

## THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MORALITY OF MUSLIM YOUTHS IN NIGERIA

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Research Article

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**Abstract:** The study aims at shedding light on the positive and negative effects of social media on the lives of Muslim youths' in Nigeria. although, it is an avenue to reach out to people, gather and spread information to one another in the Muslim domain. However, the youths have also lost their dignity through it, because it is another avenue for fraudulent activities. The work examines the effects of both electronic and print media on the socio-religious spheres of Muslim youths. The ability to use the media for “ networking” has played a significant role in the lives of these youths. As technology continues to evolve, including the means to connect and communicate in cyberspace, young Muslims see it as an opportunity for them to be heard. The researcher employed the use of qualitative and quantitative data analysis in carrying out this study as well as conducting structural interviews in order to elicit useful information. The research finally suggests that, despite the positive effects of social media on Muslim youths' through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram WhatsApp, e.t.c in passing meaningful information across the board its

negative effect of promoting moral decadence like character assassination, media violence, nudity, obscene movies and videos that have challenged the moral values of a practicing Muslim were not to be overlooked.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Morality, Muslim Youths' , Positive and Negative Effects.

## Introduction

Social media for decades have been useful to all and sundry, especially the youths. For this reason, most of them have used the platform in defrauding others, spreading false information, exposing their personal troubles and as well threatening the security tendencies of the country. The consequences are apparent: murdering, terrorising, intimidating, bombing of facilities, stealing others' money and property is, therefore, threatening the security of the countries around the globe (Aseiry, 2003). In a country like

Nigeria, the younger generations are growing day by day in the use of modern technology gadgets, by focusing on their negative aspects rather than the positive aspects.

However, youthful age as opined by Joe Lewis (2018) represents the period of physical and psychological developments from puberty to early childhood; the *Quran* describes it as a stage between two weaknesses. "Allah (is) the One Who created you from weakness, then made after weakness strength, then made after strength weakness and gray hair. He creates what He wills, and He (is) the All-Knower the All-Powerful." (Q30:54). Hence, every society is saddled with the responsibility to ensure the safety of its youths. The inevitability of social media cannot be overlooked, because people need to gather information, share ideas, communicate with one another easily, and as a matter of fact document issues. It is regarded as a life wire of every organization, state, or nation (Naik, 2005). Social media doubled positive and negative effects on society; for instance, social media facilitates friendship, instant communication with friends and family, and provides up to date information. While negatively, it keeps teenagers from attending to their school assignments, becoming victims of cyberbullying, hacking people' s accounts, addiction, spreading pornography, and media violence just to mention but a few. It is widely believed that through social media, Islamic ethics and generally Islamic education are disseminated to the larger part of the society. At the same time, it has been grossly abused and this is causing adverse effects on the Muslim youths.

### **Research Questions**

To assess the main effects of social media on Muslim youths in Nigeria, the research observed and as well experienced the problems and come up with this study so that solutions to the problem can be proffered by using the following questions:

**Question 1:** What are the effects of social media on the morality of Muslim Youths?

**Question 2:** Why are the Muslim youths in Nigeria vulnerable to social media?

### **Research Objectives**

This research which centers on the effects of social media on the Muslim youths in Nigeria aims at fulfilling the following objectives:

1. To gather data and information on the effects of social media on Muslim Youths in Nigeria.
2. To discuss the position and roles of youths in Islam.
3. To examine the provision of Islam on morality and its positive effects on youths in the society.
4. To identify and analyze the youths' abuse and misuse of the media in Nigeria.
5. To recommend positive ways of exploring social media in solving problems of immorality in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Social Media**

The term Social media' refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue (Trisha 2012).Kaplan and Haelein in their perspective explained that social media include web-based and mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue. It is a group of internet-based applications that build on ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content

(Kaplan and Haelein, 2010). Sam Mozee (2013) further stated that social media includes such tools as electronic blogs, audio/video tools (e.g, YouTube), internet chat rooms, cellular and computer texting, and social networking sites. Waleed M. and Mohd S. (2014) opined that social networking exists to provide communication among people regardless of the distance, making it open to people easily, share information, files and pictures, and videos, create blogs and send messages, and conduct real-time conversations. Having examined different submissions from these scholars, I opine that Social Media is a social arena where all and sundry communicate with each other, share messages privately and publicly and as well post information regarding one's present and experience(s).

