

Youth perspective on social media discourse on “Lazy Nigerian Youths” conversations

Nkiru Comfort Ezeh

*Department of Mass Communication, Novena University, Ogume,
Delta State, Nigeria
ezehnkiru_ct@yahoo.com*

Augustine Godwin Mbose

*National Open University of Nigeria, Uyo Study Centre,
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
austinmboso@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT

The Social Media has emerged as a new platform for discourses. It has no doubt provided people with easier and faster accessibility to information and has become an outlet for them to share their views on socio-political issues. Anchored on Public Sphere Theory, focus group discussions were conducted with undergraduate youths in South-east Nigeria to look at the issue of President Mohammadu Buhari’s referring to Nigerian youths as lazy, while speaking at the Commonwealth Business Forum in Westminster on 18th April, 2018. This article, therefore, explored the opinions advanced in the discourse based on the principles of freedom of expression and responsibility. The study suggests that while Twitter platform was more objective in the discussion of the issue of the day, Facebook and Whatsapp trailed with abuses and hate comments. The study recommended that people in position of authority should while speaking in public events use words which cannot be misconstrued to drive home their point.

Keywords: *Social Media, Lazy Nigerian Youth, Discourse, Perspective*

INTRODUCTION

...about the economy, Nigeria has a young population, our population is estimated conservatively to be 180 million. This is a very conservative one. More than 60 percent of the population is below 30. A lot of them haven't been to school, and they are claiming that Nigeria is an oil producing country; therefore, they should sit and do nothing, and get housing, education and health free.(www.thecable.ng)

The above extract is the words of President Muhammadu Buhari, of Nigeria, while responding to a question asked him by a journalist at the 28th meeting of the Heads of government of Commonwealth of Nations which was held in Commonwealth Business Forum in Westminster, UK on 18th April 2018. The response came when the journalist had asked President Buhari why he did not sign the African Continental Free Trade in Rwanda.

The Cable (2018, April,18) a Nigeria online Newspaper, had reported the story and shortly after, the social media was afire and there was a massive response on them. The message attracted many people and triggered both off-line and online discourses on other social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and Instagram. Not long after the report, the hashtag #LazyNigerianYouth started trending. The hashtag recorded hundreds of thousands of tweets and millions of expressions in less than a week (Sunkanmi, 2018). A Wikipedia page tagged: "Lazy Nigerian Youths" was also created which was described as a media outrage *by Nigerian youths. The Presidency and some of Buhari's supporters also took to the social media to defend and explain that Buhari's response was framed out of context by media outfits; describing it as a deliberate mischief by manipulators and twisters of the president's statements (Ogundipe, 2018).*

Of particularly interest to this study is the role social media channels like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter among others have played in the discourse of the president's comments. Discourse is a systematic act

of statement which gives expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Discourses are becoming a topical issue in our world today. It is rapidly evolving through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and others (Balarabe, 2013). The Social media is an evolving area of study especially with regard to public conversation. It has no doubt become an outlet for individuals to share their views on socio-political issues. However, there is a dearth of studies focusing on social media and its relationship to discourses. This obvious lacuna is most prominent in developing societies such as Nigeria where the probation, usage and access to social media is not quite as high in comparison with the developed countries, thus necessitating the need for this study. The use of the social media in previous studies have rather demonstrated youth use of these platforms for other types of social engagement and communication, thus signaling the need to investigate its use for constructive deliberations beyond youths' obvious use of the social media for other social engagements; and whether such online channels are objectively employed in discourse of issues of public importance, using 'Lazy Nigerian Youths' as a focus.

The benefit of a discourse supposes that the quality of communication is credible so that individuals will be able to make more informed decisions when exposed to it. It is only through constructive deliberations that the issues of public concern are brought to the limelight, enabling individuals to have a better evaluation of such issues (Ezeh & Ono, 2015). This study tries to weigh the suitability of social media as a platform for a discourse using *LazyNigerianYouth* as a focus. It is the usage and the perceived credibility of the social media *platform* in the discourse that this study explores.

As social and political communication source, the social media has been known to provide people with easier and faster access to information and new opportunities to unmediated dialogue as is not tampered or altered to serve a particular interest (Echime, 2019). It has marked a major transformation in

human, social and political communication and affected access to information and media use, communications and information costs; maximizing speed, broadening reach, and eradicating distance. The social media has introduced new communication practices, provided newfound interaction patterns, created new forms of expressions and stimulated a wide civic participation.

