



UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA AS MIRROR TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

¹Suleiman Alhaji Ahmad, ²Manir Abdullahi Kamba and ³Mohammed Usman

¹*Federal University Dutsin-Ma*

²*Bayero University Kano*

³*Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi*

Abstract: Social media and society can be seen and understood contemporarily as each mirrors the other from the following cascaded areas. The areas may include but not limited to: privacy; trust and credibility; political mobilization & engagement; extremism and terrorism; fake news; hate speech; and well-being. This paper aimed at digesting each of those stated areas regarding social media usage as it reflect the society. In a form of discursive mode and explanatory method the paper highlighted and explained some basic answers to the frequent questions as to what, why, and how about: privacy, trust, polity, information, hate, oppression, and general well being in using social media as it reflect our contemporary society.

Keywords: Social Media, Contemporary Society, Youth, False Identity, Fake News, Cyberstack,

Introduction

Human nature by default has been programmed to be socially active to a certain extent. Some people are more active, while others are less. However, people have always been looking for ways to connect and network with each other. In this age of digitization, people have found ways to be socially active on the internet, by the advent of the numerous social networking platforms and computer applications. Today relationships may begin, grow and end on social media. People no longer need a personal handshake or face-to-face meeting. A lot of social activities are host online.

Marshal McLuhan, in (1964) a Canadian Professor of English Language and a philosopher of communication theory propounded the theory of the ‘global village’. He presumed a world will sometime be where “anything that is happening anywhere would be happening everywhere”. He envisaged that the world would someday become a

‘virtual community’ and be made easier by the uses and applications of communication technology (Marshall & Bruce, 1992).

Kahn and Cerf (1990) cited in Udende and Azeez (2010) argued that as we were approaching the new millennium, the Internet would continue in revolutionizing our society, our economy, and our technological system. No one knows for certain how far, or in what direction, the Internet will evolve, but no one should underestimate its importance.

Unfortunately, the Internet and social media to be precise seems to have democratized tyranny more than anything. In today’s world, we are confronted with social media plague kind of. We have a lot of countless addicts of such social media who ignore decency and standard rules of practice. It is thereby warranting hate and tyranny among users due to less or absence of censorship on the social media applications. (Eid & Al-Jabri, 2016)

Social media and society

British International Journal of Education And Social Sciences

An official Publication of Center for International Research Development

Double Blind Peer and Editorial Review International Referred Journal; Globally index

Available www.cirdjournal.com/index.php/bijess/index; E-mail: journals@cird.online



Society on one hand is the existing relationships among groups. It is the sum of social relationships among groups of humans or animals. In other words it is a structured community of people: a structured community of people bound together by similar traditions, institutions, or nationality.

Social media on the other hand means virtual social interaction as opposed to physical interaction. Social media emanates when people start to communicate technologically. In those days people relied on radio, television and newspapers as well as other hardcopy publications. Today most of the forms of social media are digital which enables virtual interaction. It generates a large number of innovations. Therefore in this 21st century, social media is one of the biggest inventions of technology; it becomes very popular and widely used. (Suleiman, 2019)

Merriam Webster Dictionary (2018) defines social media as “any forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.” Social media is equally defined by Boyd, (2007) as “technologies that made social communication easy and enable discussion among its participants”.

Social media applications are used by millions of people across the globe and for many reasons. Those applications allow users to connect with their families and friends. They provide several functionalities such as sharing their daily status updates, trending news, photos, videos, discussion on related topics which could equally be either good, bad or ugly (Suleiman, 2019).

There is plethora of social media platforms and are classified into pictorial, textual, audible, visual and audiovisual. The most popularly used are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, Google+, Skype, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat MySpace, Skype, LinkedIn and YouTube. According to statista report in (2020) social media sites have grown in numbers with approximately 2 billion users. But with the increased in use of mobile

devices, the number of user is likely to cross the 3.1 billion by 2021.

Social media empowered users by unrestricted flow of information. It is undeniable that social media plays an important role in impacting on our culture, our economy and our overall view of the world (Suleiman, 2019). Social media is a forum to exchange idea, connect, relate, mobilize, seek, and offer guidance. It removes barriers and created decentralized communication channel; it opens door for all and sundry to voice out and participate in a democratic fashion. It accommodates variety of spontaneous, formal, informal, scholarly and unscholarly writings to flourish. It fosters creativity and collaboration among commentators on issues such as education, economy, politics, race, health, relationships and so on (Amedie, 2015; Eid & Al-Jabri, 2016).

