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# The Role of Libraries in the Abuse of Social Media for National Security

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## Abstract

*This paper examined the role of libraries in the abuse of social media for national security, with particular reference to Facebook, WhatsApp, blog, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. It examined social media as a network of individuals or organizations with the regular entry of commentaries, posts, descriptions of events, or other materials such as graphics, audio, or videos. Social Media is an interactive network platform, allowing visitors to leave comments and send messages to each other through widgets. Social Media technologies are used for reference services in libraries by making its customers aware of new programmes and services; provision of a common platform to all clientele for posting their views and valuable suggestions on the Library services; Provision of current awareness services; dissemination of news or resources of interest to the patrons, posting book reviews from researchers, staff, students and faculty members; communicating new arrivals (new acquisitions) to the customers; announcing library news and events and the like. Social media technologies are abused through account hacking, posting fake pictures, information cloning, lies as well as numerous activities of social network predators. The paper concludes that social media helps users and service providers to understand their strengths and weaknesses, which libraries are no exception. They must provide every opportunity to their users to provide feedback, both positive and negative, through Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and on blog posts.*

**Keywords:** Libraries, National Security, Nigeria, Social Media, Social Media Abuse

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## Introduction

Twenty-first Century has been variously described as the information age. This may be large because of the different communication media prevalent now. The modern communication technologies gave rise to the availability of mass channels of information. Social media have presently redefined the processes, patterns, and sources of human communication. The growth in the use of social media has been astronomical, unlike the previous means of communication. Collins and Quan-Haase (2012) noted that social media has become hugely popular, especially Facebook and

WhatsApp. They pointed out that Facebook gained 200 million users within a year. This was a milestone in audience coverage, which none of the earlier invented media of public communication ever came close to people.

Furthermore, Collins and Quan-Haase (2012) asserted that it took radio 38 years to reach 50 million users, television 13 years to attract the same number, and Internet 4 years to do so. Perhaps the reason for the unprecedented growth in the spread of social media among the people is because they are communication technologies that enable their users to be producers as well as receivers of information. That upgrading of the status of media audiences from being mostly content consumers to being actively content producers or contributors are features that distinguish the social media from the conventional mass media. The latter has been promoting the control and supremacy in the media content production and distribution. At the same time, the former (social media) emerged and democratized the whole process empowering virtually every person to participate in the public communication process.

Presently, social media are inconceivably popular in the hands of their teeming users, notwithstanding the point that they empower and encourage the public to generate and distribute the contents. With social media, almost everybody has become a journalist. Hence, they have enabling technologies for that purpose. It has equally altered the gathering, processing, packaging, and delivery of the media news as obtained before now. The virtual base of social media sites also makes it extremely difficult for the operations of their users to be ethically monitored or legally regulated in the developing countries. Based on the exigencies of the previous, it becomes imperative to ascertain views of people concerning the credibility of social media, which many rely on for sharing information.

The motive of this paper is to present the roles of libraries in checking the indiscriminate use of social media technologies for national security. The need to source and present information for academic purposes is a daily routine for libraries all over the world. Adoption of social media technologies as tools for information services provider has become a common phenomenon because they can improve information delivery and facilitate access to information resources.

### **Social Media Technology**

Social media technologies are communication platforms for interactions among millions of people around the world. Ekwueme and Ugwuta (2017) remarked that communicating through social media can lead a person to talk about things they normally would not in a public place. This is a result of the protection of being alone with communication devices that gives an individual the courage to talk more bluntly about politics, their employer, their co-workers, their clients, and even their family members. This newfound courage can cause significant repercussions. People criticized social media for being used to organize and carry out crimes and much unethical conduct.

In spite, social media are increasing in usage, coverage, and scope across the globe. They are gradually becoming the dominant means of keeping in touch with one another as well as the primary channels of public communication of this era. It is pronounced now that individuals and corporate organizations make use of social media sites for their distinct communication purposes. These new means of interactions are expanding the frontiers of reception as well as dissemination of information and communication all over the world (Edogor, Jonah & Ojo, 2015).

