

THE CHALLENGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF LEGAL CLINICS¹

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ABSTRACT

The consolidation of social media as a medium of information and social mobilisation reinforces the importance of using this resource to base *advocacy* strategies undertaken by legal clinics, especially those regarding human rights education aimed at elucidating concrete issues that are dear to democracy. This research intends to identify, describe, and discuss the main challenges related to communication on human rights by legal clinics, based on the experience developed at the Paraná's Federal University Human Rights Clinic (CDH/UFPR). If, in theory, *Instagram* had proved to be the most pertinent tool for disseminating research — even considering the digital exclusion of a significant quantity of Brazilians — the experience revealed the first major challenge to be the incongruity between the parameters governing the

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algorithmics functioning in the app and the academic and scientific nature of the clinic's content. By subverting and re-signifying a space governed by market interests — that impose themselves every day as a communication hub — we sought to promote the dissemination of evidence-based scientific knowledge to our channel's community of followers. In which we paid special attention to the adaptation of legal and technical language to a more accessible approach while still preserving the quality of the information being disseminated; the efforts to ensure knowledge transit and theoretical alignment in a team made up of researchers from different areas; the need to involve third parties in collaborating on the joint production of publications; and, finally, obstacles related to the scarcity of financial resources and project management.

Keywords: digital advocacy; legal clinics; human rights; social media.

I. INTRODUCTION

Legal clinics are a global movement of law teaching that aims to promote practical experiences during professional training as well as to address critics on the disconnection between legal education and social reality. In Brazil, these clinics represent an innovative practice and operate mainly in the field of human rights, focusing on promoting social impact.

By producing information and knowledge to popularize and raise awareness of human rights — thus evaluating the practical realization of these rights within the

scope of public authorities and society — many legal clinics apply the so-called *advocacy* practices.² In Brazil, the term encompasses³ various activities aimed at directing and influencing the political environment — such as public policies, budget planning and social programs, as well as the opinion and involvement of society in an issue or cause — "through a set of well-planned and organized actions carried out by a group of committed individuals or organizations working together in an articulated manner."⁴

However, according to Brelàz,⁵ this concept has a broader range in US literature, being used to name various actions and strategies that envision to make a cause relevant by mobilizing public opinion, in which interference in public policies is just one of the means by which advocacy is carried out. In the author's terms, "it ends up becoming a reduced word that serves, in a way, to give a more 'legitimate and legal' character to the act of influencing public policies."⁶

² Castilho, Natalia M; Schiocchet, Taysa. Atuação das clínicas jurídicas em litigância estratégica internacional: contribuições à difusão normativa e à mobilização dos órgãos interamericanos de direitos humanos. In: Daniel Wunder Hachem; Luisa Fernanda García López; Felipe Klein Gussoli. (Org.). Corte Americana de direitos humanos e seus impactos na América Latina. 1 ed. Curitiba: Íthala, 2020. Available at: <[sumario_20210831193920_12.pdf](#)>.

³ Reis, Toni; Cazal, Simón (Org.). Manual de advocacy, litigância estratégica, controle social e accountability LGBTI+. Curitiba: IBDSEX, 2021, p. 90.

⁴ Reis, Toni; Cazal, Simón (Org.). Manual de advocacy, litigância estratégica, controle social e accountability LGBTI+. Curitiba: IBDSEX, 2021, p. 91.

⁵ Brelàz, Gabriela. Advocacy e lobby das Organizações da Sociedade Civil. Revista de Direito do Terceiro Setor - RDTs. Belo Horizonte, year 9, n. 18, p. 41-77, jul./dec. 2015, p. 68.

⁶ Brelàz, Gabriela. Advocacy e lobby das Organizações da Sociedade Civil. Revista de Direito do Terceiro Setor - RDTs. Belo Horizonte, year 9, n. 18, p. 41-77, Jul./Dec. 2015.

Therefore, this research details the experience of digital advocacy — as defined in Brazilian literature — promoted by the Human Rights Clinic of Paraná’s Federal University (Clínica de Direitos Humanos da UFPR - CDH/UFPR) between July and November of 2021. During the period of social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Clinic articulated its activities for the promotion and defense of human rights through and for the virtual space, thus increasing the production of content circulating on social media, since the dissemination of evidence-based scientific knowledge produced by public universities is of collective interest.

Considering the preeminence of social media and of the internet in general, both of which are presently incorporated into the daily lives of a large part of the population,⁷ we ascertained the need for *advocacy* strategies undertaken by legal clinics to be guided by this very resource. The use of digital media to carry out actions — especially those such as campaigns; educational and awareness-raising actions; and the production of technical notes and *advocacy* actions that engage with public authorities (Legislative, Executive and Judicial) — has the potential to promote some advances⁸ in the field of human rights education, which itself focuses on elucidating concrete issues that are dear to democracy.

