USING THE USER:
ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON TERTIARY INSTITUTION STUDENTS

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Abstract
This discourse adopts the qualitative descriptive approach to examine the influence of social media use on tertiary institution students. it establishes that social media overuse leads to psychological disorders which could negatively affect students especially in their studies. The paper recommends guided use of the social media with a view to utilizing its positives for academic and other development objectives.

Introduction
Though the Internet and the World Wide Web created by Dr. Barnes-Lee 20 years ago ((Embi and Hassan, 2012) are initially designed to move data and information from one location to another in a reliable and most efficient manner, the communication opportunities created by these major developments in information technology have taken on a whole new dimension. A major fallout of this development is the emergence of the social media which are social interaction channels which functionally involve both sender and receiver in determining message content. They are basically internet-based media such as Facebook, You Tube, Twitter, Wikis, Badoo and Myspace among others. These media involve people across the globe in a communication network where a message idea is introduced and the final message content determined by all after meaningful contributions.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe the social media as media that use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. The success and popularity of social networking sites show that the idea of online sharing has been successfully

taken to the social and personal level (Embi and Hassan, 2012). This underscores the fact that social media emphasize dialogue, where active senders and active receivers play functional roles in shaping the message content. Amarasinghe (2010) suggest that online users engaging in social media interaction are generally motivated by similar factors which include: altruism, curiosity, sense of efficacy, pleasure of sharing, reciprocity, affiliation, power, collaboration, reward and recognition.

Social network sites have become increasingly popular among youths and professional individuals. Research evidence has established that young adults spend time on the social media more than any other group. Kuss and Griffiths (2011) found that between 55% and 82% of teenagers and young adults use Facebook on regular basis. Particularly, the human network of young adult is more concerned with 'reading' and 'watching' than they are about their own safety (Alabi, 2013). Having grown up with the Internet and digital technologies, today's youths are the most *wired and connected* generation in human history (Asogwa and Orji, 2013). Robert, Jason and Clifford, (2010, p.189) in their study of adolescent online social communication and behaviours found out that "members of this generation are constantly connected to each other—by cell phone, text messages, instant messaging (IM) and email—and continually plugged into the world of information on the Web." The observed popularity of internet use among young people has become a cause for concern in view of the negative effects of heavy internet use which this paper seeks to appraise.

Social Media Development
Definition: The social media concept refers to a 21st century phenomenon brought about by the advent of the Internet and World Wide Web. The social media are interactive, web-based media which engage key players in a communication channel in defining and determining the message content. They are media that lay emphasis on dialogue or two-way active contribution by both sender and receiver in message development (Nwabueze, 2010). Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) describe the social media as media that use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues.

To Nations (2010), the social media are instruments of communication which are different from the conventional instruments like newspapers. According to Nations, while the regular media operate as a one-way street where a person could read a newspaper or listen to a report on television with very limited ability to give his thought on the content, the social media operate as a two-way street that gives a person or receiver the ability to communicate too. Examples of the social media include Facebook, You Tube, My Space, and the numerous interactive blogs in the web. Emphasis on the social media is dialogue. This is why they are described as Consumer Generated Media (CGM) or media that have User Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan and Heanlein, 2010).

Historical Overview: The origin of the social media could be traced to the emergence of the Internet which led to the creation of Interactive websites that functionally engage sender and receiver in shaping the message content. The social media are associated with the term "Web 2.0" which is used to describe websites that provide opportunities for a user to interact with the sender of a message. The concept – web 2.0 - refers to the state of the web from 2004 till date, a period when interactive websites emerged. This is different from web 1.0 which describes the state of the web prior to 2004. Among the examples of web 2.0 sites are web-based communities, social networking sites, video-sharing sites, Wikis, and blogs.

It is pertinent to note that the term social media" is not synonymous with the term "new media", since not all new media are interactive in nature. Some websites have contents that can only be read while some other sites create opportunity for dialogue. The social media ushered the world into what is called the attention age, an era that emerged after the information age (Nwabueze and Ugwonno, 2010). The attention age is characterized by the ability of individuals to create and consume information instantly and freely as well as share it with the social media community on the Internet.

The social media have proved to be virile channels for mass enlightenment and mobilization in contemporary society. The 2009 presidential elections in Iraq during which social media were used to mobilize against election results and expose post election demonstrations against president

Ahmadinejad, the mobilization like minds to form the Tea Party movement in the USA in today, the mobilization of pro-wikileak hackers to engage in a movement called hacktivism during which hackers across the world penetrated and destroyed data base of companies that refused to do business with Wikileak (the web site that leaked confidential information about diplomatic activities of Western nations); these are among numerous examples of how the social media are impacting on trends of events in today's world.

