

ADDRESSING GENDER-RELATED PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES USING SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: Gender inequality has remained significant, despite several international efforts at reducing it. Some socio-economic factors responsible for this are religion, tradition and poverty. Female Genital Mutilation, a practice that involves altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons, which has been declared against in the 2012 General Assembly of the United Nations still thrives in Nigeria. Globally, it is estimated that about 140 million girls and women alive have undergone FGM. If current trends continue, 15 million additional girls between ages 15 and 19 may be subjected to it by 2030. Girl-child marriages still happen in Nigeria despite extant legislations against it. Discrimination against women in workplaces and on the political landscape is still on. Hence, this study looks at the instrumentality of the social media in addressing these challenges especially because of its advocacy outlook as well as spreading ubiquity. The development of social media has made sharing of information much more seamless perhaps as a result of its features especially the interactive ones such as the ability to respond, share, comment, critique, change, add to information and even clarify issues. This study examines the diffusion of New Media platforms and how they are being used possibly in addition to mainstream media outlets with anchorage on convergence technologies by individuals, groups and organizations to address these psychosocial issues. It was discovered that social media play very integral roles in impacting the grassroots and mass mobilization towards social development especially as some categories of users, based on the information harnessed from the #EndFGMng, #EndFGM, #childnotbride volunteered to further disseminate such messages to stakeholders with the aim of achieving behavioral change and refined social thinking.

Keywords: Social Media, New Media, Mainstream Media, Convergence Technology, Psychosocial Challenges, Gender-related biases, #EndFGMng, #EndFGM, #childnotbride

Introduction

Social Media has reached a great height of societal ubiquity which has greatly characterized the 21st Century making the “Information age” tag more emphatic. Journalism has evolved over the years and has come to a point where every person who has access to a smart device such as phones, gears, iPads, television sets, computers amongst others, can function as citizen journalists. Paradigms have shifted from the time where news broke daily where the print and broadcast had the masses waiting for news to break to a time that sees the masses breaking the news themselves without necessarily using the traditional media platforms. News stories now break round the clock. The traditional media and information officers now function as slaves to news as they break on the internet though the instrumentality of the social media such as twitter, Face book, Instagram, Blackberry messenger and several others. Some individuals have even become public analysts, influencing public opinion and gaining massive popularity through these social media attracting huge followership which so far seems to be more gratifying hence cutting the viewership, listenership and readership of the traditional media platforms.

According to Khamis & Vaughn (2011), “with its low entry barriers, social media tools provide an accessible platform for citizen journalism. Citizen Journalism today may be defined as the use of digital media tools to report on events on the ground, uploading text and videos directly to the Internet or feeding the information and videos to media outlets”. However, it should be noted that the use of social media, does not come for free especially in this part of the world where internet and internet-compliant devices comes at a relatively expensive rate which may be a factor that has hindered absolute adoption by the totality of the populace leaving the use to the economically privileged and elitist segment of the masses who also constitute the main consumers of mainstream media contents.

Beyond the indices of usability of affordability as analyzed in different research works, social media remains a spontaneous catalyst for new age journalism. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) define **social media** as "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". Furthermore, social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals.

The social media through convergence technologies can adequately function as a pool for audio, visual and textual contents which is the base of the media convergence discourse. This technological advancement has allowed for people to partake in information sharing, serving as alternative media platforms for encoders who have no access to traditional dissemination channels (Atton, 2002; Kenix, 2011). This has caused individuals, groups and organizations to tremendously make use of their social media handles to chart certain courses and address several societal challenges. For instance Guaranty Trust Bank makes use of its Blackberry Channel and Twitter account to educate people about autism and how to accept and manage people living in autistic conditions. This paper shall examine Nigerians' use of social media platforms to address girl-child marriage and the way the international community has intervened in female genital mutilation, a psychosocial menace still present in some parts of Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinning

New Media Theory

McQuail (2010) in propounding New Media Theory says there is now greater equality of access available as sender, receiver, spectator or participant in some exchange or network. It is no longer possible to characterize the dominant 'direction' or bias of information flow (as with press and television news and comment), although the issue of the degree of freedom available to the new 'channels' is far from settled. Breen (2007) reports fears that the internet might develop beyond its open and democratic early phase to become a multi-tier service with more privileged access to those who can pay more to produce and provide content or pay more to receive higher value content.