⁷ According to a study released by the platform “Cupom Válido” in 2021 based on data collected by the agencies Hootsuite and WeAreSocial, Brazil is the third largest country in terms of social media users in the world with 150 million users, which represents 70.3% of the nation’s population.

⁸ Shirky, C. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, Penguin Press, 2008; Lucchi, N. Internet Content Governance and Human Rights, 16, *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law*, 809, 2020. Available at: <https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/jetlaw/vol16/iss4/3>.

The CDH/UFPR⁹ is an interdisciplinary research group linked to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – CNPQ) and based at UFPR. The group includes undergraduate and postgraduate researchers from different areas of knowledge, carrying out teaching, research, and extension activities.¹⁰ Its central theme is human rights and new rights, with research focused on bioethics and biotechnologies as well as sexual and reproductive rights from a gender perspective.¹¹

⁹ Coordinated by Professor Dr. Taysa Schiocchet, the group carries out integrated teaching, research, and extension activities in transdisciplinary human rights issues. In this field, its work is guided by three main research axes: 1) the delimiting themes of the line of research 2) the theoretical framework, and 3) the methodological proposal adopted.

¹⁰ Higher education curricula in Brazil must develop three elemental areas: a) teaching, by giving a certain number of classes, variable for each field of study; b) researching, through opportunities such as study groups, programs help students start a research project etc. and c) extension (or attending the community), when students must dedicate some hours developing activities to benefit society in general, dealing with social, juridical and political issues and providing strategies to try respond them. These are mandatory academic activities within undergraduate and graduate programs that involve interaction between the university and society. They are offered by all higher education courses, whether public or private. These extension practices have four main objectives: a) to produce social impacts contributing to regional, economic, social, environmental, cultural development, and the enhancement of public policies; b) to foster dialogical interaction with the community and between faculty and students; c) to build interdisciplinary actions and interprofessional alliances; d) to relate to research and teaching activities, and finally, e) to generate theoretical, methodological, and humanistic impacts on student education. See more at: Klein, C. F.; Roe, R. ; Rahman, M. ; Jain, D. ; Naik, A. ; Castilho, N. M.; Schiocchet, T. ; Agwu, S. K. ; Moyd, O. ; Sukrow, B. ; Konig, C. . Teaching about justice by teaching with justice: global perspectives on Clinical Legal Education and Rebellious Lawyering. *Journal of Law and Policy*, v. 68, p. 141-182, 2022. <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/lawpolicy/article/id/8623/>.

¹¹ Based on biopolitics and the Foucauldian concept of Biopower, the Clinic adopts the perspective of Haraway (1995); Butler (2003) and Nussbaum (2000) on gender, as we can see at: Foucault, M. *História da sexualidade*, 9. ed., Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 2007, p. 50. Butler, J. *Problemas de gênero: feminismo e subversão da identidade*. Trad. Renato Aguiar. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003, p. 23. Haraway, D. *Saberes Localizados: a questão da ciência para o feminino e o privilégio da perspectiva parcial*. *Cadernos Pagu*, 5, 1995, p. 15. Nussbaum, M. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 61. According to this theoretical framework, gender is understood as a relational and dynamic category of analysis that mobilizes and reorders arguments in the field of anthropology, political science, and political and moral philosophy, complexifying and problematizing the way one interprets and analyzes the legal phenomenon and its implications for human life and society.

The group's purpose is to develop theoretical, institutional, and social analyses of law from the perspective of biopolitics, working under the methodologies of theoretical and empirical research in law, and aiming towards human rights awareness and the social dissemination of knowledge.

It is of note that, among all of the different strategies employed by legal clinics, strategic litigation and advocacy in human rights are the highlights of the CDH/UFPR's practices. The group has intensified its communication-related activities in the last decade, partnering with different actors: civil society (feminist collectives, for example), universities (researchers and research groups), and the government (the Brazilian Ministry of Justice and Education). The Clinic has produced events, teaching materials related to the popularization of research results (short animated videos, documentaries, rights guides), content for social media and media materials in general, as well as other methods of raising awareness through art.

The target audience included legal, health and education professionals, the academic community, public managers, people, and groups directly affected by the phenomena studied, and society in general, according to the objective of each product. This action model aims to broaden the scientific, social, and pedagogical impact of the projects developed within the public university.

Among the main activities already carried out by the Clinic in the field of communication strategies, it is worth mentioning: (i) the production and dissemination of guides aimed at educating young people on sexual and reproductive

rights;¹² and (ii) the holding of public film screenings – “Cinejus Project”¹³ internally and externally followed by debates that addressed gender and human rights issues. In the context of social media, the group stands out for the (iii) publication of a series of videos entitled “Speak to Me Properly” (“Fala Direito Comigo”)¹⁴ - on YouTube, which addresses sexual and reproductive rights in an accessible manner, seeking to inform women and girls about gender autonomy and equality. Additionally, the Clinic also released (iv) the documentary “Beyond the Law - Legal Abortion in Brazil” (“Além da Lei - Aborto Legal no Brasil”), in 2018¹⁵ - which recreates the stories of three women who were victims of sexual violence and their search for legal abortion, based on the work and resources of the CDH. The short film also exposes the views of doctors, jurists, and activists on sexual violence in Brazil, in addition to exhibiting statistical data on the subject.