### **Definition of Morality**

Morality has been defined by different scholars in various ways. Some of their views point of morality is as follows:

“ Morality is the norm, code of rules, and principles of human conduct at personal, interpersonal, and societal levels. It determines right and wrong actions (do and don'ts) and carries with it consequences of man's choice of actions. (Asaju, 1997). In the view of Aderibigbe, it is shared rules of conduct directing what should and should not be done by certain individuals under specified circumstances” . ( Aderibigbe, 1997).

The two definitions cited above, indicate that morality constitutes an important aspect of human life. Most of these definitions draw a pattern on how humans can exhibit actions with good attitudes.

### **Position of Youth in Islam**

Islam attaches premium credence to youths and regarded them important in society. Major references were made to them in the *Quran* and *Ahadith* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). This simply indicates that youths have been on the frontier level in the propagation of Islam. However, Islamic history proved that most of the Prophets sent by Almighty Allah were commissioned during their youthful ages up to the seal of them all- Muhammad bn Abdullah (p.b.u.h). Most of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) who worked tirelessly and ceaselessly in championing the course of Islam, and propagated it to be widely accepted today in the globe were youths. Mention can be made of Alli bn Abi Talib, Zayd bn Thabit, and others. Prophet Ibrahim at his youthful age challenged the idolaters of his time (Q21:51-68). Equally, we have another resourceful youth among the Prophets of Allah who rejected and resisted being seduced by the wife of his master (Q12:22-35). The ‘ people of the Cave’ were also fascinating in their story where Almighty Allah described them as a set of young-persons that believed in Allah, they fled their town for refuge from their disbelieving folk to the cave (Q18:9-26). In a tradition of the prophet, he describes how Allah adores the upright youth where he said on the authority of Uqbal Ibn ‘ Amir; “ Your Lord is delighted (in the way that suits Him) about a youth, who does not have the youthful (lustful) desire.” ( *Al-Musnad*, Imam Ahmad, vol.2, 151)

The aforementioned instances point to the fact that Islam cherishes youths and they must be of impeccable characters. Therefore, youths are teased to be upright in their dealings, worship Almighty Allah, and also dedicate their precious moments to the services of Islam. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) in this vein gave a glad tiding of having special accommodation on the day of requital to any youth who, throughout his youthful age till death remains a sincere, resolute and committed believer. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said:

Allah will give shade to seven on the day when there will be no shade but His. They are; a just Ruler, a youth who has been brought up in the worship of Allah sincerely from his childhood;.. (*SahihBukhari*, Vol2, 660)

Islam by divine has an architectural design of life for youths so as not to be led astray by devilish tendencies. However, Muslim youths are expected to play an important role in the advancement of Islam.

### Islamic Teachings on Morality

In the Arabic terminology, it is called: *Akhlaq*(singular, *khuluq*) and is translated into English as ethics” . Another Arabic word used interchangeably to *Akhaq* is *Adab*which means manner, attitude, behaviour, and the etiquette of putting things in their proper place. Scholars argue that there are some essential differences between *Akhlaq*and *Adab* in terms of application and source. This is because *Akhlaq* (ethics) indicates the “ moral philosophy, while *Adab*(morality) signifies the actual practices of moral philosophy. Al- Farabi(d.950) was to be known as the earliest great Muslim philosopher who acknowledged the intervention of *akhlaq* or character with human action. He indeed defines Islamic ethics or *‘Ilm al-akhlaqas* “ a science that studies the state of the human soul” . Al-Ghazali defined Islamic ethics or *Ilm al-akhlaqas* “ The way to acquire the well being of the soul and to guard it against the vices. He further stated that man consists of two forms:

