Effects of Social Media Abuse on Nigeria' Security: An Analysis

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Abstract

This paper argues that the advent of social media has changed the way people connect with their immediate friends and the rest of the world as it makes much easier to now share information with people anywhere in the world as long as they have access to a computer and an Internet connection. In Nigerian which is the primary focus of the paper, people have made a living through opportunities provided by social media platforms, and have equally become employers of labour. And transactions such as online deposits and transfers have made financial transactions easier. Relying on purely secondary method to collect data for this research, the work discovered that as benefiting as social media have been, regrettably, it has also been used to commit all sort of atrocities and criminalities in the country thereby affecting the security of the country. These ranged from the making of uncomplimentary remarks and usage of gutter language, spread of false and fake news, defrauding of customers and even killing of gullible victims and propagation of ideology by terror groups. Based on these, the work proffered some measures which I believe will address some of the challenges raised as a result of the abuse of social media. These among others include, punishing of people who abuse social media, Countering of unhealthy and dangerous speech through mass condemnation and media engagement; Increase audience resistance to dangerous speech; Dissemination of positive messages through campaigns against hate and dangerous speech; Training of influential bloggers and users of social media thereby increasing the knowledge of bloggers on ethical principles and engagement of media regulatory agencies on Implementation Strategy on the use of media to avoid its abuse.

Key Words: Effect, Social, Social Media, Abuse, Nigeria and Security

Introduction

Communication plays a key role in development and sustenance of human society. Communication which is the sharing of information from one person, group or groups of people helps in educating people about happenings in the society thereby keeping them

informed. However, it is interesting to state that with the advent of technology, lots of changes have been brought about in the society which in turn has affected communication. In fact, technology has been the major mover of human civilization and the force behind major societal transformations from the traditional to modern era. Among the many innovations brought about by technology which has also affected communication is the emergence of the social media. Social media as a case in point of technological innovations has become common place; individuals, groups, clubs, businesses, churches and government agencies maintain multiple social media accounts to do everything from staying in touch with old classmates, meeting new people, sharing their everyday lives, promoting a brand, gaining support for an idea or spreading a movement(Lumpp,2014). Social Media as an extension and explosion of traditional word of mouth networks has been the most effective and trust worthy means of disseminating information. With the enablement of technology, anybody with an internet access and has an opinion can be part of social media (Sajithra & Rajindra,2013).

To be sure, the advent of social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube among others has changed the way people connect with their immediate friends and the rest of the world. It is now possible to instantly converse and share information with people anywhere in the world who have access to a computer and an Internet connection (Lumpp,2014). The consequence of this development is the creation of a new space for all types of people to reach each other with no geographic boundaries. It has brought people together who are all seeking some type of connection through the utilization of the Internet. Put differently, social media has made people today not to necessarily wait for the dissemination process but the condition is such that every social media user has become a source of information on their own (Nity and Singh, 2017).

So therefore, the ubiquity of smart phones makes this new found connectedness even more extreme. Social media users can be connected to people around the world from anywhere they can receive an Internet signal and the number of usage by people around the world tremendous. In America a study conducted was conducted by Pew Research Centre entitled *Social Media Use in 2018: Demographic and Statistics*, findings from that study shows that the majority of Americans use social media especially Facebook and YouTube. These media dominate the social media landscape, as notable majorities of U.S. adults use each of these sites. At the same time, younger Americans (especially those ages 18 to 24) stand out for embracing a variety of platforms and using them frequently. Some 78% of 18 - 24-year-old youngsters use Snapchat, and a sizeable majority of these users (71%) visit the platform multiple times per day. Similarly, 71% of Americans in this age group now use Instagram and close to half (45%) are Twitter users (Wagner, 2018).

