

Freedom of speech and social media

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



Social media presents a valuable outlet for free expression. However, users of social media tend to go beyond the mere act of expressing their freedom to posting insinuating statements and insults. This signals the onset of the entire problem. Even though social media presents bloggers and other users with the opportunity of expressing their freedom, integration of the concept of character and civility is paramount.

Civility refers to the application of courtesy or politeness in speech or behavior as it is the case with most formal conversations. Even though the Internet and social media has provided an avenue for users to exercise their freedom of expression, it is evident that exercising the freedom occurs at the expense of another fundamental freedom, the right to privacy (Swigger 1). The essay argues that the social media is a valuable outlet for exercising the freedom of expression.

Speakers including corporate gadflies, cultural critics, and political candidates among others get an extraordinary opportunity when communicating their opinion regarding anything on the Internet. Therefore, their individual thoughts are made available to the global audience in an easier and faster way than it was observed before the emergence of social media platforms. That opportunity has been seized by the growing and large group of Internet users. Some studies indicate that the outcome is the expression of speech exhilarating.

In it, they see nothing else rather than an instrument of community restoration and competition of democracy while other research findings on the topic find the speech communicated on social media platforms as

frightening and offensive. Lurid threats, hate speech, and pornography among others flourish alongside social media debates over the country's political stability and democracy as well as exchange of opinions concerning fly-fishing in the governing regime.

This phenomenon has triggered mounting pressure to limit the nature speech social media users sometimes engage in or rather create systems that can filter out the content communicated on the Internet to remove offensive material. Thus, this paper also examines some of the social and legal issues identified in the growing struggle between the proponents of control and filtration and those supporting free speech on social media platforms.

Two centuries have elapsed when the world was defined by religions, borders, tribes, states, and nations, there still exists some sort of confusion amongst people regarding how to the existing divide between cultural traditions, empirical facts, science, and spiritual beliefs that demands humans to put their faith in things they cannot measure, prove, and see. This issues becomes eminent when social media is combined with the so called "blind faith," something that is almost inevitable digital footprint, and also the need for self-expression, truth, and equality (Fox and Jennifer 168).

But today, it should be acknowledged that online platforms and communications facilitate discussions that were earlier on held in the corner café, the plaza, or in court. Studies indicate that the power of social media platforms is two-fold, based on the governing regime because the Internet

has in no time revitalized the grassroots of a democratic community of readers and writers.

Despite the fact that social media platforms can claim unequivocal democratic benefits such as undermining the censorship of undemocratic governments that attempt to repress and control public opinion, in the context liberal regimes, instead, the emergence of millions of disjointed chat rooms in the whole world lead to the split of and enormous and politically concentrated mass audiences into a large figure of divided issue publics. In the current public spheres, debates carried out on the social media promotes political communication particularly when news reporters discuss about the quality of press through political magazines and national newspapers.

Putting all the above issues aside, it could still be argued that social media platforms play an integral part in scrutinizing the world events since it enables a more open and easier access to interpretation. Social media users are devoid of cues when communicating online. Their intent is also impossible to decipher and their tone not easy to comprehend (Ellison et al 858).

John Blossom, an industry analyst, suffices to be one of the bloggers that use the social media to express specific ideas with the objective of communicating the ideas to the public. Blossom finds it necessary to identify and acknowledge unsung heroes such as Vero. In his blog, That Canadian Girl, Blossom reiterates the important aspects of Vero's blog such as the ability to combine professional and personal topics (Brynco 1). From the outset, it is clear that Blossom's application of the social media in expressing

individual opinion was appropriate. However, there are incidences where other bloggers and users of social sites express their feelings and opinions in a negative way thereby creating public unrest.

In her article, PSA and Social Media, Gaul stated that it is impossible for people to prevent access to the social media or social networking each day (1). According to Gaul, it is almost certain that an individual will gain access to the social media or social networking (1). The wide accessibility and inexpensive aspects associated with the social media imply that many people can access the social media and social networking sites without incurring hefty expenses.

Consequently, the social media grants anyone the opportunity to publish and post any content that she or he deems relevant. At the same time, the social media and social networking sites grants all users the opportunity to access information as and when required if the information is already available on the target platform (Gaul 1). It is evident that the social media provides access to substantial amounts of information.

The other truth associated with the information is the fact that the rationale of the creators of the sites is to ensure that the information remains on the sites forever unless the need to delete such information arises. This elicits the need for social media users and bloggers to consider the specific information that they post on social sites or upload on social video sites such as YouTube (Gaul 2).

The intended purpose of social media sites was to increase the worldwide visibility of information by availing a means of communication that would act as a bridge between the communicating parties. In essence, the social media acts as a point of contact between the different members of a society.

Consequently, publishing and posting helpful information on such sites would be helpful to the other members of the society. However, relaying contentious information has the impact of eliciting unrest among the members of the society thereby leading to other adverse consequences.