With funding from the Ministry of Health's Research Program for the Unified Health System (Programa para Pesquisa no Sistema Único de Saúde - PPSUS), the CDH

¹² Schiocchet, T. *Fala Direito Comigo: educação em direitos humanos para o exercício de direitos sexuais e reprodutivos para jovens e mulheres*. 1. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Multifoco, 2018a. v. 1. p84. Schiocchet, T. *Fala Direito Comigo, Profissional: educação em direitos humanos para o exercício de direitos sexuais e reprodutivos*. 1. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Multifoco, 2018b. v. 1. p58.

¹³ Curitiba recebe exibição gratuita do filme “Chega de fiu-fiu”. *Jornal Brasil de Fato*, Curitiba [online], Paraná, 23 Nov. 2018, Available at: <<https://www.brasildefatopr.com.br/2018/11/23/curitiba-recebe-exibicao-gratuita-do-filme-chega-de-fiu-fiu>>.

¹⁴ Clínica De Direitos Humanos Da Ufpr. Playlist Série Fala direito comigo, Curitiba-PR, 2016. 8 videos (3 min). Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLScYiMR0056DOeRkuT03VF1yM0iUtateg>>.

¹⁵ *Além Da Lei: o aborto legal no Brasil*. Direction: M. Krueel. Production: K. Emerich. Script: T.Schiocchet, M. Krueel, K. Emerich, da Cunha, A.S. Bordin, M.. pH7 Filmes e Clínica de Direitos Humanos da Universidade Federal do Paraná (CDH UFPR). Porto Alegre-RS, 2018, (19 min). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zILCVdz9q_g&t=926s&ab_channel=Ci%C3%ADnicadeDireitosHumanosdaUFPR>.

intensified its digital advocacy activities on human rights in 2021 — with a project focused on the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights — given the relevance of digital media use during the pandemic. During this period, the communication axis of the project was prioritized and new challenges arose. The group allocated part of the funding received to pay for a Scientific Initiation scholarship for a student from UFPR's Public Relations course, who was mainly dedicated to producing and preparing posts for Instagram.

The team also included law students who were also undergraduate researchers. The group worked to articulate with the different areas of knowledge necessary to produce synthetic, accessible, and informative scientific communication materials. We emphasize that the knowledge, interests, and skills of the students involved, in addition to their legal knowledge, were fundamental to guarantee the quality of the content produced.

Expertise in the field of communication was essential to guide the use of straightforward language without undermining the content; prioritize the development of visually attractive elements; and also to manage social media while having community engagement and a wide audience reach in view. Such expertise was shared by *Prattica*, the school agency of UFPR's Public Relations course, which evaluated the strategies used in the project and provided examples of publications with the potential to boost the technical quality of the work produced.

All the CDH's activities took place remotely during the pandemic, including collecting research topics for publication with the other members of the Clinic; organizing and synthesizing information; elaborating a coherent visual identity; and the internal articulation of its members. The team communicated via instant messaging and videoconferencing applications and utilized shared task management platforms which were key to the team's integration and organization during the process.

Digital *advocacy* has numerous potentialities, such as the possibility of facilitating dialogue independent of any formal structures between different social actors and the agency, thus ensuring visibility to the marginalized, bringing about innovations in the field of monitoring, and providing assistance in cases of human rights violations.¹⁶ In view of this, this research aimed to identify, describe, and discuss the main challenges faced by a legal clinic in communicating human rights through social media, based on a practice developed at the Human Rights Clinic of UFPR (CDH/UFPR). We hope that our work can be of use to other legal clinics that intend to practice advocacy in the digital environment.

¹⁶ Dutt, M; Rasul, N. Conscientização Digital: uma análise das oportunidades e dos riscos enfrentados pelos ativistas de direitos humanos na Era Digital. SUR - Revista Internacional de Direitos Humanos, v. 20, p. 441-451, Jun./Dez. de 2014. Available at: <<https://sur.conectas.org/conscientizacao-digital/>>.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cavallaro and García¹⁷ state that the expansion of the roster of prerogatives understood as human rights, considering the contemporary practical trends in the area, imposes the need for more training, especially for legal professionals. Among several consequences of this phenomenon pointed out by the authors, include that legal and political practice in the field of strategies for confronting human rights violations must involve actions that focus not only on filing lawsuits but also on raising awareness and sensitizing society and public authorities to the issues in question.