The case of Nigeria is not different in terms of the surging number using social media as well as the role it has played like what is obtainable in the US. The social media usage in Nigeria has come to represent the perfect example of the democratisation of information and technology with demonstrable capacity to migrate communication to interactive dialogue, and social activation. In fact Social Media has rapidly grown in importance as a forum for political activism in its different forms in Nigeria (Eze, 2019). Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp have provided new ways to stimulate citizen engagement in political life. Accordingly, about 16million Nigerians are on the Facebook, the highest in Africa, making Nigerians the most active users in the Continent making it market place of ideas and creativity (Danbatta, 2017). Products and services are now sold online, thus providing opportunity for start-ups to commence businesses on a small scale. Many Nigerians, like citizens of other nations, have made a living through opportunities provided by social media platforms, and have equally become employers of labour. Huge financial transactions have been conducted by individuals and organizations online. Banking transactions such as online deposits and transfers have made financial transactions easier. In the past it was difficult to travel without physically going to transporting and tourism organizations to make booking and other logistics (Danbatta, 2017).

As profiting as social media has been in Nigeria going by the highlighted benefits, however, it is worthy to note or state that the same social media has sadly and unfortunately been used to commit all sort of atrocities and criminalities in the country. These ranged from the making of uncomplimentary remarks and usage of gutter language, spread of false and fake news, defrauding of customers and even killing of gullible victims. Similarly, it has also been used by terror group especially the bokoharam in the propagation of ideology. These developments have potential of impinging on the security of the nation and this it has. This therefore becomes the problem of the work. In other words, the security implication of the abuse of social media in Nigeria or the effect of the abuse of social media on Nigeria's security is therefore what this work intends to find out.

Conceptual Issues

i. Social Media

The concept social media has been defined in different ways by different scholars. This makes it difficult therefore to have a universally accepted or uniform definition for the concept. Rather it is considered as a phrase that many people define through giving examples of what constitute it rather than what they are. In the light of this, I shall try to examine the sheds of views by scholars of what social media is. Social media is internet based-services that allow users to generate their own contents for service and others

(Chukwuere and Onyebukwa, 2018). This means that social media is meant for the formation of social virtual communities ("social aggregation") based on the web/internet in facilitating societal discussions and events.

Kaplan (2015) on the other hand, sees social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This has been a game-changing development for corporations and individuals alike. Such applications as Twitter, Instagram, or Foursquare which did not even exist a decade ago, form an essential part of today's media and communications landscape.

ii. Security

To Baylis(2008), traditionally most writers have agreed that security is a' contested concept'. Most would also agree that it implies freedom from threats to core values (for both in-dividuals and groups) but there remains a major disagreement about whether the primary focus of enquiry should be on 'individual', 'national', or 'international' security. He posit that historically, the literature has been dominated by national security, largely defined in militarized terms. The main area of interest tended to be on the military capabilities their states should develop to deal with threats facing them. More recently, however, this idea of security has been criticized and many international relations experts have proposed an expanded concept of security by widening the limits of parochial national security to include other considerations. To him while acknowledging Buzan (1983), submit that political, economic, societal, environmental as well as military aspects are factored in while trying to examine the concept of security. To this end, he defined security as states overcoming "excessively self-referenced security policies" and thinking on the security interests of their neighbours.

The concept of security can also be looked at from both traditional and nontraditional point of view. The Traditional school of thought defines security in this sense to mean safety from danger and from external attack or infiltration. Traditional security paradigm is a realist construct of security in which the referent object is the state (Abolurin, 2010) cited in Afolabi(2016). It equates security with peace and prevention of conflict through military means i.e. deterrence policies, non-offensive defence and the like. The second school of thought on the conceptualization of security is non-traditional school. This school attempts to widen and deepen the definition of security. It argues that other issues like environment, political, economic and social threats endangers the lives and properties of individual rather than the concentration on the survival of the state. It does implies that a predominantly military definition does not appreciate the fact that the greatest threat to

state survival may not be military but environmental, health, political, social and economic(Afolabi,2016)

Methodology

The work relied on secondary data. Data therefore was collected from magazines, textbooks, monographs, journal articles, seminar papers and symposiums that directly or indirectly related to the subject matter. Data collected were analysed using the content analysis method.