In the same vein, Adewoju and Mayowa-Adebara (2016) exclaimed that "No wonder, despite their numbers and even the ones springing up, more users connect to the social media regularly. Many researchers (Idakwo, 2011; Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2013; Enobakhare & Orem, 2013; Danladi, 2013) have variously pointed and or found out that the use of the social media is on the increase among Nigerians. However, with the popularity which the social media sites have attained, it is paradoxical to see some Nigerians express utter denial of some of the messages divulged through some of the new media channels.

### **Social Media in Nigerian Libraries**

Libraries in Nigeria have embraced the use of social networking sites to communicate with users of their services. This is in line with the rich tradition of libraries using innovative yet cost-effective technologies (social media technologies) to enhance the quality of their services to users (Adewoju & Mayowa-Adebara, 2016). The social media technologies in libraries are based on specific marketing objectives; to effectively communicate with the community and to increase the hit rate of the library usage. Libraries are interested in the social media sites that can be more effective in reaching their users, the preferred media of communication with their users for library-related information. These are essential and critical strategic issues being faced by libraries.

Also, Grimes and Boening (2001) in Momodu (2015) posited that many library users bypass library resources and go to the Web for information. Therefore, Connell (2008) in Momodu (2015) remarked that the majority of library users visit a library's virtual website more often than its physical location. Based on the above facts, the libraries need to maximize the use of the web by designing and deploying a useful library website or incorporate social media technologies, if it must continue to play its role in providing relevant and accurate information to ensure national security.

### **Social Media Use in Nigeria**

Social media is about collaborating, networking, sharing, and generating knowledge and content, and all of these features are of great value in the context of national security. Social media plays a vital role in everyone's life. It is easy and convenient to access information, provide information, and communicate via social media. Social media helps individuals to be connected to their families and friends

as well as with their associates. Teachers and students are connected and can make good use of these platforms for the working of their education.

Social media has been adopted by the scholars and security operatives to carry out research surveys. Some use it as a marketing tool in promoting their research outputs. Not only can they make the work more comfortable, but they are also branding themselves professionally, creating a name for them in the community. Facebook pages, twitter accounts, various blog sites, and YouTube channels are the examples where you can see researchers doing in their stream. These platforms are highly accessed and hence can help scholars in getting a high reputation and get known for their work. It is evident from the above discussion that different social networking sites have unique capabilities. A comprehensive social networking plan is essential. Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016) presented the reasons underpinning the use of social media by libraries in Nigeria as follows:

- i. to generate awareness of library services and activities
- ii. to manage the library's reputation and build the brand
- iii. to build a relationship with users through engagement
- iv. to provide user support to improve user satisfaction
- v. to encourage users to provide feedback on library services

Similarly, Gupta (2015) testified that in the United States of America, a survey was carried out by a Babson survey research group and Pearson that 4,000 teaching faculty from all disciplines in higher education. The teaching faculty representing U.S. higher education professors examined both the personal and professional impacts of social media.

The findings from the survey showed that:

- 64.4 percent of faculty use social media in their own lives, 33.8 percent use it for teaching.
- 41 percent of those under age 35 compared to 30 percent for those over the age of 55 reported using social media in their teaching.
- Faculty of Humanities and Arts, Professions and Applied Sciences, and the Social Sciences use social media at higher rates than those in Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science.
- Blogs and wikis are preferred for teaching, while Facebook or LinkedIn is used more for social and professional connections.
- 88 percent of faculty, regardless of discipline, reported using online video in the classroom.

Another crucial area of social media that is increasingly gaining popularity is focused on building relationships outside the classroom. Social Media for Community Building has been applied to admissions departments, enrolments management departments, Public Relations, and Student Services departments that are seeking to engage their audiences using social media. In every institution, social

media is being integrated in every way possible, including admissions, campus life, alumni relations, and in the classroom.

