

A Discursive Analysis of the Use of Social Media in Building Relationships

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Abstract

The coming of social media has redefined the way the world communicate. Social media have made communication easier, faster and very interactive. Recognizing the fundamental potentials of making communication effective, individuals, groups, organisationsetc are beginning to massively use the social media to address their various needs. One of such needs is the building of relationships. To this end, this paper discussed how the social media are used to build relationships with individuals, groups and organisations. It was averred in the paper that social media are used to connect with new friends, reconnect with old friends, get married and maintain closeness in relationships. On the other hand, it was asserted that some of the risks involved in using the social media to build relationships are deaths, sexual abuse, and destruction of relationships, fraud and impediment to face-to-face communication. It was therefore, concluded that social media function like two edged sword which can make or mare relationships. Based on the revelations, it was recommended that users must be careful not to fall victims of the risks involved.

Key Words: Friendship, Marriage, Relationship, Romance, Social Media

Introduction

Over the years, the world has witnessed consistent advancement in ICT which has given birth to new technological inventions. One of such inventions is the social media. The social media, which have gained global acceptance, are redefining the patterns of communication all over the world. They (social media) have made communication very interactive and instantaneous. They have enhanced gathering and sharing of messages to the extent that information dissemination has become easier and faster. Accordingly, Essoungou, (2010) cited in Haruna and Danladi (2013, p.177) assert that “New technological developments led to the creation of social media and the sites provide a platform in what is commonly referred to as life streaming which allows users to engage in ongoing and uninterrupted broadcasting of information and events through a set of digital media.”

Throughout the world, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been widely acknowledged as having strong effects on the changes taking place in all societies. This is because the technologies, especially the newer ones (including the social media), have demonstrated unprecedented magical powers of speed, efficiency and cost effectiveness in attaining many facets of human endeavour. Hence the wide spread call for their rapid/expanded adoption (Umar, 2007, p.314). Social media networks have spiced up ways in which information are disseminated, opinions/views are expressed and most especially the instant nature of message delivery and feedback as well as creating an open environment for easy interaction... (Ozuru and Ekeanyanwu, 2013, p.88).

Social media networks as different from the traditional media (television, radio, newspaper and magazine) do not only disseminate information, but also give room for interaction about the information given. For instance, the issue of fuel subsidy removal is a case in point. One cannot compare the level of discussion that went on AIT Kakaaki and interaction that were on Facebook, Twitter, BBM, etc. just as there is an allocated time and limit to which issues could be discussed on traditional media, there is no limit and time allocation to discuss issues on social media networks as long as you are subscribed to it, you can discuss as long as you desire (Ozuru and Ekeanyanwu, 2013, p.103).

By way of definition, social media are web-based tools and services that allow users to create, share, rate and search for content and information without having to log in to any specific portal site or

portal destination (Muller and Merwe, 2011) cited in (Haruna and Danladi, 2013, pp. 176-177). Quoting Kaplan and Michael (2010, pp.59-68), Joseph, (2012, p. 146) averred that social media are “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”.

Social media are internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. In other words, the social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise, as well as other things such as jobs and career tips. They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web (Nwafor, Odoemelam, Orji-Egwu, Nwankwo and Nweze, 2013, p.70). Citing Mayfield (2008, p.12). Nwafor, Odoemelam, Orji-Egwu, Nwankwo and Nweze, (2013, p.70) further described the social media as online media that promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness.

The rapidity/ubiquity of social media has become very visible all over the world. Individuals, groups and organisations now deploy the social media to satisfy their various communication needs. This has placed social media as the most active on the internet. In line with the above assertion, Shea, (2010) cited in Acholonu, (2013, p. 134) averred that “social media have become the highest activity on the internet. The rapid growth of social media activities that has been observed in the last three years is indicative of its entry into main stream culture and its integration into daily lives of many”. To this end, Cooper (2013, p.1) stated thus;

With its new advancements in electronic technology progressing every day, its rising popularity in society, and its constant, continued use within that society, social media has become the biggest platform for communication throughout the world. Whether businesses use it for promotion, advertising, and marketing, charities and groups for raising awareness and fundraising, or families, friends and individuals simply seeking information, wanting to build and maintain relationships with those around them, near and far, the purpose of social media allows for one specific task to be executed efficiently and effectively in the easiest possible way—spreading a message.