Twitter for instance appears to be a phenomenal technological education tool. It is an infrastructure for a comfortable academic discourse that breaks away of “traditional four wall boundaries classroom discussion” (Bohl, 2015), so also WhatsApp as opined by Suleiman, (2020)

Positive benefit of social media

Over the past two decades, social media have gained so much growth and fame worldwide to an extent that many researchers are now interested in learning more about these social platforms and their effects on the community. Mostly focus is primarily on the harms of social media, it is important to recognize that there are numerous positive aspects associated with social media usage. Eid & Al-Jabri, (2016); Okoro, and Kenneth (2013) opine that some of the positive benefits could be identified from the following perspective:

Educational

- Social media enables teachers to collaborate easily and communicate with students.
- Students have free and easy access to online resources and other information.



- Student's performance and grades are improved while absenteeism is reduced.
- It has been on records that schools admit students via help of the social media.
- Many students and teachers use social media for academic activities in schools.
- It provides academic research benefits via online tools and collaboration.

Political

- It increased participation of voters.
- Users of the platform get inspiration to vote in an election via friends influence.
- Frequent users are more likely to hold a political view or get interest to politics.
- Social media gives birth to the idea of change in politics.
- It gives cheap and quick publicity to social movement and brings people together.

News and awareness

- A lot of users and mainstream media house share and get news online.
- Information posted on social media spreads much faster than other forms of media.
- Majority of people globally rely on it and get the breaking news from such platforms.
- It helps people get access to vast of resources that were rarely available.
- It empowered and informed users to seek for change in their communities.

Social

- With social media people can communicate with friends and others.
- It helps users enhance communication online while strengthening their relationship.
- It helps users stay in touch with the friends they don't see or meet regularly.
- Young people always have tendency to make vast of new friends.

Jobs and employment

- Social media is one of the best ways for marketing of products.
- It is a hub for connecting with people and finding host of business opportunities.
- It helps employers to get employees and those who are in search of new jobs.
- A lot of job recruiters have found their employers through LinkedIn and Twitter etc.
- Social media creates thousands of job opportunities new avenues of income.

Negative effects of social media

Negative effects of Social Media on users cannot be overlooked and can be overwhelming. On this note Bohl, (2015) suggested that users should avoid becoming addicted to social media. He pointed out that it can have harmful effects on the users if not controlled. Some of these effects as suggested by Okoro, and Kenneth (2013); Suleiman, (2019); Suleiman, (2020) include:

- Lack of control on personal information.
- Less realization of related online risks.
- Effect of cyber bullying.
- Issues related to mental health.
- Lack of morals.
- Spread and amplifying of fake news.
- Exposure to adult information.
- High rate of online scam.
- Low student academic pursuits.
- Long hours on social media platforms.
- Peer pressure among youth.
- Addiction to use of social media.

Privacy on social media

Since the arrival of early social networking sites in the early 2000s, these platforms have expanded exponentially from the mid-2010s with such names as social media, chat-rooms, social networks and so on. The massive influx of personal information that has become available online and stored in the online cloud has put user privacy at the forefront of discussion regarding the database's ability to



safely store such personal information. Social Media has become a natural part of life and monitoring Social Media usage could be compared to monitoring your diet (Bohl, 2015). The extent to which users and Social Media platform administrators can access user profiles has become a new topic of ethical consideration, and the legality, awareness, and boundaries of subsequent privacy violations are critical concerns in advance of the technological age. (Eid, & Al-Jabri, 2016)

A social network is a social structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organizations), sets of dyadic ties, and other social interactions between actors. Privacy concerns with social networking services is a subset of data privacy, involving the right of mandating personal privacy concerning storing, re-purposing, provision to third parties, and displaying of information pertaining to oneself via the Internet. (Suleiman, 2014)

Social network security and privacy issues result from the large amounts of information these sites process each day. Features that invite users to participate in messages, invitations, photos, open platform applications and other applications are often the venues for others to gain access to a user's private information. (Amedie, 2015)

These social networks keep track of all interactions used on their sites and save them for later use. Issues include cyberstalking, location disclosure, social profiling, 3rd party personal information disclosure, and government use of social network websites in investigations without the safeguard of a search warrant (Bohl, 2015). Although the 'Privacy Act of 1974' does a lot to limit privacy invasion through third party disclosure, it does list a series of twelve exceptions that deem disclosure of information is permissible. It can be disclosed:

1. If is for an agency in the performance of its duties.
2. If the freedom of 'information act' requires such information.
3. If it is compatible with the purpose for which it was collected.

