



ADDRESSING CYBERBULLYING THROUGH MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY EDUCATION: A CASE FOR NIGERIA

Presented By:

Ayodeji Olonode

Social Science Researcher (Nigeria)

dejiolonode@yahoo.com

+2347033190190



INTRODUCTION

The value-neutrality of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) affords users the luxury of determining the gratification to be derived from the use of such technological devices, whether positive or adverse.

In other words, it is the end users or consumers that determine how particular technological innovation will serve them.



However, the liberal construct of the internet has in recent time birthed issues such as internet troll, internet bot, cyber stalking, cyberbullying and other forms of online harassment, which is beginning to call for the attention of researchers with respect to the nature of social interaction in computer-mediated context.



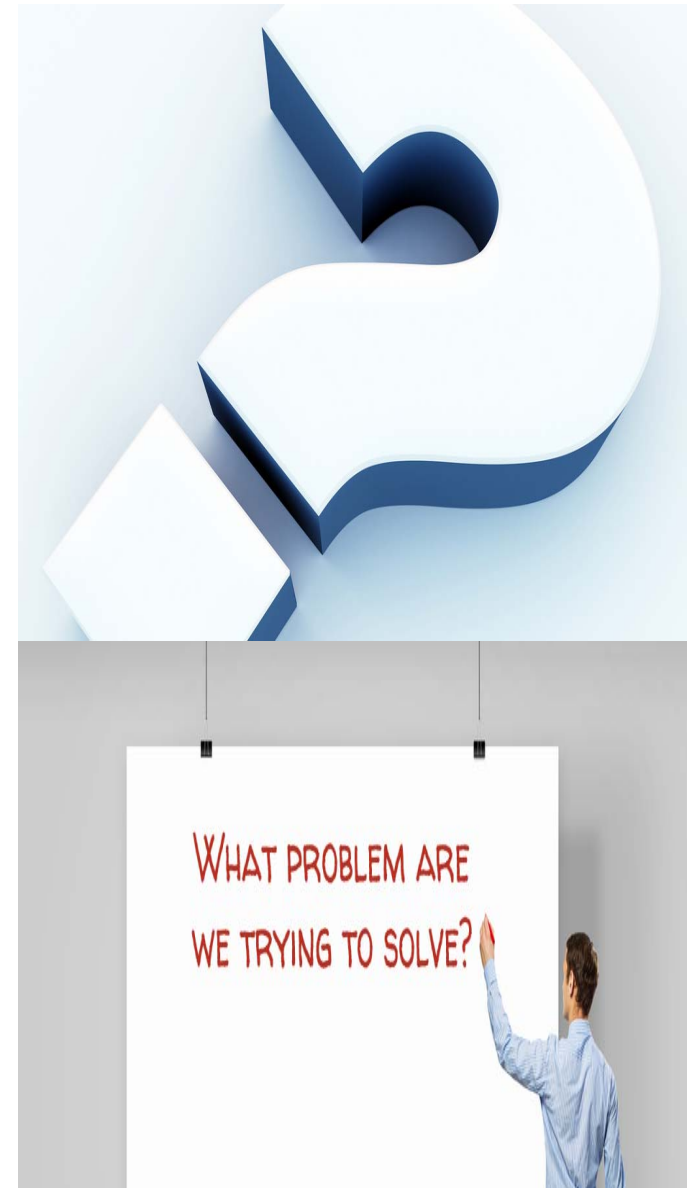
Governments and institutions are beginning to realise the threats posed by cyberbullying and other forms of online harassment (especially as it is a violation of the fundamental human right of other persons), and have consequently begun remedial campaigns and efforts in the form of country-specific anti-bullying legal frameworks and international conventions.



In Nigeria, the remedial campaign against cyberbullying has followed the trending adoption of legal frameworks, with the enactment of the Nigerian Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, which addresses issues of child pornography (Section 23), cybersquatting, (Section 25), cyber stalking (Section 24), racists and xenophobic offences (Section 26), and cyber terrorism (Section 18) amongst other acts classified as criminal acts perpetrated online.

THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

While not disparaging the roles of the country-specific and international anti-bullying policies and laws in the scuffle against cyberbullying, the allusions of an upsurge of cyberbullying based on the findings of recent studies (in Finland, Sweden, the US, in Italy, Spain & England, and in Nigeria) places a demand on researchers, governments, policy makers and other critical stakeholders for viable solutions against the cyberbullying.



