Social Media as a Bastion for correcting moral Ills in Nigeria: A Focus on Educational Decadence

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Abstract

Worried by the soaring incidence of moral decadence in Nigeria's educational system, this paper takes a look at how the social media could be used to enhance the efforts made to correct the social ills in the society, particularly education-related offences. To accomplish, this objective, the paper discusses the fading fortunes of moral living in the Nigerian society, stating the various forms of immorality which are caused by corruption and indiscipline, bred by greed. The work views the cyberspace as a zone of opportunities; ex-rays the immoral posture of Nigeria; states the strengths and weaknesses as well as the pros and cons of the social media; portrays immoral acts as mountains to be demolished for moral conduct to prevail among Nigerians, especially the youths; and describes the social communication networks which are put to the most use by the youths, the target audience of the book, as a potent instrument for correcting the moral ills of society.
Key words: Social media,   Bastion, Educational decadence, Moral ills, Nigeria

1. Introduction

 It is an incontrovertible fact that the Internet has a huge positive impact on the world. But in the same breath, the technology has suffered under–utilization and abuse, especially in the hands of those who have rather preferred to use it to perpetrate nefarious activities. Of course, this brings to mind the inevitability of abusing a thing, the purpose of which is not known. While we cannot exhaust the massive potentials of the Internet in the areas of business, politics, education, health, tourism and relationships, amongst others, one distinguishing factor of this polite technology is that it has blurred the lacuna created by time and space. Accordingly, the global village concept of Marshal McLuhan thrives on the instrumentality of the Internet.

2. Social Media: Meaning and Exposition

In examining what *social media* as a term, means, *Wikipedia* comes handy. It defines *social media* as a web and mobile-based technology that supports interactive dialogue and introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals. In essence, users generate and share all types of content within their established networks.

Contributing another definition which is rather more technical, Kaplan & Haenlein (cited in Sheedy, 2011) say the *social media* is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content"(p.60).

Users use mobile and web-based technologies to create interactive platforms where individuals and groups share, co-create and modify user-generated content from which they all benefit.

Social media include facebook, twitter, Blackberry Messenger,   WhatsApp, Skpe, 2go, Badoo, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr and Tumblr. Of these, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are among the most popular.

In respect of reach, frequency, usability and immediacy, the social media offer more opportunities than the conventional media. The case of the widening reach (coverage or breadth of circulation) of the social media, which is one of its sterling features, need not be over-flogged. As the days go by, so do these social media sites become increasingly pervasive? Interestingly, Internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of site. To this end, social media seem to have irreversible growth both in terms of the number of their members (users) and of their effects on society.

According to Social Bakers, a social media analysis company, the number of social media members for leading platforms like Facebook and Twitter has already passed 1.1 billion. As if to support   this view, *Wikipedia* records that the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PCs (i.e. personal computers) and mobile devices, increased by 37 per cent, to 121 billion minutes in July 2012, from 88billion minutes in July 2011.

Nigeria, like most of the world, is not left out in this social media frenzy. In fact, with some 100 million connected Simcards in Nigeria, and a sizeable community of online users, the social media have exploded in Nigeria with an increasing focus on political matters. Similarly, by a report released recently, the number of users of facebook, one of the most popular social media platforms in Nigeria, has hit a good number of millions.

Like other conventional media, the Internet and social media platforms are   free recreation and relaxation centres or forums. A healthy mind, it is said, lives in a healthy body. Relaxation contributes to good health and relaxation and recreation are enhanced by entertainment. Entertainment itself is a human value. People need to laugh, cry, fantasize and play. The hurly- burly of city life, pent-up emotions, the bitterness from the office over the attitude of some colleague, frustrations from perennial traffic jams, discomfort caused by noise from industrial machines and road vehicles and the boredom from the monotony of carrying out a particular assignment day in and out, which is attendant to division of labour – all these should be "offloaded" to make room for a relaxed mind.

Life which is so short should not be all about one getting tensed. That is, the proverbial Job's declaration that "man born of woman is of few days and full of troubles" (Job 14:1) need not be unnecessarily fulfilled. This is where the social and the mass media come to the rescue as entertainers.

Although the most part of a typical newspaper focuses on the events of the day (i.e news), "comics, puzzles, horoscopes, games, advice, gossip, humour and general entertainment features usually account for around 12 per cent of the content"(Dominick, 2009, p.36).

Television is primarily devoted to entertainment with about a better part of a typical broadcast day falling into this category. The entertainment content of radio varies widely according to station format. Some stations may programme more news than entertainment while others like one radio house in Port Harcourt (name withheld for friendship sake) may schedule almost zero per cent news. In like manner, some magazines may have little entertainment content while others are almost devoted to it.