Classification of Social Media

One needs to be circumspective in an attempt to classify social media because of the so many complexities, and characteristics that social media assume. This made Manning (2014) argue that all social media involve some sort of digital platform, whether that be mobile or stationary. To him not everything that is digital, however, is necessarily social media; however common characteristics help to define social media and some are used primarily for recreation or personal connections, others for work or professional reasons, but most allow leeway for both.

For this work, we shall stick to the model of Kakkar (2018). They outlined ten (10) criteria for the categorization of social media. These include:

i. Social Networks: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

These types of Social Media are used to associate with individuals (and brands) on the web. They help in business through branding, social awareness, relationship building, customer service, lead generation, and conversion.

ii. Media Sharing Networks: Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube

Media sharing types of Social Media are used to find and share photographs, live video, video and other kinds of media on the web. Similarly, they help in brand building, lead generation, targeting among others.

iii. Bookmarking & Content Curation Networks: Pinterest, Flipboard

Bookmarking and content curation networks help people discover, save, share, and discuss new and trending content and media. These networks are a hotbed of creativity and inspiration for people seeking information and ideas, and by adding them to your social media marketing plan.

iv. Discussion Forums: Reddit, Quora, Digg
Such types of Social Media channels are used for finding, sharing and discussing different kinds of information, opinions, and news. They help businesses by being a top-notch resource for doing immaculate market research.

v. Consumer Review Networks: Yelp, Zomato, TripAdvisor
For running a successful Social Media Marketing Campaigns, it is very important for today's businesses to have positive reviews on these sites. In addition, resolving all the issues that your customers are posting on these Review platforms is another thing that is going to be very important for the positive and productive outcomes for your business.

vi. Blogging & Publishing Networks: WordPress, Tumblr, Medium
These networks are must for the businesses that want to effectively use Content Marketing, plus, you can share this content on a variety of Social Networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. **vii**. Social Shopping Networks: Polyvore, Etsy, Fancy

This category helps find out all the latest trends in the marketing or crave to know the shopping tips then such types of Social Media channels are for you. In addition, they help you follow different brands, share interesting things and make a purchase on these Social Shopping networks.

viii. Interest-Based Networks: Goodreads, Houzz, Last.fm
They are used for connecting with other people who have the same sorts of hobbies or interests making easy to find the audiences who are interested in knowing more and more about the kinds of products and services that you offer. This makes it one of the best networks for engaging with your audience and creating exclusive brand awareness online. Compared to big social networks, using Interest-based networks would help you run a more targeted campaign (Kakkar,2018).

Types of Social Media in Nigeria
The following among others according to Alade(2017) are the types of social media existing in Nigeria:

(i) Nairaland.comis also called "giant that till this moment". No Nigerian site has been able to push "Nairaland" aside since its establishment in 2005. Nairaland was opened to Nigerian users to give them a voice at home and provide massive resources for information.

(ii) Gboozais a Nigerian news social network which is a free, multifunctional portal and platform for Nigerians and friends of Nigerians to connect worldwide. It is for all who are interested in social networking, unity, peace, friendship and progress of Nigerians and the world.

(iii) Timmynaija is a Nigerian site created in 2005 and aims to bring Nigerians together for mainly networking purposes. Timmynaija features daily Nigerian news interviews, reviews, multi-media and a fast growing community of users. It has been delivering daily news alerts to Nigerian music industry, hiphop lovers, two-way pagers, cell-phones and email addresses.

(iv) Naijapals is one of Africa's largest online social networking and entertainment communities which enable users to meet new people. It provides updates on Nigerian entertainment and metro news, gists, opinions, latest music, Nollywood movies, confessions and interactive discussion forum. Naijapal came into existence in 2007.

(v) Nigeriaconnect.com is the number one entertainment site for Nigerians in the Diaspora. It has a setup radio/TV for the users to link the homeland with news features, talk shows and commentaries. It was created by Marshall Anakwo in 2008.