1. *Khalq* – refers to the physical form of mankind
2. *Akhlaq* – refers to the spiritual form of mankind

Thus, *akhlaq* in the view of Al-Ghazali as quoted by Rahim (2013) is rooted in the soul and manifested through man's actions. According to Al-Qurtubi (d.1273C.E), the word *khuluq-al-awwalin* (Rahim) as mentioned in the Quran where Almighty Allah says: "This is not but the custom of the former peoples" (Q26:137) means: "the ancient customs and it includes religion, character, ideology, or doctrine. The Holy Qur'an reaffirms the truth of all previous revelations, itself comprises of all truth for the whole of mankind for all times, colours, creed, and languages” (Abdur-Rahman Doi,1981). James Michener opined that “ *Quran* is remarkably down-to-earth in its discussion of a good life (Ahmed et.al 2007). The *Qur’ anis* undoubtedly the Book of morals. In it, we find comprehensive moral guidance which can assure human progress to the highest pinnacle in every sphere of human life and activity (Paramole, 2000).

The holy prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h) indicated that good morals are the conditions for the authenticity of *Iman* (faith) affirms

He who believes in Allah and the Last Day of Judgment is forbidden to cause any harm to his neighbor, is to be kind to his guests especially the strangers, and is to say the truth or else abstain” ( *Sahih Bukhari*,1987, *hadith* no.6163).

Islam encourages Muslims to have a good relationship with Allah and as well to establish a solid moral foundation with human beings. It is *Fardkifaayah*for parents to instill moral, ethical and fundamental teachings of *Al-Qur’ an* in their children, because it will make the children learn from tender age how to make themselves responsible for their actions.

## **EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MORALITY OF MUSLIM YOUTHS IN NIGERIA**

Social media has become a daily habit for youth in Nigeria. It is a website where people post their personal information. In a bid to have the opportunity of knowing people in a speedy and trouble-free way, social media has also facilitated teenagers to have societal or physical mobility boundaries to make and preserve relationships with their friends and families. The youth subculture in neighborhoods and in Islamic organizations provides long-standing examples of social media. Most internet users probably visit social network sites daily or at least every other day, and young people lead the park (Ofcom, 2008).

### **Positive Effects of Social Media**

According to Mona Eltaway (2008) in his article, “ the internet, blogs, and social networking sites now give voices to those most marginalized in the Middle East today- young people and women.” However, social media has posted good results in some ways for Muslim youths of Nigeria. Specifically, social media has helped the youths in terms of awareness, events, and activities that are going on in the society which are promptly brought to the notice of the populace through social media. Importantly, youth through their initiative have utilized social media like Facebook, Twitter via modern devices like iPhone, Blackberry to establish an Arabic Facebook page for those who need some psychological or social advice. Some of the positive effects of social media on Muslim youth in Nigeria are as follows:

#### **1. Increase in Learning Opportunities**

Social media had presented a huge opportunity for mankind to reach out to people who may not understand anything about Islam or Muslims. It has also provided an avenue for Muslim youths to learn by asking questions and teaching other Muslim youths in the country through social media. It has also presented to the youth countless opportunities to achieve spiritual superiority through *Quranic* learning on Facebooking, Instagram e.t.c before Almighty Allah. Muslim youths today have developed countless ways of giving online courses in Arabic, *Tawheed*, and many academic disciplines through the use of social media. Islamic internet websites provide question and answer segments that are closely regulated by certified clerics like Dr. Abu Aminah Bilal Philips, Dr. Z. A Naik and Mufti Menk to mention but few.

#### **2. Ease of *Da'wah* Activities**

The Muslim youths in Nigeria use advanced media and other electronic means of communication today to propagate Islam where billions of youth around the globe get to know more about the Islamic creed. This new means created another mode of *dawah* different from the early Islamic period where *Sahabahs* and other Muslims ride Horses or made use of other local transportation means to get in contact with to nations in order to call them to Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad was reported to have said: “ If Allah guides a person through you, it is better for you than all that is on earth.” ( ).

