Awareness and Compliance with Social Media Regulations by Undergraduates of Select Universities in South East Nigeria

[1]Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and [2]Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

[1]Department of Mass Communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria and [2]Department of Mass Communication, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
Scopus ID: 58537067200
E-mail: kingsoce@gmail.com, +2348037561643 /jammyguanah@yahoo.com & jammy.guanah@uat.edu.ng, Tel: +2348032133664
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6364-7993

Keywords:	Abstract:
	The emergence of the social media has put the power of communication in the hands of individuals. This exposes the online platform to lots of abuses. To curb this, the government has come up with different forms of regulations to check the abuse of the Internet which has become the order of the day. Since most of the Internet and social media users are youth most of whom are in the universities, this work looked at the awareness and compliance of these students towards the different social media regulations. It is guided by three research objectives and the diffusion of Innovation theory. Out of a population of 218, 949, the researcher, using the Taro Yamane's sample selection formula, selected a sample of 500 respondents from the population. Using the multi-stage sampling procedure, the researcher randomly selected three states out of the five states in the region. In the same manner, three universities were selected from each of the three states - one federal, one state and one private university. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The finding showed that there is low awareness and low compliance to the regulations. The researcher therefore recommends a shift from the communication paradigm employed by the government in reaching the youths who use the social media. The government should also employ the use of the social media in official communication especially when the youths are the target audience.

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Introduction

Communication, like every other activity of human beings, is naturally interconnected with other facets of social life which it influences and is also influenced by them (Daramola, 2003; Baran, 2010). Therefore, like other social activities, communication is usually regulated through the moral and ethical strictures of the society to ensure that individuals and groups communicate in a manner that do not undermine the overall societal peace and stability. This is the basis for laws and ethical codes made to regulate communications of all kinds in the society (Momoh, 2003). However, the advent of the Internet with its radical disruption of the conventional communication landscape has significantly affected the society's ability to regulate communication activities (Navetta, 2011; Dicker, 2013). Its gateless nature and the latitude it offers for anonymous usage make regulation difficult and at times practically impossible. Thus, the web becomes a potentially anarchic sphere where society's norms are under continuous and relentless assault from users who may feel safely shielded from the moral and legal censures of the society (Dreyfus, 1998; Armstrong & Forde, 2003; Navetta, 2011; Davenport, 2012). Hence, Guanah (2018) notes that one of the issues that social media, which are derivatives of the Internet, have thrown up in the international communication scene recently is that of "fake news" perpetuation. Today, fake news is so rampant, and it is difficult to regulate the social media.

Data from behavioural studies show that humans tend more to obey rules when they are positively or negatively motivated; positive motivation by way of reward and negative motivation by way of sanction (Obilade, 1979; Omoegbe, 1994). In the absence of such motivation (particularly negative motivation) in the online environment, defiance becomes probable. Against this backdrop, it became significant to study the awareness and attitude of university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria to the online communication laws. More than ever before, the Internet has given people who otherwise would not have had such control over communication, the ability to truly communicate. As noted by Abaji (2009):

> The Internet now ensures that individuals and institutions can, at minimal cost, become media gatekeepers. Any Internet-literate user can now set up personal sites for news publication as well as video and sound streaming. This is what is meant by independent or alternative journalism - a new movement coming as a challenge to the monopolistic domination of the traditional mass media platforms by few rich individuals and corporations (p.348).

The gatekeeper/audience divide is thus effectively eliminated since people with Internet connections instantly take on the roles of both

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

information providers and creators. This liberalization also suggests that there are little regulations in the Internet sphere, since a multitude of individuals from around the globe freely create information without any accountability to one another.

Put differently, users are their own bosses because there is no hierarchical gatekeeping structure as in traditional media (Petley, 2003; Abaji, 2009). The aforementioned implications for Internet-related communication rules mean that it becomes exceedingly challenging, if not impossible, to ensure reasonable compliance. Their sense of personal responsibility may be undermined because users operate as crowds rather than as institution-based professionals in traditional media, and because they may be anonymous. This could have an impact on users' consciousness, or even awareness of the relevant norms (Navetta, 2011; Dicker, 2013; Omekwu, 2016). Due to the aforementioned factors, which significantly restrict effective surveillance, the state's ability to enforce these applicable norms is severely hampered.

Surveillance for the sake of law enforcement requires that the potential offenders be identifiable in terms of personality and location - two elements of identity that are often undermined by the very nature of the Internet (Adeniran, 2008; Mayer, 2009; Davenport, 2012; Omekwu, 2016). Yet communications that happen online are as much subject to the law as the communications that go on in the traditional

media and in interpersonal situations; in other words, there are no different standards for these categories of communication (Longe *et al*, 2007; Omekwu, 2016). Defamation, privacy, sedition, copyright, official secrets, and contempt of court are a few examples of traditional communication laws. All of this hold true for both traditional media and the Internet (Longe et al., 2007). The need to safeguard the public and individuals from potential harm that certain forms of communication may cause led to the development of these communication regulations (Momoh, 2003). On the other hand, while it has been easier to ensure conformity with traditional media, this is obviously not the case with new media. This consideration is made more urgent in Nigeria where the Internet culture has gained much impetus in the past couple of years. Statistics shows that Internet access has been on a steady rise in the country; as at June 30 2017, it stood at 91,598,757 representing 47.7% of the population (Internet World Stats, 2017). For social media, the Internet platform that majorly affords users the opportunity to originate and share content, over 19.5million access was recorded as at June 30, 2017 with Facebook claiming the lion's share with 16,000,000 users amounting to 89.05% of the social media penetration in the country (Internet World Stats, 2017).

