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# Digital Media Users' News Exposure, Knowledge, Understanding, Empathy and Willingness to Support Stateless Children in Thailand

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## Abstract

UNICEF Thailand has initiated the media campaign supporting stateless children in Thailand, to the extent that the campaign will raise awareness and create knowledge as well as understanding about their situation among Thai digital media users as they can be one of a strong drive supporting and concretely promoting stateless children's legal identity. The ongoing challenges must be solved so as to protect vulnerable stateless children who are facing risk from having no legal status. They should also be given open opportunities as citizens. To deal with that, effective communication is an essential part that promotes understanding among the public of the importance of having legal status and how they can help improve the situations of the stateless children in Thailand. The study investigated 401 digital media users (aged 18-64 years) knowledge, understanding and intention to support stateless children in Thailand. Additionally, multiple regression was employed to discover the relation of digital media users' exposure to information and knowledge, understanding, empathy, and willingness to support stateless children in Thailand. The result revealed a significant positive correlation between knowledge and empathy effect on the willingness to support stateless children while neither understanding nor understanding did. The results from this study can be further applied to the development of campaigns for the promotion of stateless children in Thailand.

Keywords: Stateless children, UNICEF Thailand, Digital media users, Media campaign exposure

#### 1. Introduction

A stateless child does not exist on the land they live on. They are not recognized as citizens of any state in the world. Although on the surface, the child seems to be living a life like any other child, in reality, leading an ordinary life is just not possible (message from UNICEF Thailand). The condition of being stateless is the burden and often excludes them from participation in society. Stateless children are often in vulnerable situations and facing the difficulty to access to child protection.

UNICEF Thailand has initiated the media campaign supporting stateless children in Thailand, to the extent that the campaign raises awareness and creates knowledge as well as understanding about stateless children among Thai digital media users as they can be one of a strong drive supporting and concretely promoting stateless children's legal identity. The ongoing challenges have to be solved so as to protect vulnerable stateless children who are facing risk from having no legal status. They should also be given open opportunities as citizens.

The research collected data in order to survey digital media users' exposure to information and examine the relation of their exposure to information about stateless children in Thailand and their knowledge, empathy, and willingness to support stateless children in Thailand. This study provides access to useful information for the design of communication methods that will help raise awareness of stateless children in the country. The research would create better understanding of the importance of having legal statusas there are different aspects to consider. The more profound understanding is not only beneficial to related persons, but also to digital media users in Thailand who can be a strong support and concretely promote potential development for stateless children.

Finally, effective communication is an essential part that helps improve the situations of the stateless children in Thailand. An early resolution is also a drive for poverty eradication, fair and equal employment, and inclusive education in accordance with sustainable development goals, which, at the same time, helps develop the country.

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## 2. Objectives

- 1) To explore digital media users' news exposure, knowledge, understanding, empathy and willing to support stateless children in Thailand
- 2) To investigate the relation of digital media users' exposure to information and knowledge, understanding, empathy, and willingness to support stateless children in Thailand

#### 3. Materials and Methods

## 3.1 Scope of contents

The scope of contents in the second phrase was to study individual factors including knowledge and understanding of stateless persons and comprehension of the current situation of the stateless children in Thailand; exposure to information about stateless children; level of empathy and support to stateless children which affected the willingness to support stateless children.

#### 3.2 Research methods

Quantitative research methods were employed. An online questionnaire as a data collecting tool was checked and reviewed by experts and research advisors before distributed to digital media users in Thailand. Data were collected from July 1-10, 2022.

## 3.3 Respondents

The researcher recruited a sample of respondents who were 401 Thai digital media users aged 18-64 years who had Internet access and were willing to participate in the research through accidental sampling.

## 3.4 Hypothesis testing

Regarding to research hypotheses, the objectives were to investigate the relationship of factors including digital media users' exposure to online information, knowledge, empathy and willingness to support Stateless Children in Thailand.