(vi) Gnaija connects users to people around them. It allows them to make friends, say what is on their mind, create a group or join existing ones, chat with other members, add blogs, comment on businesses, events and so on. Not only can users update their Gnaija "my page" status, the application used on Gnaija allows members to update their Facebook and twitter status with a single click. The site was established in 2009(Alade,2017).

Social Media Abuse in Nigeria

The following are areas which Nigerians have abused the social media leaving the nation in serious challenge. These are

i. Ladies sharing pictures they are scantily dressed on a picture sharing site like Instagram and unsurprising, it is this kind of pictures that get the most likes and comments. They do this just in a bid to get more followers.

ii. **Sharing of fake news.** Combating fake news is one of the biggest problems social networks are encountering today. To be sure, it is now very difficult to distinguish

between fake and real news. Oftentimes, whoever is affected by the news, releases a statement denying the news. This source of the fake news is not usually known but some blogs distribute these unconfirmed news stories to simply get more web traffic.

iii. **Celebrities talking about their relationships**: As a celebrity, everyone is interested in what happens in both their public and private life. For celebrities who are social media addicts, they tweet everything happening their lives including their relationship problems. It is sad to note that some have paid dearly for this. A typical example isTeebillz when he did an expose on his relationship with Tiwa Savage.

iv. **Show off wealth:** Showing off monies and other luxury items on social media is now a trend especially among Nigerian celebrities. These celebrities share pictures of wads of cash, luxury cars, and expensive designer clothes and bags. Then you wonder what they want to achieve by showing off their wealth.

v. **Begging people to like or comment on post:** It is surprising and shocking that some Nigerians on the social media beg or ask people to like or comment on their pictures(Damilola, 2017).

The Implications of the Abuse of Social Media on Nigeria's Security

i. Social media and the spread of fake news

The rise of fake news has stirred tension in Nigeria. Fake news and its consequences in Nigeria have identified death, conflict escalation, political hostility and societal panic as some of the adverse effect of fake news proliferation. The foregoing statement was evidenced in Nigeria in real terms when Ebola broke out in 2014. In the wake of the outbreak of this disease, fake text messages claiming people could avoid catching the disease by bathing in and drinking large quantities of saltwater went viral on social media even though there was no medical basis for it. Nigerians were asked to ensure their families and neighbors' bathe with hot water and salt before daybreak today because of Ebola virus which was spreading through the air"(Omar &Apuke,2020) The consequences of this faked and unverified information led to the death of two Nigerians especially hypertensive Nigerians as a result of the intake of excessive consumption and left several hospitalized. (Carter, 2014) cited in (Omar &Apuke,2020).

The same fake news unsettled Nigeria when it was reported in 2017 that the Nigerian Army was administering free medical service of polio vaccination as part of its military

operations in south-eastern Nigeria. It was rumored that the army was going to schools to inject pupils with the monkey pox virus and this caused serious fear and panic leading to the closure of schools with. The rationale for the spread of such fake news could be to diminish the efforts of the government in tackling health issues in the country as well as disrupt the peace and unity that Nigeria has been trying to attain. Similarly, fake news especially that which came from the facebook sparked and intensified in central Nigeria's Plateau State. There was a graphic image of a mutilated baby, killed in Congo Brazzaville in 2012,but was shared with the claim that the act was perpetrated by the Fulanis against the Beroms in the Gashish district of Plateau State, Nigeria in 2018. (Adegoke,(2019) quoted in Edwin and Yalmi(2019) said in a reaction to this, it was reported that Berom youths took to the streets and systematically sought out Fulani men for reprisal attacks.This news engulfed hatred among both tribes costing the life of Many Fulani Muslims in the region (Edwin and Yalmi2019).