As we have already developed in a previous study¹⁸, legal clinics have expanded and streamlined legal action strategies, becoming important actors in a legal practice that also mobilizes communication techniques and the production of social and political persuasion through advocacy and strategic litigation¹⁹. Such practices developed into

¹⁷ Cavallaro, J.L; García, F.E. ¿Cómo establecer una Clínica de Derechos Humanos? Lecciones de los Prejuicios y Errores Colectivos en las Américas. *Justicia Constitucional*, v. 6, p. 124, Nov. 2011.

¹⁸ Castilho, N.M; Schiocchet, T. Atuação das clínicas jurídicas em litigância estratégica internacional: contribuições à difusão normativa e à mobilização dos órgãos interamericanos de direitos humanos. In: Daniel Wunder Hachem; Luisa Fernanda García López; Felipe Klein Gussoli. (Org.). *Corte Americana de direitos humanos e seus impactos na América Latina*. 1 ed. Curitiba: Íthala, 2020. Available at: < [sumario_20210831193920_12.pdf](#) >.

¹⁹ "Strategic litigation therefore refers to a paradigmatic case (individual or collective) from which the mere resolution of the case is transcended, that is, the content of the judicial decision itself and its consequences for the parties. They are causes from which wider discussions are provoked, capable of forming precedents, generating legislative or even public policy changes. This type of action can also increase the publicity of the issue involved, usually in a cheaper way than using advertising campaigns, in the case of international courts and tribunals, create external political pressure around a certain demand, test and clarify the content of existing laws, and demand government accountability, establishing parameters within which governments must operate." See more at: Castilho, N.M; Schiocchet, T. Atuação das clínicas jurídicas em litigância estratégica internacional: contribuições à difusão normativa e à mobilização dos órgãos interamericanos de direitos humanos. In: Daniel Wunder

planned actions to raise awareness of human rights, among which advocacy is an important instrument for political change.

There are several definitions of the concept of advocacy in Brazilian literature which illustrate that there is no established consensus. The guides produced in Brazil generally define advocacy as an activity that aims to generate changes in public policies through strategies that are dissimilar to those of activism, which is based on the clash and confrontation of ideas, and lobbying, which is based on direct contact with decision-makers without necessarily going public.²⁰ It also differs from awareness-raising as it claims to encourage the target audience to act directly — and actively — in public policy formulation processes.²¹

In view of this, we adopted a wider conception of advocacy as an activity that identifies, adopts, and promotes a cause²² emphasizing the role of this practice in bringing the unmet demands of minorities to public attention.²³ Thus, advocacy aims not only to interfere in decision-making but also to increase the power of people and groups, especially those who are marginalized²⁴ providing them the necessary tools to

Hachem; Luisa Fernanda García López; Felipe Klein Gussoli. (Org.). *Corte Americana de direitos humanos e seus impactos na América Latina*. 1 ed. Curitiba: Íthala, 2020, p. 421.

²⁰ Morgado, R.P; Gozetto, A.C.O. *Guia para a Construção de Estratégias de Advocacy: como influenciar políticas públicas*. Piracicaba, SP: Imaflora, 2019.

²¹ Pathfinder International (2011). *Assessing the Political Environment for Advocacy*. Available at: < <https://www.pathfinder.org/publication-series/straight-to-the-point-advocacy> >.

²² Brelàz, G. *Advocacy e lobby das Organizações da Sociedade Civil*. *Revista de Direito do Terceiro Setor - RDTS*. Belo Horizonte, year 9, n. 18, p. 41-77, Jul./Dec. 2015, p. 46.

²³ Brelàz, G. *Advocacy e lobby das Organizações da Sociedade Civil*. *Revista de Direito do Terceiro Setor - RDTS*. Belo Horizonte, year 9, n. 18, p. 41-77, Jul./Dec. 2015, p. 46.

²⁴ Reis, T. Casal, S. (Org.). *Manual de advocacy, litigância estratégica, controle social e accountability LGBTI+*. Curitiba: Ibdsex, 2021.

pressure institutions to improve their own quality of life by forming alliances and networks. In short, advocacy not only raises awareness of human rights but also has the potential to encourage people and groups to exercise citizenship and thus strengthen the democratic system.

Therefore, when talking about public mobilization today it is essential to consider the consolidation of social media as centralizers of information spreading.²⁵ Although the digital environment is considered a democratic platform given its potential to amplify the voices of minority groups, it is also a space for ambiguous power disputes. It is simultaneously a place for empowering minorities and for hate speech; it gives visibility to ignored problems while spreading untrue information that favors obscure purposes with little or no filtering.²⁶ Connectivity and new forms of sociability and political articulation, mediated by the technology of social media, challenge the potential for promoting — and putting into practice — human rights. This scenario is especially evident in Brazil, given the social and political impact of such media²⁷. In this case, by promoting the constant reiteration of ethical-political values on social media, digital advocacy in human rights can be an important tool for confronting

²⁵ Nekmat, E. Gower, K.K. Gozenbach, W.J. Flanagan, A.J. Source effects in the micro-mobilization of collective action via social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, v. 18, n. 9, p. 1076–1091, Mars, 2015.

