# Dangers of Social Media

## How Social Media Destroy People’s Privacy:

Privacy is something that we dream of having every day. The increased use of the social media, for example, Facebook, Twitter and the use of smartphones to access these applications fast and everywhere have resulted in many being deprived of their privacy (Lamdan, 2015). Marketing companies have taken advantage of the increased use of the social media. They are now using these social media applications, for example, Facebook to advertise their products and goods. These companies set their website one click away from logging in, and therefore a single click will lead to you as a social media user to view their page or website. Once anyone logs in to these companies' pages, the companies can see all their data like personal images. This is an infringement of privacy in the highest order.

The advertising companies that use the social media as their marketing platform have their terms and conditions. Before any individual logs in their pages, he or she has to accept their terms and conditions on of them being the privacy rights (Pozen, 2016). Individuals are too lazy to read these terms and conditions and they allow them blindly without understanding them. In the process, they trade their privacy right in the process which means they cannot sue these companies for infringing their privacy as they signed an agreement in the form of terms and conditions.

The social media is used by many on a daily basis. Most people post personal stuff on the social media. By so doing, they tell virtual people they only met on social media about their lives. The study shows that in real life, many people are not willing to share their personal experience on a one on one encounter, but they are eager to do so on social media.

The online environment has not limited the advertising company from stalking people so as they can develop products or services that suit their needs. You will find an advert on the social media that suits you accurately, and you wonder how the producing company found out about your needs. The only way they can do this is by taking a closer look at your social media account which is privacy invasion as you did not authorize them to do so.

Data scraping or harvesting is one of the methods used to gather personal information by the research companies. The companies will look at your conversation on social media, your activities, for example, posts and the pages or the websites you like or follow(Yang, Wilson, & Wang, 2010). After gathering data about an individual, the research companies sell the data to the advertising companies that make the individual the target market of their product or service as they now know their likes. Data harvesting is considered as an invasion of privacy as the research companies do not as the owners of the various social media applications for their consent.

Besides, there are claims that some identified Facebook applications are leaking personal information about the users to the tracking companies on the internet and also to the online advertising companies. The leaking takes place when installing the applications where it is mandatory for one to accept the specified terms and condition and after allowing you are given an access token. Some of the apps sell these access token to tracking and online advertising companies giving them a gateway to personal posts, chats, and photos. In the process of doing this, you are not notified that your data will be shared with a third party, hence this can be termed as an invasion of privacy.

The “like” button on Facebook, the “tweet” button on Twitter or the +1 button which people use to share the information they deem essential with their friend’s compromise individual privacy. These gadgets on social media can also be used for other purposes apart from sharing. They can be used as variable tools in online tracking by the service providers (Leskovec, 2011). These gadgets work with cookies, which are small files in computers that make monitoring possible. The social media create websites that use these cookies and thus any time you try to log in on another website or page that uses similar widgets like the one you used to create an account then you are recognized. This is a rude interruption of online privacy. Your interest and location can also be easily tracked. Your shopping behavior can also be easily identified and revealed.

Location services usually keep a track record of every move that you make on the social media. These services, for example, google location service is considered a threat to privacy as they are used by the service provider to conduct online surveillance. In some instances, the service providers might manage much information than what is required. Google company, the owners of Google+ a social media application aimed at bringing people together, but has repeatedly been accused of helping the United States Government in their online surveillance by providing personal information collected during location service.

## The Link between Social Media and Terrorism:

Social networks are considered today to be open spaces where everyone can share information online for the whole world to see in seconds. With Google, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter updating us with the world daily news, and communicating despite of distances, it is no difference for the terrorist organizations (Jacobson, 2010).

Terrorists use the internet for several of purposes, first propaganda; they generate multimedia communications providing information, explanations and instructions about their ideology, and promoting and justifying violence and extremism. Of course there is no existence of ISIS.com or Alqaeeda.com where you sign up, login and you become one of them. But they use fake accounts to post pictures. This is done through videos, pictures, magazines and articles (Jacobson, 2010).

Al Qaida has a magazine called Inspire and Isis has 2 magazines, Rumiah and Dabiq

Second, recruitment, their main target from using social media is to recruit people online, they do so by carefully investigating the personality and psychological characteristics of the people who are prone to extremist ideologies by spying on them online (Brandom, 2016). Isis has succeeded to build a private and secure micro-community surrounded by social input for the purpose of finding recruiters, the “recruitment” platform are surrounded by technological barriers and conversations are done through encrypted messaging platform, which makes it hard for the intelligence and law enforcement personnel to track them (Miller & Mekhennet, 2015).

