, access to cyberspace without proper utilisation and regulations can result in cyberspace abuse which could result in cyber-fraud, gambling, cyber-prostitution, cyber terrorism and other non-productive activities. The consequential effect of the foregoing would hinder opportunities for self development, economic growths and further encourage widespread of poverty in Nigeria.

Undoubtedly, legitimate and productive utilisation of cyberspace particularly by youths would automatically foster socio-economic development and placing some reasonable form of controls on information flows and freedom of expression in the online platforms could helps to deter crimes such as cyber-fraud, child pornography, drug trafficking, terrorism and other non productive activities (Cyber Crimes Act (2015, No. 14).

As documented in the Nigeria Human Development Report 2008/09 (HDR) published by UNDP in December 2009, 54.4% of the population lives below the national poverty line (UNDP, 2009). This report also revealed the ravaging effects of poverty in Nigeria due to several factors, including cyberspace abuse. Arguably, the rise of communication technology and cyberspace/internet access has resulted in unprecedented increase in the incidence of criminal activities online and offline; and the increase in the incidence of online crimes and other non productive cyberspace activities pose great challenges to both individual and national economic growth in Nigeria. The foregoing has continued to impact negatively on the government effort to alleviate poverty and purse any meaningful developmental agenda. Thus, this paper is set to address some of the fundamental issues raised by exploring a conceptual framework, the state of cyberspace in Nigeria, the nexus between cyberspace and poverty proliferation, concluding remarks and a list of recommendations were suggested to tackle the challenges posed by cyberspace abuse to socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework on Poverty

To categorise a particular individual or group of people as poor, simply implies that such individual or group do not enjoy the choices and opportunities which are most basic to human development and which make it possible to live a long, healthy, well-nourished and self accomplished life: which involves the privileges to be educated and to have a reasonable standard of living, be able to live in freedom, self-respect, dignity and to participate in community (Human Development Report (UNDP, 1997).

Similarly, as observed by Royal Town Planning Institute (2016) poverty connotes the absence of requirements that add values and quality to people's personal being and enhances their earning capacity which includes; job opportunities, quality education, public services, safe streets, green spaces, leisure and entertainment. The aforementioned qualities of life are mostly accessible in particular locations and by particular class of people - which implies that poverty is highly determines by people geographical location and their social class. Put differently, people's health status, access to quality education, employment opportunities and the possibility to build wealth and improve well-being are substantially shaped by both people's socio-economic status and where they live (OECD, 2014).

According to the United Nations (2010), poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. Poverty also connotes lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. In another perspective, poverty can implies not having enough to feed and clothe oneself and family, not having access to quality education and health care, lack of access to land on which to grow one's needed food, unemployment, lack of access to credit facilities. Poverty could also connote vulnerability to insecurity and outbreak of communicable diseases, voiceless and exclusion from civil and political participation, susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.

In the same vein, the World Bank define poverty as a conspicuous deprivation in wellbeing which includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life. The World Bank's "Voices of the Poor," based on research with over 20,000 poor people in 23 countries, identifies a range of factors which poor people identify as part of poverty. These include: Precarious livelihoods, excluded locations, physical limitations, gender relationships, problems in social relationships, lack of security, abuse by those in power, disempowered institutions, limited capabilities and weak community organizations (Tetty, 2008).

Cyberspace

The proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) provides better opportunity to enhance democracy and citizen participation in governance in Africa and other parts of the world. Thus, the digital technology has expanded the breadth of possibilities for people to enjoy freedoms of expression and association that serves as an enabler for enjoying the right of access to information CIPESA (2016).

The term cyber has evolved from the work of Norbert Wiener, who defined the term cybernetics in his book as “control and communication in the animal and the machine” (Wiener 1948). His idea emanated from the assumption that humans can interface with machines and that the resulting system can provide an alternative environment for interaction. The foregoing provides a foundation for the concept of cyberspace.

According to the US Department of Defence, cyberspace is “a global domain within the information environment consisting of the interdependent network of information technology infrastructures, including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers.” (JP 1-02). This definition suggests that cyberspace is broader in scope than Internet due to its interdependent network nature. Hence, cyberspace refers to a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators in a global system. This hallucination can be experienced by children being taught mathematical concepts... or through a graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system (William Gibson quoted in Cotton and Oliver, 1994: 54). And as observe by Rebecca Bryant, (2001) cyberspace represents the new medium of communication through electronic, which is fast outmoding, or even replacing, more traditional methods of communication. In cyber world, we often send emails in place of paper letters, we leave electronic messages on bulletin boards rather than pinning slips of card to wooden notice boards, and more and more frequently we are able to read texts on-line, there is a prevalence of e-journals, e-learning and many more.