The emergence of the mobile movie has amplified the entertainment function of the mass media. According to Dominick (2009, p.37), "specially equipped vehicles let children watch DVDs (digital video discs) as they go on family trips. Travellers at airport terminals can play games on their cell phones or watch movies on their laptops while they wait." What's more, commuters can watch video   or television films while they are in transit on board a luxury bus. In fact, the scope of mass media entertainment is immense.

Like the foregoing, the various social media platforms have awesome positive entertainment value and must be hailed for bringing entertainment much closer to the versatile and adept user than others.

Thus, the social media, to say the least, have become a veritable part of human existence and their influence on every stratum of society is becoming increasingly palpable.

Yet, the extent to which the social media platforms have been used to foster morality or otherwise is, no doubt, generating a global debate. The propensity to abuse the technology is on the rise, the world over. Many despicable activities ranging from fraud, hacking and hate speeches, to wanton vituperations and pornography, among other vices, now deface this seemingly innocuous piece of technology. Accordingly, following the unsavoury   fall-outs of the misuse of the social media in Nigeria in recent times, the technology is now being portrayed by untoward users as a pervasive enabler of evil.

With this development, the stage is set for what, at the moment, looks like an argument that might not end soon. While some have called for curtailing the freedom to access the social media, others have taken up argument on the other side of the divide. The stance of the latter is not lost in the fact that the social media represent a democratic platform to express opinions and views freely and without fear of reprisal.

Arguably, the social media provide a platform that enables users to freely vent their spleen about actions or programmes of government that they see as repugnant. This opportunity is rather elusive in the orthodox mass media.

However, the social media can be likened to the kitchen knife or machete. It has several functions depending on who is using it and, of course, its usage. There is no doubt that the benefit of any material or non-material

instrument depends on how you use it and for what kind of purpose. To this end, the knife or machete might be a very helpful instrument in a kitchen or on the farm in the hand of a cook or a farmer and very dangerous in the hand of an aggressive delinquent. That is how the Internet works. The benefit derivable therefrom is not so much with the technology as it is with its usage. The social media or the Internet is useful for conducting academic research and for arranging dates and places for face-to-face meetings by a real-time network of friends. Also, it is a good instrument of communication between friends who live in different cities or countries of our globalized community called *world*. Yet it is being argued that the social media orchestrate Internet addiction, individualization and social alienation.

Consequently, our concern in this work is to attempt to examine scenarios in which the Internet has been bastardized with a view to proffering a solution on the maximization of the social media to foster and inculcate moral values in our society. Undoubtedly, we have established the fact that the presence of the social media is not without its attendant palaver.

One unfortunate incident that keeps popping up on one's memory when one talks about the social media in Nigeria, is the gruesome murder of a 24-year old business-sensitive post-graduate student of Nasarawa State University, Miss Cynthia Osokogu, by her facebook friends in a hotel in Lagos in July 2012. Cynthia died after she and her once virtual friends needed to see flesh and blood, following some periods of chatting on facebook. Her death was not only condemned by the generality of Nigerian populace but had   government contemplating slamming a legislation that would check the excesses of Internet users.

It is unfortunate that rather than some people tapping from the vast resources of the Internet and social media, they seek to put them into bad use. Governor Peter Obi, while answering questions from the press on the apprehension of one of Cynthia Okosogu's murder suspects at Nnewi, Anambra State, Nigeria, maintained that the bad usage of the social media was symptomatic of the erosion of values in society, adding that what Nigeria needed most was value re-orientation and ethical rebirth.

The aptness of this statement stems from the obvious play-outs in our society. The youths are the most culpable in this value erosion mess. The reason for this class of society being the most culpable is not far-fetched. Most youths access the Internet and social media more than other categories of persons. The access has been grossly abused. This, no doubt leaves us in a precarious situation in which we completely lose our sense of value and this is at the root of our corruption problem as a country.

Our country seems to be slipping out of moral reach. Our legislature is lethal in wasting public funds. The judiciary is jaundiced in its judgments. The executive is exacerbating corruption in the land by not genuinely enforcing anti-corruption measures. The public service is being overthrown by the craze for embezzlement of tax payer's money. Worse still, pre-mature sex, sex perversion, sex abuse, commercial nudity, lesbianism, sodomy, violence and godlessness among teenagers and youths are on the increase. Suffice it to know that we can multiply these instances of vicious activities.

 All this notwithstanding, as a nation, we should be quicker to engage in value re-orientation than to condemn the Internet and the social media simply because some unscrupulous persons misuse the technology. President Barack Obama of the United States of America agrees with this position by arguing against responding violently to the abuse of the social media and the Internet through sanctions and restriction of freedom. Rather, he enjoined society to come to terms with the pervasive power of the social media and as such, channel it towards positive results.