²⁶ Bucci, Eugênio. *A Superindústria do Imaginário: Como o capital transformou o olhar em trabalho e se apropriou de tudo que é visível*. 1. ed. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2021, p. 25.

²⁷ The impact of spreading fake news associated with the massive use of instant messaging apps for communication and daily interaction by the Brazilian population was discussed in journalist Patrícia Campos Melo's paper, "*A máquina do ódio: notas de uma repórter sobre fake news e violência digital*", published in 2020 by Companhia das Letras.

violations that occur in this environment, which will in turn become more detectable and debatable.²⁸

Although the pandemic has intensified the importance of digital advocacy — especially considering the consolidation of social media in the dispute of ideas in the political scenario — it is also essential to highlight the limitations and challenges faced in the use of this strategy.

One such restriction is digital exclusion, which affected 46 million Brazilians in 2021,²⁹ even though data indicates internet usage in 8 out of every 10 households in Brazil.³⁰

Another problem raised is the distance, as identified by Cavallaro,³¹ between human rights professionals and grassroots movements — which could be accentuated by digital advocacy, a practice not necessarily built with the involvement of those directly interested in the defended causes. Finally, the possibility of spreading clicktivism or slacktivism, digital activism with no concrete impacts on reality, is also highlighted.³²

²⁸ Morato, R.d.S. De Miranda, M.H.G. “A educação em direitos humanos e as redes sociais digitais: um diálogo necessário”. *Revista Interdisciplinar de Direitos Humanos*, v. 5, n. 2, p. 275–86, December 2017.

²⁹ Rede Brasil Atual. Sem internet: exclusão digital atinge 46% dos brasileiros, aponta pesquisa. *Rede Brasil Atual*, 7 de junho de 2021. Available at: < <https://www.redebrasilatual.com.br/blogs/planeta-azul/2021/06/exclusao-digital-pesquisa/> >.

³⁰ IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Trabalho e Rendimento. *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua*. 2019.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² The bibliography consulted indicated the use of the term "clicktivism" or "slacktivism" to designate the type of digital communication that does not go beyond mere awareness, drawing the public's attention to the intended causes without generating mobilization for action. See: Santos, J. O. *Advocacy e o papel das Organizações de Direitos Humanos no Legislativo Brasileiro: As campanhas da Rede Justiça Criminal*. Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas, 22 Mars 2021. However, other texts point out that "couch activism" is not necessarily immune from impacts in reality: some studies indicate, for example, that these people are more likely to donate money to social campaigns, etc. See Dutt, M. Rasul, N. *Conscientização Digital: uma análise das oportunidades e dos riscos enfrentados pelos*

It is therefore essential to emphasize that the practice of digital advocacy does not seek, at any level, to exhaust or replace social mobilization and human rights education strategies carried out outside the digital environment. On the contrary, the literature points out that "the success of human rights campaigns stems from a balance between online awareness and offline action to cause a significant social impact."³³ Indeed, advocacy on social media has often aimed at leading the public to physical and collective action, as was the case with the global movements “#BlackLivesMatter” and “#MeToo”, as well as in Brazil with “Marcha das Vadias”, “Jornadas de Junho” and “#EleNão”.

Consequently, the digital advocacy carried out by CDH/UFPR worked towards contrasting the prevalent misinformation in this environment with scientific information. To achieve this, the Clinic shared posts whose themes originated from the social demands and research carried out by public universities. CDH/UFPR offered evidence-based information, striving to promote human rights education through the conscious reiteration of democratic values, as well as encouraging social participation in the formulation of public policies. In addition to the literature on advocacy, the Clinic consulted pragmatic and procedural literature related to the use

ativistas de direitos humanos na Era Digital. SUR - Revista Internacional de Direitos Humanos, v. 20, p. 441-451, Jun./Dez. de 2014. Available at: <<https://sur.conectas.org/conscientizacao-digital/>>.

³³ Dutt, M, Rasul, N. Conscientização Digital: uma análise das oportunidades e dos riscos enfrentados pelos ativistas de direitos humanos na Era Digital. SUR - Revista Internacional de Direitos Humanos, v. 20, p, 448, pp. 441-451, Jun./Dez. de 2014. Available at: <<https://sur.conectas.org/conscientizacao-digital/>>.

of metrics and social media, especially from guides indicated by *Prattica*, to better improve the activities carried out.

In this context, algorithms are responsible for the personalized display of information in this environment, where it exists in excess. In addition to the criteria that seek to favor user experience — such as favoring content with more frequent interactions — there are many other algorithmic parameters aligned with marketing and individualizing motives. We emphasize that these criteria are unilaterally imposed by the companies, with users having the sole option of accepting the terms of use when joining the community, bearing in mind that only a few companies own most of the platforms currently used³⁴ — for example, the Meta Group.