The Nigerian Experience: Though social media are internet-based communication channels, social platforms for information sharing and dissemination had existed in traditional Nigerian society prior to the emergence of the Internet. Such traditional communication channels as town unions, age grades, women organizations, kindred meetings etc. provide interactional communication platforms (Nwabueze and Ugwunno, 2010). What the Internet-based social media have done is to expand the interactive community with a wider reach and communicative effectiveness.

However, Nigeria has also registered some level of presence in the Internet-based social media community. There are numerous weblogs or blogs either run by Nigerians or they create a forum for Nigerians to air their views and make meaningful contributions to the topics being discussed by a chain of users. Some of these blogs include Klinreports.com, Chidiopara reports, Nairaland, Naijapost.com, Topic.net, and Amana online. As at July 2009, there were 475 Nigerian blogs (www.Blogcatalog.com/country / Nigeria). There are also over 3 million Nigerians online (Nairaland, 2006). Facebook is a popular social medium among Nigerians. Issues on microfinance banking could be discussed in the numerous social media with Nigerian users.

The Positives of Social Media
Social media, no doubt, are essential are essential communication tools in modern society. This is in view of their roles in creating new horizons for communication process to functionally operate.
Expanding communication environment: The advent of Social Network Sites (SNS) such as Myspace, Badoo, Facebook and others have further enhanced the contributions of the World Wide Web in communication. Boyd and Ellison (2007), write that a social network site is an online service for users to create a public or semi-public profile, build a network with other users with whom they share a common links, and navigate other users' profiles and networks. Through this means, communities and groups of people with shared interests stay more 'connected'.

Expediting the communication process: Dissemination of information among several people is faster through the social media, especially when many people are connected. Asocial medium such as Facebook has a great ability to instantaneously spread messages to the masses, unrestricted by time and space (Harlow, 2012). The power of social networking sites is that they empower us to communicate rapidly, in a one to one and one to many format along the lines of our networks of value (Asogwa and Orji, 2013). The number of people who view YouTube videos within a short time frame goes to explain how information could be spread through the social media. The Gangnam Style musical video of the Korean teenage Psy moved into the Guinness Book of Records as the most viewed video YouTube. PSYs "Gangnam Style" became the first video in the history of the Internet to reach and surpass one billion views. The video, at a point, was garnering about 7 to 10 million views daily; (MarqueeBlog, 2012; Mail Online, 2012).

Used for Social Activism: Social movements and protests of all kinds have been initiated through the social media especially facebook. For instance, the revolution in Egypt which ousted Hosni Mubarak of Egypt from office in 2010 and other protests that followed in the Middle East were initiated through the social media. The occupy Nigeria Protests in Lagos, Abuja and other parts of the country in January 2012 following the announcement of fuel subsidy removal by the federal government, were coordinated through facebook.

In 2009, organizers of the new American "Tea party" protest used social media sites to coordinate the protest which drew more than 250,000 people (Britonnica, 2010). According to Whittington (2009) the tea party protest is a demonstration of how the new media, in the hands of

ordinary people can help catalyze a political movement. In Nigeria, during the fuel subsidy removal protest tagged occupy Nigeria, Facebook page was created and used to keep the protesters abreast of what is happening and to coordinate the protest (www.Facebook.com/occupy.Nigeria). The use of social media for all these social courses brought about the term "social media activism".

Used to Build Social Capital: Empirical researches have shown a significantly strong relationship between college students' Facebook usage and their bridging social capital (Ellison et al, 2007). Social capital is a concept used to describe potential resources and benefits in having cordial relationships with other people. Coleman, cited in Lin, Weipeng, Sung Yeun Kim and Robert LaRose (2012) outlined such benefits to include: emotional support, useful information or functional assistance. Putman (2000) identified two types of social capital: 'bridging' social capital and 'bonding' social capital. Putman further observes that while bridging social capital consists of loose relationship, (which serves as bridge connecting a person to a different network) bonding social capital provides emotional support through strong relationship. Wellman et al (1996) observed that computer-assisted social networks sustain strong, intermediate and weak ties that provide information and social support in both specialized and broadly-based relationships. Ferlander (2003) writes that the Internet is capable of creating and maintaining various types of social capital. These empirical evidences of strong relationship between social media and social capital could explain the increasing popularity of social media use across the globe, especially among young people.

Facilitates News Reporting and Online Journalism: There are several news blogs which compete with the traditional mass media (radio, television, newspapers etc.) in speedy information dissemination, though the reliability of online news is still questionable. Among such news-based social media run by Nigerians are Chidiopara reports, Nairaland, Naijapost.com, Topic.net, and Amana online.

