THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN DIGNITY COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract  
This paper examines the accelerating growth in social media usage in Nigeria, with special attention on youth in the South Eastern part of the country. The implication of this development for human dignity communication is also considered. The paper argues that social media is an effective communication tool with the potential to promote human dignity, if properly exploited, especially among youth in Nigeria. Hinged on the Development Media Theory and Technological Acceptance Model, this study investigated the relationship between increase in social media adoption among young people in two cities of Enugu and Onitsha and the reoccurring incidences of human right violations and abuse in society. A total of 300 young people selected from the two cities were surveyed and results indicated that numerous media reports, user generated contents and updates on human rights issues uploaded to social media (mostly on Facebook and YouTube) negatively affects the perception and attitude of people towards the concept of human dignity. Drawing on Ede (2007, p.97) position that “human beings are the principal focus of the visible world,” the paper recommends that a new educational policy on social media literacy be included in the university curriculum as well as in all levels of education in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Human Dignity, Social Media, Human Life, Southeast Nigeria, Communication

Introduction  
The prehistoric sacredness of human life has remained a custom that binds humans into a common oneness. Appreciation of and respect for the human life and dignity over the years has been associated with social and moral ethics. In every society, human lives and rights are reverenced and preserved. Christians & Traber (1997) in their study of ethical principles in 13 countries discovered that the sacredness of human life is consistently affirmed as a universal value. The concept of human rights provides the only universally available principles for the dignity and integrity of all human beings. Indeed, this justifies the global adoption of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration on human rights to which Nigeria signed unto. Member countries had pledged to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person, social progress and the right of recognition before the law without discrimination.
These rights are often advanced as legal rights and protected by the rule of law. However, the universality of the sacredness of human life has made it distinct from and prior to law and can be used as standards for formulating or criticizing both local and international law. The fundamental rights of every Nigerian are guaranteed by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended. The citizens’ Forum for Constitution Reform (CFCR) 2004 added more fundamental rights to the existing 10. They include: rights to education, right to health, right to clean and healthy environment, spousal right, right to work under safe and healthy condition, right to culture, right to mothers, etc (Elizabeth, 2010) in Anatsui & Oyetunde(2011, p.278).

Historical Note
Enugu state, created officially on 27th August 1991 is one of the five states that make up the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It is home of the Igbo people of Nigeria. The name of the state originates from its capital city, Enugu which locally implies Enu Ugwu- translated as ‘top of the hill’. It was formerly known as capital of the then Eastern Region and was the capital of the now defunct Republic of Biafra. Enugu state consists of 17 local government areas with a population of 3,267,837, comprising of 1,596,042 males and 1,671,795 females (population.gov.ng). Anambra state is the 10th most populated political subdivision in Nigeria that was created in August 27, 1991 with 21 local government areas and a population of 4,177,828 (NPC 2006). Anambra State is also one of the five states of the South Eastern part of Nigeria.

Statement of Problem and Objectives
The introduction of social media into the Nigerian media landscape and society has witnessed unprecedented impact. There are negative as well as positive effects of this adoption, especially as regards the purpose and dignity of man. The consequences of this trend includes lawlessness, drug abuse, rape, killings of all sort, kidnapping, terrorism, high disrespect for God the ‘Osebuluwa’ (Edeh, 2007, p.129), lies, deceit among other vices. There are also enhanced communication flow in the society, globalization, freedom of expression, interactivity, participation in governance, economic and health development and so on; which are equally good trajectories of social media adoption in the society. That notwithstanding, the disposition of youth who occupy a large percentage of the Nigeria population towards social media need to be placed on a scholarship radar so as to ascertain the relationship between the reoccurring incidences of human right violations and abuse and social media use. This quest aims to discover whether human dignity promotion or erosion is linked to the accelerating increase in social media adoption in the country.

Objectives and Significance of the Study
- To determine how social media have elevated or eroded human dignity in Nigeria.
- The objectives are broken down into the following sub-objectives: to determine the frequency on social media popular news stories that promoted or eroded human dignity in Nigeria; to find out the disposition of youth towards such reports; and to determine the social media platforms that mostly threaten the dignity of man in Nigeria.
- The study is timely and significant considering the increasing disregard to human dignity and the obsessive penetration of social media in Nigeria. Results will be adopted to reposition the minds of Nigerians, especially young people in schools on the essence of human dignity promotion and respect as initiated by Edeh (2007).

