**Policy Brief: Leveraging Social Media for Advocacy Against Sexual Assault**

**Executive Sumary:**

**Introduction:**

Sexual assault remains a pervasive issue globally, affecting individuals of all genders. Social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for survivors to share their stories, advocate for change, and challenge societal norms and structures perpetuating sexual violence.

**Background:**

Our main questions in this policy brief are:

* How discourse and campaigns in social media like reddit can help survivors to share their stories and break the silence surrounding sexual assault?
* How does social media amplify the reach and impact of advocacy efforts against sexual assault by facilitating the dissemination of information, resources, and support services to a broad audience?
* How Hashtags like #MeToo have sparked global conversations about sexual assault, prompting legislative reforms, organizational policy changes, and cultural shifts towards greater accountability and support for survivors?

Impact of Social Media on Advocacy:

* Social media platforms like Reddit have emerged as powerful tools for advocacy and social change, allowing individuals to amplify their voices, connect with communities, and mobilize support for causes they care about. Through the use of hashtags, viral campaigns, and online petitions, activists have been able to reach global audiences and effect meaningful change.
* The democratization of information and communication facilitated by social media has enabled marginalized voices, including survivors of sexual assault, to gain visibility, challenge dominant narratives, and demand accountability from perpetrators and Online.

Activism and Hashtag Movements:

* In recent years, online activism and hashtag movements have played a significant role in raising awareness about social issues, including sexual assault. Hashtags like #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #BelieveSurvivors have mobilized individuals around the world to speak out against sexual violence, challenge systems of oppression, and advocate for change.
* These hashtag movements have not only provided platforms for survivors to share their experiences but have also catalyzed broader conversations about consent, power dynamics, and systemic inequalities.institutions.

Reddit Communities and Subreddits:

* Reddit is a diverse social media platform consisting of thousands of communities, known as subreddits, dedicated to various topics, interests, and discussions. These subreddits serve as spaces for users to engage in conversations, share content, and connect with like-minded individuals.
* Subreddits related to sexual assault advocacy and survivor support exist within the Reddit community. Examples include r/SurvivorsofSA, r/rape, and r/SupportforSurvivors. These communities provide platforms for survivors to share their stories, seek advice, and receive support from peers.

**Material and Methods:**

The dataset extracted from the Reddit provides a source of data capturing discussions, interactions, and engagement surrounding sexual assault across various subreddits and communities including () on the platform.

Our dataset includes:

* 1. Content Data
* Posts: Textual content submitted by users to Reddit, including submissions to specific subreddits related to sexual assault or advocacy.
* Comments: Textual responses to posts or other comments, providing additional context, opinions, or support.
* Titles: Titles of posts, which often provide a brief summary or context for the content.
* URLs: Links shared within posts or comments, directing users to external resources or articles related to sexual assault advocacy.
  1. Network Data:
* User Relationships: Information about connections between users, such as user mentions (when one user tags another in a comment) or replies, allowing for network analysis of user interactions and influence.

To address the questions, we analyze the dataset using these three methods:

1. Sentiment Analysis:

Sentiment analysis can be employed to assess the emotional tone of discussions surrounding sexual assault on Reddit. By analyzing the sentiment of posts and comments, you can determine the extent to which survivors are able to share their stories and break the silence surrounding sexual assault. Positive sentiment may indicate empowerment and support, while negative sentiment may reveal challenges and barriers faced by survivors.

The sentiment score provided by TextBlob ranges from -1 to 1 and represents the sentiment polarity of the text. Here's what each range generally means:

Negative Sentiment: Sentiment scores closer to -1 indicate a more negative sentiment. For example, a score of -1 would represent extremely negative sentiment.

Neutral Sentiment: Sentiment scores around 0 indicate neutral sentiment. For example, a score of 0 would represent a neutral sentiment.

Positive Sentiment: Sentiment scores closer to 1 indicate a more positive sentiment. For example, a score of 1 would represent extremely positive sentiment.