The momentum of Internet penetration in Nigeria will be better appreciated if attention is paid to the fact that between 2000 and 2011,

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

number of users grew from 200, 000 to 45,039,711 amounting to 0.1% and 26.5% of the population respectively. Thus, between 2000 and 2017, there was more than 915, 000 per cent increase in Internet access in the country! (Amaefule, 2012). All this makes it all the more necessary that users should be aware of and comply with the laws guiding such communications. Incidentally, the large chunk of Internet users in Nigeria is the youth. Students, both in secondary and postsecondary education, make up a sizeable portion of Nigeria's youth Internet users (Salako & Tiamiyu, 2007). In contrast to their secondary school peers, Okoye (2008) notes that students in postsecondary institutions have "far more access" to the Internet because they are generally more financially and culturally independent, giving them more leverage (in terms of resources and freedom) to do so. Furthermore, the tertiary school students are likely to have more academic and even social needs to attend to on the Internet. However, the fact that young people constitute a larger segment of Internet users in the country makes the question of compliance with the law even more imperative considering the characteristic restiveness of people of such age bracket. Such restiveness implies that these people are usually adventurous and potentially defiant (Nwangwu, 2007; Okoye, 2008). Thus, it became relevant to investigate the extent of awareness and nature of attitude of these young users to the online communication laws.

Statement of the Problem

The absence of regulation and control in online communication renders the Internet susceptible to abuses of all kinds such that the legal and ethical norms that should guide such communications come under threat (Dreyfus, 1998; Armstrong & Forde, 2003; Longe *et al*, 2007; Adeniran, 2008; Mayer, 2009; Davenport, 2012). Experience has shown that because the Internet is uncontrolled, cyberspace has developed into a seemingly chaotic area where all types of communications are possible. Majority of the Internet users in Nigeria are young people. Given their characteristic restiveness and tendencies towards recklessness and adventures (Okoye, 2008), one may become concerned that the latitude offered by the Internet for unchecked activities may come under constant abuse by these youngsters. Therefore, the question is, to what extent do young people in Nigeria comply with the legal regulations regarding online communications?

Objectives of the Study

This study assessed the awareness and attitude of university undergraduate students in the South-East Nigeria to the online communication laws. Specifically, the following objectives guide the study:

i. To assess the level of awareness of laws guiding online communications among university undergraduates in South East Nigeria;

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

ii. To find out the attitude of university undergraduates in South East Nigeria towards the online communication laws;

iii. To assess the extent of compliance with the laws guiding online communications among the undergraduates; and

Research Questions

1. What is the level of awareness of laws guiding online communications among university undergraduates in South East Nigeria?

2. What is the attitude of university undergraduates in South East Nigeria towards these online communication laws?

3. To what extent do the undergraduates comply with the laws guiding online communication?

Conceptual Review
Online Communication: An Overview

Online communication refers to communication done via the Internet or the new media (Nelson, 2011). New media has not been definitely and satisfactorily defined because the term does not exactly refer to any particular type of communication hardware but to a certain kind of functionality. In other words, the term is used more in reference to a kind of communication process than in reference to any piece of communication technology (Uzuegbunam, Duru & Ekwenchi, 2015). However, new media has been generally seen as those Internet-based communication platforms that differ from the traditional media principally due to their user control features, interactivity, convergence and flexibility (Uzuegbunam, et al, 2015).

The above features mean that the new media, unlike the traditional media, lends itself more to control by the user who not only decides what to consume but is also in the position to generate what others consume. It also means that a user is relating horizontally with other users with whom he/she interacts; implying that feedback is immediate (Baran, 2010; Melson, 2011). In explaining new media, Nelson (2011) observes that new media platforms include: Internet publishing (books, newspapers and magazine), Social media (blogs, e-mail, SMS), Internet broadcasting (online radio and television) and Internet audio and video streaming. Therefore, any form of communication conducted via any of the new media's platforms is considered online communication. Put another way, it describes the vast array of communication activities carried out through the use of the Internet.

Nigeria's Cybercrime Act 2015

According to Teplinsky (2013), the term cybercrime is used to refer both to such traditional crimes as extortion, fraud, forgery, identity theft, and child exploitation that are committed over electronic networks and information systems as well as to crimes unique to electronic networks such as hacking and denial of service attacks. It implies an act via the Internet that takes advantage of an unsuspecting victim or a situation where one gains advantage at the expense of another. Nigeria's Cybercrimes

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Act 2015 is the country's legislative response to cybercrime; crime-related issues that can emanate from online communication. The Act is made up of 59 sections, divided into 8 parts. The Part III deals with offences that constitute cybercrime and penalties thereof.

Legal Internet Literacy

Legal Internet literacy is a sub-literacy under the broader concept of legal literacy. Legal Internetliteracy has been defined "as the ability of average skilled web 2.0 users to read, understand, and interpret legal text in order to align one's actions with these statutory specifications" (Steininger & Riickel, 2007, p. 1665). Legal Internet literacy involves understanding the legal rules that apply in the use of the Internet. Al-Rafee and Cronan (2006) observe that these rules relate to copyright, defamation, privacy and obscenity among other. Commenting on the importance of legal Internet literacy, Al-Rafee and Cronan (2006) contend that "better the understanding of legal regulations on actions often associated with the use of web 2.0 platforms is, the higher the chance is to avoid infringements of data protection or copyright laws" (p.238).

Empirical Literature

Studies have been conducted to find out the extent of awareness of cyber laws among students. One of such as conducted by Cantero, Cornel, Delleva, Dequina, Herrera, Salazar, Sanico and Tabigo-on (2012) was aimed to determine level of awareness of cybercrime law among second-year BS marine engineering cadets second semester, school-year 2012-2013.The study was designed as a survey and the participants were the 124 randomly selected second-year marine engineering students during second semester 2012-2013. Findings from the study revealed that the second-year marine engineering students were aware of the cybercrime law. A study conducted by Mehta and Singh (2013) was to find out the knowledge and awareness of respondents towards cyberlaws in India. Findings from the study showed that the male has more awareness for Indian cyberlaw than female. Findings from the study also showed that employees had more awareness of Indian cyberlaw than the students.