4. If 'Bureau of Census' needs such information to complete a particular census.

5. If it is only as a form of 'statistical research' and is not individually identifiable.

6. If it is historically relevant to the 'National Archives and Records Administration'.

7. If such information was requested by a 'law enforcement agency'.

8. If such information is deemed beneficial to the 'health or safety of an individual'.

9. If such information is requested by the 'House of Law' or its subcommittees.

10. If such information is requested by the 'head of the government or representatives'.

11. If such information is requested through a 'court order'.

12. If such information is requested through the 'debt collection act'.

Privacy protection online

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat have become digital billboards for internet users. People love sharing their personal views and news about what's going on in their lives. It also provides a good platform where cyber theft and bullying is done and this increases the chances and incidences of identity theft.

So, thinking twice about posting photos is eminent. Even if one doesn't explicitly post someone's name along the photo, it might be quite revealing of too much information on what might be thought as harmless photo. The internet brings to us a wealth of information, but can also harm on us. Thus, we stay safe!

These are some tips according to Suleiman, (2019) to help keep users safe online:

- Avoid sharing private information like full name and address. Keep all full name and address to oneself. Cybercriminals (yahoo boys) may be able to guess person's email address, or purchase the email address from the dark web. With it, they could send a phishing email that



could potentially lead to injecting malware and collecting data from your devices.

➤ Be careful about posting photos on social media sites. Adjust the social media platform's privacy settings. Each social media platform has a different process to control privacy settings. Before you share your post or pics, always be mindful of who can see, react, or comment.

➤ Know what types of personal data social media sites store and share. Upon signing up for a social media site, most users willingly give their name, gender, date of birth, and email address. Some social media sites don't stop at that. They go on to collect other information like an IP address or the types of things one have liked, shared, or commented on. Sometimes user will be given the choice to use like Facebook credentials to log in to other, third-party apps. While this may be convenient, one could unwittingly allow other apps to access more of the personal information than necessary.

➤ Consider carefully what personal details one provides in their profiles. Social media and networking sites may ask for additional information when signing in. Often may include hometown, schools one attended and when, your current and former workplace, political affiliations, and general interests. All this information can be stored and tracked.

➤ Be aware of privacy concerns in the news, like the Cambridge Analytica story. When the Cambridge Analytica scandal made headlines on global media including Nigeria, people began to take greater notice of how fragile their online privacy is. Special efforts are needed to navigate any social media site's privacy settings to reduce how much access a company has to user's personal information. It's not just advertisers and data firms that are vying for user information; identity thieves and cybercriminals all around online sites also want have access to such data and may even want to sell it on the dark web.

➤ Avoid social media site posting regrets. It's possible that one's employer, or the recruiter at that

company wishing to applied to, could review one's social media profile. If you're posting views that your company wouldn't appreciate like talking about how much you hate your boss then you might want to step away from the keyboard. Once information is out there, it's like water: it finds a way to run its course toward freedom. Don't let what you share today come back to haunt you tomorrow.

➤ Address your online privacy concerns with apps like Norton LifeLock. There are other options to help keep your personal information private online. Using a secure virtual private network (VPN) is one way to prevent companies from tracking your IP address and browsing history. Stronger passwords and good cyber hygiene go a long way, too.

➤ Help take back control of your online privacy. With anti-Privacy Manager app., it's easy to be smart and secure about what information you share online.

Trust and credibility on social media

Recently Facebook lost the trust of millions of its users when 3rd parties access over 87 million users' personal data. This is a massive breach of trust and has created a feeling of unrest amongst the social media platform's audience (Amedie, 2015). So much so that there is now a #deletefacebook campaign where people are completely removing themselves from Facebook and using other networks instead. If you're concerned about what Facebook is doing with your data, then why not check out on alternatives to Facebook, and see if there's a better place for you to interact with family and friends.

Some other potential dangers posed by social media as stated by Suleiman, (2019) are:

Identity theft

As there is so much information provided other things can be deduced, such as the person's social security number, which can then be used as part of identity theft.