Theoretical Support
This study is anchored on the development media theory, which, among other things, stresses that the media should give priorities to the coverage of those areas that touch on the lives of the people. This implies that media contents should be development-driven. McQuail (1987, pp. 109-134) alludes to this in his robust presentation on the matter, although, he is not alone in this domain. According to Kunczik (1988), media role as development agents began to gather momentum in the late 1960’s. It also found expression in the UNESCO's
McBride Commission of 1980 which McQuail corroborated. However, it is important to note that McQuail is the first scholar who put this normative proposition in the proper perspective. This theory is one of the two he came up with as an answer to the four normative prescriptions (Siebert et al., 1956), which he claimed did not offer any reasonable development solution for less developed countries. Also relevant here is the Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) originally proposed by Fred Davis in 1986, which explains how users come to accept and use technology. The model suggests that when users are presented with new technology, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it.

Social media
Social media are web applications which generally refer to the social environment in which everybody has the potential to become a creator of content or applications and to reshape the relationship between user and media as well (O’Reilly, 2005. DiMicco & Millen, 2007) put it. Social media allow users to organize, create and share their own media their own way. This is possible with the special qualities of platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Flickr, etc. that are designed to capture tagging on sites. Holtz (2006) observes that these social media platforms allow users to add personal meaning to information and then make the information “easily available to others, who in turn can comment on or expand the information content.” This unique potential of the social media has made the practice of creation, dissemination, provision of feedback and linking of developmental information a participatory activity. Research has indicated that social media has penetrated every sphere of life and has proven to be an effective communication tool for development. Morah, Omojola and Uzochukwu (2016) adopted the survey research method to investigate how young people in the rural communities of Anambra, Enugu and Ogun states were politically activated to participate in the April, 2015 presidential elections on the instrumentality of social media connected via mobile devices. They found out that the most popular social media respondents’ access with mobile devices indicates that Facebook ranked highest with a percentage of 63.6%. “This is followed by Whatsapp with a percentage of 18.1%. Other social media as shown from the findings indicate that 2.5% use 2go, 3.3% use Twitter, 4.2% use blogs, 2.9% use BBM while 5.4% use Instagram” (p.13). This implies that social media can indeed serve developmental purposes and even compliment the mainstream media in human development. Therefore, social media is apt for sustainable human dignity development. The study argues that media of communication do not only hold the power to inform the public, but have the moral responsibility as duty bearers to educate and increase awareness of people’s rights and monitor, investigate and report all human rights violations. When they do this, the dignity of man is protected.

Human Dignity: An Overview
Generally, dignity is seen as providing the basis for human rights in general, in the sense of providing a key argument as to why humans should have rights, and what the limits of these rights might be. In this sense, dignity is the basis for human rights to exist. Human dignity as defined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Right Article 1 states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” The spirit of brotherhood as mention in the declaration is a common characteristic of the Igbo, the people of the Southeast. Article 1 is in conformity with Edeh (2007) mindset that the Igbo live a communal life, ”as a consequence of this, the Igbo have developed a high degree of personal involvement with one another’s concerns in the society” (p.105).
Edeh (2007, p.100) observes that the Igbo word for man (the human) is ‘madu’ which means ‘good that is’. Man is therefore ‘mma-di’ meaning ‘good that is’ in the sense that having been created by god, man is a product of God the maker, who is called ‘Chineke’. This further implies that “being made in the image of God” is an indicator that man was endowed with gifts which distinguished man from animals. Even the humanists of the Renaissance (and before that Thomas Aquinas) identified dignity as an important bridge.
between classical Roman thinking and Church doctrine in another important way. They argued that one of the most important gifts of God to Man is the gift of reason.

Social Media and Human Dignity

Today's generation is too obsessed with luxury and their life is literally taken away by the use of new media. Some parts of this trend, such as multi-tasking, chatting, taking selfie, citizen reporting, user generated content, etc have become a usual phenomenon in the life of youth these days, particularly, with the advent of GSM and other mobile devices. The performance and capability of mobile phones have also changed a lot (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015). The use of smart phones by youth in Nigeria has increased tremendously. This has made information dissemination easy and citizen journalism popular. The role of the mass media cannot be over emphasized. They include: information, education, interpretation/explanation and entertainment. Wilson (2005) asserts that development is change towards patterns of society that allow better realization of human patterns of society greater control over its environment and over its political destiny and that enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves (p.124). He further argued that development is for and about people and not about things; “that the people for whom development is planned need to be made aware of their needs and to participate in the process through a converted mass mobilization” (p.126).

