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Social Media Users Perception on Privacy Issues in a Nigerian University

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the level of awareness of social media network users to terms of service and verifying the social media users perception on the information shared on social network. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from 220 respondents among the randomly selected students. Results indicated that over 91% of the respondents were aware of terms of service relating to privacy on the social media networks and 66.3% of the users had read the terms of service in whole or in part. Meanwhile, 78% request for consultation on the use of their information. The study concluded that social media users need to understand the conditions attached to its use via proper orientation.

Keywords: Social media, Users, Information, Perceptions, Terms of service, Privacy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development and usage of social media technologies has become a way of life to many Nigerians. Social media technologies have been observed to be a landslide breakthrough in information and communications technology in the 21st century. Though still evolving, its high level of adoption and usage is on the daily increase (Adaja and Ayodele, 2013). The use of social media has enabled real time communication among users such as companies, consumers, institutions, and many more. To this effect, communication has become more effective, breaking the barrier that comes with different products and issues around the world (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Remarkably, within the twinkling of an eye, information can be passed to numerous people, distance is no longer a barrier and this becomes possible due to the advent of social media technologies which made communication easy and unproblematic. Scholars share divergent opinions about the conceptual nature of social media and this is due to its fast evolving nature and diversity in delivery platforms. The cogent idea in most of the social media definitions is communication, interaction and exchange of ideas, knowledge via internet based platform. Some definitions of social media networks and their respective scholars are as shown in Table 1. So many definitions of social media networks are available in the literature, Drury (2008) definition is considered appropriate for this study. Social media can be described as online resources that people use to share content: video, photos, images, text, ideas, insight, humour, opinion, gossip, news.

This article also opined that social media is an internet based open platform, where users interact with each other to share uncensored discussions. There are various forms of social media which ranges from media-sharing tools such as YouTube and Flickr to social networking sites such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Badoo and LinkedIn. Others include social bookmarking tools (Delicious and CiteULike), collaborative knowledge development tools and creative tools such as blogs (e.g. WordPress and Blogger) and micro blogs and applications (Twitter, Whatsapp), amongst others (Balakrishnan and Gan, 2016).

Social media sites are characterised with information sharing, this information may be about their personal life, not mindful of the reactions by others as they have no control over what others post about them and how this information is utilised by the social network developers (Wu, Majedi, Ghazinour and Barker, 2010). Furthermore, social media users may not be adequately informed of the risks of using social networks. They seem to have a limited sense of how the information posted might be used by others and what type of data to be shared with third parties (Williams, 2010). One of the most significant and identified problem of social networking is privacy; many users do not understand the consequences of revealing personal information online (Polakis *et al.*, 2010).

Using social media also requires that users agree to certain terms and conditions (also called T&C or terms of service). These are rules and clauses which users must agree on, in order to use a service; these terms are usually binding to two parties (organisation and users). It includes a list of provisions such as a disclaimer of liability (owner takes no responsibility for any damages a user receives as a result of use), a licence of the copyright or agreement clause. Junco (2012) observed that the rate at which users read the agreement is reducing day-by-day. It is believed to be time consuming, tedious and unnecessary. Since the use of social media has become a trend among the people, it is assumed that not reading or violating it, may involve them in an unknown legal battle. The design of privacy controls of the social networks makes it possible for information to be revealed (Conti *et al.*, 2011). Facebook as a social networking site ensures the privacy of its users through several settings that fits its requirements (Everson *et al.*, 2013).

Wu *et al.*, (2010) was of the opinion that data retention may be a problem since all of the privacy policies involved do not have clear statements. Some perceived the terms to be written in ambiguous terms and long for users to read and are also of the belief that users need to be informed in easily accessible privacy statements that are easy to understand. Similarly, Asif and Khan (2012) found out that people remained unaware of information sharing policies despite the fact that the policies were clearly stated. Their study also showed that people do not know how their personal data can be utilised; this made users to share their private information with unauthorized people. They conclude that complexity of privacy settings and lack of control provided to user is seen to be responsible for unintentional information sharing.