In a related development, President Muhammadu death was rumored in 2017. It was rumored that President died shortly after he began a health leave to the United Kingdom on January 19, 2017. And in 2019, there was also that made the round about Buhari planned marriage. Pictures of Invitation cards were also circulated. After a few days, the President debunked the issue stating that he had no plans of taking another wife. Creators of fake news could have committed this act to discredit the government for political reasons

ii. Social Media and the bokoharan crisis

The war against Boko Haram insurgency has lasted for a decade as it engulfed the whole of North West, North East and North Central Nigeria, albeit it is now shifted to northeastern state of Nigeria- Adamawa, Yobe and Maiduguri. Among the instruments said to be used in fuelling and sustaining the crisis, the social media, stands out. The jihadist groups have exploited online media, using it to promote its attacks. Commenting on this, Nsude& Onwe (2017) argued that in Nigeria, Boko Haram leaders continue to use Nigeria's Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other Jihadist system and networks to claim responsibilities of attacks celebrate and issue threats for further attacks. According to them, that there are unconfirmed reports that the Boko Haram continue to gain support from international terrorist groups and they use Social Media to contact and organize attacks. They also upload the videos to YouTube. This group also have, Boko a Telegram account, although it was deleted much later but before then, it used by it leaders like Shekau to declare jihad in 2010 (Zenn, 2017). The same also goes to the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) as it is said that they also have an official Telegram account reform where leases of the group's propaganda are made. According to Zenn(2017) , in November, 2015, for example, it was reported that ISWAP released a selection of its videos on

Amazon, Google Play, Vimeo, Dropbox, Flickr and other platforms, although the group's videos had only been posted on YouTube or were downloadable straight from Telegram. Such videos of ISWAP include the one that showed the abduction and hostage of the three University of Maiduguri professors from the oil exploration team in Magumeri among others. The aim of releasing videos of such kinds is to communicate a sense of communal living and the efficient application of Islamic law (Sharia) in captured territories. Similarly, it is to also demonstrates the group's dominance in its captured territories while simultaneously instilling fear in the Nigerian populace. Boko Haram's propaganda videos are also used as jurisprudential contests, where verses of the Quran are applied to condemn democracy and corruption in Nigeria (Zenn,2017)

Social media and crime in Nigeria

In Nigeria, Social Medias have gained a very high ground in every sector. The banking industry, government, business, universities use this platform to promote and communicate with each other. However, Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram serve as a fertile ground for cybercriminals to launch new attacks in the sense that criminals create semi-public profiles and can directly communicate with friends without restriction. In Nigeria the level of crime is on the ascending order. And this is because perpetrators leverage on technology, especially the social media.

The tricks used in carrying out this act as argued by Frank & Odunayo(2013) include:

i **Beneficiary of a Will Scam**: The criminal sends e-mail to claim that the victim is the named beneficiary in the will of an estranged relative and stands to inherit an estate worth millions. Omodunbi, Odiase, Olaniyan & Esan(2016) expatiated on this type of crime when the posit that in Nigerian-Prince or Beneficiary of a will Scam, fraudsters send messages through social media sites speculating that the receiver is a named beneficiary of a huge some of amount or an estate from a will left behind from a deceased descendant.

ii. **Online Charity**: This is where fraudulent people host websites of charity organizations soliciting monetary donations and materials to these organizations that do not exist. In most cases, these fake social pages are backed up with pictures showcasing various illnesses. Many kind hearted people donate to this cause thereby increasing the pockets of cyber criminals. Unfortunately, many unsuspecting people have been exploited through this means (Frank & Odunayo, 2013)

iii. **Next of Kin Scam**: This crime perpetrated on the internet involves the collection of money from various bank and transfer fees by tempting the victim to claim an inheritance of millions of dollars in a Nigerian bank belonging to a lost relative. T

iv. **The "Winning Ticket in Lottery you Never Entered" Scam:** These scams lately include the State Department's green card lottery.

v. **Bogus Cashier's Check**: The victim advertises an item for sale on the Internet, and is contacted

vi. **Computer/Internet Service Time Theft**: Whiz kids in Nigeria have developed means of connecting Cyber Cafes to Network of some ISPs in a way that will not be detected by the ISPs and thereby allow the Cafes to operate at no cost.

vii. Social-Hi-Jacking: This is a major crime all over the world. Many social networking pages have been hi-jacked by hack-ers who demands money in turn for releasing the personal social page. This has occurred in sites like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. These fraudsters go as far as sending mes-sages from the authorised page to friends and family re-questing for money or any other kind of assistance. Also, another common scenario also occurs when the fraudster creates a social page pretending to be someone else especial-ly celebrities.