In contrast, the social media which are unmoderated and uncurated encourage public discussion of issues and allow nearly everyone who wants a voice to have one. Users may have to wade through thousands of insane comments or misinformed amateur opinions in order to find quality information. This should remind us about media theorist Marshall McLuhan who came up with the phrase “the medium is the message.” By this coinage, McLuhan implied that, each medium delivers information in a different way and that content is fundamentally shaped by that medium. His theorization was personified in the features of the social media that make their contents distinct from other media platforms. Today adults of all ages are accessing their favorite websites using their tablets, smartphones, and computers. For some time the Internet has been popular with younger Americans, but research shows that this trend is evolving. Generation X (ages 31 to 44) and Younger Baby Boomers (ages 45 to 54) are beginning to spend a significant amount of time online (Indvik). In fact, in 2011, it was reported that 65% of adults use social networking sites (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011).

Social networking sites in line with (Boyd& Ellison, 2007, p. 211) possess unique characteristics as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” Observations have shown that Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Whatspp are the four most popular social networking sites used by Nigeria youth, especially on mobile devices. Each of these webpages can be accessed through a consumer’s tablet, smartphone, and/or computer. There appears to be an upsurge in research interest on the role of social media in facilitating new forms of civic engagement and political participation (Nwafor, Odoemelam, Orji-Egwu, Nwankwo & Nweze, 2013; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Carpentier, 2011; Dahlgren, 2013). On the other hand, research has indicated that social media have contributed to various areas of human development in Nigeria.

Social media have proved their mettle in the area of education (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015); politics, religion, health communication (Morah, 2012) and so on. As Papachariss (2002) asserts, “new technology provides information and tool that may extend the role of the public in the social and political arena” (as cited in Kenechukwu, Morah & Uzochukwu, 2012, p.2). In the views of Anim, (2013,p.11) “the potentials of social media as agents of social change have been well demonstrated in the past five to ten years.” This shows that there might either be a positive or negative effect of social media messages in societies. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Broadband Commission Report titled 'The State of Broadband 2014- Broadband for All', in 2013, Nigeria had mobile broadband penetration rate of 10.1 per cent. Also, for the percentage of individuals using the Internet in developing countries, the country’s ranking increased to the 54th position at 38.0% against 32.9 percent of 2012 (ITU Report, 2014)
in (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015, p.2). This indicates with high internet connectivity that there is an increasing adoption rate of social media as a communication tool in Nigeria. Social media have evidently contributed to the erosion of human dignity and spread of rancor among communities. A topical example is the recent social media fake news on the health status of President Muhammadu Buhari during his vacation in the United Kingdom in the first quarter of 2017. Social media reports carried unconfirmed reports of his death, using blogs and other platforms which observably, resulted to certain levels of disagreement among the various ethnic groups in the country. Online journalists have also carried stories on dehumanizing issues like the Miss Anambra sex tape scandal reported by Naij.com; the Ejigbo pepper sodomy reported by Sahara reporters and even murder cases such as the ‘Aluu Four killing’ of Uniport students, the alleged brutal murder of a seven year old who stole garri in Bagadry, among others. Positive reports on child rape assaults do exist in the social media as well. For instance, a special report by Ahman et al (Morah, 2016, p.71) on the Leadership newspaper online titled: Child Rape: Who speaks for the Victims? exposed how a 26-year-old man Felix Ani, allegedly raped a 4-year-old girl in Lagos. According to the report, investigations showed that he had been sexually abusing the child since she was 3 years old. According to Ahman et al (Morah, 2016, p.71) he confessed that he was using his hand initially to finger the girl before having carnal knowledge of her recently.

Method, Population, Sampling and Instrumentation
This study adopted the survey method to determine the requisite variables. A target total sample of 300 social media users in Enugu and Onitsha metropolis selected through purposive random sampling were taken as respondents, over three easily delineable age groups of young adults, middle age and aged people. The option of “target number of responses” was chosen to eliminate the problem of non-response. This implied that researchers kept distributing and receiving the completed questionnaire until the target 150 were reached in each of the two assessed states in southeast region of the country. Each gender had an appreciable presence in the sampled population while the ability to read and understand in English was the qualification for completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained closed ended questions. Random sampling was carried out on the target population, stratified into the three categories to enable the determination of responses.