With the proliferation of technological devices, the tendency of misuse of such devices and innovations gets the more heightened if the users do not understand the nature and uses of the media at their disposal



DEFINITION OF TERMS

- 1) Cyberbullying - is a new methods of bullying dispensed using technology such as social websites (MySpace, Facebook, etc.), email, chat rooms, mobile phone texting and cameras, picture messages (including sexting), IM (instant messages), and/or blogs.
- 2) Media and Information Literacy - enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of **information** and **media**, as well as to become skillful creators and producers of **information** and **media** messages in their own right.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Individual Difference, Technological Determinism and Social Responsibility Theory

- Most of the variance in the phenomenon of victimization and harassment by people appears to be due to individual differences (Postigo, Gonzalez, Montoya and Ordóñez, 2013; citing Lee, 2011; Salmivalli, 2010).
- Postigo et al (2013) opined that harassment, like other forms of social behaviour, stems from a developmental process of learning which varies from one individual to another.

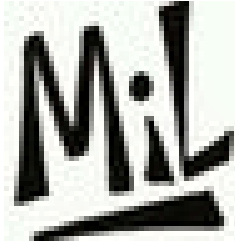
The Linkage

The concept of individual difference has been one of the major issues in computer mediated communication. Because the mode of communication is purely electronic, interaction seem impersonal, thereby giving room for assertiveness. This partly explains the underlying assumption of the technological determinism theory which presupposes that technology is a powerful and autonomous force that changes history and social order.

Media and information literacy education is therefore a sine qua non in a bid to instil a sense of responsibility in users of technological artefacts, almost in the exact same fashion that the press ensures a professional self-regulation with minimal censorship, under the social responsibility theory of the press (the normative theoretical tradition).

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Evidences abound from previous studies that cyberbullying is becoming ripe and burgeoning in different countries of the world, although the governments of different nations are already responding to the unpleasant development through strategic efforts and attempts.
- ❖ With ideology being the foundation upon which cyberbullying is established, and with the semiotic independence afforded by the Internet and social media, the need for media and information literacy (MIL) education on a global scale and as a country-specific measure becomes very necessary.



Addressing cyberbullying through media and information literacy casts a demand on both individual and corporate role players. While responsible and ethical use of the media and information is the end-in-mind for media and information literacy education for individuals, the goal for corporate role players would include strategic interventions through policy guidance and implementations.

The current form of media and information literacy education in Nigeria is dispensed basically in institutions where mass communication and media studies is taught as a course of study.



However, beyond the drip-like discharge of media and information literacy in Nigeria as noted above, some of the strategies discussed below could be given operational shots (further to this study), as part of the intervention programmes targeted at addressing the vice of cyberbullying in Nigeria. This of course requires the robust participation and inclusion of a good number of local and international role players, like the UNESCO.



SHOT 1

Inclusion of media and information literacy education as part of the deliverables of the national communication policy, which principal purpose according to Baofo (1986) is to provide a favourable framework within which communication systems and technologies can be developed and utilized in a coordinated, consistent and systematic manner for the benefit of society. The expected derivative of this combination will be the preparation of the society to deal effectively and systematically with the complex problems and issues generated by developments in communication technology at the national level.



SHOT 2

In institutions of higher learning, media and information literacy education should not be left to the Department of Mass Communication and Media Studies alone, because media and information literacy in recent time, is not a subject for professional application, but an issue of national and international relevance. Media and information literacy education and critical thinking/writing should therefore be included in the curriculum of every discipline in the higher institution.



SHOT 3

Media and information literacy education should be cascaded down to secondary schools and colleges, towards reaching teenagers and preteens, and integrating media literacy into schools curriculum, through the Federal Ministry of Education.



SHOT 4

Parents are also prime targets for media and information literacy education, as counterpart educators for their children, especially minors. Parents, as counterpart educators, should teach their children appropriate and non-appropriate content that children can share online. They should also teach their children acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours online. All these are possibilities only when parents are literate with media and information (educational broadcast focusing on media and information literacy could come handy in this instance).



SHOT 5

Taking a cue from Everett Rogers, media and information literacy should be diffused across the various sections of the society, and importantly to the grassroots.



SHOT 6

Support organisations should be established for the purposes of workshops, conferences, training and re-training of media and information literacy educators.

CONCLUSION



The onus of responsible and ethical deployment of ICT is cast on every user of the technological innovations that has graced the 21st century world, and that is exactly the gospel that media and information literacy preaches.

FINAL WORD

When used for social interaction, social networking and mobile phones can be abused by user (students, citizens, etc.) who do not have adequate media literacy about safe and ethical uses of such technology. However, with proactive media literacy initiatives citizens can be educated in such ways as to maximize opportunities and minimize risks associated with the unethical use of ICT.

THANK
YOU!