By this, President Obama is summing that social media, as pervasive as they are, they must be used to capture political vision and interact effectively with the citizen. The social media are not the demon some are making it out to be. Indeed social media networks deliver communication and collaboration, allowing people to gain productivity advantages, share interests and develop and sustain social relationships and much more.

The need to move moral mountains using the social media stems from the fact that with over 45 million adolescents, youths and adults in Nigeria having access to the Internet, the much-needed national change and value re-orientation can be achieved when we begin to make deliberate effort to use the media to inculcate socially sanctioned values. In fact, the disposition of the user in facebook, twitter and YouTube as reflected by their comments, no doubt betrays their character and personality. If a social media user cannot insult his elder face-to-face, why would he insult him online?

It his article in *Sahara Reporters*, a popular online news site, Aminu Hassan Gamawa, frowned on the blatant abuse of the social media by many Nigerians, noting that some people now hide behind their computer screens to write all sorts of unimaginable things. They underestimate the impact of what they write online. A critical review of many social media comments shows an alarming increase in hate speech, inflammatory utterances and incitement to religious and ethnic hatred. If you go through what people are posting on various social media platforms, blogs and online groups, you will see and hear comments, pictures and videos that are hurtful, harmful and promote hatred and incite harm. Hate speeches and cyber hate messages, we must understand, breed violence. Violence comes in such various forms as the use of "false facts'', "flawed argumentation,'' "divisive language'' and "dehumanizing metaphors." If fingers are pointed at the Internet and social media as reasons for the debasing moral value in our society, and the argument still remains that the media are not bad in themselves, then a paradigm shift is a necessity. To this end, it has become rather imperative that a set of rules be drawn to guide the activities of the Internet and social media users in our society. This is because, the Internet community, like the real-life community in which we live, has its rules of decorum. There is friendship, respect, humility, kindness and care.

Accordingly, the Nairaland discussion forum has its own rules of decorum that guide contributors' comments on the site. Thus, Oluwaseun Osewa (simply called Seun), owner of the website, does not condone vulgar, obscene and indecent posts. He blocks off comments that are too indecorous to be transmitted on the forum. This is an example of efforts by right-thinking and responsible website administrators to sanitize the pattern of usage of the Internet and the social media.

Therefore, as we go about our activities on the Internet or social media, we must note that the Internet is a real space. We must protect our Internet and social media reputation. You must know that your employer or potential employer may be online monitoring what you are doing (many people may have lost their jobs because of abuse and misuse of social media). Your friends, parents or in-laws may be online reading or watching the messages you are transmitting on facebook. Have you not heard that the proprietor of beer parlours likes the drunkard but does not want him for a son-in-law? What's more, the people you are insulting may be reading you and security agencies might be tracking your subversive posts.

Sometime this year, there was this much-touted case of a husband who when he moved to another town, probably by transfer at his place of work,   opened a facebook account different from his original account known to the wife. With this new account, he opened up friendship with his wife in disguise in order to test her fidelity – act probably informed by some pre-existing suspicion of the wife. Whenever he was away from home within the weekdays, he would be chatting romantically with the woman and

"razzling" her. He would entreat her to spare him his weekends as he would not be available online then. The reason for this request was that he would normally be at home with his family, with his wife-woman friend. A day came when during the facebook encounter, he asked his lover woman to send her naked pictures to his facebook page as a pre-condition for an advanced real-life romantic affair.

As wonders will not cease from happening in the world, the woman promptly posted her naked pictures on the facebook page of the lover-man intent on meeting him afterwards for the consummation of their planned romantic escapade. Poor, nasty, whorish woman, she had been hit below the belt! Her husband had vindicated his possible suspicion of the woman's immoral body language. How would she save her marriage?

We can now see that the social media could be used to advance different causes – the good, the bad and the ugly. How they can be used to promote and maintain the good cause of moving moral mountains is our concern in this discourse. Remember what is said in the bible, in Zechariah 4:7? "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain...?"(KJV). Mountains represent obstacles. For them to be made plain is to move or pull down the mountains. Moving moral mountains as the title of this work is, means combating moral decadence or immoral practices. Hence as Jesus explained authoritatively in Matthew 17:20, if we have the determination or a grain of faith, we can cause the mountains of immoral acts that bestride our nation like a colossus to lie low and the mountains will. This work sets out primarily to suggest ways by which the social media can be employed to move the moral mountains that stand on the way of moral living, especially among the youths.