Adetimirin (2014) studied awareness and knowledge of cyberethics by library and information science doctoral students in two Nigerian universities - University of Ilorin and University of Ibadan. A survey design and a questionnaire were adopted to collect data from doctoral students in two Nigerian universities. Findings revealed that the level of awareness and knowledge of cyberethics by the students were high though University of Ilorin showed a higher level of awareness and knowledge than University of Ibadan. The study concluded that cyberethics education should be provided to promote compliance with cyberethics among the LIS doctoral students in Nigerian universities. Prabu (2015) conducted a study to find out the level of awareness about cybercrime among Arts

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

and Science college students situated in Namakkal District of Tamil Nadu. Findings from the study showed that arts and Science college students have high level of awareness about cybercrime. However, male and female students differ significantly in their awareness about cybercrime scores. Hasan, Rahman, Abdillah and Omar (2015) conducted a study to ascertain perception and awareness of young Internet users in Malaysia towards cybercrime. Findings from the study showed that respondents have different levels of knowledge of unauthorized access to computer material that is, 37.4% moderate, 28.4% high, 17.8% low, 8.5% very high and 7.9% very low knowledge respectively. Thus, it could be deduced that the majority of the respondents have moderate knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory is adopted for this study. The theory is concerned with how awareness, attitude and action is built in relation to an innovation. In this case, the Internet with all its social components (including its. laws) is the innovation. And this innovation is adopted through the process diffusion as the various layers of the population gain awareness, form attitude and act towards the innovation. According to Sassen (2002), every innovation (including technological innovations) comes with its norms. Understanding and adoption of this technology also imply understanding and adoption of its norms. Thus, the advent of the Internet also implies the advent of a set of new norms (laws, ethics, values etc) which are part of the social component of the technology because "every material innovation also has its social component so long as such innovation exists in the social realm" (Sassen, 2002, p.383).

In Nigeria, for instance, the advent of the Internet has brought about some legal innovations by way of emergence of new laws related to cybercrimes, cyberstalking, and cyberterrorism; adopting the Internet will involve understanding the technology, and understanding the technology will in turn involve appreciating the rules of its use, and these rules necessarily include these laws. Based on the foregoing, diffusion of innovation in relation to laws guiding Internet use could be seen to operate via the following steps:

First Step: **Awareness and knowledge of the Internet (including the laws guiding its use)** - The individual and groups become aware and understand the Internet technology and the social implications of its use including as they relate to the law. Understanding only the physical aspect of the technology without appreciating the social norm of its use will, strictly speaking, imply that this step of diffusion of innovation has not been fully realised

Second Step: **Forming attitude towards the Internet (including as related to the laws guiding its use)** - The individual and groups begin to develop perceptions and

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

judgment towards the technology. To be complete, these perceptions and judgment ought to include the social norms guiding the use of the technology.

Third Step: **Action towards the Internet (including as related to the laws guiding its use)** - The individual and groups begin to act towards the Internet; this is where the adoption proper occurs as people begin to apply the technology in their lives. This application will involve navigating through the rules (including legal rules) of its use. Hence, the user becomes a keeper or a violator of the law.

Methodology

This study made use of survey research method. Survey involves selection of a sample of respondent from a population and administering a standardized questionnaire to them, and thereafter generalizing the result to the whole population (Dell, 2003, p. 14). The area of study was South-East Nigeria. It comprises five states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Out of a population of 218, 949, the researcher, using the Taro Yamane's sample selection formula, selected a sample of 500 respondents from the population. Using the multi-stage sampling procedure, the researcher randomly selected three states out of the five states in the region. In

the same manner, three universities were selected from each of the three states - one federal, one state and one private university. Copies of the questionnaire were the data collection instruments. The data collection was done within a space of four months. The researcher employed four research assistants to help in the process. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 for data management was employed for analyzing the quantitative data. The data so obtained were presented in charts and statistical tables. The researcher employed simple percentages and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient as her statistical tools.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Data Analysis

Out of the 500 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 481 representing 96.8% were recovered as against 19 representing 3.8% that were not. Hence, the response rate of 96.8% as against the casualty rate of 3.8% was recorded. This response was adjudged as adequate percentage to base the findings of this research since it has a high percentage representing more than half of the sampled population.

Demographic Variables

Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	294	61.1%
	Female	187	38.9%

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

	Total	481	100%
Age Bracket	15-24 years	423	87.9%
	25 - 30 years	37	7.7%
	Above 30 years	21	4.4%
	Total	481	100%
Level of Study	100 level	248	51.6%
	200 level	64	13.3%
	300 level	71	14.8%
	400 level	77	16%
	500 level	21	4.4%
	Total	**481**	**100%**
Area of Study	Humanities	334	69.4%
	Sciences	147	30.6%
	Total	**481**	**100%**

Table 1 above shows that 61.1% of the respondents are male as against 38.9% that are female. Thus, greater number of male respondents were recorded. Furthermore, 87.9% of the respondents were between 15 and 24 years, 7.7% were between 25 and 30 years, while 4.4% were above 30 years. Thus, by far, the modal age bracket was 15‐24 years; a situation that should be expected given that the studied population was university undergraduates. Also, 23.7% of the respondents were in 100 level, 21% in 200 level, 22.4% in 300 level, 23% in 400 level, while 9.8% were in 500 level. Thus, the respondents were fairly distributed among the levels of study save for 500 level which by some distance had the least frequency. Lastly, 69.4% of the respondents were studying humanities as against 30.6% who were studying sciences.

Internet Access/Use Pattern

Access to the Internet

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	481	100%
No	0	0%
Total	**481**	**100%**

Table 2 shows that all the respondents have access to the Internet. Thus, Internet access is 100% among the respondents.

Table 3: Respondents' Regularity of Access to the Internet

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	173	36%
Sometimes	120	24.9%
Rarely	188	39.1%
Total	181	10%

Table 3 illustrates the pattern of Internet access among respondents. It shows that 36% of the respondents always have access to the Internet, 24.9% sometimes have access, while 39.1% rarely have access. Hence, majority (about 60%) have access to the Internet either always or sometimes, meaning that only about 40% access the technology rarely.

Table 4: Respondents' Major Platform of Access to the Internet

	Frequency	Percentage
Desktop Computer	1	0.1%
Laptop Computer	62	12.9%
Mobile Phone	414	86.1%
iPad	4	0.8%
Total	**481**	**100%**

Table 4 shows that 0.1% of the respondents have desktop computer as their major platform of Internet access, 12.9% have laptop computer as theirs, 86.1% have theirs as mobile phone, while 0.8% access the Net mainly via iPad. Hence, mobile phone was by far the mostly used platform for Internet access.