As earlier asserted, individuals, groups, organisations etc now massively deploy the social media to satisfy their various communication needs. One of such needs is the building of relationships. Organisations deploy the social media to build relationships with their clients, groups and colleagues use the platforms to enhance their relationships while friends and families adopt them to maintain closeness in their relationships. In line with the above assertion, Cooper, (2013, p.1) avers that “businesses use it for promotion, advertising, and marketing, charities and groups for raising awareness and fundraising, or families, friends and individuals simply seeking information, wanting to build and maintain relationships with those around them, near and far.”

Social media create artificial or virtual communities of people, thus, people can make “friends” and “followers” on Facebook, Twitter and other sites. In addition, there are actual communities of people interested in art, travel or whatever that people join on various social media sites. Facebook serves as a platform to consolidate romantic relationships at the workplace, home or schools (Okorie and Tunji, 2011) cited in (Haruna and Danladi, 2013, p.180).

With the world swallowing up this new means of communication, and with social media usage progressively continuing to skyrocket, this new form of technology opens up a new channel of tightly woven interconnectivity and interactivity with individuals for the first time, forever changing the way the

world population interacts, communicates, spreads its messages, and ultimately forms relationships (Cooper, 2013, p.2).

Often, we will hear that we shouldn't be 'wasting time' on social media sites all day, and that we should be busy 'getting things done'. What these people don't understand is that being successful in using Social Media is all about **building human relationships**... Social media is about **CONNECTING** with people and **ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS** (Collier, 2012, p.2).

Theoretical Underpinning

This paper is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory and the Technological Determinism Theory.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The theory coined from Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch is concerned with how people use the mass media and the gratification they gain from such usage. Uses and Gratification is an audience-based theory. According to this theory, people do not use the media for no reason at all. Founded on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it says that audiences expose themselves to the mass media because they satisfy one or more of their immediate needs, which they gain from (McQuail, 2010, Baran and Davis, 2012) cited in (Muhammed, 2013, p.65).

As averred above, people do not use the media for no reason at all. The Uses and Gratification theory says that audiences use the media because they satisfy one or more of their immediate needs, and one of such needs is the building of relationships. In a bid to satisfy their socialization need, the audience deploy the media, particularly the social media to connect with new friends, reconnect with old friends, and generally maintain cordial relationships between and among families, office/professional colleagues, organisations and clients, governments and the citizens, those in romantic relationships, etc.

Technological Determinism Theory

Marshall McLuhan in 1962 propounded this theory to provide explanation regarding the effects of technological advancements on the society. In explaining this theory, McLuhan (1962, p.13) cited in Baran and Davies (2012, p.273) stated that "*changes in communication technology inevitably produce profound changes in both culture and social order.*"

The basic tenets of this theory according to Obayi (2013, p.102) is that the invention of new technology can alter the way society responds to events or what they use to do in an old way.

In line with this paper, it is expedient to assert here that the emergence of the various social media platforms have redefined the manner in which relationships are built. Unlike before when one has to go out of the house to enact a relationship and pay several visits to consolidate/maintain the relationship, social media have made it possible for one to enact and consolidate relationships in any part of the world just at the comfort of his/her home without necessarily stepping out of the house. Today, through Facebook, Youtube, Twitter and many other social media platforms, people connect with new friends, reconnect with old friends and the barrier of distance is to some extent subdued.

Brief Overview of the Social Media

Social media are internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. In other words, the social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise, as well as other things such as jobs and career tips. They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web. (Nwafor, Odoemela, Orji-Egwu, Nwankwo and Nweze, 2013, p.70).

Social media are internet sites where people interact freely, sharing and discussion information about their lives, using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio. Using these sites, individuals and groups create and exchange content and engage in person-person-

conversations. They are in many forms including blogs and microblogs, forums and message boards, social networks, wikis, virtual worlds, social bookmarking, and data, content, image and video sharing, podcast portals, and collective intelligence. Some of the well-known sites include Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, WordPress, Blogger, Typepad, LiveJournal, Wikipedia, Wetpaint, Wikidot, Second Life, Del.icio.us, Digg, Reddit, Lulu etc (Haruna and Danladi, 2013, p.176).