To end our discussion in this introductory chapter, let it be stated *ab initio* that in this work, *social media* is used in the plural sense, except where otherwise stated, for we see a single platform like *facebook* as a *social medium* and more than one – twitter, YouTube and Skype - as *social media*. Thus, the term *social media* is used with plural verbs and plural determiners. This is contrary to the popular Americanism which considers the words

mass media and *social media* as collective nouns, hence the generic constructions (a) The *social media* (referring to all the social networks) **is** beneficial in maintaining relationships. (b) The *mass media* (referring to all the print and broadcast media) **performs** entertainment functions. Let it also be noted that the word, *society*, when used here without the preceding definite article, **the,** means the world in general, that is, the human society, except where otherwise specified. Again, in this work, wherever the term *cyberspace* is used, it refers to the Internet or the World Wide Web.

3. Theoretical Framework

 This work is anchored on three theories of the press: Citizen Journalism, Multi-step Flow of Information and Social Responsibility.

3.1 Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism, as a form of alternative media, presents a radical challenge to the professionalized and institutionalized practices of the mainstream media (Atton, 2003).

The concept of *citizen journalism*, also known as *public*, *participatory*, *democratic* (Baase, 2008), *guerrilla* (Case,2007) or *street* journalism (Witschge, 2012, May 21) is based on the public playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Put very simply, citizen journalism is the practice of   untrained individuals doing essentially what professional reporters do through the use of new media forms. The practice involves   text messaging and transmitting pictures, audio and videos. But it is basically all about communicating information to other members of society.

Similarly, Radsch (2013) defines citizen journalism as an alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a response to shortcomings in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on other sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism.

Dan Gillmor, former technology columnist with the *San Jose Mercury News*, is one of the foremost proponents of citizen journalism. He founded a nonprofit organization, the Centre for Citizen Media, to help promote it.

The grouse critics including professional journalists, have with citizen journalism, however,   is   that it is unregulated, too subjective, amateurish, and haphazard in quality and coverage.

3.2 Multi-step Flow of Information

The multi-step flow or diffusion of innovation theory assumes that ideas flow from the mass media to opinion leaders before being disseminated to a wider audience. This theory was first introduced by sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld et al. in 1944 and elaborated by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld in 1955(Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). The multi step flow theory   states that opinion leaders are affected more by "elite media" than run-of-the-mill mass media.

According to the multi step flow theory, opinion leaders intervene between the "media's direct message and the audience's reaction to that message." Opinion leaders tend to have the most influence on those of a similar status or rank to theirs —based on personality, interests, demographics, or socio-economic factors. These leaders tend to influence others to change their attitudes and behaviour more quickly than conventional media because the audience is able to better identify or relate to an opinion leader than an article in a newspaper or a broadcast programme on ethical revival.

What then is the relevance of this theory to this work? The mass media effects are considered to be mainly cognitive (i.e. creating cognition or awareness), not affective (causing attitude or behavioural change). Whereas citizen journalists practise their art through the ubiquitous social media, it is only the educated or at least literate people that can communicate through the social networks. There is a nexus of mediating factors between the mass media and audience members, factors which operate through interpersonal communication. Many scholars are of the opinion that interpersonal communication is more effective in causing attitude, value or behavioural change than the impersonal media which are "influences, working amidst other influences, in a total situation" (Klapper, 1960, p.5). Personal interactions enhance the power of persuasion of man by man, making it easier for

people to change people than impersonal media. Between the social media platforms and most grassroots folks that need sensitization messages on moral change, there are multiple layers of influence and opinion leadership. Social media users are themselves veritable sources of influence and opinions that can move others to achieve the goal of moral rejuvenation.

3.3 Social Responsibility

In 1942, an independent commission on the Freedom of the Press headed by Robert Maynard Hutchins – at that time, the chancellor of University of Chicago (Blanchard, 1977) – was set up. The commission which was charged with the responsibility of studying the role of the press in the US society and making recommendations on how the press should best operate in support of the American democracy, comprised academics, politicians and social activists (Baran and Davis, 2006). Financed by Henry Luce (Time magazine owner and publisher), the organization came up with the theory of social responsibility in 1947 (Hutchins, 1947).

The gist of the theory is that while the press has the right to publish, it should be socially responsible. One should not, for example, shout, FIRE, in a crowded cinema hall as people will certainly die in an unavoidable stampede. The press should help preserve the sanctity of society as journalism is not practised in a vacuum but in society. The press should be responsive to the wishes and aspirations of the people to create a better society. It should provide accurate and factual information; and provide full access to the day's intelligence.

The social responsibility theory approves of both state and private ownership of the press so that one could be a check on the other. This theory is the foundation of media laws to check the excesses of the press, and of media ethics to keep practitioners within the limits of responsible practice.