Despite the above-mentioned benefits, the emergence of the social media has also created multiple platforms for the production, packaging, and dissemination of hate speech; promoting disunity, igniting crises and triggering hatred among members of the society; creating pathways for insult on those in power or minority groups. (Bushey, 2010). It is the expressed views about the social media, as Internet communication channels that have called the attention of the researchers to interrogate the extent it can serve as an effective channel for a discourse of pertinent issues. Again, the veracity of social media use and the numerosity of mobile phones and other nascent model variations which offer greater user opportunities in providing facilities make the social media researchable as effective communication tools.

Young people are particularly well-positioned to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet and digital technology (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickhur, 2010). This is because the Internet is becoming a defining part of young people's culture and an integral part of their daily lives. The younger the person, the greater the likelihood of access to the net (Baran, 2009; Ezeh & Mboso 2019). Many young people become eager to have access to the Internet because friends are hooked on it; it becomes a misnomer for him or her not to be online (Oyesomi, Ahmadu, & Itsekor, 2014). Among the youth, university students are more ardent users of social media. (Ezeh & Ono, 2015)

South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, which is the area of this study, is made up of five states in the federal republic of Nigeria. The states are; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi,

Enugu, and Imo. Students in this geopolitical zone just like in other zones follow the trend on the use of social media for online communication. Youths in the zone are known for their interest in education and relative economic stability; hence their likelihood of access and exposure to the Internet as a prelude to its use in online communication discourse which this study focuses on.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are; to determine youth level of participation in the social media discourse on "*Lazy Nigerian Youths*" conversations; and to establish the youth's opinion on social media discourse on "*Lazy Nigerian Youths*" conversations

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Discourse

Discourse is a systematic act of statement which gives expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Discourse according to Branston and Stafford (2006) involves regulated system of statement or language use. Regulated here simply means that "the 'appropriate' language for a given area operates with rules, convention - and therefore assumptions and exclusion" (p. 184). Discourses therefore define, describe and delimit what is possible to say and what is possible to do or not to do (Odoemelam, Okeibunor & Okorom 2014).

Discourse is not a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of ideas, but a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing (Codd, 2007). All discourses are ideologically positioned; none are neutral (Macdonell, 1986). However innocent and neutral the form and substance of discourse appears on the surface, it is thoroughly imbued with the biases, constraints, opinions and variable judgments of a specific intellectual community (Geertz, 2000).

Discourses are rapidly evolving through the development and use of the social

media. Just as there is a high increase in the number of social media, the users are also seeing a higher increase in patronage as millions of users are signing up every day; there is also an increase in discourse on the platform. Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It is a platform for promoting, distributing, and refining products: treating software as a service designed to run across multiple devices, relying on data as the “killer app,” and harnessing the “collective intelligence” of a network of users (O’Reilly, 2005).

The social media has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world and has impacted many aspects of human communication. It has transformed the public not as simply consumers of pre-constructed messages but as people who are shaping, sharing, reframing, and remixing media content in ways which might not have been previously imagined. And they are doing so not as isolated individuals but within larger communities and networks, which allow them to spread content well beyond their immediate geographic proximity (Jenkins, Ford & Green 2013). Existing literature (Cash, Rae, Steel & Winkler 2012; Christensen & Jerslev, 2016) record that the flood of information provided by the internet makes the users ever present in internet, navigating from one application to another seeking for information, education, entertainment, support etc., sharing everyday life and experiences irrespective of their physical location.

Social media interaction level depends on the nature of a particular social media in use. For example, Facebook has expanded beyond the scope of a simple networking site where people went to socialize with friends to now a place where people also go to seek and discover important information. On Facebook, discussions are described more civil and personal than on other sites because of the attachment of a name and a face to the comments. In Twitter, users are more likely to

interact with others who share the same views as they do in terms of retweeting, they are also actively engaged with those with whom they disagree. However, replies between like-minded individuals would strengthen group identity, whereas replies between different-minded individuals would reinforce in-group and out-group affiliation (Yardi and Boyd 2010). Similarly, (Stoddart, 2013), notes that Twitter merely reinforces the existing old media model of one-way communication and sound bites; rather than “inviting people in”, it seems to simply report what has already been decided; rather than establishing a two-way dialogue which bypasses the media and provides a direct connection with citizens,

WhatsApp is fast becoming popular among the social networking channels as an inexpensive channel. It is the king of instant messaging apps; has become an integral part of human communication, with 1.5 billion humans using the app to communicate as of January 2018 (Ayomide, 2019). It offers its users, the ability to access a large number of people in one go and share messages which can easily become viral. WhatsApp allows creating groups of up to 256 people; although the messages sent in groups are essentially broadcasted, they directly reach a user’s phone which makes it ‘personal’ (Ghost, 2018). Despite the popularity of WhatsApp, a lot of people still do not know how to communicate properly on the app; it lacks proper communication etiquette (Ayomide, 2019).

