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# Nigerian Youths, Social Media Bill Regulation and the Gathering Storm: Where are the Library Services

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This paper was on Nigerian Youths, social media bill regulation and the gathering storm: where are the library services? The paper endeavors to review the flight between Youths of Nigeria and government on the issues of social media bill which did not augur well with them. The present government in the bid to censor social media made a bill to regulate all social media spaces, to the Youths that was unacceptable. The role of social media to everyday life cannot be pushed outside. Librarians are using it to reach their users which are mostly Youths. Based on this, the paper reviewed keys areas: social media for library services; role of libraries in driving self-regulation. Social media usage is essential in libraries as it will help library staff keep themselves abreast of new innovations in their career and further help to provide services that will meet the varying needs of their patrons. Regulations over privacy issues on social media concern what data should be collected by the platforms, what data can be sold, what content should be online and who should be in control.

Keywords: Social Media, Librarians, Libraries, Youths, Bill, and Gathering Storm.

#### INTRODUCTION

Until the advent of social media, adequate forums to express oneself existed, notably the radio, print media, or television. The prerogative of these platforms was to decide on the content they published. In effect, the content was subject to pre-approval of the relevant medium. Hence, if private media refuses publication of a citizen's views, the citizen cannot enforce its fundamental right against a private party. It is only when the state imposes restraints that go beyond Article 19(2), does the citizen have a remedy against the state. Most of the laws that impose restrictions on freedom of speech have criminal consequences. A plethora of jurisprudence has developed on what material is really seditious, anti-religious or obscene in nature. What may appear to the common man as incorrect material may not be illegal, as the threshold to establish illegality or unlawfulness is quite high. Social media has offered a new, accessible, influential and pervasive avenue for citizens to express themselves. While traditional media acted as publishers and retained control over what gets published, social media platforms have chosen to position themselves merely as technology platforms (Jain and Gokhale, 2020).

Technological platforms have a safe harbour for material published on their platforms by third parties, subject to some due diligence obligations. The Supreme Court has also clarified that platforms are not expected to voluntarily take down illegal content unless directed by the appropriate authority to do so. Thus, apart from auto filters and technology enabled tools that sieve out some specific type of content, there is no pre-approval for content published on these platforms (Jain and Gokhale, 2020).

The evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has thrown young people into the visual space mercilessly. Today's Nigeria Youths spend hours surfing the net, engaging themselves in chatting and socializing on different social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, Tumblr and Instagram etc. This has become a prominent part of their lives as they are more concerned with Facebook friends, videos on YouTube, posts, twits and other online communication than they are with face-to-face friends. Singh, Amiri Sabbarwal S (2017) state that "today, Youths are defining users of social media. Social media made available the platform for Youths to build social networks or social relations among people". Youths have become addicted to online interactions; they claimed that social media help them to stay connected with their friends they do not see often, they also claim that social media allow them to make new friends online, find jobs, business opportunities through LinkedIn, self fulfillment, importance, expectation, fame, healthrelated issues and social wellbeing. Ali, Igbal and Igbal (2017) state that social media provides efficient ways for education; students used social media for e-learning, develop communication skill and raise their learning skills. In spite of what appears to be the positive aspects of social media, studies have also shown that there are a lot of negative aspects of social media particularly on Youths. It has been discovered that, access to social media by Nigeria Youths create a great distraction, affect learning and comprehension of teaching in class, and aid in cheating during examinations.

At present, social media means different things to different people (Utomi, 2020). To the Nigerian Youths for example, social media with the recent success of the ENDSARS campaign which started on Twitter has become a positive force that can enhance, among other things, communication. stakeholder engagement. knowledge acquisition, awareness building. volunteer management, accountability, advocacy, relationship building activities and promotes community foundations, whose main goal is to address community problems. Utomi went further to say that increasingly, they foster a "community" that is built less on geographic boundaries than on a sense of belonging, social media provide a diverse and transcendent public dialogue. Yet, even with this recognition of the critical/far reaching role social media plays, particularly its ability to engage minds on tasks such as learning, reasoning, understanding and other activities that creates positive impact, and crowd of 'exiting progress', recorded by users across the world, the instincts of the present administration says something new and chiefly different. While the present administration admits, like every other nation, that social media constitute a principal component of, and aids political, socioeconomic discussions across the globe, the Federal Government has, however, through its actions and inactions argued persistently that just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so, uncontrolled use of the social media serves but to destroy(Utomi, 2020).