The question now is, are Nigerian citizen journalists responsible in reporting happenings on their social network platforms?

4. Exploits of the Social Media: The Nigerian Example

Nsereka (2013) paints a clear and interesting picture of spectacular cases of exploits of the social media within and Nigeria between 2012 and 2013. On October 5, 2012, Nigerians were awakened by what seemed the most gory sight ever - at least in this part of the country where human life is still regarded with some sanctity. The social media were handy to reveal to Nigerians the dastardly, gruesome murder of four students of University of Port Harcourt at Omuokiri village in Aluu Community, in Rivers State. The Pictures and videos of the killing of these students went viral on the social media, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The brutal murder of the Uniport Four took place barely three months after a 24-year old post-graduate student of Nasarawa State University, Miss Cynthia Osokogu, was murdered by her Facebook friends in a hotel in Lagos, and the news of it spread like wildfire on the social networks.

The big deal about these incidents was not because they happened at all or because they became public knowledge but the fact that a number of high-profile assassinations in the country go unnoticed. Even when they are noticed, the security operatives do little or nothing to bring the culprits to book.

The trademark of previous governments was to, in the wake of such killings, fight verbal wars, issue hollow threats of tracking down the assassins and throw condolences at the families of the deceased. For good measure, they would place a price tag on anybody's ability to give the police information that would make the security agents unravel the criminals behind the dastardly acts. Next would be the setting up of a panel of inquiry into the matter, the report of which might not see the light of day.

The cases of Cynthia Asokogu and the Uniport Four had a different colouration. Spurred by irate audiences who received news about the Cynthia story from various social media platforms and watched live videos of the Aluu killings on YouTube and clamoured for justice, the security outfits went berserk to track down their killers for prosecution(Nsereka, 2013).

5. Morality: Explication, Definition, Application, Moral Decadence

Moral responsibilities should go hand in hand when obtaining or sharing information online. A lack of moral responsibility in anybody's behaviour in cyberspace is not the fault of the Internet technology; it simply betrays the deficiency in the person's general moral status. The totality of people's thinking patterns, attitude and behaviour in society is a reflection of our moral and religious principles, folkways, norms and customs – all of

which one can call the building blocks of a cultural heritage. It was upon these moral stands that the virtues of accountability, dignity of labour, respect for law and order among Nigerians stood before the overthrow of values by corruption and indiscipline, bred by greed. Although the contemporary Nigerian society is morally decadent, nay, rotten, moral living is not alien to Nigeria. Ejiogu (2000) cites examples of cases in Nigeria which demonstrated the enthronement of moral living. During the rule of Uthman Dan Fodio, there was a strong condemnation of bribe taking, nepotism, oppression of the weak by the strong, and ostentatious display of wealth. The National Policy on Education generally emphasizes a great need for citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in, and contribution to the life of the society as well as character and moral training and the development of sound attitude. Then in particular terms, the National Policy on Education, in articulating the aims and objectives of secondary education in Nigeria, seeks the development of "a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the dignity of labour, and appreciate... values such as respect for the worth and dignity of man, moral and spiritual values, interpersonal and human relations and a shared responsibility for the common good of society" (quoted in Ejiogu, 2000, pp.2-3).

Ejiogu recalls with nostalgia the good old days when the village teacher, though poorly paid, was happy, proud and enthusiastic as he tirelessly and selflessly performed the chores of teacher, baby minder, catechist/imam, local justice of the peace and marriage counsellor simultaneously. It was in the same spirit of patriotism that Nigeria's nationalists fought to secure independence for the country, freeing it from the claws of oppression and uniting it that it might be prosperous. They counted no cost, nor did they enrich themselves unlawfully or immorally. Some of them like Dr. Michael Okpara, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Balewa even died without bequeathing even a decent house, property or monetary wealth to their offspring.

Still talking about morality, it is on record that the undergraduates of the pre-1970s while at home on their long vacations, would go to nearby schools to coach the younger ones free of charge.   In those days, newspaper vendors were said to drop heaps of their newspapers and magazines at designated points on campus and depart for other parts of the city. On their return in the evening, they would meet accurate amounts of money for papers taken away in their absence by students. No papers were stolen nor was any money missing.

