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Appraisal of the Excesses and Abuses of the Social Media in Contemporary Society: The Way Forward

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I. Introduction

The control of the mass media through censorships, ownership, and gate keeping kept the people very far off from the making and production of news. Access to television and radio couple with literacy level and poverty further complicated issue surrounding the media making it an elite technology. It was until recently, when the federal government of Nigeria allowed for the establishment of private broadcasting station in Nigeria that we saw a new wave in information dissemination allowing for variety in broadcasting. The effect is that today, radio and television stations broadcasting twenty four hour in a day. This has affected the performance of government radio and television programmes persuading them to not only improve on the hours of broadcast and coverage but to also the quality of broadcasting so as to fit into the competition.

However, the commercialization of the Nigerian telecommunication company NITEL in 1999/2000 allowing for the introduction of mobile operators into the Nigerians telecom sector brought a new twist to the telecommunication industry in Nigeria. Today there are more than four mobile network operators competing for subscribers in the Nigeria telecommunication sector. This particular improvement opened Nigeria to the rest of the world allowing persons to get connected to the internet (Ndolo & Onwumechili 2015).

It equally opened up areas that was closed to people and left in the hand of the elite and news producers allowing for individuals with access to produce their own news and create their own followers thereby exposing everyone to the job of a journalist now referred to as 'citizen Journalism' without the resultant training.

Social network help people to stay connected with one another regardless of distance. But Social Networking, as coin, has two sides. However useful and creative it may be, but it also has its darker side. The smart phones have camera that can record as long as the length of a movie without a corresponding training or skill on what should be recorded. The new media offered a platform for persons to share what they have recorded without gate keeping or control. To make matter worse the social media platform transcendent literacy as it has a room for everyone irrespective of your cultural background or level of education. News production could be written or spoken in any language of once choice.

Today the social media is being used for all manner of things including fraud and crime. The story of Miss Cynthia Osokogu who was murdered in Lagos after being raped and robbed is still current in the mind of many. The fraud associated with the social media will very soon surpass her usefulness if no control is put in place. The social media platform has become an avenue for showcasing all manner of immoral pictures and videos. This has left the moral up bring offered to kids at home challenged by the mass production and free distribution of such obscene words/ images that are not allowed in the traditional media.

It is obvious that the social media has become the most effect instrument for the spread of fake information that is tantamount to the development and lives of people. During the Ebola outbreak in Nigeria in 2015,Adesuwa a student of Federal University of Technology Akure shared in the internet a statement that is false and untrue. He asked people to bath with salt water to avoid contracting Ebola. The information had almost seventy percent compliance especially for people in the rural areas. The social media has been

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used in circulating unverified and concocted health information to the public and in most cases Doctors from unknown hospital are used to make half truth or false health advice that gullible social media user quickly believe and adapt and share to other people under the guise of love and concern. The social media has created room for all types of advisory services to be offered on health from mostly unqualified personnel without the corresponding warning about the negative effect of such drugs as the case may be.

The presence of social bots on social media undermines the very roots of our information society: they can be employed to fake grassroots political support or to reach millions of individuals by using automated algorithms tuned for optimal interaction. One recent example is provided by ISIS, which is using social bots for propaganda and recruitment Berger and Morgan (2015), adopting different manipulation strategies according to the targets of their campaigns. The ongoing efforts of our community to fight social bots and synthetic activity are summarized in a recent survey Ferrara et al.(2014). The spreading of manipulation campaigns has overwhelming societal effects. In politics, for example, smearing attacks have been perpetrated to defame candidates and damage their public images during various elections.

The social media has become in recent time one of the recruiting platforms for recruiting persons for radical. With the growing wave of terrorism, across the globe, the social media has been discovered to be one of the instruments used for identifying asset to be recruited and radicalized. They are also used by radical groups to issue treat and assert their terrorism activities. They are great instrument for mobilization of radicals across the globe as could be seen from the crisis in Libya and its effect on Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

They are also used for the production and dissemination of hate speeches and engineering of violence in and around the world. Just recently the youths in Northern Nigeria addressed a press conference and made a proclamation asking the Igbo Nation to leave the Northern Nigeria before 1st of October 2017. The hate speech went viral on the social media. The social media is another thing that promotes crime.

The social media was quick in convincing people to share their personal information and divulge their secret. People through picture they post tell criminal where they are, what they are doing, their financial worth, their business as well as information about their family making it easy for criminals to initiate and carry out nefarious activities.

There is now a new twist to the abuse of the social media in an organized way that produces an effective and profitable chain reaction especially for the purpose of making huge sums of money from the stock market.