Rasmussen (2000) argued that new media have qualitatively different effects on social integration and participation in a modern network society, drawing on Giddens' (1991) theories of modernization. The essential contribution is to bridge the widening gap that is said to be opening up between the private and public worlds, the 'lifeworld' and the world of systems and organisations. The gap may also be increasing as a result of the new electronic highways. In contrast to television, the new media can play a direct role in individual life projects. They also promote a diversity of uses and wider participation. In short, the new media help to re-embed the individual after the 'disembedding' effects of modernization.

For the purpose of this paper, the use of social media in development communication towards social mobilization of users and grooming them as opinion leaders to further enlighten the affected segment of the masses on the ills of Female Genital Mutilation as well as deploying it as a tool of countering ill-motivated legislations is explored. Although the new media theory is prevalent in the communication channel, some element of the two-step or multi-step flow theory is evident in the communication execution as active social media users became opinion leaders, taking the crux of the message to the stakeholders and the entire populace in general.

Remediation Theory

Before the advent of the new media, the traditional media was used, and it is divided into two parts: the broadcast media and the print media. The broadcast media are basically to imply radio, television while the print media are newspapers, magazines. These media platforms have been and are still being used in conveying messages; new media platforms have only come in to complement or remediate their activities.

Bolter and Grusin (2000) explain that the evolution of new media and its diffusion does not necessarily mean a phase-out of legacy media. Rather, the new media is an improvement of the shortcomings of old ones. "The digital medium wants to erase itself, so that the viewer stands in the same relationship to the content as she would if she were confronting the original medium." Laughey (2009) puts it that "new media appropriate the techniques, forms and social significance of other media and attempt to rival or refashion them in the name of real." The medium is then our message. McQuail (2010), in the same vein upholding McLuhan's (1964) theory and supports that each new medium transcends the boundaries of experiences reached by earlier media and contributes to further change. McLuhan correctly saw different media working together, while perhaps, less plausibly he predicted the attainment of a *global village* in which information and experience would freely be available for all to share (McQuail, 2005). He argues that in each cultural era the medium in which information is recorded and transmitted is decisive in determining the character of that culture. Hence, the linking of electronic information media would create an interconnected global village. Then, since the Internet is there for message transmission, newspapers have explored the advantage of that. The theory of remediation applies in print media as it does in all other media genres since they all are affected by the new media's remediation characteristic.

Categorization of Social Media Users

There are millions of users across various available Social Media platforms who fall into different categories based on what they do with their presence on these platforms. Several people on various platforms have opined on the different user classes. For the purpose of this research, the class divisions as portrayed by Forrester Research *technographics* (2015) cited by www.webgeekly.com shall be adopted. There are six categories in which users may fall: the creator; the critic; the collector; the joiner; the spectator and the inactive.

The creator is the user who creates social media content for the world to see. A typical user in this category is the blogger who composes blog posts, makes videos, audios and images which he or she shares online. Typical creators in Nigeria may include: Linda Ikeji, J.J. Omojuwa, and Seun Osewa amongst others. Besides being a dissemination platform, it has become a commercial venture which has certainly accrued its share of media money.

The critic is not necessarily proactive when it comes to generating or creating content, rather, he or she is reactive; spurred by the creator's content to criticize various aspects of issues raised and the manners with which they were raised. The critic's activity is a clear illustration of the role-reversal mechanism in the mass communication model; majorly making use of comments, ratings and review opportunities.

The collector uses the social media to gather what is in it for him or her. Such user usually makes use of RSS feeds, hashtag search or page tagging to gather relevant information from what is available on the blogosphere.

The joiner basically joins the social media platforms for the simple sake of joining. He or she tries to be present on every available social media outlet keeping multiple profiles. Joining is the major task for these ones and what happens after then may not be too much of a concern.

The spectator, according to Forrester research is the commonest category. This class of users read blogs and online fora, view user-generated videos and photos from YouTube, Facebook and others, listen to podcasts, and searches for user reviews and ratings. All they tend to do is browse through a wide range of social media content and not necessarily see the need to react or contribute. Many people in this group do it for the purpose of staying abreast of relevant information and remaining trendy.