Given the significant sale and promotion of products and services through digital platforms, it is possible to notice the prioritization of the commercial use of such channels, a fact that directly interferes with the distribution of content. In this sense, it is clear that there is no transparency regarding the criteria used by platforms for selecting publications that will be delivered to users. In addition, these users are faced with constant changes, mainly with the creation of new tools (for example, reels and shared posts on Instagram).

Digital marketing is the field with the greatest contribution to offer successful engagement strategies; however, its proposals are often in contrast to the potential of

³⁴ Bucci, E. *A Superindústria do Imaginário: Como o capital transformou o olhar em trabalho e se apropriou de tudo que é visível*. 1. ed. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2021, p. 17.

digital advocacy³⁵. Digital marketing is related to the mobilization of emotions and senses that stimulate the public's desire to purchase products, whereas advocacy strategies aim to capture attention for political and social engagement in a cause or a platform defending and/or expanding human rights.

Moreover, the dynamics of social media tend to favor content published by individuals over organizations.³⁶ Besides, considering that user engagement is crucial in posts delivery, the more effective the calls to action made by personalist profiles, the greater the impact of collectively produced content:

*'Results suggest mechanisms that are pivotal in contemporary micro-mobilization efforts and demonstrate that highly personal calls to action are most effective, and that at least via social media distant social networks and organizational sources are roughly equivalent in their capacity to motivate participation.'*³⁷

We also emphasize that the sponsorship of publications, the objective of which is to increase the reach offered by the platforms, is unfeasible for most legal clinics, given the resource constraints faced by them. This limits them to exclusively organic (unpaid) user engagement with the content posted on the app.

³⁵ Klein, G.H. H, D. De Rolt, C.R. "Digital Advocacy: convergência de comunicação pública e marketing digital nas plataformas Web 2.0". CEP, v. 88, p. 001, November 2017.

³⁶ Nekmat, E. Gower, K.K, Gonzenbach, W.J. Flanagan, A.J. Source effects in the micro-mobilization of collective action via social media. Information, Communication & Society, v. 18, n. 9, p. 1076–1091, Mars, 2015.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 1078.

Thus, for digital advocacy to gain visibility in a saturated media environment, it is necessary to incorporate strategies used by the agents who succeed in this space: certain companies, platform providers, influencers, and content producers in general.³⁸ In summary, the performance of legal clinics on social media needs to consider the metrics of the apps that indicate the quantity of connections — and consequently access to the disseminate information. However, at the same time, we must not lose sight of the particularities of its content, which is scientific in nature, collectively constructed, and of public interest.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The work of the Human Rights Clinic of Paraná's Federal University on social media aimed to share the themes, methodologies, and results of research carried out at the public university, contributing to the democratization of knowledge and, above all, to human rights education. The results presented comprise the analysis of activities between June and November 2021 on Instagram.

Despite the funding that the CDH/UFPR projects have received since 2011 — which enabled the communication and advocacy activities, including the scholarship dedicated to social media management — the insufficient financial resources to carry out the project meant that the CDH had to improvise or even carry out the activities

³⁸ Hutchinson, J. Micro-platformization for digital activism on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, v. 24, n.1, p. 35-51, 2021.

in a somewhat amateurish manner. This may have compromised the technical quality of the work, (This might have affected the technical caliber of the content, particularly when compared to professionally published material on social media. It could have specifically impacted the creation of images intended to effectively convey scientific findings and captivate the audience's attention. As a result, it might have limited its effectiveness in reaching a wider audience). Although our team was small and diverse, we succeeded in organizing and publishing a series of 35 posts over 27 weeks.

The themes of the posts included: (i) violence against women, especially of a sexual nature; (ii) sexual and reproductive rights, such as the right to legal abortions and sex education; (iii) guidance on accessing health services and reporting procedures in the event of violations of rights; (iv) information on the work of the CDH at UFPR; (v) publicizing academic events and researcher recruitment procedures; and (vi) recommendations of literature and media materials related to the themes of the posts. We also used the Instagram profile created for CDH/UFPR to widely disseminate legal clinics as a methodology for teaching law, and in order to do so we published, for example, an online class on legal research methodology taught by Professor Taysa Schiocchet. Other advocacy materials published include the disclosure of the request to join as *amicus curiae* in the Claim of Non-compliance with a Fundamental Precept (ADPF) No. 442, carried out as part of a specific campaign aimed at exercising the right to legal abortion, and the documentary “Além da Lei - Aborto Legal no Brasil” (2020)- “Beyond the Law - Legal Abortion in Brazil”.