Thus, to establish that there are moral mountains to move for the betterment of society, we shall now turn our attention to a review of   the moral and religious institutions as well as folkways, norms and customs, drawing copiously from the ideas and views of sociologists (especially Rao, 2012).
Morality, when simply defined as good behaviour, is synonymous with goodness, integrity, virtuousness. Its other name is moral character, or a set of culturally defined virtues such as honesty, integrity, probity and fair-mindedness. The converse side of morality is, of course, immorality, often used in reference to sexual perversion or promiscuity. "A person is equally immoral if he or she is treacherous, is a liar, tyrannical, cruel, greedy, avaricious and corrupt. Immorality, unlike morality, is evil and wicked" (Ejiogu, 2000,p.1). Immorality is synonymous with turpitude, decadence and depravity. Immorality is indeed horrible, which is why we are all warned in the Bible, *There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked* (Isaiah, 48:22), a warning that firmly vindicates Euripedes' affirmation that *evil men by their own nature cannot ever prosper.*
Morality which is often equated with *moral code* is sometimes taken for those rules of behaviour which are admitted at large in society. In this sense, it is equivalent to *mores* and mostly coincides with customs, conventions, fashions, etiquettes and folkways. In sociology, there is a distinction between moral rules or code and other kinds of social rules.
Moral principles, ideas and notions are crystallised in the form of an institution called 'morality'. Morality has been a vital factor in all the societies of the world. Moral rules which prescribe the wrong, are the very basis of our collective life. Hence the evolution of the group life of man is connected with the evolution of his notions. Moral notions are at the back of the give-and-take policy without which group life is difficult. Because of moral force, an individual tries to suppress his impulsive behaviour and individualistic tendencies. Moral principles get the sanction of society and strongly support the general system of values.
Since moral ideas are inculcated in the personalities of the children from the very beginning of their coming to this life, they become habituated (accustomed) to honour them and obey them. Most of the moral norms are internalised by the individuals during the period of socialisation and hence they obey because of some internal pressure. The pressure is sometimes so strong that some individuals, even in critical situations, may not be prepared to go against it. They are more powerful than laws and legislations. Sometimes the people who are prepared to break the laws on some grounds are not ready to go against the dominant moral values.
 Morality is one of the fundamental social institutions. Religion and morality are usually considered to be among the most effective guides of human behaviour. Both formulate rules of conduct of society. Each has its own code of conduct as such. Religious ideas are embodied in the religious code and the moral ideas are embodied in moral code. Both act as powerful means of social control.

Strictly speaking, morality deals with the rules of conduct. It prescribes good behaviour and prohibits undesirable ones. Moral values are an important element in our normative pattern. Moral values are the most dynamic, creative and important driving force behind human actions and endeavours. Such concepts as justice, honesty, fairness, righteousness, conscientiousness, disinterestedness, prudence, incorruptibility, freedom and mercy, are purely moral concepts because they represent moral values. They are capable of deeply influencing and also changing the course of society. Political and social movements are normally hinged upon the values of this kind.

Moral development therefore involves the formation of a system of values on which to base decisions concerning "right" and "wrong", or "good" and "bad". Moral development is concerned with changes that occur over time in behaviour, emotions, and cognitions relative to the realm of morals (Ratcliff et al 1991 in Rao, 2012). Moral development occurs when the child imitates the actions of responsible adults and is commended for engaging in socially acceptable behaviour and punished for socially unacceptable behaviour (Bandura, 1965).

6. The Flight of Morality: Bane of Contemporary Nigeria

Since the mid-1980s, this country has been sliding dangerously into a bottomless pit of moral decrepitude. Every other Nigerian is fast losing faith in friends, neighbours and in the fatherland.   To many Nigerians, hard work has become anathema. Today, people steal public funds, use them to build castles and buy chieftaincy titles and honorary degrees from dubious foreign (and even Nigerian) institutions. It is no longer necessary to study hard for examinations since it is easier to buy fake certificates and testimonials from "Toronto".

Unable to legitimately and morally account for their sources of enormous wealth, some Nigerians live in blinking mansions that make mockery even of the White House.   "The moral principles that prevail in our society today are those of utility, quest for material achievements and denial of God. All other ideals, whether of justice, honesty or truth are subordinated to these norms"(Gurin, cited in Ejiogu, 2000, pp.6 – 7).

What do you make of a place where people are prepared to destroy anything or cover up any crime, if doing so promotes their economic interest and might? What do you make of a situation where a man that heavily defrauded a nation is convicted of the nation's judiciary but is given a red-carpet reception by leaders of the same nation, on his return from prison as if he was unjustly incarcerated? What do you make of a place where some legislators earn as much salary per month as their greed permits them while the education of all sectors cannot be funded?

Our fatherland is unarguably barren of genuinely selfless, patriotic, deeply committed and upright nationals. A disruptive moral crisis has regrettably overtaken our social system through the importation and wholesale acceptance of alien values, alien tastes and alien life-styles, including brutal nudity among our girls, our ladies.

7. Implications of Social Media for educational Decadence and Campus Life

 In Nigeria, education for all its worth in its aims and functions, has really neither generated nor promoted the right values and priorities even among those who are supposed to be educated.