Hence, the need to have the space regulated. Supporting the above claim is the Nigerian Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, recently disclosure of government's intention to regulate the social media in Nigeria. To copiously quote him, he in part said:

"Since we inaugurated our reform of the broadcast industry, many Nigerians have reached out to us, demanding that we also look into how to sanitize the social media space. I can assure you that we are also working on how to inject sanity into the social media space which, today, is totally out of control. No responsible government will sit by and allow fake news and hate speech to dominate its media space, because of the capacity of this menace to exploit our national fault lines to set us against each other and trigger a national conflagration."

The increasing ploy to tame the social media in Nigeria is similar to the minister's position were two feeble attempts in the past to regulate the information space via the introduction of the Internet Falsehood and Manipulations Bill, 2019 and the hate speech bill. At the most basic level, the Internet Falsehood and Manipulations Bill, 2019, sponsored by Senator Mohammed Sani Musa, (APC Niger East), among other provisions, seeks to curtail the spread of fake information. It seeks a three-year jail term for anyone involved in what it calls the abuse of social media or an option of fine of N150, 000 or both. It also proposes a fine of N10 million for media houses involved in peddling falsehood or misleading the public. The hate speech bill on its part, proposes that any person found guilty of any form of hate speech that results in the death of another person shall die by hanging upon conviction(Utomi, 2020). This is in addition to its call for the establishment of an 'Independent National Commission for Hate Speeches', which shall enforce hate speech laws across the country(Utomi, 2020).

As alluring as this proposition/explanation by the government appears, there exist in the opinion of this piece some obvious omissions. First, it is of considerable importance to state that the solution to fake news and hate speech, urgent as they are, cannot be found in social media censorship but in a constructive and rational approach. Secondly, for the wheel of understanding to come full circle, we all need to admit as a nation that 'without wood, the fire goes out, charcoal keeps the ember glowing as wood keeps the fire burning'. Same is applicable to the factors propelling fake News/ hate speeches in the country. What the nation's information space currently witnesses is but a clash of misinformation between the fifth columnists in the fourth estate pretending to be journalists and

the poor masses who are the real victims of broken promises. Citizens have recently come to the understanding that; 'a free press is not a privilege but an organic necessity in a society (Utomi, 2020). For without criticism, reliable, and intelligent reporting, the government cannot govern.' It is of great value, therefore, that the government draws a lesson from other nations where social media are not censored, to understand that the marketplace of ideas naturally sorts the irresponsible from the responsible and rewards the later. Nigerians are not interested in this fenderbender information atmosphere and proliferation of falsehood, propaganda, and fake news on the nation's politics. Therefore, considering the harm of social media among Youth in Nigeria and weakness on the part of the Nigeria government the gathering storm has come to stay. Hence, librarian perspective towards making users get the right services in the society should be basic objective.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review provides deep insight into related studies and it helped to select appropriate objectives, hypotheses and methodology that further enhance the topic under consideration. "The advent of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Intagram represent a new phase of revolution and development in the globalized world" Adegbilero- Iwari and Ikenwe, 2014 cited in Zakaria and Birikorang "Social media otherwise known as the new media is a form of electronic communication which facilitate interaction based on certain interest characteristics on web 2.0 technology" Asemah (20010 defines social media as a digital interactive media. Sambe (2014) sees social media as a "new media technology, a product of information of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Social media have been tagged a 'hot topic', and a 'new spirit' and one of the most significant social and technological development of the 21st Century". Anyanwu and Agwu (2016) Social media are also seen as a form of electronic communication on the Internet. Social media is also referred to as "social networking websites developed to specifically help people share their views and stay in touch with their friends, foes, relatives, well wishes and other groups in the society"