The last category is **the inactive**. These groups of users have access to social media content but do not use it in any way. According to Forrester, this group of users is becoming rarer as most internet-anchored platforms have integrated social media in their spaces which at times may be mandatory to be able to use the platform for any

reason whatsoever.

According to Statista (2021), 99.05 million Nigerians, amounting to around 47% of the country's population have access to the internet and as such are open to social media platforms. The figure is projected to reach about 153 million by 2025. From the user-categorization above, it is possible for a person to fall into more than one user-class, although one may be predominant.

Social Media and Activism in Nigeria

Jones (2012) describes activists as people and organizations that work to promote social, psychosocial or political changes; and went further to assert that the internet is one of many outlets for their campaigns. The activism phenomenon is gaining relative popularity in the African continent and world over. In Africa, its popularity may perhaps be ascribed to widespread adoption of democracy; however, it has exhibited its own series of challenges. (www.theglobaandmail.com)

Activism consists of efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, or environmental change. The term connotes a peaceful form of conflict. Various forms of activism range from writing letters to newspapers or politicians, political campaigning, economic activism such as boycotts or preferentially patronizing businesses, rallies, street marches, strikes, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. It has however become global research to explore how activist groups and general individuals are using social media to facilitate civic engagement and collective action. Activists like journalists are public watchdogs and whistle blowers, attempting to understand all the actions of every form of government. All government must be accountable to oversight and transparency.

Some activists try to persuade people to change their behaviour directly, rather than to persuade governments to change or not to change laws. Other activists try to persuade people to remain the same, in an effort to counter change. The cooperative movement seeks to build new institutions which conform to cooperative principles, and generally does not lobby or protest politically, and clergymen often exhort their parishioners to follow a particular moral code or system. Some other activists move against social menaces and psychosocial disorders, women largely fall in this category due to their fight against gender inequality and child abuse which is manifested in several ways in this part of the world which include low rate of girl-child education, high rate of girl-child marriage, and female genital mutilation amongst others.

The unhindered diffusion of the Social Media has aided the emergence of various pressure activities across the globe especially, Africa – through the eye of the Arab spring. Storck (2011) quoted a Cairo activist saying “We use Face book to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world”. This is a clear summarized picture of the aid of social media in processes of activism.

Recently in Nigeria, a major movement of social media activism came up as a result of repeated cases of police brutality without any successfully tried and convicted case. Although the #EndSARS hashtag had been around for a couple years, it gained prominence and global recognition in October 2020 when many Nigerians converged at the Lekki toll plaza in Lagos, Nigeria to demand the disbandment the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Nigerian police. The grievances were borne out of continuous extortion, assault and even extra-judicial killings. Nigerians broadly accused the police unit of wanton overbearingness and a high level of impunity which have gone unchecked over the years, causing them to become a menace in the society. The government made crucial attempts to quell the protest but it gained more momentum until October 20th, 2020 when protesters were allegedly shot at with claims that some of them lost their lives while others were badly injured. Many of the cases are currently being determined by judicial panels of inquiry across the country. The movement between September and November, 2020 was a defining period and is still a reference point for social media activism in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2020; Washington Post, 2020).

This paper examines cases of similar social media activisms and campaigns based on two major gender-related matters – #childnotbride and #EndFGMng. The former is a social media movement to end child marriages which remains prominent in parts of Nigeria and is still practiced by some elitists, including a few political office holders. The latter is a call to end the practice of female genital mutilation, which is still present in some areas on the basis of cultural orientation and prevention of promiscuity among women.

#childnotbride.

In Nigeria, social media has been tremendously used to influence government decisions and policies on issues deemed to be anti-social or affecting the society negatively. One of such issues found relevant for this study is the movement against girl-child marriage in Nigeria. A social media movement was formed and nationally accepted against this menace – the “child not bride” campaign which carried the hashtag #childnotbride.

The #childnotbride was used to connote the societal stand on under-age marriage for girls who are constitutionally regarded as minors since they were not up to the age of eighteen where the law sees them as responsible and matured to take their decisions and face the consequences which may arise from such. The motion raised for a bill to be passed in favour of under-age marriage had been raised in Nigeria’s upper house by its member Senator Yerima who has been alleged to have already wedded a thirteen year old girl.