As noted earlier, there are six different types of social media, Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), Blogs and Micro blogs (e.g. Twitter), Content communities (e.g. YouTube), Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), Virtual game worlds (e.g. world of warcraft) and Virtual social worlds (Second life). An assemblage of the various types of social media makes communication easier, faster or highly interactive.

Social networking sites offer people new and varied ways to communicate via the internet, whether through their PC or their mobile phone. They also allow people to easily and simply create their own online page or profile and to construct and display an online network of contacts, often called 'friends'. Users of these sites can communicate via their profile both with their 'friends' and with people outside their list of contacts. This can be on a one-to-one basis (much like emails), or in a more public way such as a comment posted for all to see. Like other communication tools, social networking sites have certain rules, conventions and practices, which users have to navigate to make themselves understood and avoid difficulties. These range from etiquette of commenting on other people's profiles to understanding whom one does not add as a 'friend' (Ofcom, 2008, p.4) cited in (Ozuru and Ekeanyanwu, 2013, pp.103-104).

Social media create artificial or virtual communities of people, thus, people can make "friends" and "followers" on Facebook, Twitter and other sites. In addition, there are actual communities of people interested in art, travel or whatever that people join on various social media sites. Facebook serves as a platform to consolidate romantic relationships at the workplace, home or schools (Okorie and Tunji, 2011) cited in (Haruna and Danladi, 2013, p.180).

Overview of Relationships

It is often said that no man is an Island. This implies that no man is independent. Man will always need another to satisfy various desires. This is where relationships come to play. Anytime two or more assemble, the tendency for a relationship to begin is often insight. In line with the above assertion, Ndolo, (2006, p.5) avers that; "Whenever people meet, some sort of a relationship is formed. This can be defined as any connection, involvement, or association between two people, regardless of its source. It can be permanent: by blood or it can be transitory: friends, lovers".

Many types of relationships exist. These types of relationships exist to satisfy different desires. People usually engage in relationships with different intentions. The intentions amongst others include satisfying sexual urge, acquiring wealth, enhanced social status, get married and build a family, get connections for political appointments, secure contracts and keep away from loneliness. In this regard, Ndolo, (2006, pp.6-7) notes that;

...it is functionally impossible to have close, intimate relationships with everyone we meet. We however, need a wide range of relationships in order to keep our lives flowing smoothly" some for intimacy, some for fun, some for sex, some for money, some for gossip, some for companionship, some for handy man/handy woman and some for job advancement.

We need to develop relationships to understand ourselves, to understand others, to understand and cope with the world, to fulfill our needs, to increase and enrich positive experiences, and to gain stimulation (Ndolo, 2006, p.15). All these reasons for developing relationships are satisfied by the various types of relationships, depending of what one desires in a relationship.

There are many kinds of relationships, and a given kind may fit a given person or couple at one stage of development but not at another. Driven by our personal history, we choose partners who help us

meet our present needs, fulfill our expectations, and if we're lucky, work through our issues and grow in the directions in which we need to grow. For a person or couple, recognizing this can open doors to a broader spectrum of ways of being with ourselves and each other (Lynch and Daniels, 2000, para.2).

As earlier stated, there are so many categorizations/classifications of relationships. For the purpose of this discourse, two relevant categorizations will be looked at. The first is the one given by Wilmot. Wilmot, (1987) cited in Ndolo, (2006, p.5) classified relationships in the following manner;

1. Romantic Relationships:

- (a) Cross-sex relationships such as husband or wife, fiancé, lover, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, paramour, beau, steady, flame, mate, sweetheart, or just a casual dating partner.
- (b) Same-sex relationships such as gay and lesbian relationships, which use such as partner, lover, friend and roommate.

2. Friendships:

All friendship types, cross-sex or same-sex, using such labels as best friends, close friends, just friends, casual friends, pal confidant, buddy, and others.