In any case, we must all admit that education in the country has faced persistent crises including incessant strikes by the nation's university lecturers owing to the gross underfunding of our universities.

But what is easily seen as the perennial crisis in this country is the crisis of people's values which are often base and selfishly materialistic, ironically even among the educated and intellectual segment of our society. Education in Nigeria since independence has neither been relevant nor maximally functional. Its alienating effects still confront both those who are being educated and the educators themselves. Ocho (1988), for instance, reminds us of the rather sad fact of our experience that the more education a Nigerian has, the more European-manufactured goods he would prefer. Ocho adds that despite the beautiful philosophy of adapting education to the needs of the people of Nigeria, little effort is made to put the philosophy into effect.

It is a sorry situation that because of encrusted prejudices, wrong values, wrong priorities, erroneous assumptions, disordered and disoriented ambitions which are the results of false options and philosophy of life, instead of Nigerians using their education or endorsing an educational philosophy to appreciate being more productive, they fall for anything that makes them a more consumer-conscious nation, making nonsense of their education. This is why their younger generation does not care as much about being knowledgeable as about obtaining academic certificates, which must be obtained by any means, cooked or straight. Hence the need here to proffer ways of curbing educational decadence.

An average Nigerian student participates in the social media. Watching them on the road or in classrooms, one can see their heads bent and their fingers speedily typing while others are taking pictures of themselves to share on the social media.   The social networks have spread their wings far and wide into the consciousness of students today.   They engage in all manner of schemes to provide money to buy smart phones. The recent trend is how much skin a girl can reveal in her pictures to enable her to get more popular on social network platforms. The guys post all kinds of crude, brash and ugly comments in a bid to be more popular. Social media encourage students to be very public about their personal lives. They post updates about their families, homes, locations like saloon, party and village trips. If you have any reason to monitor particular students on a social network, you may know everything about them - which is often fake.

The social media are a big distraction. Because of their easy access to information, students use them to do research and rely heavily on any information they get from there. They use these media to kill boredom during their study time and this diverts their attention more than necessary. A student that is supposed to be doing an assignment finds himself or herself chatting, sharing   pictures and recent updates. They get low grades; they don't take proper rest or meals on time; they prefer living in the virtual world to living in the real world. Which is why one might walk into a quiet class and find everyone on the phone, on BBM, Facebook or twitter.

Their exposure to on-line sexual images, behaviours and even predators makes their moral ethics very low. They are unmotivated to make meaningful relationships in the real world, preferring the numerous casual relationships cultivated on the social media.

The social media, while being a major factor in the increase in moral decadence among youths, can also be used to combat immorality. There could be Internet-based campaigns and seminars on the disadvantages of over-exposure of private lives. A lot of pastors and ministers already engage in this. They send religious and moral messages that touch the conscience of these students and get them thinking on the overall effect of the social networks on their lives. Already, the case of Cynthia Osokogu, whose face book friends encouraged to visit Lagos and killed her, is a lesson in history. Ever since that incident, most reasonable students have put up a measure against exposing their private lives to strangers on the Internet.

Apart from pastors, there are also some churches that follow-up their members on the social network. When a student, church member or pastor is also on their list of friends on the social media and can thereby see everything the student posts on the media, whether good or bad, the student tries very hard not to post obscene images or comments. Even when they do post these obscene images or comments, the church members engage them in highly moral advice that sometimes gets the student to change.

Even family members could act as a check on these students. If a girl, for instance, has her dad on her BBM, twitter or face book, she will be very careful not to post anything that might upset the dad and the dad, on his own, can give her fatherly advice on sensitive issues. The reason why students engage in all kinds of nudity and obscene language on the social media is that they lack   official checks (cyber ethics) on these networks.

A school management or department could set up a group contact on the social network that will help the students to interact and exchange meaningful ideas. Some   students create departmental group contacts on BBM, face book and twitter where they meet themselves and discuss every obscene topic they can come up with. They even discuss their lecturers on this group contacts. If a department had an official group contact organized by the departmental lecturers, it would be a helpful platform for them to meet and discuss problems with the students and he students can air their views and have a change to be a part of an intelligent discussion every day.

An educational institution or department could also set   up an e-library where students can have access to books outside the Internet and   reduce the dependence on information obtained from the Internet which is sometimes not reliable or trustworthy.

 A great many students of this generation   find   the social networks more alluring than their academic work. They spend or invest and expend much more time and energy on social networks than on their academic assignments. A student may simply say "I want to go online for my assignment" but ends up either tweeting or *facebooking*.

The heavy use of the social media has serious implications for the morality of the students.   It has positive and negative effects. On the positive side, social networks help students, friends, classmates or course mates stay connected to one another, even if they are worlds apart in the real world.