Cyberspace Abuse

The Internet has created a new technique for communication, particularly for young people whose use of instant messaging, social networking websites, YouTube, e-mail, chat rooms, and webcams, among others, is fast replacing old methods of communication worldwide. The development of electronic-based communications has been greeted by both benefits and challenges. For instance, the benefits involve the social and academic support, identity exploration, and cross-cultural interactions. However, the cyberspace/internet is also flooded with a potential site for abuse, victimization and other criminal activities (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2003).

And in a succinct manner, cyberspace abuse refer to the misapplication of interdependent network of information technology infrastructures including the Internet and telecommunications networks through computers and other electronic devices for illicit and unauthorised activities. In many occasions, cyber-abuse could result in a situation whereby young people can fall victim to sexual perpetrators, stalkers, exploiters, cyber bully, sexual extortion, child abuse, cyber violence against human, cyber fraud, cyber prostitute and cyber trafficking among others.

The State of Cyberspace Activities in Nigeria

There is exponential rate in the growth of global Internet, occasioned by modern ways of learning, communicating, socializing and transforming almost all facets of the societal life on daily basis. However, the benefits of the Internet are not evenly distributed among African countries and within countries in Africa. It is instructive to note that, in Africa, despite a slow start in harnessing access to cyberspace, Internet use is now rapidly growing, and its transformative impacts are increasingly accessible (Towela, N. J & Tesfaye, B (2015)

Importantly, in the beginning of this millennium, African countries have experienced a steady growth in Internet penetration from 0.78% in 2000 to 20.71% in 2014 (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>; ITU (2014). It is instructive to note that the progress varies from one country to another. The improved broadband connectivity in countries like Botswana, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria and Tunisia has already attained appreciable level: which has enhanced citizens' involvement in political interaction, economic and industrial engagement, educational advancement and reducing socio-cultural barriers. However, cyberspace/internet connectivity is still limited in some parts of Nigeria.

The number of Internet users has also witnessed an upward trend since the year 2000. ITU data indicates that number of the Internet users has doubled since 2009 by 25 percent in early 2016. While this shows an upward trend, about three-quarters of the African population does not have access to the Internet today. Moreover, there is a significant diversity in Africa, with only a few well connected countries like Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, and Tunisia attaining a connectivity level of around half of the population. These countries also lead in utilizing the Internet for education. However, over 70 percent of the population living in rural areas, the majority of those who need the Internet the most, such as rural schools, do not have it due to various factors ranging from inadequate supply of infrastructure that can foster Internet access, wide spread of poverty and lack of political will to support Internet access by some African government among others (Africabandwidth Maps, http://www.africabandwidthmaps.com/?page_id=27).

The cyberspace activities in Nigeria are characterised by both positivity and negativity. Thus, in recent time there is improvement on the use of the cyberspace/internet for learning in most tertiary institutions that prioritised online distance learning through the use of online educational resources. In some cases, government at different levels in Nigeria have also started investing in ICT on education in public schools through the rollout of Schoolnet projects. For instance, most of the government projects in this direction involves efforts at equipping selected “public/modern schools” with computer labs, trained ICT teachers, and providing students and teachers with ICT learning materials.

Despite efforts of the government in Nigeria to develop ICT and Internet broadband over the last two decades, there has been limited success in rollout of ICTs and the Internet in some key areas like education, public service, security and agricultural sectors among others. For instance, ICT and Internet rollout in public schools and government own tertiary institutions is still very poor, due to lack of resources, inconsistency policy on communication technology and the absence of a holistic/integrated vision and strategy.

Impressively, there is significant increase in the number of youth equipped with ICT skills and access to cyberspace/internet in Nigeria. Drawing from the fact that youth constitutes majority of the Nigerian population with potential to transform their immediate society through the use of modern technologies within the cyberspace and InfoTech global system. Given that approximately one-third of the world’s population is made up of 2 billion young people under the age of 18 years. Thus, category of young population make up half the population in the least developed nations including Nigeria while the young people population in developed countries constituted less than a quarter of their entire population (UNICEF, 2004). In essence, the foregoing explication suggests that, engagement of young people in cyberspace/internet activities is more prevalent and evolving in both developed and developing countries of the world.