YouTube was originally conceived as a site for sharing mainly amateur video, these tools may be used by individual citizens as well as political activists to advance their goals, through a specific approach. It is perhaps not surprising to find political movements which lead to political discourse infiltrating the platform; although public discourses on YouTube occur mostly on Facebook as Facebook remains the highest discursive channel of Youtube videos (Ezeh & Ono, 2015).

With the creation of the social media, today, the ethics of journalism practice is undermining. We have seen in recent events

over the past years where social media users while promoting or criticizing political views make offensive comments; say things and use harsh words they never would in person. Because of the anonymous nature of some of the social media sites which means that the users are not held accountable for what they say, each communication slides to name calling, use of abusive languages and outright attack of personalities, ignoring the ideas being presented. It is an ideal platform to adapt and spread hate speech and foul language contributing in expanding disaffection among tribes, political class, and religion or even among friends in the society (Bushey, 2010). This is because of the decentralized, anonymous and interactive structure of the social media. The prevalence of hate speech and fake news which is accelerating on social media is fringing on political and national issues as well as social interaction (Msughter, 2018).

According to Albert and Salam (2013), social media have been seen as a two-edged sword discursive system. First a social movement - A social movement is a form of collective action that can potentially empower the weak and affect or be catalysts to social issues and ultimately aims at transforming a social order; which could lead to improving the lives of ordinary people. Secondly social media attracts social practices such as cyber bullying - a situation in which vulnerable populations are victimized through discourses within social media and social movements. Social media can be conceptualized as an emerging frontier where new forms of social relations causing power differences and other forms of unacceptable social practices develop at the intersection of human collective communicative acts and information technology.

Scholars (Semetko & Scammell, 2012; Capelle, 2013) believe that the old approaches to measuring political use of social media are inadequate; that the social media messages are subverted by online users. Social media messages can be re-edited and digitally retouched by the users in a way that can affect both individual and collective

perceptions of the content (Mboso & Ezeh, 2019). For example, YouTube communication is vulnerable to the intervention of Digital content generating users to a degree never true of 'old media', centralised and top-down as they were (McNair, 2011).

Berrocal, Campos-Domínguez & Redondo (2014) in their study on "Media Prosumers In Political Communication: Politainment On YouTube" made a case study of the political information produced and consumed on YouTube, and in particular of a speech given by Ana Botella, the Mayor of Madrid, before the International Olympic Committee (IOC). They found that most of the opinions aired by the prosumers on the videos were very short and merely reinforced the majority message. None of the messages analysed were truly informative, as in, providing information that did not feature in the video or which took a well-argued stance. Only two videos attracted significant differences of opinion in which two groups of prosumers argued among themselves, trading insults and opinions not backed by any solid arguments, and the rest were merely opinions that followed the majority lead.

Public Sphere Theory

The Public Sphere Theory was propounded by Jurgen Habermas. In his book entitled, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), he states that public sphere is like an intermediary system of communication between formally organized and informal face to face deliberations in arenas at both the top and bottom of the political. He refers to public sphere as a notional 'space' which provides more or less autonomous and open arena or forum for public debate. To (MacQuail, 2010) the 'space' lies between the 'basic' and 'top' of the society, and mediation takes place between the two- basic. "The basic is considered to be the private sphere of life of individual citizens, while the political institutions at the centre or top are part of the public life.

The basic belief in the public sphere theory is that political action is steered by the

public sphere, and that the only legitimate governments are those that listen to the public sphere (Habermas, 1962). Habermas (1962) proposed that social institutions such as the media have played a critical role in enabling citizens to gain knowledge to debate matters of public significance, and through such debates, a rational –critical discourse can emerge through which public participation bears upon the conduct of the state, thereby, better securing the relationship between promises of liberal democracy, its potential empowerment of citizens, and the practice of the public institutions Habermas’ theory of the public sphere would be relevant and apply to the Internet if the Internet is a many-to-many medium which is accessible to all people so that they can discuss matters of public concern in unrestrictedly. Social media is not as selective and elitist in nature like the conventional media. No doubt, it is expected that issues at discussion on social media affects the person’s off line actions and behaviour since he interacts with people that have similar interest with him.