3. Family Relationships:

All types where the participants are called brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparents, parents, step-parents, siblings, step-sister and step-brother among others.

4. Work and Function-Based Relationships:

Examples are such relationships as professor/lecturer student, co-worker, colleague, schoolmate, pastor-parishioner, and supervisor-subordinate, among others.

The second classification of relationships discussed in this paper was done by Chukwuma (2014, p.16). He classified relationship in the following manner;

1. **Romantic Relationships:** There is a great deal of sexual intimacy in this type of relationship. It essentially involves sexual intercourse between cross or same sex partners. This implies that romantic relationship entails sexual relationship between a male and a female or between two males (gay) or two females (lesbians).

Romantic relationship involves cross-sex relationships such as husband or wife, fiancé, lover, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, paramour, beau, steady, flame, mate, sweetheart, or just a casual dating partner. And same-sex relationships such as gay and lesbian relationships, which use such as partner, lover, friend and roommate (Wilmot, 1987) cited in (Ndolo, 2006, p.5).

2. **Family Relationship:** This is a type of relationship that involves both the nuclear and extended families. Here, we have the father, mother, step-father and mother, grand father and mother, brother, sister, step brother and sister, uncle, aunt, etc. A conglomerate of all these make up the family relationship.

Family relationship entails all types of relationships where the participants are called brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparents, parents, step-parents, siblings, step-sister and step-brother among others (Wilmot, 1987) cited in (Ndolo, 2006, p.5).

3. **Organization-Clients Relationship:** This is the relationship between an organization and its clients. Organisations often do all they can to maintain very cordial relationship with their clients most times to increase and as well sustain patronage. This is done by ways of properly satisfying the relevant needs of the clients and going the extra mile to do other appropriate things that will sustain the clients' continued patronage. In Nigeria for instance, Telecom companies such as MTN, Glo, Etisalat, Airtel etc, Banks such as First Bank, First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank) United Bank for Africa (UBA), etc, have deployed all relevant customer relations strategies to maintain cordial relationship with their clients.

4. **Work Based Relationship:** This is a type of relationship that exists amongst staff/colleagues in various companies, organisations, offices and other places of work. It is a relationship that emerges on the basis of the fact that those involved work in the same office, company or organization. Such phrase as "office colleague" is often used to describe this type of relationship, implying that they work in the same office, company or organization. Those in this type of

relationship are staff of a particular medical centre, financial institution, telecom company, government agency/parastatal etc.

5. **Government-Citizens Relationship:** This type of relationship involves government and the citizens. In Nigeria for instance, this type of relationship involves the federal government and the Nigerian masses, the state governors and the respective citizens of the states, the local councils' administrators and the people of the councils, the federal, states and local councils' legislators and their various constituencies.
6. **Religious Relationship:** This is a type of relationship that has its bearing on religion. People become familiar on the basis of their religious affiliations. Christianity, Islam, Hindus, Judaism etc are veritable platforms to enact religious relationships.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

Lots of studies have been conducted by researchers to ascertain how social media are used in relationships. Some focused on romantic relationships amongst adults, while some studied students and youths generally. Some researchers also studied the aspect of organizational relationships. Others also examined the angle of relationships amongst social groups.

Haruna and Danladi in 2013 conducted a study entitled "Social Media, Youths and Culture Change among ABU Zaria Undergraduates". Survey research method and FocusGroup Discussion were used as research methods of the study. The population was undergraduate students drawn from four faculties (Social Sciences, Arts, Administration and Sciences) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Questionnaire served as instrument for the collection of quantitative data while Discussion Guide was used as instrument for the collection of qualitative data. From the data analysis, findings amongst others revealed that;

1. Majority of youths use the social media to make friends and share information among them. This can be said that online social networking tools presents many opportunities to young people by making it easier for them to, amongst other things, get connected to local and global audiences; stay in touch and communicate with peers; find and interact with people with shared interests.
2. Respondents are mostly engaged in chatting and making relationships online.
3. Respondents also indicate that communicating with friends online is the greatest benefit they derive from the social media.