The following information could be used to steal the users' identities: Full names including middle name, date of birth, hometown, relationship status, residential information, other hobbies and interest.



Preteens and early teenagers

Among all other age groups, in general, the most vulnerable victims of private-information-sharing behavior are preteens and early teenagers. In the technological culture that society is developing into, not only should adolescents' and parent's awareness be raised, but society as a whole should acknowledge the importance of online privacy.

Sexual predators

Most major social networking sites are committed to ensuring that use of their services is as safe as possible. However, due to the high content of personal information placed on social networking sites, as well as the ability to hide behind a pseudo-identity, such sites have become increasingly popular for sexual prostituted. In worst cases children have become victims of pedophiles or lured to meet strangers. They say that sexual predators can lurk anonymously through the wormholes of cyberspace and access victim profiles online.

Stalking: Cyberstalking

The potential ability for stalking users on social networking sites has been noted and shared. Popular social networking sites make it easy to build a web of friends and acquaintances and share with them your photos, whereabouts, contact information, and interests without ever getting the chance to actually meet them. With the amount of information that users post about themselves online, it is easy for users to become a victim of stalking without even being aware of the risk.

Employment

Issues relating to privacy and employment are becoming a concern with regards to social networking sites. As of 2008, it has been estimated by CareerBuilder.com that one in five employers search social networking sites in order to screen potential candidates. For the majority of employers, such action is to acquire negative information about candidates. Managers considered information relating to candidates' alcohol and drug use, poor communication

skills, inappropriate photographs, inaccurate qualifications and bad-mouthing former employers/colleagues.

It is a fine tool for monitoring of staff's and common method of ensuring that employees are not browsing websites during work hours. It was estimated in 2010 that an average of two million employees spent over an hour a day on social networking sites, costing potentially billions.

Online victimization

Social networks are designed for individuals to socially interact with other people over the Internet. However, some individuals engage in undesirable online social behaviors, which negatively impact other people's online experiences. It has created a wide range of online interpersonal victimization. Some studies have shown that social network victimization appears largely in adolescent and teens, and the type of victimization includes sexual advances and harassment. All in all, positive online social behaviors are promoted to help reduce and avoid online victimization. (Schwartz, et al. 2014)

Surveillance

While the concept of a worldwide communicative network seems to adhere to the public sphere model, market forces control access to such a resource. Using social media for academic research is accelerating and raising ethical concerns along the way, as vast amounts of information collected by private companies including Google, Microsoft, Facebook and Twitter are giving new insight into all aspects of everyday life.

Location updates

Foursquare, Facebook, Loopt are applications which allow users to check- in and these capabilities allow a user to share their current location information to their connection. Some of them even update their travel plans on social networking applications. However, the disclosure of location information within these networks can cause privacy concerns among mobile users.

Law enforcement prowling

Law enforcement agencies use of social network websites in investigations like Interpol, FBI, MOSSAD, KGB, MI6,



NIA, DSS, etc has dedicated undercover agents on Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn. One example of investigators using Facebook to nab a criminal is the case of Maxi Sopo. Charged with bank fraud, and having escaped to Mexico, he was nowhere to be found until he started posting on Facebook. Although his profile was private, his list of friends was not, and through this vector, where he met a former official of the Justice Department, he was eventually caught. In recent years, some state and local law enforcement agencies have also begun to rely on social media websites as resources. The episode of Hushpuppi that feature in the issue of Dubai gates in the year 2019 proves that intelligence units used the social media in their operations to target at the suspected culprits.

Political engagement and social media

The use of social media in politics has continued to grow in recent times. Since Barack Obama broke the world record in the history of social media use for political purpose during the 2008 US presidential elections, many nations and politicians across the globe have continued to embrace the platform to mobilise their citizens and candidates towards active participation in the political process. Nigeria had the first real test of social media use for political participation during the 2011 general elections. (Okoro, Nnanyelugo & Kenneth 2013)

The use of social media as a formidable force for social engineering and political electioneering has continued to grow (Huang, 2014). The technology is participatory, interactive and cost-effective. This has made it the medium of the moment as far as political communication and participation are concerned. (Suleiman, 2014)

Anderson, Toyin and Kenneth (2020) postulate that political participation include such activities like political discourse, political campaigns, voter registration, the actual voting, writing and signing of petitions, attending of civil protests, joining interest groups that engage in lobbying, political advocacy, monitoring and reporting of cases of violation of the electoral process such as frauds,

rigging, intimidation, violence, monetary inducements, underage voting, etc. (Okoro, 2013)

Okoro, (2013) observed some lapses in the use of social media during the 2011 general elections in the various towns and states studied. Their result indicates that “an average of 0.1% believe social media were used to attack opponents during the 2011 electioneering, 30.1% said the technology was used to spread false numerous and 34.4 % believe they were used to spread hate & inciting messages”. Also, “13.8% said the platforms were used to manipulate images, messages and videos.”