The social media keep students up- to- date with happenings around the world. It is faster to get digital news from the social media than from switching stations on the orthodox broadcast news channels or getting news from the print media. Global, national and local news spreads faster on the Internet than elsewhere. And because life seems to be made easier on the Net, a student who is not on facebook, twitter or any other social media platform, seems to be missing or locked out of modernity.

For the student, social networks have eased mobility. Instead of stressing yourself doing a physical movement to have a full chat with some folks, you may decide to ping with the fellows.

Social networks are a rich source of livelihood   for many people who are roaming the labour, sorry, *favour* market, in search of job opportunities as a lot of job vacancies are advertised on-line. With the information posted there, one can apply for suitable positions and be meaningfully engaged. The enlightenment acquired through the social media   motivates students to study to become good website designers.

Socializing with friends in cyberspace has helped many introverted students to have their shyness broken. Through social networks, some students that are good at blogging, can share the links of their blogs and other people can start advertising in their websites.

 Brainstorming sessions among serious-minded students on teething academic topics can be held on-line through the social media, where time does not permit their coming together physically to hold their discussions.

For group assignments that require pictorial demonstrations, students can download existing video clips from Youtube and use them for PowerPoint presentations.

The regular exposure to bad and ugly messages online has as much corrupting influence as it does the moralising influence from good messages. In July or so, this year, a spill-over female student went into an examination hall in one of our universities.   After the course examiner and the invigilators had arranged all the candidates for the examination, the question paper was distributed to them. The girl in question wrote down all the questions she intended to answer in her handset which she had smuggled to where she was seated; and sent the questions out as a text message to a faceless distant helper. In no time, answers started coming via text messaging into her phone. Her uneasy composure and fidgety disposition attracted the attention of one of the invigilating lecturers who caught her with the phone and uncovered the trick just before she could start copying from the phone. For as long as the examination lasted, the phone was in the hand of the   lecturer who caught her cheating and for that long, answers kept coming in but sorry, the phone was not in the targeted criminal's hand. An improved technology of examination malpractice! She had to answer for her lawless act. Worse things than this happen on campus via GSM and other social media tools.

Some students pretend to be searching for course or study material online and before you know it, they have been attracted to one nasty site or another.

The frequent visitation of these sites has successfully started reducing learning and study time capacity. They start losing interest on academic performance and concentration. The more times they spend on the social network, the less they spend in socializing in person with others.

It has lead to reduction of communication skill because communication is no longer effective with others, students begin to lose credibility over language and writing skill because most times they use slang, and writings in shortened form when charting.

The use of social networks has led to a reduction of the capacity for reading, as many students believe that they can goggle anything.

An addiction to Internet use could have an adverse effect on the health of the user. Some students are so engrossed in surfing the Net that they   sometimes forget to take their meal at the appropriate time. Instead, they take excessive amount of coffee to keep   them active – an act that is not healthful - instead of investing all that energy in reading the recommended texts.

You might stumble on a link while on-line and when you click on it, it could lead you to *Mojo* (pornographic video) and because it is enticing, some persons keep it in their cell phones. This promotes immorality. Many students would rather satisfy their social media needs than their academic work.

Let educated men, women, and concerned youths, mainstream and citizen journalists as well as all non-governmental organizations who worry about the apparent flight of morals from the Nigerian society, especially from among the youth, use the weapons of text messaging and social networks – which, incidentally, the youths are more friendly with, to mobilize the citizenry   to instil discipline in themselves and their children; and to urge every government in power to be genuine in its efforts to fight corruption, jettisoning its cosmetic approach to the hydra-headed problem.

8. Conclusion: Weaknesses of the Social Media and Suggestion

 Misinformation or rumours can quickly spread on social media. It may allow criminals to keep track of police activity. Additionally, although awareness of an issue may be increased, it is hard to tell the role the social media play in actually putting people to action. "Group action gives human society its particular character, and anything that changes the way groups get things done will affect society as a whole" (Shirky, 2009, p. 23).

But Mainwaring (2011) quotes a   co-founder of Twitter, Biz Stone, as contending that the social media lower the barrier to activism. Others insist that the effects of social media are minimal. They argue that social change comes about the way it always has come from people on the ground. In the opinion of   yet others, online social networks create only weak ties, not the strong ties that are needed for actual action. A worrisome observation is that "where activists were once defined by their causes, they are now defined by their tools" (Gladwell, 2010).

The shortcomings of the new media notwithstanding, when used rationally, reasonably and responsibly, social media can fling surprises at Nigerians as they did to the Arabs in the *Arab Spring* by helping in curbing educational decadence.

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