

Chapter 21

A Critical Evaluation of Social Media and Human Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Recent fraudulent online activities have drawn the attention of a sleeping nation to the alarming nature of the increasing rate of hate speech, fake news, and other sharp practices in Nigeria. The corrosion of values is blamed on the explosion of information and communications technologies (ICT). This chapter employed theories of legitimacy and dialogic communication to investigate the menacing effects of unwholesome online practices. It found overemphasis on the negative use of social media and slowness to acknowledge the significant changes in ICT as factors why people have not taken advantage of social networks. It recommended ongoing media-education through campaigns and further research on internet penetration in the country as veritable ways of measuring successes in human development. It concluded that if educationists and policy makers take advantage of social media platforms, they would remain a huge resource for human development and national integration.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the most populous countries worldwide (Clement, 2019). “With over half of the Nigerian population under 30 years of age, they are the ones more frequent on the Internet” (Nigeria Internet Registration Association, 2019). This has brought about massive revolution in almost every sector of life. “With instant messaging and unlimited access, being a cheaper method of communication, raising awareness and generating income by promoting goods and services, social media has revolutionized

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modern day society” (Olusola, 2018). However, many Nigerians are daily becoming circumspect of the use of social media. Perhaps it might be correct to opine that the rising number of cyber crimes across the world is alarming. The recent profiling of 80 Nigerian youths who are on the wanted list of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States of America did not help matters (BBC, 2019). This is coupled with the saturation of the virtual space in Nigeria with fake news, hate speech and calls for either secession or revolution. It is apparent that the traditional media is overwhelm with the activities of so-called “citizen journalists” who post anything online. As things stand, unsuspecting members of the public who are often gullible are left confused.

The seeming menacing effect of social media-abuse is putting journalism and media-scholarship in on trail. While the public is saturated with multiple stories, young students who are leaders of tomorrow are confused as to what constitutes truth and objectivity. The scenario is worse because apparently, experts in education and learning have not seen the need to train the masses in order to be media savvy. While mass mobilisation is far from being realized, we are left with a situation where new technology is not exploited for the advancement of the human being. Sadly, while people in other climes are cashing in on the good that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offers, Nigerians are busy dealing with insecurity, insurgency, hunger and other analogue malfunctioned systems which do not guarantee hatching technologically advanced global citizens who can compete with their peers in other developed parts of the world.

With this motivation and background in mind, the standalone qualitative survey aims at:

1. Drawing the attention of a sleeping nation to the alarming nature of the increasing cases of hate speech, fake news and other sharp practices in Nigeria;
2. Decrying the corrosion of values as a result of fraudulent online activities in country;
3. Investigate why Nigerians have not been able to take advantage of social media for human development;
4. Recommending veritable ways of measuring successes in human development through social networks; and,
5. Demonstrating how Nigerians, particularly students, those in business, educationists and policy makers can take advantage of social media platforms as huge resource for national integration and human development.

CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION

Social Media

Social media has been defined “as the facilities and tools that reduce the world to a global village; websites and applications that enables users to create, share contents and participate in social networking. The social media platform provides opportunities for users to create online communities to share ideas, information, personal messages, etc. Some of the social media applications include Facebook, Instagram, You-tube, My Space, Twitter, Skype, LinkedIn, etc” (Nigeria Internet Registration Association, 2019). However, in this study, we could conceive it as the use of modern devices such as internet enabled Smartphones for the purpose of interfacing with others who are close or far to share information, engage in social interaction, do business or make ends meet. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp,

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