World Development Indicators (2013) cited Anyanwu and Agwu (2016) also state that, "social media users in Nigeria are officially put at 53.5% of the population, in 2012 higher than the national average for 2008 which was

projected in 2016 over 80% of those who live in the urban areas in Nigeria use social media". Both the Internet and social networking sites have played a crucial role in the day-to-day learning environment. Odoh, et al. in their study of the use of social media and the Nigerian academic/ learning environment. studied Madonna University, Okija and National Open University, Enugu Campus, sampled 420 students within the age bracket of 20-45 years, found that Nigerian students use more of Facebook and Twitter social media platforms. Their findings also showed that these social media tools enable Nigerian undergraduates and teachers to freely send direct communication to friends and colleagues around the world not for academic reasons.

The findings also revealed that students have access to social media daily on their desktop computer, laptop, e-readers, tablets, and cell phones to actively engage in social networking, text messaging, blogging, and content sharing. Odoh and Ajah (2016) in their study entitled, "bridging rural-urban information gap development: the social media imperative" used a survey research method to study undergraduates and secondary school teachers in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State, a rural setting. The age bracket of the respondent was 17-30 for students and 25-45 for teachers, the study population stood at 9700 and a sample size of 400 was drawn using Taro Yamani. The findings showed that the rural Igbo-Etiti have access to telecommunication services as well as the use of social media. The findings also confirmed that often times the telecommunication networks are epileptic. The findings also confirmed that, the rural dwellers in Igbo-Etiti use social media to support their development and amongst the preferred are Twitter and Facebook.

# SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

Social media as a Web-based channel of information dissemination is rapidly permeating all aspects of library and information services (James, Chidozieand Chukwuma, 2020). Also, it is observed that social media is rapidly becoming the most preferred means of establishing social/professional networks among librarians, while it is also being used to communicate with potential library users, as well as extending the information services to other remote users particularly in the academic community (Quadri & Idowu, 2016). In the information profession, particularly in libraries, universities, and colleges, social media tools serves as the platform mostly suited for individuals to

interact, disseminate, and share information among themselves (Sahu, 2013). Librarians are now realizing the potentials of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Skype, and Google+, and other social tools and are making efforts to integrate them into library services such as library orientation, new arrival of library resources, references services, selective dissemination of information (SDI), and customer services in general. Social media tools, mostly MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Delicious, Flickr, Blogs, Wikis, Youtube, Podcasts, and Hi5 have enabled libraries to connect their users and allowed librarians to adopt a new role by placing themselves into a social realm with users (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012).

By reading blogs, group postings, and message boards, the librarian becomes an active participant, who is able to anticipate and advise patrons as needs arise. Social media tools have also enabled libraries to link their various patron profiles which keep them abreast of their information needs. Libraries now have a fan page on Facebook which help them to market the library's services and products. By linking to the library's website, the Facebook page acts as a portal to the library. Blogs and wikis have been recognized as ideal sources to disseminate news and information. Blogs in academic libraries are tools to reach out to students. Blogs and Twitter are a realtime communication platform and have been overwhelmingly used to market the library services and products. According to Musibau. Milstein, Enyinnaya, Edward, Wantrudis and Nojeem (2011), social media tools also allows users to create an account, post and receive messages to a network of contacts, as opposed to send bulk email messages. There are libraries which use Twitter to connect themselves with important information sources. These social media tools and their networking sites help establish a cordial relationship with users while attracting them to the library environment. Libraries have increased the use of Facebook and Twitter to connect, communicate as well as collaborate with users in an innovative way, and providing the needed services to users.