The #childnotbride campaign is a vivid scenery of the employment of social media platforms to fight a policy which would pose psychosocial challenges from being entrenched in our societal system. Several people in the creator category of social media users created twitter handles some of which still exist such as @childnotbride, @childnotwife and used them as a medium of disseminating information to mobilize the general populace and to influence government legislation which can be rated largely successful as the legislation was killed before birth and its midwife, silenced. Some picture tweets from the twitter handles are displayed below.



Figure 1: A girl-child with her child
Source: Twitter (@childnotbride)



Figure 2: The #childnotbride logo
Source: Twitter (@childnotbride)



Figure 1: A child not bride meme
Source: Twitter (@childnotbride)

Earlier, there have been protests which massively utilized the social media in Nigeria such as the movement against oil subsidy removal by the Federal Government as was announced in January, 2012. The Federal Government had announced that the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) will be increased from sixty-five Naira (N65) to One hundred and forty Naira (N140). This met with very stiff opposition and there were coordinated efforts by citizens who through the instrumentality of the social media staged an effective protest that resulted in reducing the price from One hundred and forty Naira (N140) to Ninety-seven Naira (N97). Face book was used as a notice board to schedule protests and mass gathering; Twitter was used to send updates and changing venues as well as recent developments while YouTube was used to broadcast protest proceedings. Archives of these are still present on these social media platforms. The activism industry consists of organizations and individuals engaged in activism. Activism is often done full-time, as part of an organization's core business. Many organizations in the activism industry are either non-profit organizations or non-governmental organizations.

#EndFGMng

Female Genital Mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) which is also known as female circumcision is one harmful traditional practice that is rooted in the cultures, traditions, norms and mores of families, communities, religions and societies practicing it, but this practice, differs greatly from other forms of violence against women because women are not only the victims but are also predominant perpetrators which in a number of cases are trained medical personnel mostly midwives. UNFPA (2015) asserts that about 1 in 5 girls who have been subjected to FGM had the procedure performed by a trained medical professional. In some countries, this number is as high as 3 in 4 girls. UN programmes on the ground report that health workers sometimes do not even use medical facilities for fear of being caught. The United Nations in its General Assembly in December 2012 identified the practice as harmful and declared against it.

Female Genital Mutilation which has to do with the total or partial removal of the external female genitalia or injury to the female genital organ for non-medical or non-therapeutic reasons can cause infertility, bladder infection, bleeding and childbirth complications, from these consequences and complications women can experience growth of cyst, develop bladder fistulae and the result of the mutilation can lead to infertility and divorce (Alo and Adetula, 2005). In agreement, UNFPA (2015) adds that the practice can cause short- and long-term health complications, including chronic pain, infections, increased risk of HIV transmission, anxiety and depression, birth complications, infertility and, in the worst cases, death. This caused the UN to declare the act as a human rights violation. Globally, it is estimated that between 100 million to 140 million girls and women alive today have undergone some form of FGM. If current trends continue, 15 million additional girls between ages 15 and 19 be subjected to it by 2030.

According to the United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF (2013) it was indicated that FGM/C is concentrated in 29 countries and in scattered communities across the globe. Nigeria is one of such countries with about 20 million women and girls subjected to the practice especially in Ebonyi, Ekiti, Imo, Osun and Oyo states. Although, 24 out of 29 countries where FGM/C is prevalent have enacted decrees or laws against the harmful practice it still seems to be with the people. In Nigeria for instance, some states of the federation have outlawed the practice between 1999 and 2006; and in May 2015 under President Goodluck Jonathan, Nigeria passed the Violence Against Persons (Prohibited) Law which makes it an offence for anyone to carry out FGM/C on any category of females among other acts of violence such as rape (marital and extra-marital), assault amongst others. (CHELD, 2015)

Granted that so many reasons abound as the motivation for this practice, a major impulse generally accepted is that the practice of female genital mutilation will ensure that the girls or women conforms to the sexual norms of these societies, have self-restraint, femininity, respectability and maturity (WHO, 2012).

Other reasons for the practice are psychosexual; reducing rates of promiscuity amongst women, sociological; having to do with cultural identity of a family or people and social integration, hygiene and aesthetics; based on the fact that the external female genitals are unappealing to the eyes, religious; being in agreement with religious doctrines and tenets, and other reasons such as improving the chances of fertility (UNICEF, 2003).

