

Chapter 65

Communication on Social Network Sites: Assessing Cyberbullying Among Young Women in Nairobi, Kenya – Case of Facebook Platform

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ABSTRACT

Facebook is regarded as a popular social network in Kenya more so among the youth besides other sites like Instagram and Twitter. A study conducted by World Wide Web Foundation revealed that more than one in every five women in Kenya have experienced cyberbullying. Such study results justifies that the internet is rife with harassment with more women bearing the brunt as compared to men. The main objective of the study was to establish forms of cyber-bullying among young women between 25 to 35 years old on Facebook platform. It was established that unwanted trolls, doxing, and sexual harassment were the dominant cyberbullying trends on Facebook among young women in Kenya with men being the highest perpetrators of cyberbullying than women. It was also established that there is lack of awareness among young women on Facebook Safety, which is a resource developed by Facebook for reporting inappropriate content and help protect people who may be feeling self-injury due to cyberbullying on Facebook.

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INTRODUCTION

Mathews et al. (2000) define social media as any medium of communication that allows interaction and network of relationships. While social network sites (hence forth referred to as SNS) are platforms or sites that facilitate communication, interaction and social relations, Aggarwal and Charu (2011) state that SNS are more about the tools used to make that content available to others and to allow users to connect, to engage with it and to build online communities. SNS can as well be defined as internet based social spaces designed to facilitate communication, interaction, collaboration and content sharing across network of contacts. Furthermore, Aggarwal and Charu (2011) state that sites which are used for sharing online media content such as Flickr, Youtube, and Instagram can also be considered as indirect forms of social networks because they allow an extensive level of user interaction. Boyd and Ellison (2007) concludes that SNS are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profiles within a bounded system, articulate a list of others with whom they share a connection.

It is with the advent of the 21st Century - the information age - that the explosion of social network took place. Impressive growth of social network tendency was recorded when Facebook was launched in February 2004. Facebook is considered as the largest network across the globe. Before the historical diffusion of SNS, with the launch of Facebook, other SNS were launched as well. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), the first recognisable social network site launched was SixDegress.com in 1997. It allowed users to create profiles, list their friends and beginning in 1998, they were able to surf the friend lists.

Preceding this historical diffusion of Facebook, SNSs like AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, MiGente, LiveJournal and Friendster were launched and re-launched. This process of adding features and innovating the platforms, supplied as an advantage for the development of Facebook, as well as for the progress of the large number of SNSs used actually, such as Twitter, Skype, E-mail, YouTube and Flickr. In the beginning of 2005, as pointed by Boyd and Ellison (2007), with the large attendance of SNS platforms, SNS became a global phenomenon. In addition, SNS have changed the way people interact and communicate. Furthermore, these Web platforms provide tools, with open services, that facilitate the interaction, information sharing and online communication.

Moreover, in the digital age, with the advent of internet, people are becoming more and more dependent on SNS to interact and create social relations in addition to communication. This dependence is due to the tools that SNS provide that allow users to have social relations easily without any kind of constraints or fears created when it comes to a direct interaction and social relations with the society.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2014) define social media as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. The advent of social media has presented a unique opportunity for communication. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter over the years have attracted a number of young people, especially the youth. These interactive platforms have made the world become a global village and what happens in Europe is business in Africa and vice versa. People are spending more time on SNS, which has grown at a rapid pace and has become more popular than any other interaction platform in history (Parvez et al., 2019). The SNS has since enabled social relations and networks between individuals, virtually connecting those with similar interests, experiences and/or real-life connections (Cheung et al., 2015). Just as social media platforms present opportunities for interaction, users are also faced with challenges of abuse from other online users.

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