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Table 5: Respondents' Access to Social Media

	Facebook	**WhatsApp**	**YouTube**	**Twitter**	**Instagram**
Yes	89.8% N = 432	57.6% N = 277	53.8% N = 259	50.3% N = 242	38% N=183
No	10.2% N= 49	42.4% N = 204	46.2% N = 222	49.7% N = 239	62% N = 298
Total	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**

Table 5 shows that 89.8% of the respondents have access to Facebook, 57.6% have access to WhatsApp, 53.8% have access t o YouTube, 50.3% have access to Twitter, 38% have access to Instagram.

Awareness of Social Media Regulations

	Defamati	Privacy	Copyright	Sedition	Official Secrets	Obscenity/ Indecency	Contempt Of Court	Online Fraud	Online Harassme
Yes	26.4% N=127	30.1% N=145	25.2% N=121	28.7% N=138	19.3% N=93	27.7% N=133	23.7% N=114	93.3% N = 449	74.6% N = 359
No	73.6% N = 354	69.9% N = 336	74.8% N = 360	71.3% N = 343	80.7% N = 388	72.3% N = 348	76.3% N = 367	6.7% N = 32	25.4% N=122
Total	100% N = 481	100% N = 481	100% N = 481	100% N = 481	100% N = 481	100% N = 481	100% N = 481	100% N = 481	100% N = 481

Table 6 shows that 26.4% of the respondents are aware that their online communication may constitute defamation, 30.1% know that it may constitute privacy invasion, 25.2% know that it could constitute copyright infringement, 28.7% knew such communication could constitute sedition. Furthermore, 19.3% knew their Internet communication could amount to divulgence of official secrets, 27.7% knew that it could amount to violation of the law of obscenity/indecency, 23.7% knew that it could amount to contempt of court, 93.3% knew that such could amount to online fraud, while 74.6% knew that it could amount to online harassment.

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Respondent level of Awareness of Law Guiding Online Communications (Cumulative)
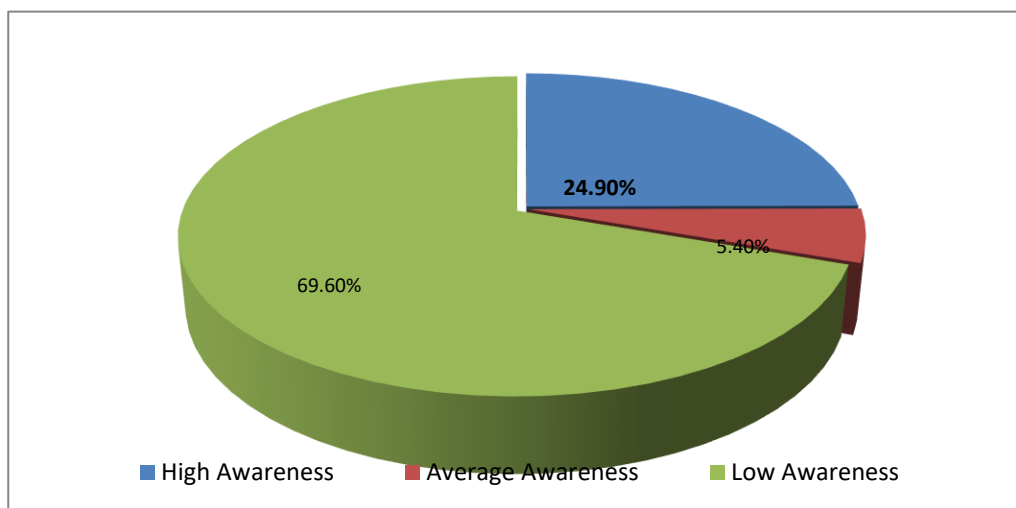
The figure above shows that 24.9% have high awareness of the laws guiding online communication, 5.4% have average awareness, while 69.6% have low awareness. This is a reflection of the respondents' ignorance in relation to each of the nine aspects of the online communication law as seen in Table 6.

Attitude and Compliance with Social Media Regulations

Table 7: Respondents' Concern about the Legal Implications Of materials they source or share online

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	31	6.4%
Sometimes	236	49.1%
Rarely	18	3.7%
Never	196	40.7%
Total	**481**	**100%**

Table 7 shows that 6.4% of the respondents have always felt concerned about the legal implications of materials they source, originate or share online, 49.1% sometimes felt concerned, 3.7% rarely felt concerned while 40.7% never felt concerned.

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Table 8: Respondents' Ever seeing need to improve their knowledge of Laws Guiding Online Communication

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	138	28.7%
No	343	71.3%
Total	481	100%

Table 8 shows that 28.7% of the respondents ever thought it necessary to improve their knowledge about the laws guiding online communication, while 71.3% never thought so.

Table 9: Respondents' Compliance with Laws Guiding Online Communication

	Defamation	Privacy	Copyright	Sedition	Official Secrets	Obscenity/Indecency	Contempt of Court	Online Fraud	Online Harassment
Always	16% N = 77	14.1% N = 68	10.6% N = 51	16.8% N = 81	16% N = 77	17% N = 82	16.2% N = 78	65.7% N = 316	74.2% N = 357
Sometime	14.8% N-71	35.1% N=169	17.7% N = 85	11.2% N = 54	7.9% N = 38	13.1% N = 63	7.7% N = 37	25.8% N=124	23.3% N=112
Rarely	7.1% N = 34	14.6% N = 70	7.1% N = 34	4.2% N = 20	7.5% N = 36	4.6% N = 22	5.4% N = 26	7.7% N = 37	2.5% N=12
Never	62.2% N = 299	36.2% N=174	64.7% N = 311	67.8% N = 326	68.6% N = 330	65.3% N = 314	70.7% N = 340	0.8% N = 4	0% N = 0
Total	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N = 481**	**100% N =**	**100% N = 481**

Table 9 above indicates that 16% of the respondents always take steps to ensure that communications they make online do not amount to defamation, 14.8% sometimes do, 7.1% rarely do, while 62.2% never do. The item defamation shows that slightly more than majority (69.3%) do not comply with the legal aspect of defamation law regarding operations. Also, 14.1% always take steps to ensure their communication do not amount to invasion of privacy, 35.1% sometimes do, 14.6% rarely do, while 36.2% never do. Then, 10.6% always take steps to ensure that their online communication do not amount to copyright infringement, 17.7%

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

sometimes do, 7.1% rarely do, while 64.7% never do so.