This medically irreversible mutilation which is still carried out on females in some parts of Nigeria is also anchored on tradition, religion and culture. Some cultures defend their practice of FGM based on the common belief that if

the clitoris a part of the female genital organ if allowed to grow it will be in competition with the male organ and cutting it is deemed necessary to prevent such growth. It is concluded therefore that this practice is a societal issue, even though it detrimental to the health of the women folk it is reinforced by traditional practices, religion and culture, which is a way of life and supported by men and women in the societies where they are practiced. Irrespective of the adverse effects female mutilation on women, many societies still indulge in the practices.

The United Nations and its agencies are no doubt at the fore of the eradication efforts and a major strategy they have adopted is the use of the social media platforms especially twitter. The social media campaigns are structured to create more awareness about the dangers of this harmful health practice. This has generated a lot of public opinion and debates, health practitioners and civil society groups have come out to lend their voices to the #EndFGMng campaign which is aimed at absolutely eradicating female genital mutilation.

BOX 1. TYPES OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Type 1- Clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals) and /or in rare cases only, the prepuce (the fold of the skin surrounding the clitoris).

Type II-Excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (the labia are the 'lips' that surround the vagina).

Type III-Infibulation: narrowing of the vagina opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia with or without removal of the clitoris.

Type IV-Other: all other harmful procedure to the female genitalia for non-medical purpose, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.

Source: WHO, 2012.

According to WHO (2012), the Type I which is the clitoridectomy is the commonest type prevalent in Nigeria. Type II is called excision. It is the total or partial removal of the inner and outer labia of the external female genitalia with or without the removal of the clitoris. Type III is Infibulation; the removal of the external genitalia then fusion of the wound. This is considered the most gruesome form of mutilation as the circumciser after cutting stitches the wound, leaving a tiny hole for urination and menstrual flow.

Waris (1998) recounted, "but for all the excitement and success of my new life, I carried wounds from the old. The tiny hole the circumciser had left me only permitted urine to escape one drop at a time. It took me about ten minutes to urinate. My periods were a nightmare always. I couldn't function for several days each month; I simply went to bed and wanted to die so the suffering would stop."

Type IV FGM is a mix of all forms of injuries to the female genital organ which include burning, scarring, stretching, incising, scraping, pricking, introduction of foreign substances and others. In Nigeria, types I and II are common in the South while type IV is common in the North. In cultures where fattening is a compulsory stage in the wedding process, one of the things the woman goes through is FGM with the belief that removal of the clitoris will help tame the woman's libido and reduce her chance of promiscuity which is identified as a psychosocial reason.

The condemnation of this act which started with a few individuals with little backing from civil society groups in Egypt in the 1920s rose to the level of a global discourse in 1979 when FGM/C was discussed for the first time at a WHO seminar on Traditional Practices affecting the Health of Women and Children also known as the Khartoum Seminar. There have been global milestones geared towards eradicating the practice over the years and on 20th December 2012, the United Nations General Assembly passed the first resolution calling on states to intensify efforts to eliminate FGM/C (UNICEF, 2013).

This elimination fight has been creatively reinforced through the use of social media as a voice of expression. This creativity has been greatly portrayed in the use of the twitter platform which although gives room for only 140 characters per tweet, yet account holders were able to expressly pass their messages. "My vagina is not a space for

culture”, “Take your knife away from my clitoris”, “No medical solution, the only solution is counselling” and several others were tweets that were trending on the anti-FGM campaign.

With understanding of how viable the social media is as a tool for providing and accessing information, the United Nations Population Fund as well as some other agencies such as *Education as a vaccine* and *YouthHub Africa* came up to the fore of this discourse as they took over the Nigerian *tweetosphere* and blogosphere to sensitize young people about the ills of the medically irreversible mutilation which is still carried out on females in some parts of Nigeria which is hinged on tradition, religion and culture. The twitter invasion attracted a lot of young people and leveraged on the real-time interactivity of the social media derived from its instantaneous role reversal feature. The tweet chat was structured to answer questions from an interested and inquisitive range of social media users while other categories of users could observe and learn. The back end of @UNFPANigeria was handled by Mrs. Funso Orenuga, a nurse with twenty-three years’ experience in reproductive health and right issues.