In the same vein, the high security threat that accompanies the use of social media is worth discussing. With billions of users online, these tools not only attract friends and family who wants to stay in touch, but they also attract people with ulterior motives. Theft of identity is one of the common threats of using social media. Most social networks have information that is required, such as email address, birthday, location and others. It's common for an identity thief to hack an email account by using social information as well as knowing your location at a particular time. By going directly to the source of social media sites, hackers can interject malicious codes which makes it easy to steal identity, inject viruses to your computer, smart phones and obstruct bank account information, to name a few.

This study attempts to ascertain whether social media users actually read through the terms of service of social media before consenting to it, it also evaluate their knowledge of the use of the private/public information shared. Specifically, the study focused on describing the level of awareness of social media network users to terms of service and verifying the social media users perception on the information shared on social networks.

2. EVIDENCE FROM LITERATURE

The use of social networks invariably involves the processing of personal data and thus engages the necessity of privacy policies. The advent of technology such as smart phones, tablets, and other wearable i-techs has brought considerable threat to life. It has also challenged traditional concepts of privacy for well over a century and also redefined social attitudes and perception towards privacy concerns.

2.1 The Emergence of Social Media Networks

The swift change in technology started in the 20th century and by the 1980s, home computers were becoming more common and social media was becoming more sophisticated. These online meeting places started with the Bulletin Board System (BBS) which were large computer codes that allowed users to communicate with a central system and post messages to other users, though the technology of the time is restricted to text-only exchanges of data.

At the emergence of the internet, Fidonet and some other services linked many BBSes together into worldwide computer networks. The earliest forms of the Internet, such as CompuServe, came into public domain in 1980s as a business-oriented mainframe computer communication solution. Today's social networking sites, is said to have been spawned under the AOL (America Online) umbrella. It was referred to as "*Internet before the Internet*", in 1995, Classmates.com which today has about 57million registered users was created and it could be considered as the first to meet the modern definition of social media. After this, was the advent of Six Degrees and Asian Avenue, created in 1997, BlackPlanet created in 1999, MiGente, 2000. Friendster was launched in 2002 followed by LinkedIn and MySpace in 2003 and LinkedIn has over 297 million users today. (Shah, 2016)

Facebook, founded, like many social networking sites and was launched in 2004 and now leads the global social networking pack (Shah, 2016). As of the fourth quarter of 2016, Internet world statistics showed that Facebook had 1.86 billion monthly active users which makes it the first social network to surpass 1 billion monthly active users, of which, 16 million are from Nigeria.

The emergence, popularity and acceptance of the social networking technologies in Nigeria within a short period are commendable. It took 38 years for 50 million people to have access to radio, 13 years for television and 4 years for the Internet to attract the same number of users. This only took a period of 12-months for Facebook to gain 200 million users (Awake 2011; Eke *et al.*, 2014). There is also an increase in number of WhatsApp users. WhatsApp now has 700million monthly active users and delivers 30 billion messages per day, Twitter (284million monthly users) and Instagram (300million monthly users) combined (Koum, 2017). From stats monkey record of mobile internet users in Nigeria (2015), 93.72% use Facebook, Twitter ranks second with 5.29%, Pinterest ranks third with 0.42%, Tumblr ranks fourth with 0.2% and the remaining social networks holds 0.37%.

This invariably shows that these social media applications are becoming a daily necessity and the rate at which Internet surfers sign up to these social media sites is quiet alarming. Besides the usefulness and attraction of social media it also has some hidden threats.

2.2 The Uses and Benefits of Social Media Networks

The advent of social media has significantly changed the way people interact with one another and the world around them. The majority of Nigerians use the internet via several means; they use mobile phone to source information, embrace, construct and maintain social networks as well as perform other internet based operations. Social media is most frequently used for updating one's own profile; commenting on photos or other posts; posting public messages to others wall, instant messaging. In addition to communication, SNS facilitate the creation and sharing of various forms of content including blogs, video, photos and more. (Nielson, 2010).