Suraweere et al (2011) admitted that the availability of online social networks in libraries and information organizations is increasingly prevalent and a growing tool that is being used to communicate with more potential library users. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) add that social media tools sites are two way transparent communications that encourage a feedback mechanism; connecting people with shared

interest. Furthermore, the availability of social networking tools enables librarians to identify library patrons on the social cyberspace and proactively provide the type of information that would normally result from reference service. Social media tools are not only being available for promoting services, programs and new resources but they are also used for reference service. Libraries have also provided available platforms such as Ask a Librarian, meebo and twitter for students to use and to ask questions in "real time and this is assisting in promoting the library as a relevant, efficient and helpful place. In recent time, there have been different interaction rituals which can be performed on social media for reconstructing the established social networks. Such popular activities include updating user information and getting updates on new library collections.

Libraries can also add value to their services by creating knowledge repositories on Wikis, developing bibliographies through social bookmarking sites, building historical and cultural collections through media sharing applications, and forming relationships with like-minded individuals in social networking communities (Kroski, 2007). These platforms can help libraries to be harvesting information from individual users for improving online services, and research, etc. (Chu, Cheung, Hui, Chan & Man, 2010). With the advent of social media tools, libraries can now relate to her wide users even in remote areas. The availability of social media for libraries also enhances two-way communication which afforded libraries to be in tandem with their users' changing needs and expectations. These platforms of information service delivery can increase library's reach to the patrons. Social media tools in libraries act as information resource while supporting collaboration between students and libraries. Succinctly put, social media tools are rebranding the library services in view of the current trends of COVID 19 pandemic.

## ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN DRIVING SELF-REGULATION

While social media companies are urged to self-regulate in order to continue giving access to information and prevent hate speech, propaganda, misinformation, disinformation and breach of users' privacy on their platforms, libraries can help the society to 'self-regulate' through widely teaching the principles of literacy and media literacy. IFLA (2017) realized that the recognition of the of 'post-truth' as the 2016 Word of the Year by the Oxford Dictionaries was a call to

arms for librarians to focus more on critical thinking as a crucial component of information literacy in the 21st century. Eight steps were delineated on how to spot fake news.

- Every source of information on social media should be critically considered. Check the website for the stated mission/vision and contact information
- Some headlines are click-baits. They are mainly sensational and would tempt one to believe what they proclaim. Librarians should encourage people to always read the body of a story to ensure it tells the story as outlined in the headline. People need to be taught that 'liking', 'retweeting' or 'sharing' such click baits on social media is promoting fake news, misinformation and propaganda
- Every author of a news item or picture on social media should be checked online. Digital footprints of everyone that publishes, writes and posts online can always easily be identified.
- Are there embedded links in the news item or post in the social media? Click on them to make certain that they support the story.
- Sometimes stale news is reposted as a current event in social media to drive propaganda. This is often true of political news. Check the date of the post before sharing or clicking on the 'like' button.
- Is the post in social media nuanced; laced with sarcasm and satire and not truly a real rendition of facts? This can be determined by checking the author and through the site linked with the author,
- Personal biases can make one to quickly believe a post on social media without going through the aforementioned steps. Check prejudices before 'sharing', 'liking' or 'retweeting' a social media post.
- Libraries and librarians should identify themselves and speak up on different social media as professionals in 'self-regulation' on social media so that people can ask them to verify the authenticity of posts and news items on such platforms.
- Libraries also need to embed the issues of online privacy into their Information and Media Literacy lectures. According to Teaching Privacy (2016), there are crucial principles that can help people make better decisions about their privacy as they use the social media –
- Digital footprints are real. Every post a person sends to a social media platform or