The UNFPA and UNICEF are strategically addressing this psychosocial menace and the social media is at the fore of the strategy. Social media was used to gather interested volunteers who worked with the United Nations agencies to interact with stakeholders in affected communities. One of such communities is *Alajue* village in Osun state, South-West Nigeria. A Focus Group Discussion with religious leaders, traditional leaders, community health workers, nurses, circumcisers and circumcised girls revealed that no girl above age 15 had not been circumcised.

The twitter activities were harmonized by hashtags which are used as tags to identify tweets (messages) on various specific subjects. #EndFGMng was domesticated to Nigeria, harmonizing thoughts specific to the prevalence of FGM in Nigeria while #EndFGM was concurrently used to move the campaign into the global mainstream involving Africans, Arabs and even migrants who travel home for the purpose of FGM initiation for their daughters.

Tracing with the hash tags in the tweet sphere, around 1,126,000 users were reached during the twitter invasion with well-structured brief messages from social media creators and influencers to emphasize that FGM has neither benefit nor remedy. Several other messages were passed in relation to religion and legislation as they concern FGM. It was revealed to many that there is no religious injunction at least in the two most prominent religions in Nigeria - Christian or Islamic religion that backs the mutilation of the female genitalia. Through the arousal of interests and grooming of opinion leaders on social media who volunteered to carry out sensitization efforts in affected places around them, people at the grassroots are becoming more aware that it has become a crime to carry out FGM on anyone given the Violence Against Persons’ (Prohibition) Act of 2015 as passed by former President Goodluck Jonathan on 25th May, 2015.

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the World Bank (2015), 42.7 percent of Nigerians have access to internet and as such are open to social media platforms in Nigeria. This shows a high rate of adoption. Hence, rather than domesticate the charting of pro-social courses to social media alone, they should be used to mobilize users as opinion leaders so that messages can reach the grassroots to allow for all-inclusive social communication and participation; it will help in causing a paradigm shift in the masses’ behaviour from their expectant nature to a participatory one thinking of how they may be useful to national development and not just lie in wait for the nation’s acclaimed development to trickle-down to them.

Also, the reliability of Nigerian users on social media users, even joiners and spectators makes it a platform that can characterize a message with necessity as most users want to be up-to-date with trends and on-goings in the social media landscape. This can be leveraged upon to first reach the various categories of social media users and then influence public discourse and even policy as the case may be. It is also pertinent to emphasize that the almost 1,200,000 users reached with the #endfgmng is a clear indication of the sphere of influence of social media which is on the constant rise.

The ubiquity and necessity that have characterized social media use in Nigeria hereby make them a veritable tool for addressing psychosocial challenges especially as it affects gender inequality which is still somewhat prevalent in the country.

It is thus recommended that more organizations including public and private bodies as well as Non-Governmental organizations and international institutions should make utmost use of the social media platforms available not only to initiate and execute social campaigns but to groom public opinion leaders, after the multi-step flow pattern, who are able to use other channels available to them including physical contact to propagate the gospel of such campaign so as to give it more credibility and effectiveness.

More specifically, social media users should be encouraged to harness their devices and connectivity for developmental causes, this way, more users can be educated and mobilized towards achieving coordinated social change.

Social media can be said to have reduced riot casualties since what is needed is the voice rather than violence. Hence, civil society groups, human rights activist and non-governmental organisations are advised to constructively use social media platforms for activism purposes which are even more effective as there is the provision to directly tag key government officials concerned with the issue of discourse.

The study also recommends the use of hash tags to tag posts on social media. This ensures that anyone who chooses to follow the trend can easily see all posts tagged with the selected subject. Hash tags also make social media monitoring and participation easy for such coordinated activists especially regarding gender as it presents itself as a voice to the voiceless.

Finally, while social media may not completely take-over the watchdog role of the media, it does credibly well in keeping government on its toes since everyone now has a voice if properly used. Hence, citizen journalism is becoming even more rampant than ever before with virtually every citizen being a watchdog. Media organisations are to capitalize on the remediation functions of the new media so that it is not seen as only a competition but a completion to the old media forms such that they adequately run new media platforms to amplify the voices of the legacy media they operate thereby disciplining followers as advocates further amplifying their voices to other people especially teeming youths who seem to be dropping old media addiction.

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