**Table 1** Likert-Scale and data interpretation

Likert Scale Description	Likert Scale	
Strongly disagree	1	
Disagree	2	
Neutral/Uncertain	3	
Agree	4	
Strongly agree	5	

The following means were interpreted as follows:

Mean $4.51 - 5.00$	very high level
Mean $3.51 - 4.50$	high level
Mean $2.51 - 3.50$	moderate level
Mean $1.51 - 2.50$	low level
Mean $1.00 - 1.50$	very low level

# 3.5 Data Analysis and Presentation

The data were analyzed by SPSS software and presented using descriptive statistics. Multiple regression was also conducted to examine the relationship among factors including digital media users' exposure to online information, knowledge, empathy and willingness to support stateless children in Thailand. All incomplete surveys were discarded from the analysis. All findings were presented in tables with respect to research questions.

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#### 4. Results and Discussion

The research investigated 401 respondents, and the findings were as follows:

#### 4.1 Demographic factors

According to Table 2, the majority of the respondents were 364 females, followed by 131 males. Six respondents specified 'other sexes'. Most of them lived in Bangkok, followed by the central region, the northeastern region, the southern region, the eastern region, the northern region, and the western region, respectively. In terms of age, the majority were aged 26 - 39 years, followed by 18 - 25 years, 40 - 49 years, 50 - 59 years, and aged 60 years and over, respectively. Most of them graduated with a bachelor's degree, followed by high vocational certificate (vocational certificate), higher than a bachelor's degree. =, vocational certificate (vocational certificate), secondary level 4 - 6, secondary education grades 1 - 3, and primary level, respectively. The majority were employees, followed by business owners, general contractors, freelancers, government officers, grade students or university student, housewives or husbands, and unemployed, respectively. In terms of average monthly income, it was found that most of them monthly earned 20,001 - 25,000 baht, followed by 15,001 - 20,000 baht, 25,001 - 30,000 baht, 10,001 - 15,000 baht, 30,001 - 35,000 baht, 35,001 - 40,000 baht, 40,001 - 50,000 baht, 50,001 - 100,000 baht, less than 10,000 baht, no income, and 100,000 baht or higher, respectively. The majority used mobile applications at a high level. They used the LINE application the most, followed by Facebook, YouTube / music applications, Instagram, Twitter, websites, and games, respectively.

**Table 2** Frequency and percentage of personal factors of the respondents

Personal factors	Number	Percentage	
1. Gender			
Male	131	32.67	
Female	264	65.84	
Other	6	1.50	
Total	401	100.00	
2. Geographical background			
Bangkok	244	60.85	
Northern Province	16	3.99	
Southern Province	20	4.99	
Central Province	71	17.71	
Western Province	10	2.49	
Eastern Province	19	4.74	
Northeastern Province	21	5.24	
Total	401	100.00	
3. Ages			
18 - 25 years	107	26.68	
26 - 39 years	182	45.39	
40 - 49 years	61	15.21	
50 – 59 years	35	8.73	
60 years and above	16	3.99	
Total	401	100.00	
4. Level of Education			
primary school	1	0.25	
middle school	4	1.00	
high school	17	4.24	
vocational certificate	23	5.74	
vocational diploma	38	9.48	
bachelors' degree	282	70.32	
M.A. level and graduate	36	8.98	
Total	401	100.00	
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	Personal factors	Number	Percentage	
5.	Occupation			
	government officer	22	5.49	
	private employee	189	47.13	
	general contractor	50	12.47	
	freelance	38	9.48	
	business owner	53	13.22	
	housewife/husband	19	4.74	
	student/university student	21	5.24	
	unemployed	9	2.24	
	other	0	0	
	Total	401	100.00	
6.	Average monthly income			
	no income	11	2.74	
	less than 10,000 baht	19	4.74	
	10,001 - 15,000 baht	30	7.48	
	15,001 - 20,000 baht	78	19.45	
	20,001 - 25,000 baht	92	22.94	
	25,001 - 30,000 baht	66	16.46	
	30,001 - 35,000 baht	28	6.98	
	35,001 - 40,000 baht	28	6.98	
	40,001 - 50,000 baht	22	5.49	
	50,001 - 100,000 baht	20	4.99	
	over 100,000 baht	7	1.75	
	Total	401	100.00	