The social media play educative, entertainment and information function, which are the traditional functions of the mass media. As identified by Nyland et al (2007), the five motives of using social media include: meeting new people, entertainment, maintaining relationships, social events and; media creation. Ellison et al (2007) write that recent empirical researches have shown a significantly strong relationship between college students' Facebook usage and their bridging social capital. Social capital is a construct that describes potential cumulated resources and benefits embedded in relationships with other people. Coleman, cited in Lin, Weipeng, Sung Yeun Kim and Robert LaRose (2012) outlined such benefits to include: emotional support, useful information or functional assistance.

Negative Effects of Excessive Social Media Use
The social media are not without disadvantages, which, depending on who is using them and level and nature of usage, could outweigh the advantages. In Nigeria, the first case that comes to mind when down side of social media use is mentioned is the case of Cynthia Osokogu, a 24-year old post graduate student of Nasarawa State University and a clothing retailer who was murdered in Lagos in July 22, 2012 by two young men who had lured her to them through facebook under the pretence of helping her to buy cheap goods for her boutique (Adeyemo, 2012). Cynthia was drugged, sexually abused and murdered by two young men who had been in the business of using the social media to lure women to their hotel rooms, rape and dehumanize them before letting them go. The question is, before Cynthia's case exposed the young men, why did nobody hear about the other victims of the young men? Reports had it that while Cynthia's case was being investigated, three more victims of the young men emerged with stories of how they were lured, drugged and raped by the young men but managed to escape with their lives (Adeyemo, 2012). This is a typical case of what could be classified as a major downside of social media on youths. However, there are several negative effects or influences of social media on users, especially when used in excess.

According to Deragon (2011), social media maladies(which result from spending long hours on the internet) are conditions affecting productivity of human networks. Deragon further writes that social media maladies constitute a social condition which could be caused by external factors (such as

influence of technology/social media or, simply using technology/ social media in the wrong way and for wrong purposes) or internal factors (such as a lack of knowledge and / or wisdom by individuals or groups in the use of social media). The pandemic is all about the production and consumption of meaningless and insignificant things that do not enhance progressive continuation of human network (Alabi, 2013).

Social Media and Psychological Problems: Facebook Addiction Disorder is a term used to describe one the psychological effects of spending long hours on facebook. Larkshmi(2011) writes that the term was introduced by a U.S psychologist to describe people who are addicted to Facebook and whose lives are really affected by their uncontrolled use of Facebook. Larkshmi provides the checklist for Facebook addiction disorder as follows:

➢ The first thing you do in the morning is to check your Facebook account.
➢ Whenever you are not online, you day-dream of the comments and status updates that have been received.
➢ You spend hours or waste a lot of precious time on Facebook.
➢ Your day ends only after a last check of your Facebook account and wishing everyone 'good night' as status update.

Writing on the psychological effect of heavy use of internet, Young (2009) observes that an ailment called Facebook Addiction Disorder could set in because addiction criteria such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, mood modifying experiences, tolerance and concealing the addiction behavior appear to be present in some people who use social network sites excessively.

Attempts to provide clinical relevance for Facebook addiction has been conceptualized under Internet Spectrum Addiction Disorder (Karaiskos et al, 2010). Young (1998) defines internet-related disorder as "Problematic Internet Use (PIU). According to this definition, for an individual to qualify as internet addict, he or she must meet up with at least five of the following eight criteria:

➢ Preoccupation with internet,
➢ need for longer amount of time online,
➢ repeated attempt to reduce internet use,
➢ withdrawal when reducing internet use,
➢ time management issues, environmental distress (family, school, work, friends),
➢ deception around time spent online, and;
➢ mood modification through internet use (Young, 1998; Alabi, 2013).

The postulation above tallies with the checklist on Facebook addiction given by Larkshmi (2011) showing that Facebook Addiction Disorder is a kind of Internet Spectrum Addiction Disorder which could be described as the umbrella psychological problem encountered from spending long hours on the internet.

Social Media and Sex: Among the major fallouts of social media use, especially 'uncontrolled' and excessive use is sexual perversion. Ojo and Fasubaa (2005), using focus group discussion in their study of Sexuality and Family Life Education in South-western Nigeria discovered that adolescents' sexuality behaviour in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa is seriously going through transformation from what it used to be in the past. They attributed this to the effect of the internet, which according to them, more than any other agent of social change has contributed in no small measure to the removal of guilt, fear and shame associated with unconventional sexual activities.