### **Social Media Abuse in Nigerian Society**

The social media, no doubt, is one of the instrumental technological creations of the 21st century. Its uses are very numerous to mention, so also its dark sides. Ekwueme and Ugwata (2017) asserted that there is nothing too technical about how people go about abusing others on social networks. It is straightforward: People lie. They stated that there are, of course, more complicated technical ways such as hacking into user accounts, accessing e-mail address books and finding and posting fake pictures. Hence, the abuser appears as someone he or she is not. Regardless, abuse happens when people lie, and unfortunately, it is becoming more common as social networking sites continue to go virile among Nigerians.

In the same vein, Edogor, Jonah, and Ojo (2015) identified the most common scenario in Nigerian societies for social network predators:

- The predator opens an account using a fake name and birth date.
- The predator will post a picture of someone else, usually a picture of someone around the same age as the predators "target group."
- The predator then is open to troll around the social networking websites as, for example, a 16-year-old girl when the predator is a 42-year-old paedophile.
- Youths aged 19 to 22 are potential victims of an online sexual solicitation.
- One-third of the youths in this age group received what is called "aggressive sexual solicitation." This means the predator asked to physically meet them, corresponded with them through regular mail (this means that the target individual must have given the predator her address) and received gifts.

Cyber bullying is much like real-life bullying in society, and the incidences are on the rise. Bullies often add users to their online network of friends, with the intention of mischief. The bully then begins to harass the user in much the same way he or she would harass a victim in person through the use of teasing, derogatory remarks and put-downs (often referred to as "flaming" (Idrus & Hitam, 2014). Another way cyberbully harass their victims is by listing the people they do not like and writing derogatory remarks about them on their Facebook or Xanga pages. One of the most common reasons reported by Idrus and Hitam (2014) as to why the cyberbully is on the rise is due to the anonymity offered by the Internet.

Ekwueme and Ugwata (2017) asserted that users of social networking sites in Nigeria societies, aged between 19- 40 years old used social media more for sharing negatively-oriented information as opposed to the positively-oriented information. Youths in Nigeria have more trust in social media as a news source; even most of the reports or information disseminated is not correct. Those aged less than 30 years are now making social media as their primary information access. They seem no longer interested in watching or get information through mainstream media such as television or major newspapers (Edogor, Jonah & Ojo, 2015).

Other forms of sexual harassment take place through person-to-person contact; sexual harassment is also happening at alarming rates through online technology. Email, blogs, social networking sites, chat rooms, dating websites, cell phone text messaging, and the like are all possible domains for sexual harassment. Cyber-harassment, as it is also known, can be carried out by anyone, including among the students, lecturers versus students, among the fellow staff or a stranger (Idrus and Hitam, 2014). The growth of technology has created unprecedented potential for the viral spread of online comments, photographs, video images, and the like. The anonymity afforded by many forms of online communication may make it a vehicle of choice for harassers. *Sending or forwarding sexually-explicit photos can result in severe consequences. If it is discovered and confiscated, such acts could result in being labelled a sex offender in the court system.*

### **How Libraries can curb Social Media Abuse in Nigeria for National Security**

Libraries need to develop an online presence, not necessarily for users who visit the library, but for the online user. Because online users are disconnected from the physical facets of the library, it is essential to create a welcoming online experience in which the user knows that almost anything that he or she needs will be available through online communication with the library. This is a different strategy from marketing to users who come to the library. Library users who visit the library are aware of the people and the culture of the space, so it is worthwhile to advertise within the space. Online users, in contrast, may not know the culture or the dynamics of the library, and that is where social networking sites can help (Fiander, 2012).