# 4.2 Information about exposure to online information about stateless children

As illustrated in Table 3, the overall level of exposure to online information about stateless children was moderate ( $\overline{x}$  = .318). Information searching was at a high level ( $\overline{x}$  = 3.63), followed b" Exposure to news and information" ( $\overline{x}$  = 3.62), "Personal experience that makes exposing to news and information" ( $\overline{x}$  = 3.00), and "Information channel" ( $\overline{x}$  = 2.46).

Table 3 Level of exposure to online information about stateless children

Information about exposure to online information about stateless children	x	S.D.	Interpretation
Information channels	2.46	1.3469	Low
1) Receiving information about stateless people from websites.	2.41	1.5533	Low
2) Receiving information about stateless people from Facebook.	2.81	1.5118	Moderate
3) Receiving information about stateless people from Twitter.	2.21	1.5783	Low
4) Receiving information about stateless people from Instagram.	2.02	1.6354	Low
5) Receiving information about stateless people from YouTube.	2.84	1.4763	Moderate
Information searching	3.63	.7552	High
1) Searching for information about stateless people when seeing that others are	3.83	.8423	High
interested in this issue.			
2) Searching for information about stateless people when there is news about them	3.95	.8748	High
in a variety of media.			
3) Searching for information about stateless people when relevant organizations	3.40	.9300	Moderate
provide news or updates about this issue.			
4) Searching for information about stateless people when having an opportunity	3.51	.9168	High
directly interact with them.			
5) Searching for information about stateless people when desiring to support them.	3.48	.9301	Moderate

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Information about exposure to online information about stateless children	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Exposure to news and information	3.62	.8095	High
1) Open to news and information about various groups of stateless people.	3.63	.9215	High
2) Open to news and information about challenges stateless people are facing.	3.54	.9022	High
3) Open to news and information about policies to resolve situations of stateless persons.	3.84	.8609	High
4) Open to news and information about how and through which channel help and support stateless people	3.48	.9301	Moderate
Personal experience that makes exposing to news and information	3.00	1.2691	Moderate
1) Receiving news and information about stateless people when desiring to help or donate to charity in general	3.04	1.2780	Moderate
2) Receiving news and information about stateless people when desiring to help or	2.96	1.3079	Moderate
donate to them.			
Total	3.18	.8407	Moderate

## 4.3 Knowledge about stateless people in Thailand

In Table 4, the respondents' level of knowledge about stateless people in Thailand was moderate ( $\overline{x}=3.31$  Four out of the eight items were displayed by high means. The highest mean was displayed by "Thai nationality is obtained from being born in Thailand was at ahigh level ( $\overline{x}=4.33$ ), followed by "Being a stateless person limits many rights necessary for living: freedom of travel, the right to higher education, the right to healthcare services, the right to work according to one's skills and potentials, etc." ( $\overline{x}=4.13$ )), "Stateless people in Thailand can apply for Thai nationality according to the specific criteria was at "high" level ( $\overline{x}=3.86$ ), and Thai nationality is obtained through the bloodline of Thai" ( $\overline{x}=3.59$ ), respectively. Three items were displayed by moderate means; the highest mean was displayed by "Some stateless children are those who are born from parents from a minority or an ethnic group that came to live in Thailand ( $\overline{x}=3.09$ ), "Stateless children are those who are born from transnational parents who temporarily or illegally came into the country" ( $\overline{x}=2.99$ ), and "Stateless people are those who illegally move into a country and there is a problem of repatriation to the country of origin" ( $\overline{x}=2.53$ ), respectively. Only one item, "Stateless children are Thais, born from Thai parents who did not report their birth, so they do not have documents to certify their births nor birth certificates" displayed a low mean ( $\overline{x}=1.98$ ), .