This theory will be used to evaluate the view that social media channels provide spaces, platforms which can be considered as incarnations of the public sphere, which can influence good decision making and in which the ‘public will’ can be developed or collectively articulated. The alternative view to be tested is that these channels are spaces in which people are victimized through discourses expressed in the channels. These will be done with regard to the social media discourse of the Lazy Nigerian Youth.

METHODS

The research method used for this is the Focus Group Discussion. The Focus Group Approach was used to investigate selected students in tertiary institutions in South-east Nigeria, in order to have an in-depth interaction with the respondents.

There are 32 institutions of higher learning in South-east Nigeria; 5 Federal Universities, 5 State Universities, 8 Private Universities, 3 Federal Polytechnics, 3 State

Polytechnics, 2 Private Polytechnics, 2 Federal Colleges of Education and 4 State Colleges of Education. The total population of students in these institutions is 344,832. The population of the study, therefore, is 344,832

The probability sampling technique was used in the selection of states to be used in the Focus Group Discussion. The study decided to fix the number of states to be selected as three out of the five states in the South/Eastern Zone because of convenience. The table of random numbers was used for the actual selection of the three states in order to eliminate any bias in the choice of any state. The states and the result of the exercise was as shown below;

Table 1
Selection of State for the FGD

S/N	States in the South East	Selected State
1	Abia	Abia
2	Anambra	Anambra
3	Ebonyi	Ebonyi
4	Enugu	
5	Imo	

The result in the above table shows that Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi states were selected for the study, using the table of random numbers. The researchers decided to do three (3) Focus Group Discussions in three (3) purposively chosen institutions to ensure that the three types of tertiary institution (University, Polytechnic and College of Education). It is from the three (3) selected states that the three (3) tertiary institutions for the Focus Group Discussion were selected. The following results emerged:

Table 2
Selection of Institutions for Focus Group Discussion (Purposive)

State	Name of Institution	Type/Nature
Abia	College of Education, Aruchukwu	State College of Edu.
Anambra	Madonna University, Okija	Private University
Ebonyi	Akanu Ibiam Federal polytechnic, Uwana	Federal Polytechnic

The selected institutions above shows that the three types of tertiary institution in the South –East zone in Nigeria are represented in the above sample, hence, 1 University, 1 Polytechnic and 1 College of Education. It means that participants in the focus group discussion (FGD) shall represent students in those types of institution as applicable in the zone. Also, the selected institutions reflected the proprietorship of the institutions as Private, State and Federal institutions. Again, it implies that the selected tertiary institutions represent the type and nature of the educational institutions in the South East zone, from which the sample was selected for the Focus Group Discussions.

One focus group discussion session was conducted in each of the selected institution. Each focus group discussion composed of Seven (7) discussants selected from the various departments in each institution, Since “individuals are being invited to participate in Focus Groups because they are viewed as possessing important knowledge about particular experiences, needs, or perspectives that is hope to learn more about” (Omni, 2011, p.7), The selected discussants must have participated in online discussion of ‘Lazy Nigerian Youths’ so as to give more insight into how it was used. Effort was made to eliminate students in the 1st year, using the Screener questionnaire. This is because they were not admitted into the institution of higher learning at the time President Buhari made the statement; and so do not qualify to participate in the study. An appropriate venue

accessible to the discussants within the school environment was used. The discussion lasted from 1hour: 30min. - 2 hours. A video recorder was used for recording the entire discussion, to facilitate report documentation, after which it was played and transcribed.

To determine the Validity and Reliability of Instrument, the focus group provided screener questions for the selection of members of each group. The screener questions or pre-session was designed to ensure that those selected to participate in the focus group are valid and reliable for the session. A moderator’s guide was also produced to be used so that the Focus Discussion would remain within the realm of the research topic. In this way, the expected result from the group shall be reliable enough to address the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information on the discussants’ social media access

The discussants raised issues of social media access and use as it relates to *Lazy Nigeria Youth* conversation. Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter were the focus in organizing the analysis not only because of their salience in the conversions, and their given relevance and variability to the topic selected for the case study, the following social networking sites – Facebook, WhatsApp and to a limited extent Twitter – were adopted for organizing the analysis of the discussions. It turned out that Facebook and WhatsApp were prevalent social media that discussants have access to. Some of the discussants were not current users of Twitter, but had used it and therefore considered themselves users. It was also revealed that the participants visited their Facebook page more frequently, followed by WhatsApp than Twitter.