> On Tuesday April 23rd, 2013 at 1:07 p.m. the official Twitter account of the Associated Press (AP), one of the most influential American news agencies, posted a tweet reporting two explosions at the White House allegedly causing President Barack Obama to remain injured. The tweet garnered several thousand re-tweets in a few minutes, and generated countless variants that spread uncontrolled reaching millions. In the short interval of time that took to other agencies to challenge the veracity of this news, and to realize that the AP Twitter account had been hacked, the panic of a terror attack started diffusing through the population; as a direct consequence, the Dow Jones plummeted 147 points in a matter of 3 minutes, one of the largest point drops in its history; shortly after the confirmation of the hack, the Dow recovered but the crash erased $136 billion dollars. Ferrara (2015)

Social media and recruitment sites continue to be powerful resource for attackers to understand the individuals or organizations they are targeting. This information can be used to make phishing emails that are more appealing to the intended victim, or give them the inside track on an organization's operations, security tools and information assets. Recruitment sites also present a favorable environment for cold contact and developing online relationships. The social media has created and access point opportunity for infiltration of organization. According to Jose. (2013),

> Another benefit for the attacker in using popular online social media and file storage sites is that internet users typically attach some degree of legitimacy when accessing links to trusted and recognizable. Malicious activity on popular social media and file storage websites can also be difficult to detect amongst legitimate use through technical means, e.g. some automated detection systems or network traffic filters may be configured to trust popular social media or file storage sites, meaning connections to malicious files may not be flagged as suspicious. In addition the vast majority of popular file storage or social media sites encrypt communications between the user's device and the website, meaning that some network defenders maybe blind to the content of the communications with these sites.

Lastly the social media is being used in promoting placement of gory images in the internet. It now well acclaimed that persons instead of making effort to help victim of accident prefer to bring out their phone and to get video and photos of people about to breathe their last. Families now learn about the death of their loved ones from the social media. This has been

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made possible because of social media addicts in their quest to be the first to share the bad news. Citizen journalists are not good in exercising caution with respect to what should be posted and shared on the social media. For some it is anything that the camera can capture as majority lack the editing skills that will ensure obscene and gory images are not posted on the social media.

II. Objective of Study

The following forms the objective of the research

1. To find out how often social media is abused.
2. To determine the most frequent manner of abuse of the social media.
3. To determine the most abused social media.

III. Statement of Problem

Social media communications are platforms for interactions for millions of people around the world. Communicating through social media can lead a person to talk about things they normally would not in a public place. 'The protection of being alone with your phone or computer gives people the courage to talk more bluntly about politics, their employer, their co-workers, their clients, and even their family members" Jose Smith 2013. This new found courage can cause major repercussions. The people accuse the social media today of being used to organize and carry out crimes and many unethical conducts This research intends to look at the excess of the social media in Nigeria and the various ways they are abused.

a) Research Questions

1. How often are social media abused?
2. What is the most frequent form of abuse of the social media?
3. Which of the social medium is mostly abused?

IV. Literature Review

Social media is a phrase that many people define through giving examples of what constitute it rather than what they are. According to Udeze et al and Nwofor et all in Nwodu 2015 social media is an internet based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute and search for information online. It refers to internet based sites that provide for interaction. They are the web based mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue. Quite unlike the traditional mass media , social media do not only provide people with information but allow the end-users to interact and share with other users in a web like arrangement, prominent among these online sites are Face book, You Tube, Twitter, LinkedIn blog my space that have content based on user participation.

Millions of people around the world have become connected through social media which made it easier to mobilize for collective actions. The social media have knitted the world together more than the traditional mass media. They made communication more interactive and participatory, moving away from the sender receiver or linear model of Harold Lasswell (Denis& Windahl 1981) to the 21st century web model where receivers are no longer hobbled to sequential representation of message as in television newscast but are in a web-like network that connect every receiver and sender irrespective of their location. (Odii 2013)

Social Networks are Web-based services that allow people to construct a public, or somewhat public, profile. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection with friends, family, etc. Social networks not only allow people to meet and communicate with strangers, but they also let users organize and make visible their social networks. In many ways, social media has led to positive changes in the way people communicate and share information; however, it has a dark side, as well. Social networking can sometimes result in negative outcomes, some with long-term consequences. There are millions of people on the internet who are looking to meet other people and to gather and share information and experiences on a variety of topics. Hundreds of social networking sites have been created, and have attracted millions of users. In a very short span social networking has become a phenomenon. Most of the key features of these sites are very similar, yet the cultures that form around the social networking sites vary in many different ways. Some of the sites target diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language, race, sexual preferences, religion, or nationality. Mbachu, D (2003) The sites also vary the ways in which the show and incorporate new information and communication tools, like mobile access, blogging, and photo and video sharing.