Table 4 Level of Knowledge about stateless people in Thailand

Knowledge about stateless people in Thailand	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1) Stateless people are those who illegally move into a country and there is a	2.53	1.6340	Moderate
problem of repatriation to the country of origin.			
2) Some stateless children are those who are born from parents from a minority	3.09	1.6888	Moderate
or an ethnic group that came to live in Thailand.			
3) Stateless children are those who are born from transnational parents who	2.99	1.7305	Moderate
temporarily or illegally came into the country.			
4) Stateless children are Thais, born from Thai parents who did not report their	1.98	1.3728	Low
birth, so they do not have documents to certify their births nor birth certificates.			
5) Thai nationality is obtained through the bloodline of Thai parents.	3.59	1.7613	High
6) Thai nationality is obtained from being born in Thailand.	4.33	.8933	High
7) Stateless people in Thailand can apply for Thai nationality according to the	3.86	.8901	High
specific criteria.			
8) Being a stateless person limits many rights necessary for living: freedom of	4.13	.8660	High
travel, the right to higher education, the right to healthcare services, the right to			
work according to one's skills and potentials, etc.			
Total	3.31	.8394	Moderate

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#### 4.4 Level of understanding about current situation of stateless children in Thailand

According to Table 5, the overall level of understanding about current situations of stateless children in Thailand was moderate ( $\overline{x}=2.92$ ). When analyzing each topic, it was found that Stateless children who were over 15 and able to work were often discriminated. The results in two items were high. "They were selected to do unwanted jobs or hazardous work and receive unfair wages" displayed the highest mean ( $\overline{x}=3.98$ ), followed by "Having no nationality makes stateless children vulnerable to discrimination" and "Stateless children are often bullied and abused by society. ( $\overline{x}=3.82$  each). The rest displayed low means. "Most stateless parents can claim the basic rights for their children, e.g., rights to education, rights to healthcare, and rights to be protected" displayed the highest ( $\overline{x}=2.35$ ), followed by "Stateless people who have 13-digit-identification numbers have basic rights to healthcare are entitled to receive medical treatment" ( $\overline{x}=2.30$ ), "Stateless children can attend public schools in primary and secondary levels without having identification documents and the government has to provide subsidies to schools" ( $\overline{x}=2.11$ ), and "Stateless people have the basic rights equal to Thai people" ( $\overline{x}=2.06$ ), respectively.

**Table 5** Level of understanding about current situations of stateless children in Thailand.

Level of understanding about current situations of stateless children in	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Thailand			
1) Stateless children can attend public schools in primary and secondary levels	2.11	1.6238	Low
without having identification documents and the government has to provide			
subsidies to schools.			
2) Stateless people have the basic rights equal to Thai people.	2.06	1.4563	Low
3) Stateless people who have 13-digit-identification numbers have basic rights to	2.30	1.5017	Low
healthcare are entitled to receive medical treatment.			
4) Most stateless parents can claim the basic rights for their children, e.g., rights	2.35	1.5045	Low
to education, rights to healthcare, and rights to be protected.			
5) Having no nationality makes stateless children vulnerable to discrimination.	3.82	.8110	High
6) Stateless children who are over 15 and able to work are often discriminated	3.98	.8363	High
against. They are selected to do unwanted jobs or hazardous work and receive			
unfair wages.			
7) Stateless children are often bullied and abused by society.	3.82	.8694	High
Total	2.92	.8716	Moderate

#### 4.5 Level of empathy

According to Table 6, the level of empathy was high  $(\overline{x}=3.97)$ . Each item also displayed a high mean. The highest mean was displayed by "Feeling pity for people who are in distress when knowing that they are facing insecurity, sorrow, or injustice"  $(\overline{x}=4.14)$ , followed by "Empathizing with people who are in distress when knowing that they are facing insecurity, sorrow, or injustice because of the same feeling if in the same situation as theirs"  $(\overline{x}=4.11)$ , "Being concerned about and understand the feelings of people who are in distress and want to help when knowing that they are facing insecurity, sorrow, or injustice  $(\overline{x}=4.10)$ , "Trying to ease the pain of others"  $(\overline{x}=4.09)$ , "Often sacrificing personal benefits for a good cause"  $(\overline{x}=3.86)$ , "Properly using own experience and feelings to understand the situations others are facing" was at  $(\overline{x}=3.80)$ , and "Often sharing necessaries and donate money for charity"  $(\overline{x}=3.68)$ , respectively.