Collin, Rahilly, Richardson and Third in 2011 enumerated the benefits of social networking, and outline the risks and opportunities associated with the practices of social networking that must be understood and addressed by young people, policy makers and the community. They emphasize that social networks do not yield particular risks or benefits but it's the sets of communicative and creative practices in which social media are embedded that lead to constructive or harmful impacts.

The use of social media aids the development of technical capability of users. From literature, it is affirmed that the use of social networking services can support the development of complex digital or web literacy- the knowledge and skills required to use social media. Creation and sharing of content on services has been seen to increase both young people's 'technical literacy', as they learn to use code to create their profiles, and creative content and visual literacy" as they draw from and re-use media in appropriate ways for communication and self-expression as well as understanding of the production, nature and use of various forms of content (Perkel 2008, Collin 2011 & Skaar, 2008).

Other significant benefits identified by Collin et al, 2011 is that it enhances the effective delivery of educational outcomes, strengthen interpersonal relationship among users. The use of internet has generally been found to strengthen young people's existing interpersonal relationships (ACMA 2009:8; Besley 2008). It also helps the users to form identity and promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem. In a study conducted by Smith, Schlozman, Verba and Brady (2009) in the US, 37% of people within the age of 18-29 years use social media for civic engagements and political participation

Eke, Omeku & Odoh (2014) in their study on the use of social networks among the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, (UNN) Nsukka examined the extent of usage of social networks by the students and their purpose of using social networks. Through the use of descriptive survey research design and a sample size of 150 undergraduate students of the university, it was revealed that mostly all the student were using the social networking sites in interaction with friends, connecting to their class mates for online study and for discussing serious national issues and watching movies.

Wiid, Cant and Nell (2014) examined perceptions and uses of social media networks by South African students to determine South African students' perceptions and uses of social media networking systems. The study determined whether students are making use of social media networking systems, the purpose of making use of social media networking systems, and whether the students' believe that it can be an effective and easy tool to use in order to study the course content. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and its constructs ('Perceive ease of use', 'Perceived usefulness', 'Attitude towards using', 'Intention to use', and 'System accessibility') to test the objectives, self-administered questionnaire was distributed to students, and it was found that social media is mostly being used by students for social purposes rather than for educational purposes, and that Facebook is the most popular social media networking system to use.

2.3 Social Media Networks and Privacy Issues

Despite the enormous benefits of using social media networks, its adoption has also been characterised by many risks. The identified risks as stated by Livingstone & Helsper (2007); Livingstone (2008) and cited in Collin, (2009) include management of personal information and privacy, the risk of predation and cyber bullying, privacy breaches and predation and understanding copyright law in relation to creative content production.

Furthermore, Costello (2015) assessed the information quality, privacy policies and data safety practices in online social network for health using a longitudinal analysis of online social networks designed for patients diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. Observational analysis of 20 indicators in three domains - practices for auditing and moderating the quality of content provided by users, accessibility of privacy policies, and data sharing policies and member control over data sharing - was conducted on 10 sites in 2013 and again on 12 sites in 2015, with 7 of the same sites included in both samples. Scores for each domain were compared across years in order to assess whether practices and policies had changed over time. Differences in site practices and policies between 2013 and 2015 were not significant. Quality was variable across all sites, with gaps in medical disclaimers, a lack of external review of privacy policies and data safety audits, and missing information about internal quality control in the form of moderators.

Asif and Khan (2015) evaluated user's perception on Facebook's privacy policies with the intention to study the amount and type of information disclosed by Facebook, its consented parties and other Facebook users; and to compare the findings with regard to the hypothesis that creates a foundation as to why people do not properly organize their Facebook privacy settings. The study asserts that people are ignorant of such privacy policies and settings, and even if they are conscious and they've read them, they hardly understand their effect. It was argued that even the computer science graduates have least idea regarding information disclosure by Facebook. The result clearly showed that people remain unaware of information sharing policies despite been clearly stated. And if they have read them, they are not confirmed about the effect. The study also shows that people do not know how their personal data can be shared. And they end up in sharing their private information with unauthorized people because of their ignorant attitude. It was concluded that complexity of privacy settings and lack of control provided to user is equally responsible for unintentional information sharing.