#### **3. Contact with more Muslims**

Social interaction is one of the intrinsic natural compositions of man as a social being that cannot live in absolute isolation (Rabiu,2014). This, however, translates the extent to which man needs to socialize with other fellow humans as a prerequisite of joyous living. Maintenance of social or kinship

ties is one of the obligatory and highly recommended duties in Islam (Q17:26-28) that attracts unquantifiable rewards as well as resulting to increase in provision, extension, or protection of one's life span (Sahih Bukhari, *adaab al-Mufrad*,10-13). All these are achievable through the use of social media.

#### **4. Dispelling Negative Stereotypes About Islam**

With the help of social media, Muslim youths use it as a tool to discard misinformed notions about Islam. In this aspect, they also counteract the growing anti-Muslim backlash created by the western world through media

### **NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

#### **1. Promotion of Indecency**

Islam encourages Muslims to imbibe certain manners to better the *ummah* in general, and one of such is the lowering of the gaze as stipulated in the following verse:

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them..(Q24:30)

Today, most of our youth are used to the posting of their naked pictures on social media such as Facebook, Blackberry messenger, twitter, Instagram as well as other electronic communication mediums. This has exposed many youths to illicit activities like fornication. This has equally resulted in a baby carrying a baby on social media.

#### **2. Unguarded Utterances**

The “ freedom of speech and expression” irrespective of its effect on the individual and society at large has caused several negative tendencies to its users which include the Muslim youths, in particular, tendencies such as the act of engaging in illicit discussion with the opposite sex and all that care to participate, public insult/abuse of individuals via these electronic means, display of illicit pictures of oneself and foes, all these are done in the name of “ freedom of speech and expression. Recently, a video of Muslim youth (Khalifa Mahmud NasiruDoogo) was posted on Facebook claiming that *salat* is not compulsory and it means nothing in Islam (Facebook.com, 2018).

Abu Hurayrah reported that the messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) said, “ ..He who believes in Allah and the last day, let him speak good or remain silent” (Hadith 15 of An-Nawawi: reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

#### **3. The radicalization of young clerics**

Some upcoming Islamic scholars had turned the religion that preaches the best of manners and forbids the utterances of foul languages into radical religion. This has created a misconception that portrays Islam as a religion of violence. Today, western Media have launched a campaign against terror by referring to these clerics or Muslims as terrorists, “ extremists, and radical Islamists” . The negative impacts of social media, in general, are numerous, however, is not without its advantages and roles play in the Muslim lives and Islam as a religion.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted through qualitative and quantitative methods to confirm the existing information and relevant data regarding the effects of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram on the Muslim Youths in Nigeria. The results of these methods detailed the description of the information gathered. The researcher adopted these methods to have concise information on how social media had impacted positively and negatively on the morality of Muslim youths in Nigeria. Finally, interviews and surveys were used as tools for collecting information and data; statistical analysis was also employed in this research.

## STUDY POPULATION

A 20 Question survey was given to about 315 respondents to administer the effects of social media on Muslim youth. The participants were drawn from all levels of youths in different Islamic societies in Nigeria like Nasfat, Ansarud-Deen, Qareeb, Nawarud-Deen, and Asmuf. They were all sampled because each of them either possessed Smartphones or laptops. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire along with his assistants almost immediately they were retrieved from the respondents.

## FINDINGS

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondent**

S/N	GENDER	Percentage %
	Male	126
	Female	189
	<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>
2	<b>Age of Respondents</b>	
	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
	12 – 20	42
	21 – 30	22
	31-35	26
		<b>100</b>
	<b>Marital status of the respondent</b>	
S/N	Status	Percentage %
1.	Single	63
2.	Married	22
3.	Divorce	10
4.	Widow	5

**Table 2: How often Muslim youths in Nigeria use social media**

Period of use	Frequency	Percentage %
1- 2 hours	21	6.7
2-6 hours	108	34.3
4-8 hours	148	47.0
8- 12 hours	38	12.1
Total	<b>315</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 3: Do social media make positive effects on Muslim youths in Nigeria?**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	126	40
No	189	60
Undecided	-	-
Total	315	100

**Source: Researchers analysis of field study, 2018**

The table above shows that 126 (40%) of the respondents agree that social media has impacted on the Muslim youth positively while 189 (60%) depicts that it has affected them negatively.