**Table 6** Level of empathy

Level of empathy	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1) Trying to ease the pain of others.	4.09	.7183	High
2) Often sacrificing personal benefits for a good cause.	3.86	.7663	High
3) Often sharing necessaries and donate money for charity.	3.68	.8502	High
4) Properly using own experience and feelings to understand the situations others	3.80	.8165	High
are facing.			

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Level of empathy	X	S.D.	Interpretation
5) Empathizing with people who are in distress when knowing that they are facing	4.11	.7809	High
insecurity, sorrow, or injustice because of the same feeling if in the same situation			
as theirs.			
6) Often feeling pity for people who are in distress when knowing that they are	4.14	.7707	High
facing insecurity, sorrow, or injustice			
7) Being concerned about and understand the feelings of people who are in	4.10	.7937	High
distress and want to help when knowing that they are facing insecurity, sorrow, or			
injustice.			
Total	3.97	.6222	High

### 4.6 The support to stateless children

According to Table 7, the level of support to stateless children was high ( $\overline{x}=3.95$ ). Six out of seven items display high mean scores. The highest mean was displayed by "Stateless children should have equal rights to Thai children, e.g., rights to education, rights to public health, rights to be protected" ( $\overline{x}=4.16$ ), "Stateless children should be given opportunities to maximize their potentials, both through education and necessary skill development because they are equal to ordinary children" ( $\overline{x}=4.14$ ), "Willing to persuade or tell others about the help to stateless children" ( $\overline{x}=4.06$ ), "Willing to help stateless children by making donations as much as possible" ( $\overline{x}=4.02$ ), "Interesting in receiving news about stateless children in Thailand" ( $\overline{x}=4.01$ ), and "Advocating and take initiative for the rights of stateless children if seeing an incident or situation that is unfair to them" ( $\overline{x}=3.96$ ), respectively. Only one item, "If given an opportunity, willing to be a volunteer to help stateless children as much as possible. was at a moderate level ( $\overline{x}=3.32$ ).

**Table 7** Level of intention to support stateless children

Level of the intention to support stateless children	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1) Stateless children should have equal rights to Thai	4.16	1.0138	High
children, e.g., rights to education, rights to public health,			
rights to be protected.			
2) Stateless children should be given opportunities to	4.14	.9568	High
maximize their potentials, both through education and			
necessary skill development because they are equal to			
ordinary children.			
3) Interesting in receiving news about stateless children in	4.01	.8873	High
Thailand.			
4) If given an opportunity, willing to be a volunteer to help	3.32	1.0922	Moderate
stateless children as much as possible.			
5) Advocating and take initiative for the rights of stateless	3.96	1.0252	High
children if seeing an incident or situation that is unfair to			
them.			
6) Willing to help stateless children by making donations	4.02	.8198	High
as much as possible.			
7) Willing to persuade or tell others about the help to	4.06	.8868	High
stateless children.			
Total	3.95	.6945	High

## 4.7 Hypothesis testing

From the research hypotheses, the objective was to study the relationship of digital media users' exposure to online information, knowledge, empathy, and willingness to support stateless children in Thailand. It was found that such hypotheses were confirmed in Table 8.

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**Table 8** The relationship of digital media users' online information exposure, knowledge, empathy, and willingness to support Stateless Children in Thailand

Independent Variables	В	Beta	T	Sig.
Knowledge about Stateless Children in Thailand	0.401	0.152	3.403	0.001*
Understanding the Situation of Stateless Children	0.126	0.106	2.242	0.026
in Thailand				
online information exposure	0.084	-0.029	511	0.609
Empathy	-0.024	.669	14.859	0.000*

Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.413$ , F = 69.783, \*P < 0.05

Table 8 displays the relationship of knowledge, understanding the situation, online information exposure, and empathy and their effect on willingness to support stateless children in Thailand ( $R^2 = 0.413$ , F = 69.783, P < 0.05). However, empathy mostly affected the willingness with a significance level of 0.05.