A student said;

I prefer Facebook to Twitter. I have more than 500 friends on Facebook. If you observe, Twitter is mostly used by celebrities. I am not a celebrity, if am on Twitter, who will follow me? (laughter).

All participants shared memories of interaction with the social media. Examples included

- chat with friends especially those outside the country, because it is cheaper compared to phone calls.
- raise issues they want their friends to comment on and comment on issues raised by friends; see who likes their posts.
- notify friends of their birthdays, remarkable dates and achievements.
- To see advert on new products/ideas/services.

When asked if there were limitations to their use of the social media, they pointed out some factors such as poor power supply, exorbitant cost of data required to access the sites, network failure and access to channels used for the social media as their major challenges. They explained that apart from these factors, they will always use the social media, especially the Facebook and WhatsApp.

- a. Information on awareness and participation in President Buhari's 'Lazy Nigerian Youths' utterance

The FGDs suggest that there is a link between awareness and participation. Awareness of an issue might eventually lead web users to select a particular discourse and participate in discussing within it. The study therefore equally sought to know if the youths were aware of President Buhari's *Lazy Nigeria Youth* utterance. It was discovered that all the participants were aware of the issue which they got to know through Opera Mini, Twitter and Instagram, but the video footage of the interview was seen on WhatsApp and Facebook where the actual discourse took place.

In comparison of their extent of use of the three social media (whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter) under study, it was discovered that the participants all had a click on the viral material which their friends brought online. However, more discussants participated in the discourse on Facebook and WhatsApp than on Twitter. However, a student of

Madonna University who considered himself an ardent twitter had this to say;

Twitter is for mature minds than... Most of the information trending on Facebook has been disseminated on Twitter. Twitter has variety of content. They have sources from different works of life, journalist, writers, poets etc. Facebook is full of fake things and fake activities

Another participant quickly added

.....I have a Twitter handle but I don't normally use it. If you observe, twitter is mostly used by celebrities. I am a not celebrity, if am on twitter, who will follow me? (laughter).

An obvious result emerging from the second research question on how participants in the online conversation perceived President Buhari's utterance regarding *Lazy Nigerian Youth* is a passionate nature of the responses. Respondents perceived the remark as one which portrayed Nigerian youth in a very bad light, yet they noted that the online discourse was filled with hate speeches and frivolities. However, the discussants believed that the social media users especially Facebook and Whatsapp were not objective and constructive in the discourse; they evoked a lot of attack on the personality of the president and brought in other issues outside the scope of discussion like;

- President Buhari has failed to deliver on his campaign promises; he is therefore trying to push the blame on the youths.
- Nigerian youths are the cause of their problems because they voted him to power not minding his age.
- Buhari lacks communication skills, hence his inability to put across his idea effectively.
- Nigerian youths should vote the president out in the 2019 presidential elections as this will prove that they are not lazy.
- President Buhari has derogated the

youths just as he did women folks when he said that his wife belongs to the kitchen and the other room.

- Buhari's son's involvement in Power bike accident shows he is a lazy Nigeria youth.

The participant perceived that the conversations on Facebook and Whatsapp had positioned the President in a very negative way, a position that demotes his personality as the president of a country. However, Twitter was seen as a more objective platform for the discourse.

When asked why they think that twitter is more objective platform for the discourse, a male discussant has this to say;

...there is synergy between contents and the manner in which they are posted on Twitter.

Another participant said;

...Twitter provides more quality information when compared with Facebook because it is used by mature people, mostly knowledgeable professionals; while Facebook and Whatsapp can be used by anybody, irrespective of status and gives them more opportunity to chat with friends

The above submission goes a long way in portraying Twitter as a more credible and reliable source of information as professionals who mainly use it would crave for objectivity and professionalism. However, Facebook and Whatsapp were identified as more problematic online channels because they all comes affair and care less on the quality of information that are distributed in them.