In a study conducted by Abdulahi, Samadi and Gharleghi (2014), they studied the negative effects of social networking sites such as Facebook among Asia Pacific University scholars. The researcher utilized survey research design among 152 students of the chosen university in order to examine and study the negative effects. Their paper measured frequency of use, participation in activities and time spent preparing for class, in order to know if Facebook affects the performance of students. Social network sites were believed to be an electronic connection between users, but unfortunately it has become an addiction for students. Lastly, the paper provided a comprehensive analysis of the law and privacy of Facebook.

It shows how Facebook users socialize on the site, while they are not aware or misunderstand the risk involved and how their privacy suffers as a result. The researcher found that people remain unaware of information sharing policies, although the policies are clearly stated and if they have read them, they are not deep-rooted about the effect. The result also means that the increase in usage of Facebook often leads to increase in the amount of exposure to privacy and security issues increases as well. It concluded that people do not know how their personal data can be shared on social media. Research has also shown that young people are aware of potential privacy threats online and many take tactical steps to minimise potential risks (Hitchcock 2008; Lenhart & Madden 2007; Hinduja & Patchin 2008; cited in Boyd and Ellison (2007).

Irrespective of the threats involved, experts stress that it is important not to concentrate on the fears or devalue the density of the challenge (The Alannah & Madeline Foundation, 2009).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The data for this study was obtained from a survey conducted in Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. The university is the leading ICT institution in Nigeria with a bandwidth of 113Mbit/s as well as a pioneer in iLab in south of Sahara Africa and this serves as the basis for this study area. The paper employed descriptive survey design. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from about two hundred and twenty (220) respondents from randomly selected students. A total number of one hundred and eighty nine (189) duly completed questionnaire representing 85.9% response rate was retrieved and found suitable for analysis. Quantitative method of analysis (descriptive statistics) was used to describe the variables of study and the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The study majorly operationalized on variables such as self-reported years of social media networks adoption, perceived levels of awareness of privacy policies based on knowledge of social media networks' terms of service, degree of social media networks' information privacy consent and levels of access to social media networks users' information by third parties. The respondent's length of social media networks usage was determined through a closed-ended behavior question on a four point scale with each option been indicated in intervals. Self-perceived depth of knowledge of social media networks' terms of service was measured by asking the respondents whether they were aware that social media networks have terms of services with a binary response of 'yes or no'. Also, the respondents were asked whether they have ever read any of the terms of service in whole or in part for each social media networks to which they use, as well as if they were aware of the fact that when accepting the terms of service of a social media network, they were giving permission for some of their information to be accessed by third parties.

Furthermore, a set of five belief statements (constructs) aimed at establishing how the respondents viewed the use of their information (such as status updates, photos, videos, personal information etc.) uploaded to social media networks by third parties for academic purposes in the university environment without their explicit consent were stated to ascertain the users' level of knowledge on their privacy rights. This was in line with study by Turow *et al* (2007), as this would give insight into what the users think their level of privacy is, when using the social media networks and this was measured using a Likert rating scale. Also, the respondents were asked how concerned they were each time their social media information (such as status updates, photos, videos, personal information etc.) were been used by organizations such as universities, advertisers, commercial research companies, government departments etc. for research purposes without their consent and this was also measured using a Likert rating scale.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Respondents' Socio-demographic Characteristics

Parameters	Classification	Percent (n=189)
Sex	Male	70.9
	Female	29.1
Age (Years)	Below 25	45.0
	25-40	47.6
	41-60	7.4
Marital Status	Single	65.6
	Married	33.3
	Divorced	0.5
	Widowed	0.5
Religion	Christian	70.4
	Islam	28.5
	None	1.1