Vii Cyber-Stalking, harassment and Blackmailing Scam: They entail threatening and blackmailing acts carried out on the inter-net by fraudsters on the victim. In most cases, the perpetua-tor's identity is unknown by the use of a false alias or by blocking the identity by keeping all information hidden (Frank & Odunayo, 2013)

The security implications of these tricks are so monumental to the nation. Clear cut examples exit. During the 2015 elections for example, the website of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was reportedly hacked and attempts made to gain access to critical information of several government parastatals. This threatened the fate of the election and if the situation was not arrested, who knows what would have happened, thanks for the timely intervention by cyber security experts. There are other abundant cyber infractions in the country, but the issue here is that, the social media abuse is partly responsible for all these.

Still on crime fuelled and perpetrated by social media, one can remember the national security implication of the issue of Olu Maintain, a Nigerian musician who released a single in 2007 titled "Yahooze" with lyrics that glorified and endorsed internet scam in an era where cyber-crime otherwise known as "Yahoo Yahoo" popularly known in Nigeria; "Yahoo oh oh, Yahoozee// If I hammer, 1st thing na hummer, 1 million dollars, elo lo ma je ti n ba se si Naira (1 million dollars, how much will it be when I convert it to dollars)."

Rather than being treated as a case of National Security, he was invited to sing this song at the Under-17 World Champions of 2007 at the country's capital. It can be assumed that this song helped to trivialize the consequences of internet frauds and scams, rather than supporting the efforts to curb this fraudulent act.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper set out to examine the national security implications of the abuse of social media. The work revealed that globally, social media has contributed seriously in transforming the world by bringing people closer for interaction. However, the paper revealed that Social media despites its benefits in Nigeria, has o been abused in the area of faking of news, instigating of violence and has become a cheap tool in the hands of terrorist especially the bokoharam insurgent group; all these have had grave impact on the nation's security as showed in work. Base on these negative brought about by the abuse of social media on the nation's security, the work makes the following recommendations.

i. Erring members of the society who abuse the use of social media should be punished
ii. There should be countering of unhealthy and dangerous speech through mass condemnation and media engagement. The Civil society organisations, media houses and influential leaders or companies can assist in this regard by impressing it upon influential dangerous speakers to withdraw utterances. They should create meaningful awareness surrounding on issue through direct condemnation and calls for statement withdrawals.
iii. Increase audience resistance to dangerous speech Disseminate positive messages through campaigns against hate and dangerous speech. This can be implemented through peace platforms on Facebook and Twitter and the use of SMS bulk messaging. It can also be achieved through use of social media hashtags, such as #nohatespeech, allow conversations to be tracked. Interactive radio programmes focusing on key peace-oriented messages can act as meaningful compliments.
iv. Train influential bloggers and users of social media.Workshops can be facilitated with the aim of increasing the knowledge of bloggers on ethical principles, conflict sensitive communication and hate and dangerous speech. This knowledge should guide their future reporting and commentary.
v. There should be engagement of media regulatory agencies Implementation Strategy on the use of media to avoid its abuse. This can be implemented through the hosting of a well-structured meetings and workshops with press councils, broadcasting commissions, advertising practitioners and public relations practitioners, regular review and update media regulatory laws and processes

and ensure effective compliance and enforcement as this have the capacity to strengthen and enforce regulations to prevent individuals and organisations, including political bodies, through communications guidelines and restrictions.

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