Similarly, 16.8% take steps to ensure that communications they make online do not amount to divulgence of official secrets, 7.9% sometimes do, 7.5% rarely do, while 68.6% never do. Also, 17% always take steps to ensure that communications they make online do not amount to obscenity/indecency, 13.1% sometimes do, 4.6% rarely do, while 65.3% never do. Equally, 16.2% take steps to ensure that communications they make online do not

amount to contempt of court, 7.7% sometimes do, 5.4% rarely do so, while 70.7% never take such steps. In the same vein, 65.7% always take steps to ensure that communications they make online do not amount to online fraud, 25.8% sometimes do, 7.7% rarely do, while 0.8% never do. Lastly, 74.2% of the respondents always take steps to ensure that communications they make online do not amount to online harassment, 23.3% sometimes do, 2.5% rarely do, while 0% never do.

Figure 2: Extent of Compliance of Law Guiding Online Communications (Cumulative)
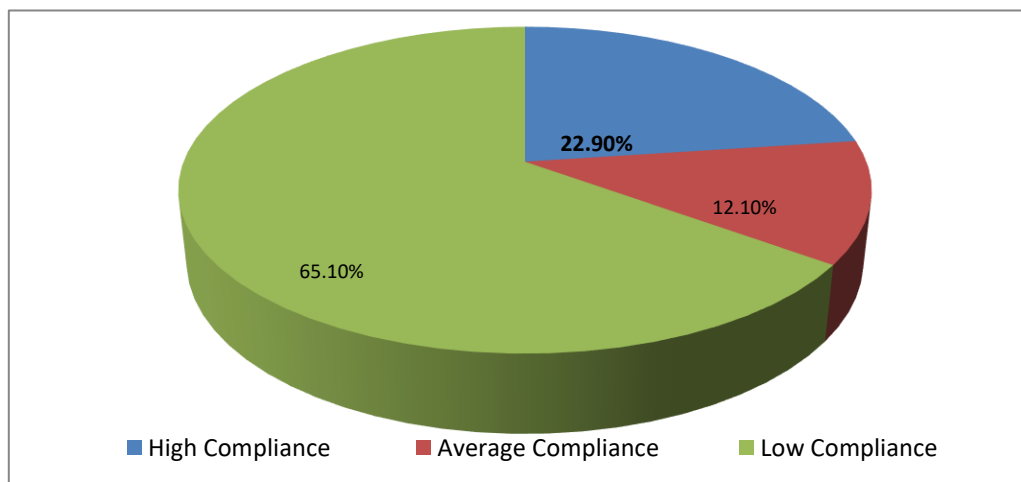

Figure 2 further examined the extent of compliance cumulatively. The respondents' compliance level with online communication laws was categorized based on their answers to the nine questions as reflected in Table 9 above. The points assigned to the answers are as follows: Always (3), Sometimes (2), Rarely (1)

and Never (0). Thus, respondents were categorized based on their cumulative scores as follows: 19-27 points (high compliance), 10-18 points (average compliance), and 0-9 points (low compliance). Thus, Figure 2 shows that 22.9% exhibit high compliance with the laws guiding online communication, 12.1% exhibit

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

average compliance, while 65.1% exhibit low compliance.

Discussion of Findings

This study showed that there is low awareness of laws guiding online communication among university undergraduates in the South-East Nigeria and that these undergraduates are largely indifferent towards the legal implications of their online communications. Such indifference tends to agree with the position of scholars like Longe and Longe (2005), Davenport (2012), Christopherson (2007) and Longe et al, (2007) who argue that many users of the Internet hardly bother about the legal or moral appropriateness of materials they share given the unregulated nature of the Internet which affords them some sense of protection from any possible consequence of their online activities.

Similarly, it was found that there is generally low compliance with the laws guiding online communications among the undergraduates. These first three findings are related in that low compliance could be linked to indifference (negative attitude) and ignorance (low awareness). In behaviour change communication, awareness is recognised as critical to attitude change and ultimately behaviour change (Mangal, 1998; Sassen, 2002), meaning that one has to possess the requisite information to be in a position to judge correctly (positive attitude) and then act correctly (positive practice).

Therefore, the fact that the undergraduates were largely not complying with the laws guiding online communication could be a product of their ignorance of these laws. One of the important factors that have been identified as affecting knowledge and negative attitude to law is the general legal culture in a particular society; where there is strict enforcement of the law, there is more likely to be greater public legal consciousness than in a place where enforcement is lax (Handzhiyska & Mackay, 2003; Dalai, 2015). This could lead to the assumption that enforcement of Internet laws in Nigeria may still leave much to be desired. Interestingly, this is the argument of Omekwu (2016) when he notes:

> There is still this apparent ambivalence on the part of Nigeria towards enforcing the relevant communication laws as they relate to the Internet. While emphasis has been on cybercrime for understandable reasons, other aspects of online laws appear not to have received the desired attention. For instance, we are yet to do any meaning thing towards combating Internet-based copyright abuse which means that online copyright infringements are likely to go on unabated... Many countries of

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

the world, particular those of them in the west, have since left us behind, they have moved forward, responding to the imperatives of the time whereas we have obviously failed to be proactive (p. 17).