Importantly, youth in Nigeria are becoming more computer-savvy than adults, and the older generation. This indicates that younger generation have much interest in ICT and cyberspace/internet activities for daily integrations and technological advancement. According to UNICEF (2004), globally young people are increasingly turning to the Internet as a source of information, communication, socializing and entertainment due to their enthusiastic about the capacity of the Internet to foster their connectivity with the outside world and aid free sharing of information.

In a national poll conducted in 2009, 22% of teenagers were found to log on to their favorite social media sites more than ten times a day, and more than half of adolescents log on to a social media site more than once a day (National Poll, 2009). In a related observation, it was revealed that 75% of teenagers owned or have access to cell phones; 25% used the cell phone for social media; 54% used them for texting, and 24% used them for instant messaging. Thus, a substantial portion of the younger generation develops social and emotional attachment to the Internet (Hinduja, 2007).

Undoubtedly, the widespread of cyberspace/internet through the use of social media and other ICT platforms has become a phenomenon that has created opportunity and space for many people in Nigeria to interact and express their opinion on the issues bordering on socio-economic and political situation within their environment. However, as the cyberspace/internet activities through various social media continue to grow in popularity and become mainstream it has been faced with growing controversy and criticism (Web Designer Depot, 2009), and perceived to be a new threat to democracy and other critical issues. In other words, despite the opportunities offers by cyberspace/internet access in terms of Socialisation, enhanced learning opportunities, communication, entertainment, political participation, and economic development, it also pose serious challenges to socio-cultural identity, security, democracy stability and youth productivity.

The Cyberspace and Poverty in Nigeria

One of the greatest challenges confronting African societies is overwhelming increase of poverty rate among her populace, and eradicating poverty has become insurmountable task for most African governments due to poor governance, corruption, predominant mono-cultural economy and excessive reliance on foreign aid among others. Currently, African accounts for 10 percent of the world's population and hosts over 30 percent of the poor people in the world. It is instructive to note that tremendous efforts have been made in most part of developed countries to reduce inequality and extreme poverty over the last three decades by curtailing it to nearly two thirds between 1970 and 2000.

However, the trend in Africa south of the Sahara has been in the opposite direction, due to increase in the number of people living in poverty. For instance, there was an increase in 1970 from 36 percent to 50 percent of poor people in 2000. As a result, one in two Africans (or 300 million people) are poor, spending less than \$1 a day on basic necessities of life. This proportion is twice as high as the world average, and the number of the poor is twice as high as it was in 1970 (Ndulu et. al, 2006). Research into the impacts of cyberspace abuse and its consequences on social economic in particular and poverty in general is still relatively scanty and most in their infancy stage due ambivalent problem to directly establish a linkage between poverty proliferation and cyberspace abuse. For instance, the US National Research Council (NRC) argued that the study of the costs and benefits of gambling is "still in its formative stage", and the lack of "systematic data", the substitution of "assumptions for missing data", "haphazard" applications of estimations in many studies, and a general lack of identification of the actual costs and benefits to be studied have also hinder such attempt at accurate analysis on the subject (NRC 1999: 5-18).

Surprisingly, one of the puzzling that is currently dominating the debates on poverty and socio-economic development is the negative effects of internet/cyberspace on socio-economic misfortune and widespread of poverty in Nigeria. This is so, because the improper and non productive use of internet/cyberspace among the youths that constitutes majority of Nigerian population has started to have backlash effects on Nigeria economy. At this juncture, it is important to categorise some the activities that constitutes cyberspace abuse which could result in productive time waste and widespread of poverty particularly among the youth in Nigeria. The need for this categorisation is deduced from the observation that some of the youths in their productive age with access to Internet facilities are not using cyberspace for productive activities, rather the current trends of cyberspace usage among youth in Nigeria shows that larger percentage of the youths are using cyberspace/internet for fraudulent activities, sport gambling via (Nairabet, Bet9ja, and Winners Golden Bet among others), online prostitution, online drug and human trafficking, online money doublers via (Mega-wealth, wealth-solution, Penny-wise, Givers-forum, Paradise, Naira-propeller, Cash2Cash, MMM) and excessive use of cyberspace purely for fun via (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube-streaming, QZone, WeChat, Skype, Google+, QQ, Viber, Tumbir. VK, LINE, Myspace among other).

The foregoing development depicted cyberspace abuse which has further contributed to non-productive lives and false consciousness of escaping the scourge of poverty among the youth whereas; in the real sense they are unknowingly jeopardising meaningful socio-economic and political opportunities for themselves and damaging international image of the country at large. This schism is true, because cyberspace abuse will directly or indirectly hinder the government prospect for poverty alleviation and impacted negatively on overall wellbeing of the entire country.