According to the result of the study, empathy affected willingness to support stateless children in Thailand as it is an emotional response to affective state of another (Baron-Cohen, S. & Wheelwright, S., 2004). To encourage Thai people to support stateless children in Thailand, communication strategies should focus on empathizing stateless children in Thailand as there are the links between mindfulness and empathy and highlight the importance of emotional awareness (Borghi, O. & Mayrhofer, L. & Voracek, M. & Tran, U., 2023) which later brings about the intention to support and opportunities giving to others they never benefit from (Goleman, 1995).

Knowledge is driven by awareness (Breckler, 1986). According to Sawandee (2011), knowledge and awareness are related to consciousness. When the respondents gained more knowledge about stateless children in Thailand, their willingness to support increased. It is important to publicly dissiminate information about stateless children in Thailand and apply communication through consciousness that meets the target audiences' preferences. Knowledge can affect their attitude towards stateless children in Thailand, and they can later take the support action when it is put into the processes of selection, attention and retention as individuals have the tendency to select sources of information relating to their interest and opinion to support their belief and attitude while avoiding those against them (Klapper, 1960). This would serve to reinforce their prior predispositions and attitudes when faced with media content.

In summary, the findings from this study will be useful for those working in media campaigns that support stateless children in Thailand. Income and education levels affected the audiences' intention to support for stateless children. Besides, as the research found many factors, such as associated knowledge and understanding about situation of stateless children in Thailand, affected the audiences' intention to support for stateless children, related organizations should create public awareness, understanding, and desirable perception on stateless children in Thailand. Meanwhile, environment and society also plays an important role in influencing Thai people to donate their money (Yimtae, A. 2022). It is better to use online channels with the help of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) who can empower UNICEF in conveying a key message because its prompt, wide coverage and personalization features can facilitate media campaigns while KOLs can encourage their followers in their perception, and finally, call for supporting the rights of stateless children. In the media campaign implementation, the objectives should focus on educating and informing digital media users about the situation of stateless children as understanding of stateless children should lead to greater awareness of supporting the needs for citizenship of all children. Empathy-driven helping appeal and inspiring appeal should be applied to encourage the audiences to support legal status of stateless children in Thailand as nationality brings them the rights to access to any opportunities and choices of life as well as equity.

# 5. Conclusion

This study found that knowledge, understanding of the situation, exposure to online information, and empathy affected willingness to support stateless children in Thailand. Therefore, the target audiences' knowledge and understanding should be promoted so resulting in their willingness to support stateless



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children. UNICEF Thailand should focus on communication campaigns using online media as channels of communication to promote willingness to support stateless children.

To develop digital media that promotes support for stateless children, the following topics should be considered:

- 5.1 Target audience Personal factors, including level of education and monthly income, are variables associated with their lifestyle, media behavior, and decision to support stateless children.
- 5.2 Communication objectives As the audiences' level of knowledge and understanding about the situation of stateless children in Thailand was at a moderate level, educating the audiences about stateless children in Thailand would help them realize the importance of stateless children's legal identity as citizens of the country.
- 5.3 Communication channels Using online media and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) can empower UNICEF in conveying a key message because of its prompt, wide coverage and personalization features can facilitate the media campaign while KOLs can encourage their followers in their perception, and finally, in their action.
- 5.4 Key Message The main focus of the key message should relate to stateless children's current situations because it can help clarify the problem of no legal status and being stateless, the difficulty, and limitation to many social opportunities which affect their future. At the same time, the message stressing on the audiences' supportive power that can lead to movement should be another priority.
- 5.5 Mood & Tone Empathy-driven helping appeal and inspiring appeal can encourage the audiences to support the legal status of stateless children in Thailand as nationality brings them the rights to access.

## 6. Acknowledgements

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