Omar Mateen the terrorist that killed more than 50 people in Florida at the Orlando nightclub was inspired by online extremism.

Third Financing, Younis Tsouli is a British young man who is considered to be a virtual terrorist under the name of “Irhabi 007” in the United Kingdom and was charged for stealing credit cards online worth of 2.5 million dollars and laundering the money to use it for webhosting Al Qaida propaganda videos and terrorist activities (Brandom, 2016).

Terrorists also create charities and non-governmental organizations to transfer funds collected from one location to another since on the internet there is no geographical boundaries. Abu Abdullah al-Maghribi, ISIS defector said “The media people are more important than the soldiers. Their monthly income is higher. They have better cars. They have the power to encourage those inside to fight and the power to bring more recruits to the Islamic State” (Miller & Mekhennet, 2015).

## What the “Social Media” has to say?

In 2016, Twitter shut down 125,000 accounts linked to Isis.

On July 2017, Facebook, Google, Microsoft and YouTube agreed to work together in order to remove terrorist, violent and extremist content from their platform.

Today Facebook has teams all over the world specialized in identifying online activities that are linked to terrorism. These teams are made up of people who speak several languages and work with the police (Taylor, 2015).

YouTube rejects terrorism and they remove any video related to violence and extremism and block the accounts responsible.

The link between social media and terrorism will remain forever since the social media is an open space for anyone and terrorists will always find one way or another to benefit from its services, social media companies should take full responsibility and keep up the good work (Taylor, 2015).

### Cyber Bullying:

Cyber bulling is another issue caused by social media. According to Kahle (2012), “Much like traditional bullying, the definition of cyber bullying differs in dimensions, but most central to the concept is that it occurs through the use of technology” (p.23). Cyber bulling can occur through media by means such as video, e-mails, messaging, or rumors. The use communication and information on another person so they can harm them physically and to threaten them. The following are some of the most common forms of cyber bullying:

1. Harassment: This can be through e-mail, SMS or social media. Bullies tend to post rumors about someone on social media and even have the tendency to use the “warn” feature on the victim’s social network in order to get the victim investigated or banned from using the social media platform. Bullies also post the victim’s personal information on the internet, putting the victim on the danger of identity theft or actions of other predators. Moreover, many bullies use malware (application for attacking) or other applications to spy on the victim or take control of the victim’s computer. This is also known as hacking. Many cyber bullies stay anonymous or use false identity while harassing the victim (Barry, 2017).
2. Impersonation: Bullies pretend to be the victim online and behave in a terrible way. Other attacks can be for example, stealing the victim’s password (or device) and pretending to be the victim while chatting with others, changing the victim’s profile in social accounts so that it is offensive and also setting up social accounts in the victim’s name (Barry, 2017).
3. Flaming: This refers to online fights via electronic messages, often expressed in vulgar and angry language.
4. Cyberstalking: This might be considered cyber bullying when it includes intimidation, vilification and persistent taunting through social media (Nuccitelli, 2015).
5. Trickery: The cyber bully tricks the victim to reveal his or her secrets or personal embarrassing information and then the bully proceeds to publish these information on social media or send it to others.

Cyber bullying is caused by many factors which include:

Retaliation: In many cases, the bully is also a victim. The bully can be bullied by his or her classmates, siblings, parents, neighbors or any member of the family. The feeling of sadness, fear, and powerlessness will lead the child to seek something that will make him or her powerful and control. Consequently, such children find a home in social media where they become bullies. Bullying someone and making others feel weak and powerless will make the bully feel strong. These people who may be perceived in real life as weak will use the internet to bully others anonymously.

Family influences: Children can become bullies because of lack of emotional support, authoritarian parenting, divorces, domestic violence and poor parental communication.

Behavior gets rewarded: Action can be rewarded and reinforced if the bullies see that they are gaining popularity and attention on the internet.

Inability to regulate emotions: Some children do not know how to manage their anger or temper. Consequently, a child may get angry at silly things and not know how to deal with his or her emotion and end up hurting others.

Jealousy: Social media can cause jealousy since people most of the time post pictures about what they have the people they are hanging out with and places that they are visiting. Some people may get jealous of this and resort to bullying that person just to feel better.

The symptoms of cyber bullying are loneliness, crying all the times, depression, loss of interest, feeling sad when looking at the phone, fear, trust issues, suicidal thoughts, mental breakdown, harming themselves, no social life and exclusion from others.

The interventions for Cyber bullying include:

Group therapy: Have people that are dealing with the same problem sit in a group and express their feelings. They would feel better if they know that others are going through the same problem.