According to Gupta (2015), a study was conducted by the Nielson Company in 2012 and reported that Facebook is the most popular social networking site. Hence, Facebook can be used to create and demonstrate the culture of the library. Facebook should not be used solely to market services and products, but can also be used to express the library's culture. This would allow the online user to experience the library even without being within the physical space. This can be achieved by taking photographs of staff, special events, and students using the space. Posting videos on YouTube or Facebook can help the online users experience what it is like in the library. Users who come to the library do not need this, and therefore, marketing to them within the physical space could be sufficient. Facebook can also be used to let the online user know where to go for different services and can provide helpful tips to assist online users with research. Facebook can be the online space where users will want to visit and, while they are there, receive useful information. This is much like the approach with the physical space of the library.

However, based on the literature review, Twitter can play a specific role. Twitter would not be used to recreate an online library environment but could be used to market to particular groups of library users. For instance, the Koerner HSS library at the University of British Columbia does not use Twitter to market library services. However, it uses it to list reference questions received by using the

#refdesk tag (Fiander 2012). Twitter could also be used as a tool to communicate with various departments and groups on campus, especially those that use the library quite heavily. Each department can have its hashtag, where followers are free to ask questions, make comments, and get the help they need. Because each group would have its hashtag, the content could be searched by persons within that department. Also, if a product or a particular service is available for an individual department, these products can be marketed so that they receive only the relevant information that applies to them. Instead of being used as a general marketing tool, Twitter can be specialized in the market to a target audience using hashtags.

YouTube has many users watching every day, but these users may not necessarily have accounts. Libraries can find ways to market their services to their users using videos. Libraries are already using YouTube in a variety of ways for marketing services (Brooker & Bandyopadhyay, 2017). Brooker & Bandyopadhyay (2017) further explained that the videos could be marketed to users in the library by having users scan a QR code that would send visitors to a video to briefly tell them about the area they are in. It could also guide them through the library or even give them brief, fun facts.

The academic libraries can also adopt the usage of wikis, blogs, and LinkedIn; hence very few library users have a LinkedIn account; therefore, it appears that the library should not focus on LinkedIn as an outreach tool. It is possible that LinkedIn is used more by alumni than by students and could be a tool to reach alumni (Gupta, 2012). Other social media websites, such as Wordpress, allows blogs to look more like websites. And users may unknowingly use blogs for information, believing them to be websites; hence membership is not required for blogs, and users may use it only for informational purposes.

## Conclusion

Social networking sites can be effectively used to provide many types of support to library users. For example, users can benefit from access to resource material that helps them with their research projects. Faculty will appreciate receiving information on and access to research databases. Staff will benefit from information on financial literacy, investment, and health care advice. Facebook can be used to cross-promote useful informational or instructional videos and articles available on specialized blogs and YouTube channels. Valuable features such as answer on LinkedIn can be very effective in answering specific questions from users.

Feedback from users helps service facilities understand their strengths and weaknesses. Libraries are no exception. They must provide every opportunity to their users to provide feedback, both positive and negative. Users should be encouraged to make constructive comments on library services through Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and blog posts. Like profit-making organizations, libraries can run contests that reward (e.g., with Amazon gift cards) those users who make the most constructive comments on different social networks.



## Suggestions

There is a need to take initiatives by the libraries in providing interactive service through social media platforms through the following:

- i. Library management should make use of social media for news, open services, SDI services, library notices, explaining the library and information centre rules and regulations, and forgetting the feedback as well as for conducting the online user orientation programmes.
- ii. Library management should seize this golden opportunity to promote their services on Facebook and Twitter to channel the time spent on friendship networking to more academic programmes.
- iii. Librarians in Nigeria should take advantage of the attention given to Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter by the youths and use the medium for the provision of reference and information services. The information services include selective dissemination of information (SDI), mentorship, and current awareness services instead of just relying on the face to face contacts in library and classes.
- iv. More youths should be encouraged by the library management to become members, as this will enable them to share useful information across the world.
- v. Libraries are at this moment encouraged to make social networking a learning platform for academic activities and speedy communication of information across the nation.
- vi. The above suggestions can stimulate the confidence of the international communities in our national security, especially academia, during this current information and communication technology era.

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