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Information on socio-demographic distribution of the respondents are contained in Table 2 as the larger percentage of the social media networks users were below forty-one (41) years of age and about 66% were single. This could be as result of the fact that students still at youthful age tend to be more curious to see, learn and adopt whatever technologies that are useful, relatively, easily accessible and more importantly could bring them closer to their friends and families. Studies such as Collin *et al.*, (2011) have proven that social media networks enhanced the effective delivery of educational outcomes, strengthen interpersonal relationship among users. The use of internet has generally been found to strengthen young people's existing interpersonal relationships (ACMA 2009; Besley 2008). More so, social media networks helped users to form identity and also promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Smith *et al.*, (2009) in the US, 37% of people within the age of 18-29 years use social media for civic engagements and political participation.

Figure 1 below presented the duration in years in which the respondents had started using social media networks. The study revealed that larger percentage of the sampled respondents started deploying social media networks applications in the last four to ten years. This could attributed to the recent dramatic changes in the level of diverse makers of mobile phones products in Nigeria and rising social media software applications which are now been easily installed on various mobile phones anywhere and can be easily accessed with availability of internet infrastructure. Also, for instance in Nigeria, it took only a period of 12-months for Facebook to gain 200 million users (Awake, 2011; Eke *et al.*, 2014), while reports from Stat Monkey in 2015 revealed that 93.72% used Facebook, Twitter ranks second with 5.29%, Pinterest ranks third with 0.42%, Tumblr ranks fourth with 0.2% and the remaining social networks holds 0.37% and this invariably shows that these social media applications are becoming a daily necessity and the rate at which Internet surfers sign up to these social media sites is quiet alarming.

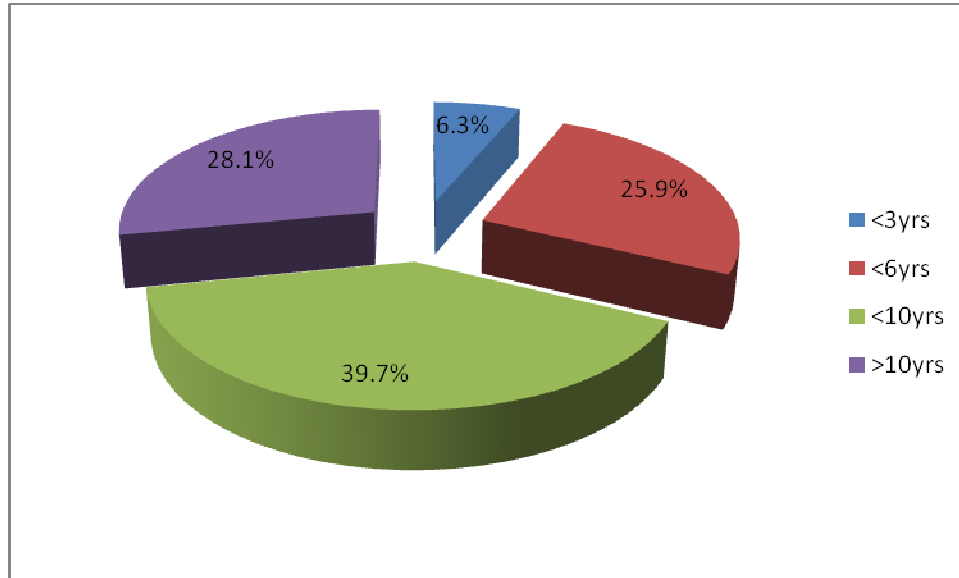


Figure 1: Respondents' Length of Social Media Networks Adoption
 Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3: Level of Awareness of Social Media Networks Privacy Policies

Construct	% (n=189)
Awareness level of social media networks privacy policies	91.5
Read and understand social media networks privacy policies in whole or in part	66.3
Aware that accepting the terms of services of social media networks guarantee permission to information by third parties	72.7