**Table 4:How often do Muslim youths abuse and misuse social media in Nigeria?**

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
Unguarded statements	135	42.8
Promotion of indecency	90	28.6
Radicalization	90	28.6
Total	<b>315</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Researcher’ s analysis of field study, 2018**

The data in table 4 indicate that 90 (28.6%) of the respondents believed that Muslim youth abuse the social media through the promotion of indecency while 90 (28.6%) respectfully confirmed that radicalization is another means the youth use in the abuse of social media and 135 (42.8%) indicates that unguarded statements are the highest mode in which they abuse the media.

**Table 5:What kind of information do you usually derive from social media?**



<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Job related information	45	14.3
Making new friends	45	14.3
Updates from family and friends	135	42.8
Entertainment	90	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Researcher’ s Analysis of field study, 2018**

Table 5 shows that 45 (14.3%) out of the respondents indicates that they visit social media to get information on the job-related issue, 45 (14.3) also shows that youth access the social media to make new friends, 90 (28.6%) stay online either listening to music, watching movies or playing games while 1325 (42.8%) indicates they visit the social media to get the latest information about family and friends.

**Table 6: Social media has changed the communication habits of Muslim youths**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	45	14.3
Agree	134	42.5
Strongly disagree	91	28.9
Disagree	45	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researchers Analysis of Field Survey, 2018**

The table above shows that 45(14.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that social media have changed the communication habits of Muslim youths in Nigeria, 134 (42.5%) agreed to the statement, 91 (28.9%) of the respondents strongly disagree while 45 (14.3) disagree with the statement.

## **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

The study reveals that social media have been helpful to Muslim youths in Nigeria. More than half of the respondents attest to the fact. They have made a reasonable achievement in terms of using social media positively.

Again, over two-third of the participants agreed to have misused social media for flimsy benefits. This shows that the abuse of social media is common among Muslim youths. The sample also shows that the youth often use Facebook platform then other platforms.

However, it is important to note that 68% of the youth who use social media frequently is just for them to receive updates from friends and family through the Facebook platform. This study shows that few Muslim youths use social media to propagate religious teachings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The efforts made in this research so far centered on the positive and negative effects of social media gadgets on the morality of Muslim youth in Nigeria. The youth mostly use social media for communicating between their friends and families. However, the fact that most of the youths were born in this era of modern technology, they find it difficult to disengage themselves from using it frequently. The research also shows that they depend on it so much for the series of positive benefits they gain from it such as research and reaching out to friends and family. It is our ardent hope that heeding to the undermentioned recommendations would considerably help in changing the moral condition of the Muslim youth in Nigeria understudy and beyond for the better

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following propositions were made after the study:

1. The government of Nigeria should enact a regulatory policy or law in the form of Media ethics. This law is meant to address what kind of information is to be displayed by social media users. Equally, the government should work on having a kind of ‘ Internet Firewall package to regulate website accessibility in the country as operative in some countries like Saudi Arabia.
2. The youth should always put Allah first in whatever they are doing and should not allow themselves to be controlled by satanic forces through electronic gadgets to protect themselves from sex pests and pedophiles.
3. Parents and guardians should as well exercise some control over what their children and wards engage in online as a form of a check when they are at home. An example of such was the admonition of Prophet Luqman to his son.
3. The findings of this study should be used in policy formulation at all levels of learning where youths are partaking such as religious gatherings, schools, and government agencies that deal with youth.
4. Conduct new studies that will shed light on the role of social media on the morality of Muslim youth and suggesting new methods to curb the menace.
5. It is hope that this research will further educate students on the positive use of social media and avoiding its negativities in all ramifications.

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