From the above findings by Haruna and Danladi, it is very obvious the youths in ABU, Zaria essentially use the social media to build relationships. They connect and share information with friends via the social media. A similar study by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) showed that social networking sites are used to develop social relationships and may be a positive force from those who otherwise have weak ties with people on the site they used (Acholonu, 2013, p.138).

Abubakar and Tengei, in 2013 did a study entitled "An Evaluation of the Use of Social Media in Building Relationships amongst residents of Kwara State". Survey research method was used to execute the study while both questionnaire and in-depth interview guide served as instruments for quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Using the multi-stage sampling technique, findings amongst others revealed that majority of Kwara Residents utilise the social media in building relationships.

Another study was conducted in 2013 by Okoli entitled "The Use of Social Media in Initiating and Maintaining Relationships amongst Residents of Delta State in South-South Nigeria". This was purely a qualitative study as only Focus Group Discussion was used as the research method. Six discussion sections were conducted with six selected groups of discussants in the state. Among other things, it was revealed that Delta State residents use the social media to build relationships. Virtually all the discussants indicated that they use the social media to relate with their families, friends and colleagues.

Furthermore, Adeyemi in 2013 carried out a study entitled "The Use of Social Media in Building Relationships between Companies and their Clients in Lagos State of Nigeria". Both staff and customers of the selected companies were used as respondents. The Survey Research Method, Focus Group

Discussion and Observation were all used to prosecute the study. The questionnaire, in-depth interview guide and observation diary all served as instruments for the collection of data. Findings from the study showed that companies massively deploy the social media to build and sustain relationships with their various clients.

A similar study was conducted in the same 2013 by Njoku in Rivers State. The study entitled “An Evaluation of the Use of Social Media in Building Relationships amongst Companies and Clients”. In prosecuting the study, Njoku used the survey research method while the questionnaire served as a measuring instrument. The study revealed that various companies in Rivers State use the social media to build relationships with their customers and staff. It was further revealed that virtually all the companies studied have at least one social media account which they use to relate with their customers.

The Use of Social Media in Building Relationships

Social media have enhanced relationships in many ways. Individuals, groups, and organizations have continued to utilize the various social media platforms to enhance their relationships with friends, colleagues and clients. Asemah and Edegoh, (2013, p.242) aver that “the kind of community building across internet groups, demographics and nationalities has transformed the way we connect with strangers, loved ones, friends, colleagues and even ourselves. The following are some of the ways social media are used in relationships.

1. **Social media are used to connect easily with new friends:** Social media provide a veritable platform for people to connect with new friends at any location of the world in the comfort of their homes and at a very fast speed. With the social media, someone in Nigeria can easily become friend with someone in the U.S. without the two of them meeting physically. This is why today, many people have friends from various parts of the world which they have not met physically. In this regard, Cooper, (2013, p.2) averred that “within the realm of online interactivity, social media users can actively gain significant numbers of friends and followers at one click of a mouse behind their computer screen without ever having to meet other users face-to-face.” Giving support to Cooper’s averment above, Ganyobi (2012, para.2) asserts that “people are connecting more and making friends at a greater pace than if they were physically placed in a room full of strangers. We are connecting more every second and minute through the various social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, G+, MySpace, Path, Instagram, LinkedIn etc”. In line with the above assertions by Cooper and Ganyobi, Mesch, (2008) cited in Haruna and Danlandi (2013, p.177) averred that “the advent of social media has brought about a change in our cultural norms because they connect people instantly from distant lands and serve as a platform to establish new relationships.”

Findings from a study entitled “Social Media, Youths and Culture Change Among ABU Zaria Undergraduates” conducted in 2013 by Haruna and Danladi revealed amongst others that majority of youths used the social media to make friends and share information among them. This can be said that online social networking tools presents many opportunities to young people by making it easier for them to, amongst other things, get connected to local and global audiences; stay in touch and communicate with peers; find and interact with people with shared interests (Haruna and Danladi, 2013, p.183).