The Presidency of George W. Bush brought forth millions of bloggers that wanted to express their outrage to the dubious projects of the Bush Administration (Brundidge et al. 741). During his tenure as the President, the U. S. invested in dubious projects such as the Iraqi Invasion, warrantless eavesdropping, and harsh interrogations, retrograde strategies towards emergency management and climate change, and excessive secrecy (Brundidge et al. 748). The result was an expanding blogosphere where bloggers took to the

Internet to express their outrage to the projects. Even though the force presented by the bloggers did not appear to be strong at the onset, the situation took a different turn in the end. The legal blogosphere turned out to be a massive force with substantial influence. It comprised of influential online communities characterized by vast organizing and fundraising capabilities. The blogosphere also incorporated different arguments and voices as well as reporting and investigative journalism (Boehlert 59).

The online movement yielded the netroots, a combination of grassroots and the Internet, that later had a massive influence in Barack Obama's victory in 2008 (Boehlert 59). In the case, it is evident that the influential members of the blogosphere capitalized on the freedom of expression granted by social networks and the social media to communicate significant and sensitive information to other individuals with the objective of getting rid of the poor leadership decisions evident in Bush Administration.

The use of social media leads to offline relationship problems and stress. Studies indicate that close to 31% of social media users in their teenage have fought with each other due to online events (Sidani et al. 323). In 2016, research results showed that the adolescent's overuse of Internet sites and social media platforms can limit the chances of success in people's relationships in their later life because communication is a barrier to the development of conflict resolution awareness and skills of interpersonal cues (Sidani et al. 326). Research also found that as an individual get more following on his or her Facebook page, the more stressful such people become for using the social media account. Social media experts in their studies say that " active

Twitter use leads to greater amounts of Twitter-related conflict among romantic partners, which in turn leads to infidelity, breakup, and divorce" (Sidani et al. 331).

People are enticed by social media to waste their precious time. An empirical survey on the users of social media platforms particularly those aged sixteen years to sixty-four years established that on average, they spent 1.72 hours

on the social media daily, this time when estimated against the total time spent online represents approximately 28% (Salmon et al. 5).

Amongst the participants, close to 36% identified social media platforms and Internet sites as the "biggest waste of time," compared to shopping (9%), watching TV (23%), and fantasy sports (25%) (Salmon et al. 5). When alerted to new activity on the social media like Facebook message or a new tweet, the users of such account take an average of between 20-25 minutes to return to the original job. Research on the 30% of all the surveyed cases, it was established that returning to the original duty took close to two hours (Salmon et al. 5).

However, despite the concerns raised on the social media users in this discussion, increased interaction and social engagement turn out to be the main benefits of social media and social networking. However, incidences of historical tragedies remind us of the devastating impact of social networking on the society. The incidences reveal that the contemporary society lacks civility and is on the forefront in the expression of anger and hostility. It is evident that majority of such incidences emanate from the information that users of social networking sites obtain from the sites (Ellison et al. 855).

To address the adverse effects of negative social media comments on the readers of such information, choosing civility should be imperative on the part of the users of the social media and networking sites. Choosing civility entails the implementation of considerable conduct and proper online behavior. Under considerable conduct, it is imperative that online bloggers and other users of social networking sites should think the best.

Thinking the best is detrimental towards enabling bloggers and other online users to evaluate information before deciding to publish and post it online. By so doing, incidences where people capitalize on the freedom of expression to post insinuating comments will not be common. This will contribute towards eliminating historical hostilities that emanate from public reactions on posted contentious information. Online bloggers should also respect negative responses even when they are subtle.

It is also proper behavior for bloggers to refrain from idle complaints posted by other bloggers. Apparently, the objective of some bloggers is to post insinuating comments that would attract negative interest from other bloggers. By avoiding such comments, the bloggers that post the comments would fail to attain their objective of creating unrest among the public. Considerate conduct also requires bloggers to avoid shifting blame and responsibility to others.

It is the responsibility of all users of social sites and other networks to ensure the appraisal of positive comments and the dismissal of insinuating comments. Apparently, when a blogger responds to an insinuating comment with another inciting one, the chain of negative comments expands thereby sparking unnecessary interest among other bloggers. The occurrence of hostilities because of the comments therefore turns out to be the joint efforts of all bloggers that took part in the "idle" conversation. In essence, considerate character requires all bloggers to refrain from speaking ill of other persons, organizations, or events.

Before deciding to use social networks, several issues should ring in the mind of a blogger. From the onset, the blogger should identify the primary goal of using the site. In the event that the identified goal is negative, the blogger should refrain from using the blog with immediate effect. The blogger should also determine the sites that the target audience uses on a regular basis. Identifying the site will enable the blogger to deliver the information to the target audience within the shortest time possible. As a blogger, one should also find answers to the two questions: What can you offer and how will you assess your use?

The social media presents a good platform for free expression. The use of the social media is a rising trend across the globe. People find the social media as the most reliable platform for expressing their feelings, concerns, and ideas among other issues. However, the effective use of the social media in communicating the needs of bloggers to the target audience is mandatory. This emanates from the fact that comments on contentious issues turn out to be inciting to the society thereby creating public unrest on some occasions.

Hostilities from the hatred between bloggers of different opinions turn out to be the result of such heated online conversations. Bloggers should also attain a balance between the right to privacy and the freedom of expression in using the social media. Assessing whether the content will spark negative reactions among other online bloggers before deciding on whether to post such information is necessary in avoiding the inappropriate use of the social media in expressing our issues.