Extremism and terrorism on social media

Another dangerous aspect of social media is the rapid adoption of this medium by terrorists groups. In the last couple of decades, incidents of Islamic terrorism have occurred on a global scale, not only in Muslim-majority countries, but also in Europe, Russia, and the United States. Terrorism has been using social media for their benefit for gathering information, for recruiting members, for fund raising, and for propaganda schemes. Social media is helping "lone-wolf" terrorism, through the virtual packs behind them, in which there is somebody who trains, guides, and launches them (Suleiman, 2012). Social Media can also be used as a cyber terrorism tool where the perpetrators disseminate false or compromising information using the Internet. Social media is increasingly becoming a tool for individual criminals and terrorist groups. (Amedie, 2015) It appears to be widely known that some in countries like the Chinese government is censoring their information and blocking information from the rest of the world with the sole aim of preventive measure against threat to their sovereignty as a nation and protection to its citizens. (Bohl, 2015)

Fake news on social media

The use, misuse and abuse of social media come when the term “fake news” comes up. People usually think of social media posts with rather fantastic, implausible stories when posts shared on social media. However, there is so much more to fake news than exaggerated posts on social media



feeds. Fake news may seem new to propaganda. The social media platform used is the only new thing about it. Propaganda has been around for centuries, and the internet is only the latest means of communication to be abused to spread lies and misinformation. (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014)

Fake News

Experts now recommend avoiding the term ‘fake news’, or at least limit its use, as the term ‘fake news’ is closely associated with politics, and this association can unhelpfully narrow the focus of the issue. The term ‘false information’ is preferable as it can refer to a diverse range of disinformation covering topics such as health, environmental and economics across all platforms and genres, while ‘fake news’ is more narrowly understood as political news stories. (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014)

What is False Information?

Lots of things you read online especially in your social media feeds may appear to be true, often is not. False information is news, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers. Usually, these stories are created to influence people’s views, push a political agenda or cause confusion and can often be a profitable business for online publishers. False information can deceive people by looking like trusted websites or using similar names and web addresses to reputable news organisations. (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014)

According to Martina Chapman (Media Literacy Expert), there are three elements to fake news; ‘Mistrust, misinformation and manipulation’.

False information is not new, however it has become a hot topic since 2017. Traditionally we got our news from trusted sources, journalists and media outlets that are required to follow strict codes of practice. However, the internet has enabled a whole new way to publish, share and consume information and news with very little regulation or editorial standards. (Huang, 2014)

Many people now get news from social media sites and networks and often it can be difficult to tell whether stories are credible or not. Information overload and a general lack

of understanding about how the internet works by people; has also contributed to an increase in fake news or hoax stories. Social media sites can play a big part in increasing the gossip, novelty, speed and share-ability. (Bohl, 2015); (Schwartz, et al. 2014)

Types of false information

Yeboah and Ewur, (2014) hold that there are differing opinions when it comes to identifying types of false information. These include:

1. Clickbait

These are stories that are deliberately fabricated to gain more website visitors and increase advertising revenue for websites. Clickbait stories use sensationalist headlines to grab attention and drive click-throughs to the publisher website, normally at the expense of truth or accuracy.

2. Propaganda

Stories that are created to deliberately mislead audiences, promote a biased point of view or particular political cause or agenda.

3. Satire/Parody

Lots of websites and social media accounts publish fake news stories for entertainment and parody. Example of these is: the onion, the daily mash, etc.

4. Sloppy journalism

Sometimes reporters or journalists may publish a story with unreliable information or without checking all of the facts which can mislead audiences. For example, during the U.S. elections, fashion retailer Urban Outfitters published an Election Day Guide, the guide contained incorrect information telling voters that they needed a ‘voter registration card’. This is not required by any state in the U.S. for voting.