For instance, in Nigeria the pervasiveness of online gambling dominated the significant aspect of cyberspace abuse due to its negative consequences on psycho-social and economic condition of the individuals involved. As observed by Palmer (2013) there are two additional changes that occurred which have shifted the nature and parameters of sports betting: first, the rise and expansion of the Internet and associated media platforms and technologies (such as android phone, smart phone, tablet and emergence of several “apps”) have shifted the focus of sports betting to predominantly online event; and second, is the nature of betting which has shifted from betting simply on the end result of a race or an event to “micro-betting”, “in play betting” and betting “in-the-run”, where consumers can place a bet on a range of possible outcomes both after the game has commenced and, as they occur during a game.

Generally speaking, in Nigeria and many other countries online sports betting is rapidly surpassing all other forms of gambling in terms of participation. For instance, A United Kingdom Report (Charlton, 2013), revealed that betting on football (soccer) has seen the largest growth in the sports betting sector, it has recorded 69% growth between 2009 and 2012. However, the negative consequence of the growth of online betting and how such growth can have a backlash effect on household income and wellbeing have not been given adequate attention.

According to Reith (2006) rather than tracking changes in gambling development over time, many studies have provided a static ‘snapshot’ of the effects of gambling. In order to account for how the impacts of gambling can be influenced by other factors, it is important to track the changes in gambling development. In addition, there is a strong connection with profuse online gambling and disruption of personal life, family tie, financial and employment relations. Importantly, the online gambling has a strong link with financial problems such as debt and bankruptcy, divorce, lost productivity, crime (such as theft and fraud), depression and suicide that usually result in widespread of poverty within the society.

Consequently, there is a symbiotic relation between being poor and cyberspace abuse. It is instructive to note that the disadvantaged social groups who experience poverty, unemployment, dependence on welfare and low levels of education are most likely to suffer the adverse consequences of increased gambling, online prostitution, online drug and human trafficking and online money doublers schemes. Similarly, online gamblers, cyber fraudsters and online money doublers are more likely to indulge in heavy consumption of drugs, alcohol and easily develop high blood pressure which could make them to become unproductive and bankruptcy. Although individuals from these groups may not spend more money on gambling in absolute terms, they do spend a higher proportion of their incomes than wealthier players.

In linking poverty with online gambling for instance, there are two opposing perspectives; proponents emphasised the economic regeneration, while opponents emphasised the long or short terms social costs or consequences particularly in terms of increased problem gambling. In either of the perspectives, the debate tended to be based on polarised opinions, based on ethical and/or religious convictions rather than factual evidence.

As noted by Gainsbury, et al, (2013a) in Western countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, betting on sporting events, fixtures and results, particularly through the Internet, is becoming increasingly prevalent. For instance, in Australia, sports betting appear to be the fastest growing form of gambling, where it has almost doubled in popularity over the last decade. In 2011, it was estimated that the revenue generated by sports betting in Australia alone topped \$600 million, up from \$264 million in 2006. Thus, sports betting have also been associated with a rise in problem gambling, with an Australian clinic estimating a 70% increase in the number of young males presenting with gambling problems (Horn, 2011; Thomas, Lewis et al. 2012, p.146).

Hence, as new forms of gambling are introduced, promoted and delivered via the Internet, mobile phones and related devices, some groups of people become greatly exposed to different forms of risks (Abbott, Romild and Volberg, 2013). Thus, as gambling activities have expanded and diversified, young people are increasingly being exposed to messages from a broad range of media that endorse, promote and normalise gambling (AMA, 2013).

There is also connection between sporting betting, fraud and scams, although there appears to be no dedicated educational resource on this. According to Brooks (2012) there is potential for transnational crime such as money laundering, illicit financial flow, theft and fraud that may occur via on-line gambling sites, including sports betting ones. More so, through transnational crime such as money laundering Africa have lost around US\$29 billion every year between the period of 1970 and 2008 and out of that amount, the Sub-Saharan region accounted for \$22 billion. Nigeria lost approximately \$10 billion annually to illicit financial flow within the same period (Global Financial Integrity, 2008).

Unsurprisingly, the anticipation that cyber attacks and fraud would increase exponentially as many more people in the global community decide to participate in or launch into today cyber activities had earlier expressed by many scholars. (Morris 2004:20). Thus, the rise of illicit financial flows as part of cyber-fraud has further promotes other criminal activities. For instance, the continued breakthrough of tax evaders and money launders has also created opportunities for the crime perpetrators to reinvest the proceeds generated through criminal activities to finance other crimes such as youth militancy, electoral violence, robbery, kidnapping, smuggling, drug and human, trafficking, prostitution, corruption, counterfeiting, advance fee fraud, cybercrime, illegal currency manipulation, terrorism and illegal importation of arms and ammunitions among other crimes.