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Users were presented with a number of statements relating to their level of awareness of activities concerning privacy on the social media networks. Over 91% of the respondents indicated high level of awareness of terms of service relating to privacy on the social media networks (see Table 3) but Asif and Khan (2012) in their study discovered that social media networks users' remained unaware of information sharing policies despite the fact that the policies were clearly stated. Also, only 66.3% of social media networks users had read the privacy policy in whole or in part, and this contradicted the findings of Polakis *et al.*, (2010) where they asserted that many users of social media network do not understand the consequences of revealing personal information online and users do not recognize the principles guiding social media networks privacy policies. Likewise, Junco (2012) observed that the rate at which users read the social media networks privacy policies is reducing day-by-day, that it takes time to read the long and tedious terms and conditions and that people assume it is unnecessary, while Asif and Khan (2012) concluded that complexity of privacy settings and lack of control provided to user is seen to be responsible for unintentional information sharing.

However, there appears to be a level of certainty relating to information being accessible to third parties as about 73 % of the users attested that while accepting the terms of service of social media networks, they were giving absolute permission for their information to be accessed by third parties. This also in a way opposed the findings of Williams (2010) as he emphasized that users seems to have a limited sense of how the information they post might be used by others and what type of data to be shared by with third parties. This is not the case in this study.

Table 4: Level of Social Media Networks Information Privacy Consent

Construct	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
I don't mind if people use <i>my status updates</i> as data for academic research without my explicit consent	42.4	57.6
I don't mind if people use <i>my photos</i> as data for academic research without my explicit consent.	16.1	83.9
I don't mind if people use <i>my videos</i> as data for academic research without my explicit consent	23.7	76.3
If any of my information is used as data without my consent for academic research, my identity should be anonymous	50.0	50.0
If any of my social media information (status updates, photos, videos etc.) is used for academic research, I would expect to be asked for my consent	78.0	22.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Furthermore, most of the respondents disagreed with the proposition of using their information (status updates, photos, videos etc.) posted online as data for academic research as they considered such as means of intruding into their privacy without their explicit consent, while 50% of the respondents felt that, should their information were to be used for academic research, their identity should be made anonymous (Table 4). More so, 78% of the social media networks users' sampled agreed that they would expect to be consulted before their information are to be used for academic research purposes.

Table 5: Level of Social Media Networks Information Privacy Concern

Construct	Concerned (%)	Not Concerned (%)
How concerned are you about your social media information (status updates, photos, videos etc.) being used by Universities	80.6	19.4
How concerned are you about your social media information (status updates, photos, videos etc.) being used by Advertisers	87.1	12.9
How concerned are you about your social media information (status updates, photos, videos etc.) being used by Commercial research companies (e.g. polling companies)	83.9	16.1
How concerned are you about your social media information (status updates, photos, videos etc.) being used by Government departments (e.g. Revenue and Customs, Department for Education etc.)	84.9	15.1

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Measuring the perception of the social media networks users' towards their information (status updates, photos, videos etc.) been accessed and used by third parties such as organizations, it was discovered that almost all the respondents demonstrated that they always care to know who, what and where their information are been used (see Table 5).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Adequate access to relevant scientific information by social media users can help to maximize the benefits it offers and avoid the risks involved. The outcome of this research is that respondents from Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria are aware of social media networks privacy policies and larger percentage read in whole/part and agreed to it. Higher percentage of the users attests to the fact that on accepting the terms of service, they give permission for their information to be shared.

In contrast to the above, most of the users disagree in using their posted information by third parties, one of the reasons given is that it intrudes into their privacy and it is without their consent. They expected to be consulted before their information is used. Most of the respondents also care to know how their information is being utilized. It is therefore observed that the social media users considered for this study does not really understand the terms of service/privacy policies of the social media networks or whether they do not take their time to read it or they read it in part.

There is therefore the need for social media users to actually read and understand the privacy policies and also the need for proper orientation of the use of social media networks and its implications in Nigeria. This is with a view to increase the social media literacy of the users. It is also imperative for the government of Nigeria through its ministries (Federal Ministry of Information, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology) and agencies such as National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), National Centre for Technology Management (NACETEM), National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP) and others to develop a framework for the management and control of social media use in Nigeria.

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