After a study of Internet Infidelity, Katherine (2006) cited in Asogwa and Orji (2013) writes that people are using the Internet more frequently to form friendships and romances and to initiate inordinate affairs. After a study of the Internet and sexual perversion among students of University of Nigeria Nsukka, Asogwa and Orji (2013) found that majority of students are attracted to social networking sites mainly on the grounds of initiating and maintaining relationships cum sexual indulgence/promiscuity. These students often do this either regularly or very regularly even to the extent of keeping online relationships with strangers and taking further steps by meeting the same online friends in real world. Meeting online friends in the real world, though not a bad idea entirely,

has however proved dangerous in the past as in the case of Cynthia Osokogu who met her online friends, a development that led to her death.

Social media effect on Academic work: Research evidence has established that addiction to social media affects academic performance of students. According to Louis and Paul (2012), research evidence shows that internet use had interfered with addicts' academic work, professional performance or their social lives. As stated above based on research evidence, the increasing popularity of social media use and more time spent on internet generally especially among young people will no doubt, have a form of negative influence on their academic activities (for those of them who are students). Student-users like to register their presence on facebook and other social media everyday and every time they have the opportunity to do so. They are action to log in and update information online. This includes the using the time which could be channeled towards their academics to regularly update the chats on facebook and other social media. Alabi (2013, p. 72) summarizes the influence of social media, especially Facebook on academic activities of students in Nigeria in the following words:

> In Nigeria, irrespective of age, most university undergraduates now start the day by checking their Facebook accounts…. The frenzy is gradually tending toward addiction as some students cannot do without accessing their Facebook accounts within every passing hour. They like to stay up-to-date with the current trends and events in the virtual world of Facebook. The time and attention that undergraduates are giving to this social network site is becoming increasingly alarming because students can access their Facebook accounts on their mobile phones. Often, when lectures are going on, students still find time to chat with friends online or respond to Facebook notifications at the detriment of their academic pursuit.

This does not mean that there are no students who positively use the internet for research and other activities that could enhance their academic performance. However, the trend in the usage of social media reflects more of a negative influence on academics than positive influence. This postulation is basically premised on the major reasons for social media use among youths which is initiating and maintaining relationships cum sexual indulgence/promiscuity (Asogwa and Orji, 2013).

Negative aspects of social media use may not be exhausted here but the basic ones have been looked at.

Conclusion

The increasing popularity of the Internet among young people has opened up doors to social maladies that were not envisaged when Dr. created the World Wide Web over 20 years ago. The observation by Asogwa and Orji (2013) is pertinent at this point as a note of warning on the dangers posed by mindless use of the Internet on young people and the society at large:

> Although social networks may encourage positive relationships and the sharing of content, we have also come to recognize that the technology revolution has opened up a seemingly limitless world of unmediated information that can be a powerful tool for the commission of crime. The various literatures suggest sexual predators are increasingly using the Internet to lure, solicit, and sexually exploit people. "Self-exploitation," the creation and distribution of explicit or inappropriate pictures of oneself or one's peers, has become a gradually stabilising high-risk behaviour. The trend however, has to be curtailed, lest we are in for a worst society; a society where its leaders of tomorrow are on the brink of cultural and/or moral summersault (p.37).

There is need for censorship of internet content to ensure that materials capable of causing high risk behaviour so as online sex, encouraging violence, and other such maladies are blocked online. Currently, pressure is being mounted on google by members of the public to block internet content capable of encouraging violence, among other social maladies, after it was alleged that suspected perpetrators of the Boston Marathon terrorist attacks in April 2013, Tsarnaev brothers, were exposed to and inspired by terrorist materials online. The suspects said they got instructions on how to make

bombs from the internet (Williams, Iskoff, Winter and Connor, 2013). The younger of the brothers, DzokharTsarnaev, was a student of Massachusetts University.

Seminars should be organized on regular basis in primary, post primary and tertiary institutions on the dangers of excessive exposure to the Internet, including production and consumption of meaningless and insignificant things that are worthless to life.

Internet Use education should be made a part of school curricula at all levels as a way of constantly updating young people's knowledge on dangers of internet exposure. This is because lack of knowledge of what regular and increasing exposure could cause may lead users to gradually stray into internet-based danger.

Parental guide and monitoring have always been suggested as one way of checking excessive internet use. But with the advent of mobile phones which have made internet browsing easy and common, parental guide may be more meaningful at advisory and enlightenment levels. It will be difficult for parents to regulate or restrict hours spent online by their children because there are many ways and facilities for browsing which parents cannot successfully monitor. Parents do not stay in tertiary institutions with their children to know what they are exposed to online. However, parents can regularly engage their children in discussions on internet usage with a view to enlightening them on dangers inherent in exposure or production of meaningless content. Parents also need to update themselves regularly on Internet usage and contents to be well equipped to provide the relevant enlightenment for their children.

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