2. **Social media are used to reconnect with friends:** Social media have also provided an avenue for friends to reconnect. There are cases where contacts of friends are lost and are not accessible, facebook, twitter, whatsapp, LinkedIn, MySpace, etc, serve as very potent platforms to easily reconnect with such friends. You find out that today, childhood friends, old classmates, former office colleagues, etc are all easily reconnected through the social media.
3. **Social media have helped people to get married:** Social media have over the years proven to be a very potent channel for people to find their life partners. A lot of people have met with their life partners through facebook, twitter and the rest of them. Today, we have many married couples who have testified that the social media made the connection possible. According to Ganyobi (2012, para. 2) “We are connecting more every second and minute through the various social

media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, G+, MySpace, Path, Instagram, LinkedIn etc. Some are also using these platforms in the hope of finding that 'dreamgirl or boy'.

4. **Social media are used to maintain closeness:** Many families and relationships have crashed as a result of distance. Loneliness often compels participants in distant relationships to look elsewhere for care and affection. The instant interactive nature of the social media makes it possible for friends and families to often be in touch thereby giving them a feeling of closeness. You find out that through the highly interactive nature of the social media, the barrier of distance in relationship is to some extent, surmounted. People now regularly ping, tweet, and chat. This helps to close the barrier of distance. In line with the above statement, Vinish, (2012, p.10) averred that;

Social media is positive in the sense - it's hard to imagine a time before the ring of the iPhone or the chime of the AIM message, couples survived for centuries on monthly letters, daily dinner chatter and long awaited visits. But since the rise of instant messaging, email, Facebook and Twitter, relationships are placed under unique stresses to keep a close eye on their partners...

5. **Organisations and Government also use social media to maintain relationship with customers, staff and the citizens:** In recognition of the rapidity and ubiquity of the social media, lots of organisations and governments now use the social media to enhance their relationship with customers, staff members as well as citizens. Today, we have virtually all banks, telecom organisations, government agencies etc, on the social media with the priority aim of enhancing their relationships with relevant partners. They use the platforms to share their stories and respond to customers' and citizens' questions with the main goal of enhancing relationship. Nigeria's former President, Goodluck Jonathan took the lead in government's use of the social media in relating with the citizens. For instance, the President opened a Facebook account which he used to relate with the citizens during the 2011 general elections in Nigeria. He deployed the platforms to engage the citizens on different programmes and policies of his government. Also, in a study conducted by Obayi, Onyebuchi, Amune, and Daniel (2012), it was found that most organisations are present on most of the social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube; and that the strategy is effective for interaction between customers and organizations. They averred that the social media have become a new horizon for establishing, relating and maintaining customers' relationship.

Hazards in using the social media to build relationships

Much as the social media are used in building relationships, the usage has become counterproductive in some cases. In line with the above statement, Richardson and Hessey (2009, p.29) averred that Social/New media have been the primary communication change of the past few generations, which likely accounts for the attention they receive. Some scholars in sociology have decried the negative effects of new technology on society and relationships in particular, saying that the quality of relationships is deteriorating and the strength of connections is weakening.

1. **Demise of people:** Using social media in relationship building has led to the demise of people. One obvious case in Nigeria is the murder of Cynthia Osokogu. Cynthia was murdered by her social media friends in her hotel room in Lagos. The sad incident occurred in July 2012. It is in line with this that Haruna and Danladi, (2013, p.186) recommended that youths should be careful with the kind of friends they meet on social media so as not to expose themselves to risk of losing their lives.
2. **Sexual abuse:** Another hazard in using the social media to build relationship is that of sexual abuse. This is no doubt a very rampant case in Nigeria. Today, a lot of people are deceived and sexually abused. Through Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter etc, people are lured and raped. An

example in this regard is the incident popularly called “Abia Rape”- an incident where a girl was deceived via the social media and brutally raped by a rape gang in Abia State of Nigeria.