In many occasions proceeds of cyberspace abuse has been deploying to facilitate other illicit crimes and sometime used to secure political power in many developing countries. Thus, more often than not political power secured through the proceeds of illicit cyber frauds and other related crimes usually resulted in political power abuse, mismanagement, more corruption and further impoverishment of the masses.

Thus, the Internet has also become an environment where the most lucrative and safest crime thrives. According to Olaide and Adewole (2004), a sizeable number of criminals in Nigeria fall within the youthful age. Cybercrime a new form of crime now exists in our tertiary institutions which is denting and drilling holes in the economy of the nation. it is also leading to the erosion of confidence in genuine Nigerian commercial credibility and today many western countries with France taking the lead have moved to deny Nigerian businessmen and women who are legitimate the rewards of e-commerce. France today requires web camera verification for most online business transactions from Nigeria (Okeshola and Adeta 2013).

Across the globe, there is a strong connection between online illicit financial flow (IFF) and insecurity, although, the linkage is somewhat weak. This simply implies that, states needed to be secured against online crimes in order to guarantee human and material security: a state that is vulnerable to cyberspace abuse is more likely unable to secure its human and material assets. Although, in the contemporary political system, the dimensions and perspectives of security has shifted to cover issues encompassing seven major elements: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (UNDP Human Development Report of 1994).

The conventional wisdom deduced from foregoing is that pervasiveness of cyber abuse through online activities that promotes illicit financial flow, transnational crimes and other related cyber crimes has gravitational possibility to impaired on the government capacity to ensure justice, fairness and equity in the distribution of public services and resources among the populace and in turn the government inability to ensure equity and fairness within the public space is more likely to foster public discontent, impoverishment, unemployment and disenchantment among the citizenry.

Conclusion

Against the general backdrop that access to internet/cyberspace would automatically foster economic growth and general development in a country, this paper concludes that in Nigeria and many other African countries, access to internet/cyberspace alone is not sufficient for socio-economic development. Thus, to boost economic, foster development and alleviate poverty, access to internet and its utilisation must be reasonably control and focus more on productive engagements in terms of learning, political advancement, economic development, science and technological inventions among others.

Recommendations

The wide spread of education and the Internet access are becoming inextricably interwoven and to a large extent constitutes greater assets to global world. This is true because through education that is driving by cyberspace, billions of lives can be transformed socially, economically and politically. Thus, it is recommended that the government should channel more efforts to invest in ICT and cyberspace development in public schools and create more access to cyberspace/internet facilities for the general public at subsidised rates. Second, since ICT that is driving by cyberspace/internet utilities, it has potential to aid sustainable economic development particularly when used appropriately without much abuse.

Thus, in a country like Nigeria, where a vast section of the population are living below the poverty line, cyberspace/internet access can offer an opportunity to boost social and economic development by providing ICT and digital knowledge in private and public enterprises, thereby encouraging a more productive human capital and financial self-reliance. Therefore, government, civil society groups and stakeholders in cyberspace/internet business must embark on awareness creation on the dangers associated with cyberspace/internet abuse in order to encourage more people to utilise cyberspace/internet for productive activities.

And notwithstanding the numerous benefits of Internet access to Nigeria development, access to the Internet without some form of regulation, control and supervision also has the potential for negative development in terms the diversion of IT knowledge meant for societal development into illicit acts such as cyber-fraud, terrorism, human/drug trafficking, smuggling, kidnapping, online prostitution, online cultism, cyber-bullying, online gambling and hacking/disruption of classified website among others. Hence, government must ensure proper regulation and control of activities of unemployed youth in particular on cyberspace/internet without undue infringement on citizens' right to communication.

Fourth, special governmental institution must be created to investigate and prosecute cyber abuse cases, which is important due to the technical and dynamic nature of cybercrimes. This development will also promote speedy trials for of cybercrime offenders, reduce cybercrime activities and serve as a feedback mechanism for government policy on ICT and Internet development in Nigeria. And last, there is a great need for government to develop inclusive knowledge societies, taking into account the cyberspace/internet universality principles adopted by the UNESCO's General Assembly that advocate for a human rights-based open and accessible Internet to all. This is pertinent because the population that have unhindered access to cyberspace/internet and effectively utilizes ICTs tools also function help determine a country's competitiveness in the global digital economy and thus, in the country's ability to harness natural resources for sustainable growth.

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