Access to social media is a plus in accessing other opportunities accruable in the use of the internet. The participants all had Facebook and WhatsApp account. This suggests an appreciable high number of students in the Nigerian institutions of higher learning that have access to Facebook and WhatsApp. This corroborates previous studies on high youth usage of Facebook and WhatsApp. This popularity may not be

unconnected with the fact that Facebook and WhatsApp are easier to operate, and it is easier to follow people on Facebook than on other social media. It means that students in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria, had access to social media platforms through which online communication can be realized. The considerably high use of social media for gaining information shows it keeps them abreast of local and global information; get them connected with families and friends irrespective of distance; closing time barriers and communication cost.

The discussants got the information on *Lazy Nigerian Youths* first from Opera Mini and Twitter before it started trending on Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. This means that Opera Mini and Twitter were significantly effective in breaking major news and inducing participation in the discourse of major issue since it pops up information in form of notifications for the online users' reactions. But Facebook and Whatsapp remain the platform where user's participation in the discourse in form of chats and comments occurred when compared to Twitter. This could be because Twitter allows its users to form asynchronous connection with others, where the follower graph is 20 per cent reciprocity, meaning only 20 per cent of those you follow on Twitter follow you back (Pettersen, 2016). This is not same with Facebook's concept, which is based on establishing synchronous relationship and allows users to follow updates from others besides their friends (Van Dijck, 2013). Although Whatsapp communication is limited to people that are in user's contact list, it is easier to share materials on Whatsapp and this makes contents go viral within a shortest period of time.

People who access the social networking sites were able to chat with friends and it is through such chats that ideas are shared as a communication process. This, therefore, means that the public sphere theory applies to this finding since the social media played a vital role in enabling citizens gain knowledge to issues of public significance. People's feelings were freely expressed and

published as opinions through chats on the websites. Social media, therefore, guarantee “freedom of assembly and association and freedom to express and publish their opinion” (Habermas, 1962), which became vivid through chats on the social media platforms. The supporters of the presidents also used the social media to explain how the president was quoted out of context (Ogundipe, 2018). The public sphere theory also applies to this finding since the people in the position of authority “listen to the public sphere”, by pushing to the media rebuttals and some explanations that would clear the air on the President’s speech.

Theory of ‘Spiral of Silence’ which premised that people are reluctant to express their opinions that are opposed to perceived majority public opinion because of fear of isolation (Noelle-Neumann. 1974: 43), is not applicable to the social media. The traditional media play a significant role in increasing the isolation of minority opinions (Dashti, Al-Abdullah & Johar 2015) while social media is all inclusive as those whose opinions/views may be in the minority also find opportunity in the social media to get heard and find responses to opponents’ arguments.

The credibility of the social media is measured by the quality of the discourse – the objectiveness, constructiveness, use of words and deviation from the focal point. The participants perceived social media of Facebook and whatsapp as not being credible in the discourse of issue of the day; social media users were not objective and constructive in the discourse; they evoked a lot of attack on the personality of the president and brought in other issues outside the scope of the issue. This is in line with (Berrocal, Campos-Domínguez, & Redondo 2014) assertion that social media discourses do not take a well-argued stance; rather merely reinforce the opinions that followed the majority lead, not backed by any solid arguments. They were perceived as a platform for unethical behavior and attack on the personality of the president and his family. This could be understood with regards to

the age and flexibility of the discussants that are young and attach much importance to people’s personality, character and attitude, unlike an older age group who might be set in their ways and who might be influenced by other such variables such as religion and ethnicity. This corroborates (Bushey, 2010; Msughter, 2018), views that the social media helps in the spread of hate speech and rumour; promoting disunity, igniting crises and triggering hatred among members of the society; and creating pathways for insult on those in power or minority groups. The youths perceived social networking sites as where frivolities and cheap talks take place; where important issues are trivialised; and where people make mockery of people in authority.

However, the discussant believed that Twitter was more credible in the discourse of issues of importance. This is because the very nature of Twitter which allows the use of ‘filters to ensure that contents posted on the platform adhere strictly to rules and fair usage, the qualities that inform their operations are also bear credence on their online presence; hence veracity of contents is assured.

CONCLUSION

Access to social media and its use in the discourse of issue of public importance have greatly increased. Facebook and WhatsApp are the prevalent amongst the youth compare to Twitter. In as much as the social media help in the expansion of the public sphere that supports unrestricted information flow, it is not a credible media for an objective discourse. In the future, it is expected that People in position of authority should while speaking in public events use words which cannot be misconstrued to drive home their point. Again owners of blogs where such discussions are taking place and media houses who now post their contents on the social media should try as much as possible to coordinate comments on such platforms and continue developing mechanisms that work to regulate the quality of posted content.

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