One of the findings from the study of Haruna and Danladi, reveal that excessive use of social media exposes youths to virtual relationship which may be risky. This amongst others could be inform of inappropriate contact (online) from strangers which may include grooming and in most cases, sexual abuse (Haruna and Danladi, 2013, p.185)

3. **Destruction of relationships:** The social media have also served as platforms on which many relationships have ended. There are situations where damaging comments are made about a person as well as disturbing pictures uploaded which may not go down well with his/her intimate friend and that may mark the end of their relationship. Also, families have been thrown apart as a result of this. A lot of people are obviously victims of this painful aspect of the social media. Even companies/organisations have lost their clients in this regard (online de-marketing).
4. **Impersonation/Fraud:** Another painful aspect of using the social media in building relationship is the issue of fraud. This is a situation where companies and individuals are impersonated by someone else with the core aim of defrauding the potential victim(s). In Nigeria, we have seen and heard cases where people use the social media to impersonate wealthy individuals (including popular men of God like Prophet TB Joshua, Pastor E.A. Adeboye, Bishop David Oyedepo etc) all in a bid to defraud people. Also, we have seen and heard cases where people create social media accounts using the names of well-known companies with the aim of defrauding people.
5. **Impedes face-to-face communication:** With the consistent urge to connect with friends online, face-to-face communication suffers neglect. Ganyobi (2012, para.3) clearly notes thus;

In the average Ghanaian family, every member of the family has a gadget of some sort. Either both parents have a BlackBerry or another smartphone while the two teenagers have cellphones plus an iDevice, gaming device or some form of tablet which they got as Christmas gifts. These are great items to have but are slowly replacing face-to-face conversations with our ‘need’ to connect. Some families have even stopped having dinner together because someone has to reply to an ‘Urgent’ email sent by the company boss, the kids have seen new comments on their status and have to ‘Like’ or comment back, instead of cooking the mother buys takeaway because she has to comment on the GroupChat created by her old students’ 76 Year Group. But even if there is dinner, everyone has their gadget with them and heads keep bowing as if in prayer just so as to stay connected.

As we sink more into telling the world ‘what’s on our mind, we are slowly reducing the ability to actually tell others what really on our minds via the face-to-face interactions (Ganyobi, 2012, para.7).

The effect social media usage has on interpersonal relationships is changing the way the world population communicates and forms face-to-face relationships, while decreasing human social and behavioral skills. If the trend of social media and online interactivity and communication continues to rapidly grow and increase in the future, the more time the population will spend interacting on social media, which means the more face-to-face human contact skills, as well as interpersonal relationships, diminish (Cooper, 2013, p. 1).

With these positive advancements in communication and building relationships through social media, social media also incorporates negative advancements in communication and building relationships, alluding to online communication trends transitioning into interpersonal communication trends, exterminating the need to communicate face-to-face and crippling the way in which the population communicates interpersonally (Cooper, 2013, p.2).

Since social media's main purpose is communicating, its platforms are open for discussion opportunities in the forms of virtual panels and chat rooms, allowing social media users behind a protected mask to openly announce messages they otherwise would never project in a face-to-face conversation. Social media users can also check in at certain locations and also form meeting times and groups to come together at virtual locations, also canceling out the need for establishing interpersonal meeting times and groups at a concrete location. All of these features, including uploading pictures and videos, writing statuses, and tweeting incessantly allow social media users to inadvertently create virtual lives, without having to interpersonally interact at all, outside of the real, concrete, substantial lives they live every day in reality (Cooper, 2013, p. 2).

Conclusion

From the above discourse, it is therefore conclude that social media is like a double edged sword, it can make or mare relationships. To this end, individuals, groups and organisations haveto be very careful in using the social media to building relationships. Carefulness will engender an escape from the many evils associated with the use of social media in building relationships. It is also important to assert here that there is nothing wrong with the social media. Therefore, the social media have no problem. The problem is however with the users and users must make appropriate use of the platforms to enhance their relationships.

Recommendations

1. People need to be careful to ensure social media will not take the place of building physical intimate relationships with our family and friends. We need to control our use of gadgets in our everyday lives and actually learn to switch them off every now and then to enjoy human relationships and the natural environment (Ganyobi, 2012, para.11).
2. Individuals, groups and organisations have to be very careful in using the social media to building relationships. Carefulness will engender an escape from the many evils associated with the use of social media in building relationships.
3. Social media users are urged to positively use the social media to herald genuine relationships devoid of fraud, sexual abuse, death and other evils/illegalities.
4. Parent should carefully monitor how their children use the social media. This will help them not to fall victims of the evils associated with the social media.

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