With the arrival of internet, it seems the advocates of libertarian theory have finally had their way. The information super highway is now unstoppable. It was in this era that Marshal McLuhan saw when declared the world as having become a global village. It means that distance is no longer a barrier to access to information. The various laws regulating the media are being call to questions because of the social networking sites.

The media has gone social and made it possible for a free press where anyone who cares can become part of the making of the news and most importantly unlike before become part of the dissemination. Through the advancement in technology the media have again broken the barrier of illiteracy as the social media allows people to become part of the news production irrespective of their level of education.

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These social media include: face book, twitter, you tube, insta-gram , twoo, blog, etc. the traditional media like TV, Radio and Newspapers are not left out in this new advancement making it difficult to control as many make use of virtual office i.e. operating from the comfort of their living room. It equally makes them impossible to control given the fact that it cut across national boundaries.

The social media has brought up a new era where press censorship has become practically impossible if a country is to be connected to the rest of the world. In the past a country like Egypt tried to cut her country from interacting with the rest of the world because of the power of the social media in mobilizing the population. The processes of signing up, posting and finding or creating communities to communicate with have been made as smooth as possible. This approach has promoted an explosion in communication, and created a colourful array of special interest channels, groups and hash tags, allowing people to discuss things they care about. It did not however tell us how it is abused, many have joined Jonathan (2016) in asking 'Are social media hurting or helping'?

The open design and the vast scale on which contents are created and shared are both key to social media platforms. They help to generate the frenetic activity of likes, re-tweets. According (Cara 2017) the problem with putting such a premium on instant accessibility is that it becomes difficult to deal with content which is hateful, abusive or illegal. Lacking the traditional safeguards of editors and moderators able to screen content before it is publicly viewable, social media companies have found them hosting violent threats, hate speech and, in some cases, images of child sexual abuse. Although, majority of platforms have strict guidelines on acceptable content, the question however, is whether they are doing enough to remove content which is in contravention of these guidelines. (Cara 2017).

> Other also agree that there are examples of threat groups using social media platforms (such as LinkedIn) to identify particular profiles of individuals within organizations they are trying to target, and to cultivate relationships that can later be exploited as part of their attack. Not only can adversaries identify and communicate with individuals of interest, via overly descriptive job role descriptions, they may also find information that might assist their attack planning (e.g. the security tools and technologies deployed within a target network, and individuals working in desirable areas of an organization). Social media channels have even been used to enable malware to communicate with attackers, once it has successfully infected a system. We have also seen examples of threat groups leveraging free cloud storage websites in their attacks, including as a mechanism to deliver malicious software to targeted organizations, or using online file storage sites to store data stolen from networks.(Bhopinder 2015)

V. Theoretical Framework

Technological determinism is a therefore a technology base theory of social change. It is the idea that technology has important effect on people lives and determines social change. For instance, in this contemporary time internet is revolutionizing every aspect of the society. It is assumed that the social change occurring in human society today is as a result of development of new technologies (Asemah &Edegoh, 2013)

This discourse is anchored on technological determininism theory which explains how communication technologies are turning the patterns of communication flow between and among human. Marshal McLuhan, in his early works drew attention to the evolving strength of communication technologies which were changing the way in which people experience the world and also the nature of the social order. (DeFeur, 2010). McLuhan states that technology is the prime mover of every society and shapes how individuals in a society behave the way they do, especially the way they communicate, partly because of the influence of technology which governs every aspect of their lives. As technology changes, so do society.

The theory therefore relates to the subject of our discussion given that the changes in communication technologies are fast changing the human values

VI. Research Methodology

The social scientific survey method is used for this research. The is reason is that this research is studying human being. Survey is usually the appropriate design when the objective is to describe or explore a subject of study. It is the most appropriate design for behavioural studies and hence this study looks at the excesses and abuse of social media in a contemporary society. Since the study is about the abuse of social media. The population of studies are the social media users in South Eastern Nigeria. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the three social media for study as well as the sample.

Given the size of the target population, it is not possible for the researcher to sample all of them due to constraints in time and finance. Asemah et al (2012) concur that it is not feasible to observe all the people that may be appropriate to a research work. Therefore, this research work has a sample size of 384 respondents gotten by using the National Statistical Service and Sample Size Calculator.