Private therapy: Have a private session with a specialist that can help in case of depression and fear.

Parents’ involvement: It is important to let parents know what is happening. Parent can help their children by providing support and also limiting access to the internet.

Confront the bully: Sometimes, bullies do not know that their actions and words are causing harm to others. Letting them know can clear things and help solve the problem.

Moreover, confronting the bully can be seen as a sign of confidence and strength which may change the bully’s perspective of the person he is bullying.

The following are some of the tips that children can master to minimize the incidents of cyber bullying:

* Never share or give out personal information, PIN numbers, and phone number among others.
* Tell a trusted adult.
* Do not read messages by cyber bullies.
* Do not delete messages; they can be used to take action.
* Do not open a message from someone you do not know.
* Do not respond to a person who is bullying or harassing you.

Tips for parents:

* Pay attention. Know how and when your children are using the internet.
* Install blocking or filtering software.
* Encourage your child to talk to you if they are being bullied.
* Limit the time your child spends on the internet.
* Regulate when children can go online and what they can do.
* What to do if anything makes them uncomfortable.
* How to protect their personal information, stay safe in interactive environments, and behave ethically and responsibly online.

Tips for schools:

* Develop school policies for acceptable internet and cell phone use.
* Zero tolerance for bullying in any form.
* Ensure that children and young people are aware that all bullying concerns will be dealt with sensitively and effectively.
* Ensure that parents/guardians expressing bullying concerns have them taken seriously.

## How Social Media Is Bad For Children:

In the current technology-savvy population, use of social media Web sites is one of the most common activities among children as well as adolescents. Despite the fact that it keeps children in touch with technological advancements, social media use have adversely impacted on children over time. First, it leads to isolation of children. Social media creates a world withion the ordinary world. People, including children, often seclude themselves from normal face to face interactions because of the conviction that online interaction is enough. Meeting new people and chatting with familiar people has become easier with the advent of social media sites, which make people to shut people around them and focus on online community (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Moreover, children of today have no play time as they spend most of their time chatting on social media and watching videos on social Web sites. Also, social media expose children to unsuitable videos such as pornography.

Most social networks usually contain content that are often inappropriate for children. This is because most contents on social Web sites are usually user-generated and are not moderated in most cases (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Consequently, children are likely to access inappropriate contents such as pornography, videos of violence as well as luring information about use of prohibited drugs. Social media also exposes children to online sex predators. Social media sites have become a niche for sex predators who have found an effective platform for sexting. Sexting is the process through which people send, receive and also forward explicit messages, images through electronic gadgets. The internet has made it easy to distribute these messages globally, exposing children to such unsuitable information. Pedophiles have taken advantage of lack of information moderation on social web sites to lure children into their traps and eventually assault them sexually.

Moreover, social media has been linked with depression in teenagers and adolescents. High intensity of use of social media, such as Facebook, by children has led to increased incidents of depressed teenagers. Children are also exposed to harassment and cyberbulling by other Social network users (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Online harassment is one of the most popular forms of intimidation among the youths in the current world. Children are often subjected to psychological torture when they are exposed to intimidating information from other users of social networks. Consequently, children can go into depression, anxiety, isolation and at its worst commit suicide because of the level of intimidation and misinformation that they get from social media.

## The Images of "Ideal" Bodies and "Ideal Lifestyle" That Has Gotten Into People’s Heads:

Social media has become epitomic of ideal bodies and lifestyles that people would want to associate with. Everyone usually wants to be accepted. Social media has heightened the desire for people to live like their role models. For example, Facebooks and instagram has increased the desire for perfection and acceptance through likes while Tweeter has propagated the same via retweets. The higher the number of likes and retweets, the more likeable an individual is perceived to be. Social media has pushed individuals to focus more on external evaluation of their worth. Moreover, social media has been awash images of skinny models and very masculine men with protruding biceps. These images often sway many social network users into trying to mimic the lives of the models so that they can also be like them. Consequently, many people have become subject to online attack for being “too fat” because social media has set a standard that dictates how people should look or weigh.

## Counterargument:

Despite all the dangers that come with social media, it also offers some benefits to the users. Even though critics say it leads to isolation, social media leads to socialization and communication. It allows teenagers to accomplish many offline tasks online, staying connected with friends and family as well as making new friends. It enhances learning opportunities by enabling students to connect with each other and share ideas on how to go about assignments. Social media also offers important information despite being seen as a recipe for bad information. For example, it offers adolescents with crucial health information, including sexually transmitted diseases (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). As such, an individual can immensely benefit from social media when he or she uses the internet correctly.

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