Viewed from the point of view of the theory of diffusion of innovation, the findings of this study may be an indication that there are still gaps as far as diffusion of Internet culture in the country is concerned. This assertion stems from understanding the argument by Sassen (2003) that every innovation (including technological innovations) comes with its norms. As such, understanding and adopting of this technology also imply understanding and adoption of its norms. Thus, the advent of the Internet also implies the advent of a set of new norms (laws, ethics, values etc) which are part of the social component of the technology because "every material innovation also has its social component so long as such innovation exists in the social realm" (Sassen, 2002, p.383). Thus, in this sense, the laws guiding online communication could be considered as a component of the Internet innovation yet to diffuse adequately among the young population studied.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, we conclude that there is still gap between the extent of Internet penetration in the country and the extent of awareness of the legal norms associated with the technology. The foregoing suggests that the nation might be facing the risk of social harm that might result from use of the Internet in ways that do not take cognisance of the required social norms. Viewed from the perspective of the diffusion of innovations, the Internet as an innovation in today's Nigeria is not restricted to the physical (technological) aspect of the web; rather it includes its social component which includes the norms of its operation and use. It is in this sense that knowing and imbibing the laws guiding Internet use ought to be seen as part of adoption of the innovation represented by the Internet technology. Adoption of technical innovations without their corresponding norms leads to some form of social dislocation as the technology becomes more of a destabilising than a useful element in society (Sassen, 2002).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Effort should be made to educate the populace on the laws related to online communication in Nigeria. This should be done via mass media campaign and public forums (such as conference, seminar, workshops etc). This way, more awareness and compliance could be guaranteed.

2. ICT literacy programmes in the school system of all levels should incorporate Internet law. Such will ensure that the

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

pupils/students learn not just ICT skills but also be orientated on the legal and ethical issues arising from use of the ICTs.

3. The government should ensure more efficient enforcement of Internet-related laws. Agencies (such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, and the Nigeria Copyright Commission, NCC) should be strengthened for more efficient performance in this respect.

References

Abaji, K. (2009). Internet and democratic participation in Nigeria. *Journal of Humanities*, 4(2), 346-357.

Adeniran, A. I. (2008). The Internet and emergence of Yahoo boys sub-culture in Nigeria. International Journal of Cyber Criminology, 2 (2), 368-381.

Adepoju, J. T. (2003). *Mass communication research*. Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited.

Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, S. E., &Iyamu, E. o. S. (2005). using information and communication technology in secondary schools in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *Educational Technology & Society,* 8 (1), 104 - 112.

Akuezuilo, and Agu, N. (2002). *Research and statistics in education and social sciences*.

(Millenium Edition). Awka: Nuel and Cent Publishers.

Amaefule, E. (2012). Nigeria joins top 20 *Internet nations*. Retrieved from http://thepunchonline.com/news/Nigeria Joins/

Ani, O. E. (2005). Evolution of virtual libraries in Nigeria: A myth or reality? *Journal of Information Science*, 31 (1), 66 - 69.

Appazov, A. (2014). *Legal aspects of cyber security*. Retrieved August 2016 from http://justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/ files/media/Arbejdsornraader/Forskning /Forsknings puljen/Legal_Aspects_of_Cybersecurity

Arnold, N. (2010). *Social research methods*. Retrieved from http://www.socialreserchmethods.net.

Arsham, H. (2002). Impact of the Internet on learning and teaching. *USDLA Journal*, 16(3), 248 - 355. Retrieved from http://www.usdla.Org/htm//journal/MA RO2 Issue/arctilceO 1 .html.

Asika, N. (1991). *Research methodology in the behavioural sciences*. Lagos: Longman Publishers.

Audu, C. (2006). Internet availability and use by postgraduate students of University of

Nigeria Nsukka. *Global Review of Library and Information Science*, 2,34-43.87

Ayub, A., Hamid, W., &Nawawi, M. (2014), Use of Internet for academic purposes among students inMalaysian institutions of higher education. *The Turkish Online Journal* of Educational Technology, 13(1), 232-241.

Bagozzi, R. P. (2007). The legacy of the technology acceptance model and a proposal for a paradigm shift. *Journal of Association* of Information Systems, 8(4), 244 - 254.

Bisdee, D. (2007). *Consumer attitudes review.* Office of fair trading, June, l-147.Cheung.

Bittner, J. R. (2003). *Mass communication: An introduction* (5th ed.). Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.

Carlson N (2011) Facebook has more than 600 million users, Goldman tells clients. Available at: http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-has-more-than-600-million-users-goldman tellsclients-2011-1

Clough, J. (2010). *Principles of cybercrime.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Collin, B.C. (1996). The future of cyber terrorism: where the physical and virtual worlds converge. 11th Annul International Symposium on Criminal Justice Issues.

Comrey, A. L. & Lee, H. B. (1992). *A first course in factor analysis.* Hillside, NJ: Erlbaum. *Cybercrimes (Prohibition, prevention etc.) Act 2015.*

Dalal, P. (2015). *Awareness of cyber law in India.* Retrieved from http://cyberlawsinindia.blogspot.in/2010/05/awareness-of-cyber-law-in-india.html, visited on 20/02/2015.

Daramola, I. S. (2004). Knowledge and skills possessed by technical college graduate of building technology trade in Taraba State. *Journal of League of Researchers in Nigeria,* 4(1), 243 -267.

Dasuki, S. (2014). *National cyber security forum.* Retrieved from http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/06/ratecybercrimes-Nigeria-alarmingnsa/#sthash.j96HmOUh.dpuf.

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MISQuarterly,* 13(3), 318-340. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/249008

Dean, J. (2003). Why the net is not a public sphere. *Constellations,* 10(1), 95-112.

Dell, L. (2003). *Social science research.* London: Rutledge.

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Denning, D. E. (1999). *Information warfare and security*. Washington DC: Auerbach Publications.

Deuze M (2006) Participation, remediation, bricolage: considering principal components of a digital culture. The Information Society 22(2): 63-75.

Dicker, J. N. (2013). Social media communication and the law. *Journal of Communication*, 6(8), 546 - 559.