Although Instagram initially seemed to be the most pertinent tool for disseminating research carried out at public universities, its actual use revealed, as the first major challenge, the incompatibility between the app's algorithm and the academic and scientific nature of our content. In addition, the technological sophistication that drives the professionalization of activities in this area resulted in challenges related to our team management.

Since these platforms' operational criteria is based on a marketing and personalistic logic, adapting the activities carried out by the Clinic was key to achieving favorable metrics that would lead to an increase in the profile's connections. Based on the concepts of subversion and re-signification of a space governed by private interests — an increasingly dominant trait in digital communication — our team focused on the dissemination of collectively constructed scientific knowledge. This stands in stark opposition to the algorithmic tendency to favor personalist profiles, characterized by seemingly improvised, and frequent publications that are aimed at a specific target audience or delimited by a *persona*.³⁹

In addition to the challenges previously mentioned, among which we highlight developing publications with quality (i.e., informative and efficient communication)

³⁹ Here, it is important to distinguish "persona" from target audience. When it comes to *advocacy*, a significant part of the literature focuses on "target audience"; however, most of the material produced on media management refers to "persona", a term coined by programmer and software designer Alan Cooper. These are two different concepts, since the meaning of "*persona*" is narrower: it refers to the personification of a hypothetical customer, with specific characteristics to whom the sale of a certain product is aimed, while target audience refers to a group of people potentially interested in a certain subject. Cooper, A. *About Face: The Essentials of User Interface Design: Essentials of Window Interface Design*. John Wiley & Sons, 1a ed., 1995, p.115.

in a short production time, we emphasize the finesse in transmitting — and often translating — technical legal language to the general public in order to maintain the quality of the information. In other words, since the posts that most often appear in social media feeds are those with the most interactions among users, our publications needed to meet the demand for engagement to achieve social impact.

Given the need for the involvement of third parties in both engaging and the joint production of publications, the team developed an electronic form to survey possible topics for posts. The form was distributed among the members of the Clinic so that they could write short texts containing questions and reflections pertaining to their area of research, while also associating them with recent news, events, and commemorative dates. The responses were analyzed by the communications team who, with the collaboration of each researcher and their proposed content, created artwork with images and icons in order to reorganize the information in the texts into posts with more accessible language.

Organizing our online endeavors enabled seamless collaboration across various cities, facilitated by the use of real-time project management tools like Trello and WhatsApp. These tools enhance our ability to conduct work activities with increased agility. However, mastering these tools and having exclusively virtual contact with the team presented new challenges to overcome during the activities.

We held several meetings to discuss the content and themes of the posts, since the team was made up of researchers from different areas, which meant that ensuring

theoretical alignment and knowledge transit between team members was vital. The Clinic's activities were carried out by academics from different areas (law, public relations, and medicine) and levels (undergraduate, master's and doctorate), coordinated by the leader of CDH/UFPR. The entire process happened online, which required organization and rigorous execution of a phased plan, as well as the use of digital tools to optimize our work. There were challenges related to managing the execution of the project, since it consisted of several simultaneous and sequential stages.

The experience allowed a critical analysis of how digital tools work. These tools are often incorporated into everyday professional life without further questioning regarding the need — and viability — of immediate and automatic submission to the parameters established by big techs.⁴⁰ In this context, occupying the digital space with evidence-based information can be a challenge if we take into consideration the communication between academia and society. Consequently, we reflected upon the

⁴⁰ "Young companies, only a few decades old, had reached a price higher than the GDP of any country except China and the United States. And their shares kept growing. In August 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic was still claiming lives, with 750,000 deaths on the planet (more than 100,000 of them in Brazil), Apple's price was climbing the charts, surpassing the two trillion barrier in a fulminant rise. In a span of 21 weeks, the best-rated of the big techs doubled its market value. According to *The New York Times*, in the first seven months of 2020, the five biggest big techs, i.e. Apple, Amazon, Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, and Facebook, rose by 37% while all the other companies in the S&P 500 (the five hundred largest companies with shares traded on Nasdaq - National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations - or the New York Stock Exchange, NYSE) suffered an average 2% decline in their share prices." Bucci, E. *A Superindústria do Imaginário: Como o capital transformou o olhar em trabalho e se apropriou de tudo que é visível*. 1. ed. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2021, p. 17.

interests involved in producing content for digital platforms — in other words, which kind of information can be updated and renewed continuously.

We observed that the increase in interactions with the page's profile was not exponential, solely reaching restricted proportions compatible with the strategies employed. We also noticed that, over time, the reach of the posts stagnated, which led us to believe that in addition to the influence of "luck" or "chance" factors on the growth of Instagram pages, there are limitations imposed by the app's algorithm, whose parameters for recognizing relevant information often do not match those of scientific productions. Besides, the growing professionalization of digital communication strategies makes the battle for attention in this space increasingly complex.

We also found that the challenging nature of the creation of posts,⁴¹ which required the team's exchange of knowledge was fundamental in contributing to the participants' legal training.