- that others post about someone and the sites one visits all generate information from which inferences can be drawn. Every Internet connection always transmits the IP address of a user. Websites and applications store all of this information and can easily exchange them with other applications and devices without the knowledge of the user. Cookies track browsing history. Data mining techniques can expose personal data to unethical users. Librarians can teach people how to check their privacy settings to curtail unnecessary sharing of private information through use of 'opt-out' functions, disengagement of location tags on devices, communicating privacy status preferences and deleting online accounts that are no more being used.
- Control of over information is given up to social media platforms once a post is sent. The sender cannot control the reaction and/or interpretations of what is posted, the content can be reposted to unknown audiences in widening circles, manipulated, misrepresented and replicated without consent. Search engines crawl, analyze and cache websites. There is no guarantee of control over any post sent online. Librarians should teach people to 'self-regulate' on social media by thinking critically before sending a post - 'Do I want to be identified always by this post? What would my reaction if this post goes beyond my target audience? Do I trust my target audience to understand and keep sensitive information about me to themselves?
- It is deceitful to believe that one can post anonymously on social media and get away with it. Librarians should make posters and put up all over the library – 'Do not do anything online that you would not do in public physically'. Private browsing and incognito modes are no guarantee as cookies on websites track browsing history as well as browse configuration. Librarians should educate the public to understand that personal information should be given out when and as much as is necessary.
- Search engines are getting more proficient and eliciting information thought to be 'hidden' by connecting devices and applications. Librarians should encourage the public to always check their 'digital footprints' and assume that every information about one that has been posted on the social media will eventually surface one day.

- Everyone's data eventually ends up online.
  Technology keeps on improving. A picture
  with a person in the far, furry background
  can be used for identification purposes.
  Librarians can lead the public to understand
  that people need to get intentional consent
  from others before sharing their private
  information and pictures. That someone takes
  a picture with a group is not tacit consent to
  post on social media platforms.
- Information is valuable. Information that is posted to social media can be used to benefit others, contrary and maybe detrimental to your interests. Librarians should help people 'self-regulate' by advising that if one is not sure of how information in social media posts can be used, it is better not to post it at all. Social media platforms are business organizations with great potentials of trading with information in one's post to the platforms or the information footprints one leaves in using the platforms. Unethical data miners can use such information to bully, blackmail or coerce people.
- The online world is as real as the physical world that is touched and felt. Librarians should make it clear that posts on social media can affect the physical world. In sending posts to social media platforms, people should be advised to be truthful, circumspect and respectful. Also, the digital footprints generated by anyone is part of the identity of the person online and in the physical world. Some employers now check the online profiles of applicants and their persona on social media platforms to help in arriving at a decision of whether to employ or not.
- No one will guarantee online privacy for the other person. It is a private decision backed up by personal efforts. Privacy policies by websites, applications and devices are primarily for their own protection against legal actions, not to protect the user. Librarians need to educate the public on this issue so as not to be misled into believing that the click on 'acceptance of privacy policy' is for their own good.
- Identity on social media is not guaranteed as with a few clicks some other entity can clone your account or that of others. Collaborating and sharing on social media platforms requires rigorous checking and rechecking to ensure that one is not communicating with fake accounts.

Librarians can teach all these steps and principles in their libraries to their user communities as well as share them online through social media so that it can reach the target audience. The knowledge would help people put in proper 'regulations' as they use the social media platforms for information.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Social media usage is essential in libraries as it will help library staff keep themselves abreast of new innovations in their career and further help to provide services that will meet the varying needs of their patrons. Regulations over privacy issues on social media concern what data should be collected by the platforms, what data can be sold, what content should be online and who should be in control. Social media could selfregulate by using plain language in user agreements so that people will clearly understand what they are signing up for, disabling consumer data tracking and collection, providing notice of data breach of their users within 72hrs, delete user data and provide copies of data collated about users when they receive such requests. Most importantly, social media operators could be made to get clear well-spelt out consent from users before using their data. The Intellectual Freedom Committee recommends that libraries participate in social media after thoughtfully reviewing the guidelines presented here, and adopt a social media policy in consultation with legal counsel that reflects their institution's intent and capacity. Social media presents an opportunity for libraries to engage with users and to make significant contributions to shared knowledge. This robust civic engagement leads to an informed citizenry and a healthy society, while also demonstrating the great value of our society.

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