Dreyfus, H. L. (1998). Education on the Internet: Anonymity vs. commitment. *The Internet andHigherEducation*, 1 (2), 113-123. Retrieved fromhttp://www.sciencedirect.eom/science/article/pii/S 1096749499801743

Eagleman, A. N. (2013). Acceptance, motivations and usage of social media as a marketing communication tool amongst employees of sports national governing bodies. Sport *Management Review*, 16, 488-497

Ernst, J.V. (2006). A comparison of traditional and hybrid online instructional presentation in communication technology. *Journal of Technology Education*, 19(2), 40 - 49.89

Eyiuche, L. S. (2003). *Introduction to journalism*: Theory and practice. Lagos: Lindslay Press.

Falahah, L. & Rosmala, D. (2012). Study of social networking usage in higher education environment. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* 67,156 - 166.

Fatoki, O. C. (2004). Impact of library resources and the Internet on undergraduate students research, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. *Nigerian Libraries,* 38(1), 21 - 33.

Freedom on the Net (2013). *Internet freedom status*. Freedom House. Freedom on the Net (2015). *Internet freedom status*. Freedom House.

Froomkin, M. (1996). *The Internet as a source of regulatory arbitrage*. Retrieved from http://osaka.law.miami.edu/~froomkin/articles/arbitr

Ganesh, S. & Stohl, C. (2010). Qualifying engagement: A study of information and communication technology and the global social justice movement in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Communication Monographs,* 77(1), 51-74.

Gefen, D., Karahanna, E., *&*Straub, D. W. (2003). Trust and TAM in online shopping: An integrated model. *MIS Quarterly,* 27(1), 51 - 90.

Gerhards, J. & Schafer, M. S. (2010). Is the Internet a

better public sphere? Comparing old and new media in the USA and Germany. *New Media & Society,* 12(1), 143-160.

Giglio, M. (2011, February 24). Middle East uprising: Facebook's secret role in Egypt. *The Daily Beast.*

Gimmler, A. (2001). Deliberative democracy, the public sphere and the Internet. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 27(4), 21-39.

Global Internet Map (2016). *Global Internet penetration.* Retrieved from http://www.Internetsociety.org/map/global-Internet report/?gclid=ck706zybhdECFgWOwod3cIMOAglobal-Internet-penetration.

Guanah, S. J. (2018). "Fake News" as a contemporary issue in global communication concern. In L. C. Nwodu & I. S. Onunkwor (Eds.). *Evolving Thoughts on International Communication, Diplomacy and the Social Media.* (pp. 23-37). Enugu: RhyceKerex Publishers.

Gulbrandsen, I. & Just, S. N. (2011). The Collaborative paradigm: towards an invitational and participatory concept of online communication. *Journal of Media, Culture & Society*, 33(7), 1095-1108.90

Gurak, L. (1997). *Persuasion and privacy in cyberspace*: The online protests over lotus marketplace and the clipper. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hafner, K. & Lyon, M. (1996).*Where wizards stay up late*: The origins of the Internet. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hall, S. (2001). Encoding/decoding. In C. L. Harrington & D. D. Bielby (Eds.), *Popular culture: Production and consumption* (pp. 123-132). Maiden, MA: Blackwell.

Harrison, T. M. & Barthel, B. (2009). Wielding new media in Web 2.0: exploring the history of engagement with the collaborative construction of media products. *New Media & Society*, 11(1-2), 155-178.

Hasan, S., Rahman, R. A., Abdillah., T., & Omar, N. (2015). Perception and awareness of young Internet users towards cybercrime: Evidence from Malaysia. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 11 (4), 395 - 404.

Hennink, M. M. (2007). International focused group research: *A handbook for the health and social sciences.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Herring, S. (2004). Online communication: through the lens of discourse. *Internet Research Annual*, 1,65-76.

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Hinde, S. (2003). The law, cyber crime, risk assessment and cyber protection. *Computer and Security*, 22(2), 90 - 95.

Hoffman, D. L. & Novak, T. P. (1996). Marketing in hypermedia computer-mediated environments: conceptual foundations. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(3), 50-68.

Huang, E. (2008). Use and gratifications in e-consumers. *Internet Research*, 18(4), 405 - 426. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.!108/10662240810897817

Igun, S. E. (2006). Use of Internet resources in a Nigerian university community. *Global Review of Library and Information Science*, 2,21 - 32.

Internet World Stats (2017). *Internet' users in Africa 2017*. Retrieved from http://www.Internetworldstats.com/statsl.htm

Jantan, M., Ramayah, T., & Chin, W. W. (2001). Personal computer acceptance by small and medium companies evidence from Malaysia. *Journal of Management and Business*, 3(1), 1 - 14.

Just, S. N. (2008). European public debate - offered identities and performed agencies. In:

Kajava, J. & Siponen, M. T. (1997). Effectively implemented information security awareness -An example from university environment. Proceedings of the!3th International Conference on Information Security: Information Security Management - The Future, 13th May 1997, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Kode, S. & Kode, A. (2003). Free online serials in the area of library and information science. *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, 50(4), 146-152.

Lee, Y., Kozar, K.A., & Larsen, K.R.T. (2003). The technology acceptance model: Past, present, and the future. *Communications of the AIS*, 12,752 - 780.

Leiner, B. M., Cerf, V.G., Clark, D. D., Kahn, R. E., Kleinrock, L., Lynch, D. C., Postel, J., Roberts., L.G & Wolff, S. (1997). *Brief history of the Internet. Retrieved from http://www.Internetsociety. Org*

Ling, R. S. (2004). *Mobile connection: The Cell phone's impact on society*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann.

Mamudu, P. A. & Oyewo, A. O. (2015).Use of mobile phones for academic purposes by law students of Igbinedion University, Okada Nigeria. *International Journal of Library Science,* 4(4), 65-72.

Mattar, F.N. (1994). *Pesquisa de marketing.* Sao

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Paulo: Atlas.

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (5th ed.) London: Sage.

Moore, S. (2008). The challenge of Internet anonymity: Protecting John Doe on the Internet.
Computer & Info. 1.26(469). Retrieved from http ://heinonline .org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.j ournals/j   mj   cila26&div=23   &id=&pa ge=

Morgan,   D. L. (1988). *Focus groups the quantitative research.* Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.