5. Misleading headings

Stories that are not completely false can be distorted using misleading or sensationalist headlines. These types of news can spread quickly on social media sites where only headlines and small snippets of the full article are displayed on audience newsfeeds.

6. Biased/Slanted News



Many people are drawn to news or stories that confirm their own beliefs or biases and fake news can prey on these biases. Social media news feeds tend to display news and articles that they think we will like based on our personalised searches.

Locating false information on social media

Media is no longer passively consumed. It's created, shared, liked, commented on, attacked and defended in all sorts of different ways by hundreds of millions of people. The algorithms used by the most powerful tech companies like Google and Facebook in particular are brilliantly designed to personalise and tailor these services to each user's profile (Huang, 2014).

When we go online or login to a social network we are generally presented with news, articles and content based on our own searches online. This type of content tends to reflect our own likes, views and beliefs and therefore isolating us from differing views and opinions. This is often referred to as a filter bubble.

Google and Facebook have announced new measures to tackle fake news with the introduction of reporting and flagging tools. Media organisations like the BBC have also established fact checking sites while these are welcome developments, digital media literacy and developing skills to critically evaluate information are essential skills for anyone navigating the internet and especially for young people.

The vast amount of information available online and rise in fake news highlights the need for critical thinking.

There are a number of things to watch out for when evaluating content online.

1. Take a closer look

Check the source of the story, do you recognise the website? Is it a credible/reliable source? If you are unfamiliar with the site, look in the about section or find out more information about the author.

2. Look beyond the headline

Check the entire article, many fake news stories use sensationalist or shocking headlines to grab attention.

Often the headlines of fake new stories are in all caps and use exclamation points.

3. Check other sources

Are other reputable news/media outlets reporting on the story? Are there any sources in the story? If so, check they are reliable or if they even exist!

4. Check the facts

Stories with false information often contain incorrect dates or altered timelines. It is also a good idea to check when the article was published, is it current or an old news story?

5. Check your biases

Are your own views or beliefs affecting your judgment of the news feature or report?

6. Is it a joke?

Satirical sites are popular online and sometimes it is not always clear whether a story is just a joke or parody...

Check the website, is it known for satire or creating funny stories?

Fact checking sites

Snopes: snopes.com/

Fact Check: factcheck.org/

BBC Reality Check: bbc.com/news/reality-check

Reverse image search from Google: google.com/reverse-image-search

Hate speech and oppression on social media

Hate speech is not new to Nigeria. The country is perhaps the only nation that has survived a civil war but had its corporate existence publicly attacked with such vehemence by its own politicians, journalists, and academics as opine by Bukarti, (2017). He further hold the view that politicians started questioning Nigerian nationhood even before the ink with which Nigeria's independence was signed in 1960 was dry; earlier, critics had called the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria the mistake of 1914. This dispute culminated in a 30-month civil war that led to the deaths of tens of thousands and millions of pounds' worth of property losses from 1967 to 1970.



What social media did, however, was to afford hate groups an opportunity to spread their hate without restraint. With the growth of the Internet and the freedom of publication it offers, provocative speech assumed unprecedented proportions. People spreading hate now have the liberty to publish whatever they want, because they are the authors, editors, and producers of their content; all they need to circumvent conventional media, which may filter their content, is an account and data. Promoters of hate speech can therefore publish content that can never appear in conventional media. (Bukarti, 2017)

Bukarti, (2017) in his write-up on the institute for global change website declared that some Nigerians from both parts of the country take to social media platforms to malign each other by using unprintable names and issuing jaw-dropping threats. From the south, these attacks are spearheaded by the separatist group Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, led by Nnamdi Kanu, a British-Nigerian. Kanu's group has constantly vilified Nigerians from the north and southwest and vowed not to stop until it has destroyed Nigeria. He has also called on his supporters to boycott elections in the country.

Northern youths on social media have long been observing these developments, with little or no collective response. In June, some youths from the north, under the aegis of the self-styled Arewa (northern) youth groups, made what came to be known as the Kaduna Declaration, in which they gave Igbos living in the north an ultimatum of 1 October 2017 to quit the region in preparation for breakup. This declaration, which went viral on social media, attracted national outrage and drew insults, name-calling, and disparaging statements. As if to add insult to injury, a Hausa song maligning Igbos and calling for violence against them was uploaded onto social media platforms in July.