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The result displayed is as follows:

Confidence Level: 95%
Population Size: 124, 480
Confidence Interval: 0.04998
Standard Error: 0.02550
Relative Standard Error: 5.10
Sample Size: 384

VII. Instrument of Data Collection

The questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection using focus group discussion and interviews methods.

Given that social media users are target population, to get a better result the researcher made use of social media platforms for both focus group and interview. Three Whatsapp groups cutting across Enugu Anambra and the University of Nigeria Community were used. The researcher used a whatsapp platform Anambra Election watch a platform for civil society organization working in Anambra state, "All 4One" an association of 2007 graduates of Mass Communication, and Public Relations Group a platform for PR option of Master's degree programme in Mass Communication of University of Nigeria Nsukka.

VIII. Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Rate of Questionnaire

Question	No.of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Responded and found usable	346	90.10
Non respondent	38	9.90
Total	**384**	**100**

Table 2: Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	153	44.22
Female	193	55.78
Total	**346**	**100**

b) Research Questions

Question 1

How often are social media abused?

Table 3

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very often	253	73.1
often	57	16.5
rarely	34	9.8
Not at all	2	0.6
Total	**346**	**100**

The table above shows the responses on how often the social media is abused. 253 respondent amounting to 73.1% said the social media is abused very often, 57 respondent amounting to 16.5% believe it is often, 34 respondent being 9.8% said rarely while only two respondent amounting to 0.6 % said not at all.

Research Question 2:

What is the most frequent form of abuse of the social media?

Table 4

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pornography	155	44.8
Rumour mongering	78	22.6
Hate speech	48	13.9
Gory images	28	8.6
Fraud	16	4.6
Data theft	13	3.8
Others	6	1.7
Total	**346**	**100**

Research question 3

Which of the social medium is mostly abused?

Table 5

S/N	Social medium	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Facebook	294	85.1
2	youtube	35	10.1
3	Twitter	15	4.3
	Total	**346**	**100**

IX. Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

The abuse of social media has been acknowledged as a thing that is gaining momentum among users of the social media. The abuse is growing with the growth in the number of people that are embracing the social media for leisure as well as for business. If this trend continues, in no long time many reasonable people are going to abandon the use of social media or give it a name that will lead to the decline of its subscription

The research showed that the face book is the most abused social media. This might not be unconnected with the number of subscribers it is currently enjoying. Facebook is the most widely used social medium with 1.71billion subscribers and an amazing 81 million fake profile. This is also not unconnected with the fact that Facebook offers many alternatives apart from creating profile subscribers can all so chat and share video. With the very high number of fake profile the kind of havocs being wrecked is unimaginable.

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Good numbers of respondent agree that the social media is abused very often. One will be forced to ask are the social media helping or hurting its users with the level of abuse revealed by this research. It may be true that the social media have provided a great relive to mental help patience. But how can one be sure that with the level of abuse it will not complicated the problem the more as there are a good number of people wanting to take any change created by the networking to wreck havoc. It means that the social media companies have not done enough to prevent and control the damages cause by the abuse of the social media. The essence of deterrence in law is to prevent future occurrences. The social networking company should be able to warn people about the abuses of the social network.

X. Conclusions

The changes sweeping the contemporary society today as a result of advancement in technology and the growing population, increased awareness and growing interest in social issues and its abuses have to be checked continuously. Social media abuses can damage relationships with friends, family and destroy business. Most users of the social media do not even know the list of things that constitutes abuse as subscribe to social media. Law enforcement agencies and regulators should wake up to their duties.

XI. Recommendations

The social media have come to stay and are growing by the day. The negative effect of Facebook is growing by the day as it is with many good things it can be applied wrongly and the social network provider as well as the security authorities should work together to bring abuser of the social media to book. The lawmakers should review the enabling laws that have almost become obsolete when it comes to social media to meet with the challenges of the social media. The security agencies in Nigeria should be trained on how to use the social media to control crime without removing the freedom it beings. The public and most especially the school children should be enlightened on the right use of the social media. The security agencies should provide avenues for people to report abuses and for abusers to be prosecuted. The social network providers should do more and balance the quest to make money with the ethics. They should go ahead and warn people about the wrong uses of the social media upon registration and a continuous reminder to alert the social media communities about the frivolous uses of the social media. Other developing countries like Nigeria should mounting pressure on Facebook and other social network providers to introduce a tool that lets users flag suspicious content. The NCC should employed people to monitor flagged material and mandated companies to employ staffs that monitor content around the clock. Given the vast circulation of fake information, the social media companies should introduce an incentive that promotes countering and circulation of the right information.

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