Musa, A. S. (2015). Social media in the learning process of Nigerian students of Mass Communication. Journal of International Institute for Science and Education (IISTE), 44: 25-30

Nigerian Communications Commission (2013). *Subscriber data-monthly subscriber data.* Retrieved from http://www.ncc.gov.ng/index-php?option=com

Oberer, B., & Erkollar, A. (2012). Social media integration in higher education. Cross-course googleplus Integration Shown in the example of a master's degree course in management. *Social and Behavioural Sciences,* 4(7), 1888 - 1893.

Office of National Statistics (2008). *Statistical bulletin: E-commerce and ICT activity.* Retrieved from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/ecoml 109.pdf

Okeshola, F. B. & Adeta, A. K. (2013). The nature, causes and consequences of cyber crime in tertiary institutions in Zaria-Kaduna state, Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research,* 3(9), 98 - 114.

Okoye, J. S. (2008). Impact of the social media on the academic endeavours of undergraduates in Lagos State (Master's Thesis). University of Lagos.

Omekwu, C. O. (2016). Africa not part of global revolutions. *Orient Daily,* Tuesday September 27,2016,p.l6-17.

Omoregbe, J. I. (1994). *An introduction to philosophical jurisprudence: Philosophy of law.* Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited.

Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement.* New York: St Martin's Press.

Oyewunmi, A. O. (2012). The ICT revolution and commercial sectors in Nigeria: Impacts and

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

legal interventions. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences, 5* (2), 234 - 247.

Parker, D. B. (1976). Computer abuse perpetrators and Vulnerabilities of computer systems, National Computer Conference.

Parmar, A., & Patel, K. (2016). *Critical study and analysis ofcyber law awareness among the Netizens*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publicatio n/299749227

Parr, B. (2011). *Linkedlin surpasses 100 million users*. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2011/03/22/linke din-surpasses-100-million-users-infographic

Poster, M. (2001).Cyberdemocracy: The Internet and the public sphere. In D. Trend (Ed.), *Reading digital culture* (pp.259-271). Maiden, MA: Blackwell.

Rachna D., Tygar, J. & Hearst, M. (2006). Why phishing works. Proceedings of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI2006).

Ramayah, T., & Ignatius, J. (2005).Impact of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceivedenjoyment on intention to shop online. *ICFAI Journal of Systems Management,* 3(3), 36-51.

Rogers, M., Archibald, M., Morrison, D., Wilsdon, A., Wells, E., Hoppe, M., Nahom, D., &Murowchick, E. (2002). Teen sexual behavior: Applicability of the theory of reasoned action. *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 64, 885 - 897.

Scarpitti, F. R., Nielsen, A. L., & Miller, J. M. (2009). *A sociological theory of criminal behavior: Crime and criminals contemporary and classic readings in criminology* (2 ed.). New York: Oxford University.

Scolari, C. A. (2009). Mapping conversations about new media: The theoretical field of digital communication. *New Media & Society,* 11(6), 943-964.

Selamat, Z., Jaffar, N. & Ong, B. H. (2009).Technology acceptance in Malaysian banking industry. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences,* 1(17), 143-155.

Smith, A. (2009). The *Internet's role in campaign 2008. Pew Internet and American Life Project.*Retrieved from http://skin.ris.org/uploadi/editor/12439 58591The_Internets_Role_in_Campaign _2008.pdf

Smith, J. H. & Just, S. N. (2009). Playful

persuasion: The rhetorical potential of advert games. *Nordicom Review,* 30(2), 53-68.

Smith, R.G., Holmes, M.N. & Kaufmann, P..(1999). Nigerian advance fee fraud. *Trends and Issues in Crime and CriminalJustice,* 121. Retrieved from http://vAvw.aic.gov.au

Sobel, D. L. (2000). The process that "John Doe" is due: Addressing the legal challenge to Internet anonymity. *Virginia Journal of Law & Technology* 5(1). Retrieved from http://www.vjolt.net

Spinello, A. R. (2003). *Cyber ethics: Morality and law in cyberspace* (2nd ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Sponcil, M. & Gitimu, P. (2013). Use of social media by college students: Relationship to communication and self-concept. *Journal of Technology Research,* 4,1-13.

Stahl, W. M. (2011). The Uncharted waters of cyberspace: Applying the principles of international maritime law to the problem of cybersecurity. *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law,* 2(1), 110 - 131.

Teo, T. S. H. (2001). Demographic and motivation variables associated with Internet usage activities. *Internet Research,* 11(2), 125-137. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.! 108/10662240110695089

Teplinsky, M. (2013). Fiddling on the roof: Recent developments in cyber security. *American University Business Law Review,* 4(6), 213 - 228.

Thompson, K. K. (2011). Not Like an Egyptian: Cybersecurity and the Internet Kill Switch Debate. *Texas Law Review,* 2(4), 134 - 149.

Thornton, P. & Houser, C. (2004). *Using mobile phones in education.* Paper presented at the 2nd IEE International Workshop on Wireless and Mobile Technologies in Education. Retrieved fromhttp://ieeexplore.ieee.org/xpl/freeabs_all.jsp?amumber=1281326.

Tindell, D. & Bohlander, R, (2011). The use and abuse of cell phones and text messagingin the classroom: A survey of college students. *College Teaching,* (60), 1-9.

Wall, D. S. (2007). *Cybercrime: The transformation of crime in the information age.* Cambridge: Polity, 276.

Wanajak, K. (2011). Internet use and its impact on secondary school students in Chiang Mai, Thailand (Unpublished PhD

Kingsley Chukwudubem EZEKWELU, Ph.D. and Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D.

Dissertation). Edith Cowan University.

Warnick, B. (2007). *Rhetoric online: Persuasion and politics on the worldwide web*. New York: Peter Lang.

Whitehead A. (1929). *Process and reality*. New York: Macmillan.

Wimmer, R., & Dominick, J. (2003). *Mass media research: An introduction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Yuslihasri, I. A., & Daud, A. K. (2011). Factors that influence customers buying intention on shopping online. *International Journal of Marketing Studies,* 3(1), 128 - 143.

Zappen, J. P. (2005). Digital rhetoric: toward and integrated theory. *Technical Communication Quarterly,* 14(3), 319-325.