There is a limit to what the law can do, however. Schools need to religiously push for national integration by inculcating a spirit of national unity through their civil education curricula. The national orientation agency is

responsible for promoting patriotism, national unity, and the development of society, by bringing Nigerian youths together while stopping sectionalism and tribalism.

Bukarti, (2017) also asserts that it is more importantly that; political, religious, traditional, and tribal leaders must speak up against hate speech, especially when such speech comes from their groups, and make efforts to bring the country together. In other words, all Nigerians must collectively kill hate speech especially on social media as they collectively protect free speech.

Even in US, the President Trump ordered for social media control after Twitter applied a warning label to his tweets that said they were "potentially misleading." Twitter highlighted two of Trump's tweets that voting would lead to widespread voter fraud. Trump later threatened to "strongly regulate" or shut down social media platforms. Since then, Trump has continued his attacks against Twitter.

The Nigerian Senate is currently considering two harsh bills relating to freedom of expression online, including one which proposes the death penalty for 'hate speech.' These bills, supported by the Nigerian government, represent an alarming escalation in the authorities' attempts to censor and punish social media users for freely expressing their opinions.

The proposed National Commission for the Prohibition of Hate Speech bill, and the Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation and other Related Offences bill, give authorities arbitrary powers to shut down the internet and limit access to social media, and make criticizing the government punishable with penalties of up to three years in prison.

Social media is one of the last remaining places where Nigerians can express their opinions freely. The harassment of journalists and bloggers and the introduction of the Cyber Crimes Act have already "shrunk the civic space and created a climate of fear," said Seun Bakare, Programmes Manager Amnesty International Nigeria.



Amnesty on this requested that “we are urging the Nigerian authorities to drop these bills, which are open to vague and broad interpretations and impose incredibly harsh punishments simply for criticizing the authorities.” Amnesty further states that “social media is one of the last remaining places where Nigerians can express their opinions freely but in and with earnest”. (Amnesty, 2019) On the editorial of Guardian Nigerian News Paper (2018) it's reported that social media avail the user enormous powers, they also present themselves as agents of harshness, cruelty and arbitrariness. It also state that some Nigerian social media users thus find themselves as unprepared, but ready tyrants who despise even media itself which empowers them. (Guardian News Paper 2018)

Conclusion

To summarize, Social Media are found to have an extremely high level of interaction among the users, differently from traditional media, which are characterized by a one-way communication flow. Indeed, Social Media users can be at the same time both senders and recipients of information, and creators, and users of content. Despite the positive benefit of rapid information sharing, social media enables people to create false identities and superficial connections, causes depression and is a sort of primary recruiting tool of criminals and terrorists. Since Social Media is a relatively new phenomenon, most studies so far done are reasonably new. Thus, the advantages of Social Media are emphasized quite often as opposed to its negative aspects which are very rarely discussed. Discounting positive impacts does not hurt in the long run, nearly as much as negative ones do. In this presentation, therefore I explored the nitty-gritty on potentials and harms posed by this uncensored and unmonitored new medium of communication which exposes us all to a gradual breakdown of social cohesion and the destruction of our traditional value systems. We therefore have to take responsibility to ensure that our understanding of Social Media and its impacts are constantly evaluated with what's happening in the world now and then.

In conclusion, social networking has been proved to have both positive and negative effects on our youths. Individuals should make a conclusion whether to go on using the sites or stop or even moderate on their usage. Parents should guide and advise their children on current matters like the usage of social media and warn them of its negative impacts to them when misused or overused. The education curriculum also should be revised so that it can include social media studies in its disciplines so as to alert students that they need to be careful in their social media usage.

The paper further concludes that freedom of the Social Media is a consequence of the nature of that technology, not a reason for its misuse. Therefore, internet freedom is somewhat different from the freedom associated with social responsibility, which matches freedom with a duty to respect the rights of others and the need for social sanity.

Recommendations

It is important that we continue to underscore the relevance of the use of social media to our national life. While it may not be ideal to suggest anything that would tamper with the democratization of the internet, it would be necessary to recommend that:

The ministry of justice (through NCJ), education (through NUC/NCCE/NBTE), communication (through NCC/NITDA) and that of information (through NBC) and other relevant agencies of government encourages operators and providers of Social Media applications to increase the regulation of contents generated by users to forestall abuse of social rights.