Findings, Data Analysis and Discussions
The data analyzed was from copies of questionnaire distributed face to face among youths from two cities of Enugu and Onitsha. Out of 300 copies of questionnaire distributed, 249, representing a response rate of 83% was completed and returned. Analysis of data was presented on the thematic and demographic variables underlying this study using SPSS data analysis software.

Demographic Data
In terms of the age of the respondents, results from the study indicated that 189 of the respondents sample representing 77.8% are youths between the age brackets of 18-22 years; 46 respondents representing 18.9% are within age brackets 23-28 years. Other age brackets sampled is a negligible 3.3% representing age brackets 29-40 years. It is obvious that a good proportion of the respondents are indeed youths. Out of the selected sample investigated, one hundred and twenty eight representing 54.2% are females while 108 representing 45.8% are males. Meanwhile results equally show that majority (195) of the youth sampled of 81.3% are single while 43 respondents, represented by 18.7% are married which implies that most of the youths used for the study are single. Most of the respondents are educated, as findings reveal that 168 respondents used in the study have attained tertiary education; 7.4% secondary education; 7.0% primary education, while 2.0% indicated they are not literate.
RQ1: What is the frequency on social media popular news stories that promoted or eroded human dignity in Nigeria?

Table 1: Do you think that social media report on human dignity is common these days?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of media report</th>
<th>Enugu</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Onitsha</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>69.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanty</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18.07%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>30.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows that human rights reports are now commonly reported on social media unlike in the days of conventional media. In Enugu, a greater 185 (74.3%) respondents agreed to this while 69.07% (172) respondents agreed in Onitsha. This implies that social media carries a lot of human rights stories these days.

Table 2: Rate the human right stories (Yes or No) you have read generally in terms of the following ethical characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Enugu</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Onitsha</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>102</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of exposure to the human dignity based stories and their video, a majority 164 respondents from the two states rated the stories as inaccurate; 195 respondents assumes they are truthful reports; 176 believes the stories lack objectivity ; and 155 respondents agreed that there is no fairness in the reports. Thus, we can infer that human rights reports are regarded as unethical and highly unacceptable among youths in the two SE states.

RQ2: What Influence Do The Published Stories Have On The Audience?

Table 3: Do the human right abuse stories have any negative influence on you in terms of your belief system (religion)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Belief</th>
<th>Influence on</th>
<th>Enugu</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Onitsha</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>197</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that a mean percentage of 74.9% representing 197 and 176 respondents from Enugu and Onitsha respectively who believe that dehumanizing stories with have negative influence on their religious belief. Since there are mostly Christians with minority of traditional religionist in the south east, this result implies that violations of human dignity are strongly condemned by the two religions since it is a universal belief (Edeh, 2007).
RQ3: Which social media platform mostly threatens the dignity of man in Nigeria

Table 4: which of these platforms is mostly perceived as being a threat to the dignity of man in SE Nigeria?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>social media platform</th>
<th>Enugu</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Onitsha</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatsapp</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result shows that Facebook and Youtube threaten the dignity of man more than other social media platform in both cities in the percentage of 46.2% for Enugu and 32.9% for Onitsha. This is followed by Whattapp and Twitter. This implies that social media has great impact on human dignity communication as an interactive media.

Table 5: Do the stories have any negative influence on you in terms of the existence of Nigeria as a nation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Influence on Nigeria’s existence</th>
<th>Enugu</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Onitsha</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 indicates that 74.3 % representing 185 respondents from the Enugu and 172(69.1%) from Onitsha agrees that the human reports has negative influence on them in terms of the existence of Nigeria as a nation. This implies that most Nigerians has lost confidence in the unity of the nation and probably lives in a world of fear as a result of watching and reading such media reports.

Conclusion And Recommendations

Result has shown that despite the perceived usefulness of social media as interactive and participatory media, Nigerian youths are not happy with the degrading portrayal of humanity on social media. Drawing on Ede (2007, p.97) position that “human beings are the principal focus of the visible world” the paper recommends that a new educational policy on social media literacy be included in the university curriculum as well as in all level of education to further empower Nigerians in the appreciation of ‘mma -di’ and the sacredness of human life. This is because with education, there will be social change of behavior and attitude.

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Gazetted Amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2011