Throughout our activities, introspection regarding the challenges faced caused a strategic shift in our advocacy approach across social media platforms. This shift was prompted by a reassessment of our target audience. Initially, the CDH|UFPR's role in social media mirrored that of individuals, civil society organizations, and commercial

⁴¹ The main tool used to assemble the posts was *Canva*, which can be accessed at <<https://www.canva.com/>>. Through "*Canva For Education*", the application's professional package is available free of charge to students, upon registration with their institutional email address.

entities, predominantly focused on engagement geared towards product or service sales. Our digital presence emulated, somewhat mechanically, the prevalent paradigm of establishing an online footprint. However, this approach encountered hurdles stemming from both our team's lack of technical expertise in digital marketing and the intricate dynamics of social media algorithms. Subsequently, we redefined these challenges by subjecting the Clinic's digital presence to critical scrutiny, thereby gaining a clearer understanding of our capabilities and actual scope on social media platforms as an academic institution. Relying on the algorithmic metrics available, we gauged that the Clinic's content failed to resonate with our initially delineated audience: girls and women confronting violations of sexual and reproductive rights. Evidently, this audience segment wasn't engaging with our Instagram profile.

Our observations revealed that the Clinic predominantly engaged with the academic community—comprising faculty, researchers, students, and individuals interested in research outcomes. Consequently, we pivoted towards generating fewer, more technical publications, supplementing these with shared content from civil society organizations or our own archive. This strategic adjustment was anchored in scientific dissemination objectives and fostering dialogue with other clinics, research collectives, and decision-makers. The Clinic sought to augment the visibility and significance of these thematic concerns within the university milieu and among stakeholders closely associated with academic disciplines, particularly law and health, where these issues remain peripheral.

Despite the recalibration of our target audience and the revised digital strategy on social media, we acknowledged that, according with prevailing literature on legal clinics, measuring social impact remains an intricate challenge, even in the digital landscape equipped with metrics analysis through algorithms (such as likes, saves, shares, etc.). Our analysis of this scenario illuminated that digital advocacy operates synergistically with other strategies—traditional advocacy, litigation, and scientific dissemination. The evaluation of its impacts necessitates a comprehensive assessment encompassing all adopted strategies.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research presents a theoretical and reflective exercise on the challenges faced in *advocacy* through social media, an experiment carried out by students participating in the Human Rights Clinic at UFPR. Based on their experience, we identified, described, and discussed the main challenges related to the practice of digital *advocacy* by legal clinics.

These challenges were mostly of technical, operational, organizational, and financial order, mainly related to the dynamics of social media. In our experience, the criteria that give visibility to posts are often at odds with the academic and scientific nature of the information of legal clinics, which is of collective construction and public interest. In addition, the professionalization of the digital space created technical and financial challenges. Since knowledge of good practices on social media is foreign to

legal clinics, the need to hire professional services arose. The scarcity of resources for such made it infeasible to invest money in boosting publications, leading to the need to put out information in an organic and amateur way. We also faced challenges in aligning the theory of multidisciplinary teams and encouraging the involvement of third parties, especially academics, to collaborate with the objectives of scientific dissemination.

Despite this, we believe that the information published on CDH/UFPR's Instagram profile met the objectives of bringing content researched at the public university to the digital space in a concise and accessible way, of promoting scientific events, and of spreading information on the clinical methodology of teaching law. Therefore, we reiterate that digital advocacy cannot be an isolated activity that ends in itself. The visibility of the Clinic's social networks further contributes, for example, to the reach of the group's range of activities, such as training courses for professionals, to be produced and made available by the UFPR's Human Rights Clinic through projects already underway.

On the other hand, the limitations imposed by the scarcity of financial resources and the very dynamics of social media apps, as well as the professionalization of social media management, not only restricted the reach of publications but also generated an unavoidable demand to be always up to date in this particular medium. As a result, it is necessary to examine the effective impact of digital advocacy by legal clinics, bearing in mind that social interest and quality of information are not necessarily

related to the reach achieved in social media. Thus, when carrying out human rights advocacy in the digital scope, legal clinics must understand their limitations and assess the real viability of this practice, considering the obstacles listed above.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the social impacts within the context of this research, it becomes evident that digital presence stands as a significant facet in conjunction with complementary strategies. This significance lies in its ability to confer heightened visibility, authority, and legitimacy amid other research institutes, legal clinics, and civil society organizations operating within related domains. This fosters the establishment of partnerships to facilitate gatherings, forums, and strategic litigation efforts, alongside underexplored digital collaborations. Such alliances reinforce the exchange of knowledge among these diverse institutions and broaden the outreach to affected individuals, fostering larger and more diverse engagements, such as mobilizing a greater number and variety of events. Moreover, it enriches the discourse by integrating contributions from external organizations into the University sphere, thereby elevating the complexity of debates.

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