- The Act on cybercrime be treated with much more seriousness, including creating awareness on the spirit. To ensure the safety of the youth online, it is strongly recommended that:
- Put in place adequate and effective online usage protection laws
- Parents as a matter of urgency should monitor the activities of their family members on the Social Media.



- Government should empower the citizens so as to engage them in more meaningful and constructive activities.
- A cyber monitoring team should be set by agencies to checkmate the illegal activities of on the Social Media.
- The users should be educated on the proper use of the both Internet and Social Media.

We must guide ourselves and limit the exposure to the negativity of social media. We must ensure appropriate laws are in place to protect ourselves against the exposure and vulnerability to Social Media. We must channel most of our activities on the social media toward yielding positive results.

References

- Anderson A. U., Toyin, A. and Kenneth, U. (2017). An Appraisal of the Role of ICT as a Tool for Participatory Democracy in Nigeria: M C C | J U N E . 2 0 1 7 | V o l . 1 N o . 1
- Amedie, Jacob, (2015). "The impact of social media on society". *Advanced writing: pop culture intersections*.
<http://scholarcommons.scu.edu/engl176/2>
- Bohl, Bryana (2015) "Social Media Usage Among University Students in China," *Occam's Razor*: Vol. 5 , Article 5. Available at:
<http://cedar.wvu.edu/orwww/vol5/iss1/5>
- Boyd, D. and Ellison, N. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 1-11. Retrieved from
<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>.
- Bukarti Audu Bulama (2017). Hate Speech Threatens Co-Existence in Nigeria: Available at
<https://institute.global/policy/hate-speech-threatens-co-existence-nigeria>
- Eid, M. I., and Al-Jabri, I. M. (2016). Social networking, knowledge sharing, and student learning: The case of university students. *Computers & Education*, Vol. 7 (9), Pp. 14-2
- Guardian News Paper, (12th December 2018). The youths, tyranny of the social media and effects on national development: available at
<https://guardian.ng/technology/the-youths-tyranny-of-the-social-media-and-effects-on-national-development/>
- Huang, H. (2014). *Social Media Generation in Urban China A Study of Social Media Use and Addiction among Adolescents*. Berlin: Springer Berlin, 2014. *Western Washington University Libraries*. Web. 13 Oct. 2014.
- Merriam-Webster, (2020). Merriam- Webster Dictionary. [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social media](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media) retrieved November 13,
- Marshall McLuhan and Bruce R. Powers, (1992). *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*, Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Okoro, N. and Kenneth, A. N. (2013). Social Media and Political Participation In Nigeria. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 1, No. 3, Pp.29-46, www.Ea-Journals.Org
- Schwartz, Sarah E., Jean E. Rhodes, Belle Liang, Bernadette Sánchez, Renée Spencer, Sarah Kremer, and Stella Kanchewa. (2014). "Mentoring in the Digital Age: Social Media Use in Adult-youth Relationships." *Children and Youth Services Review* (2014): n. pag. Web. 11 Oct. 2014.
- Seun Bakare (2019). Nigeria: Bills on hate speech and social media are dangerous attacks on freedom of expression. Available at
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/12/>



nigeria-bills-on-hate-speech-and-social-media-are-dangerous-attacks-on-freedom-of-expression/

Suleiman A. A., (2014). Social Networking Site Usage as Tool for Social Capital and Academic Adjustment in the Nigerian Context. Presented On 17th-18th March 2014 at 21st CAF 2014 in Harvard University USA.

Suleiman A. A., (2019). Effect of Social Media on Students' Academic Performance. Asian Journal Education and E-learning. Japan.

Suleiman A. A., (2020). Students' Attitude Towards Using WhatsApp For Educational Activities At Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria. Fudma Journal of Science. Katsina, Nigeria

Statistica.com. www.statistica.com.org

Yeboah, J., and Ewur, G. D. (2014). The impact of WhatsApp messenger usage on students' performance in tertiary institutions in Ghana. *Journal of Education and practice*, Vol. 5 (6), Pp. 157-164.

Udende, P. and Azeez, A. L. (2010). Internet Access and Use among Student of University of Ilorin, Nigeria. *Journal of communication and media research*. 2(1), 33-42

NA, (nd): Explained: What is False Information (Fake News)? <https://www.webwise.ie/teachers/what-is-fake-news/>