1. Content Analysis:

Content analysis allows for the examination of the content of Reddit posts and comments related to sexual assault. By analyzing the language, themes, and discursive strategies used in discussions, you can gain insights into how discourse and campaigns on social media platforms like Reddit facilitate survivors in sharing their stories. Additionally, content analysis can reveal the prevalence of hashtags like #MeToo and their role in amplifying survivor voices and breaking the silence surrounding sexual assault.

1. Network Analysis:

Network analysis can be employed to study the relationships and interactions between users, communities, and content related to sexual assault on Reddit. By examining the network structure and patterns of information flow, you can assess how social media amplifies the reach and impact of advocacy efforts against sexual assault. Network analysis can also uncover the influence of hashtags like #MeToo in sparking global conversations and driving legislative reforms, organizational policy changes, and cultural shifts towards greater accountability and support for survivors.

**Results:**

1. After conducting sentiment analysis on comments and post body seperately, the results on comment show:

A score of -0.5 in the first row suggests a negative sentiment.

Scores around 0.018 and -0.007 in the following rows indicate slightly positive and slightly negative sentiment, respectively.

A score of 0.165 in the last row suggests moderately positive sentiment.

The result on post body show:

A score of approximately -0.085 suggests slightly negative sentiment in the first row.

Scores around -0.007 in the subsequent rows indicate slightly negative sentiment as well.

The negative sentiment scores obtained from the sentiment analysis on both the post bodies and comments could indicate that the content expresses negative emotions, experiences, or opinions related to sexual assault.

1. Expression and Empowerment:

Social media, including Reddit, provides survivors with platforms to share their stories, break the silence surrounding sexual assault, and reclaim their voices and agency.

Hashtags like #MeToo serve as powerful tools for collective expression, solidarity, and validation, enabling survivors to connect with others who have similar experiences and to challenge societal attitudes and stigma surrounding sexual violence.

1. Communication Power and Awareness:

Social media amplifies the reach and impact of advocacy efforts against sexual assault by facilitating the dissemination of information, resources, and support services to a broad audience.

Hashtags like #MeToo have sparked global conversations about sexual assault, prompting legislative reforms, organizational policy changes, and cultural shifts towards greater accountability and support for survivors.

**Policy Recommendations for Advocacy Groups and NGOs:**

Emotional Impact: The negative sentiment scores suggest that the posts contain emotionally charged content related to sexual assault. This could include expressions of pain, anger, frustration, or fear associated with the topic.

Experiences Shared: The negative sentiment scores may reflect the prevalence of negative experiences or narratives shared by individuals who have been affected by sexual assault. These could include personal accounts of trauma, discrimination, or injustice.

Need for Support: The presence of negative sentiment underscores the importance of providing support and resources for individuals affected by sexual assault. It highlights the need for advocacy efforts, counseling services, and community support networks to address the emotional and psychological impact of sexual violence.

Awareness and Education: The negative sentiment scores highlight the ongoing need for raising awareness and educating the public about the prevalence and impact of sexual assault. It emphasizes the importance of promoting understanding, empathy, and action to prevent sexual violence and support survivors.

1. Amplify Survivor Voices:

Collaborate with survivors to amplify their voices and experiences on social media platforms like Reddit. Provide platforms for survivors to share their stories in their own words, ensuring their autonomy and consent are prioritized.

1. Provide Support and Resources:

Utilize social media channels to disseminate information about support services, hotlines, counseling resources, and legal aid available to survivors of sexual assault. Ensure that resources are easily accessible and culturally sensitive.

1. Educate and Raise Awareness:

Develop educational campaigns and materials to raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of sexual assault, as well as prevention strategies and consent education. Utilize hashtags like #MeToo to reach a wider audience and engage in dialogue about these critical issues.

1. Advocate for Policy Change:

Advocate for policy changes at the local, national, and international levels to strengthen laws and policies addressing sexual assault, including measures to improve survivor support services, increase perpetrator accountability, and enhance prevention efforts.

**Conclusion:**

Social media platforms like Reddit, coupled with powerful hashtags like #MeToo, have transformed the landscape of advocacy against sexual assault, providing survivors with platforms for expression, empowerment, and solidarity. By leveraging these tools effectively, advocacy groups and NGOs can amplify survivor voices, raise awareness, and drive meaningful change towards ending sexual violence.