



Social Media and Future Concerns: A Cultural Discourse on Humanity, Fame and Fortune

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Received: 02 March 2023

Accepted: 16 May 2023

Published: 20 June 2023

Abstract: *With the advent of content creation, and its consequent traffic generation, which invariably results to high rate of income generation through social media, there has been a huge surge of Social Media influencers and their likes. Hence, their sole concern, usually, is to create gripping and engaging instantaneous contents without regard to the feelings or safety of the butts of these contents. Unfortunately, this new culture has not received adequate critical attention from scholars. Thus, there is a paradigm shift from every sense of community and humanity to cruelty through this new culture, as the exigencies of this emerging culture has engrossed the attitudinal disposition of these young netizens, rendering them unconcerned and spurning human relations. This has created lots of panic recently, as questions are being raised, as to what extent this new culture has affected the society as well as how can it be curbed and controlled? So, within this purview of interrogating the behavioral inclinations of social media content creators, this research takes a qualitative survey of the different social media platforms, in order to investigate the true state of human social relations. This, shows that there is a steady decline of healthy human relations amongst the present generation, who have imbibed the new cultural norm as portrayed on social media.*

Keywords: *Social Media, Carter, Influencers, Psychoanalysis, Humanity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Kevin Carter's professional prerogatives when taking the photograph of the Sudanese starving girl, alongside a waiting vulture, who is ready to feast on her carcass immediately after her death, was basically for fame and fortune. His quest for self-elevation, winning a national award for being a distinguished photographer during the 1993 Sudanese civil war beclouded his sense of humanity. At that moment, his major concern was to be famous, gain world recognition, as an outstanding photographer who could capture in close detail the woes and



horrors of the war in Sudan. According to a certain report “In 1993, Kevin Carter took a controversial photo of a little girl in Sudan slumped over on the ground as a vulture stood behind her. At the time, Carter was working full time for Reuters” (grady.uga.edu, 1).

Unfortunately, humanity did not forgive him of his action, for not saving the girl, a life, rather than fame. Fred Cate reports that he was called “the true vulture” (2) and has been described as “devoid of humanity. Carter was widely criticized for not “carrying the child to the feeding shelter that she struggled towards” (2). This, however, is the same attitudinal disposition of many content creators and influencers on the different social media platforms in recent times.

These content creators and influencers are solely concerned with generating traffic, getting verified and having lots of followers at the detriment of whosoever’s ‘news’ is being shared. They focus more on the level of income generating contents rather than seeking or showing concern towards humanity. It has become a culture, as many of the present and upcoming generation are getting influenced by this inhuman attitude. There is a serious decline in ethics, morals and human values with this rising wave of income generating fronts through social media. Worthy of note is that Carter never enjoyed the fame and fortune he sought, by undermining his human nature, for not rescuing the dying girl. He was consumed by his ambition, the negative responses from the public led to his death, as he committed suicide.

Lindsay Maizland asserts that:

Carter followed his “instincts” and acted as a photographer rather than carrying the child to food. Carter’s critics strongly believed that Carter neglected his duties as a human being. A conflicted Carter commented to a friend “I’m really, really sorry I didn’t pick the child” (Cart). Soon after receiving the Pulitzer Prize for the photo in 1994, Carter committed suicide. (2) He became ill-reputed for his action than being celebrated, as he intended. Consequently, his myopic mind for fame and self, devoid of every form of humanness, made his ambition short-lived. The danger of getting overwhelmed by one’s ambition at the expense of humanity should not be underemphasized, as it destroys both self and the society ultimately. However, there is presently a paradigm shift from the ‘latter Carter’s conscientious mind’ of regret, to the former, behest of quest for fame. It is obvious that these social media content creators and influencers have gradually made their unprofessional, uncultured and improperly censored, inhuman activities norms and ‘woke’ cultural practices. Incidentally, majority of them are not concerned about the impact of their activities upon their victims and society generally, as they are more focused on their income generation. Hence, the younger generation, which they popularly referred as ‘Gen Z’, has over the time inculcated these despicable behaviours as an acceptable norm and tradition. Therefore, there is a serious gap between this ‘Gen Z’ generation and concern for humanity, as they go about fame and fortune, without considering the effect of their action on the society. Consequently, this disconnectedness, unhealthy gap from humanity, associated with the ‘Gen Z’ generation, which is the concern of this paper, helps to interrogate and unravel the syncretism of Sigmund Freud’s human psychology or dream that is interpreted as id, ego and super ego. The functionality of the human mind, which usually reflects the happenings of his environment, as well as interpreting the mode and pattern of his mental development, helps to explore the state of impulsiveness of the ‘Gen Z’ generation through



their activities on social media, as influencers and content creators. Thus, Freud's psychoanalysis is based on three aspects of human psychic, which he identified as the id – the irrational self, ego – the conscious self and the superego – the felicitous self. These are different workings of the human mind, usually elicited by cultural influences and personal environment. So, Mahroof Hossain is of the view that “Psychoanalysis gives emphasis on the subject and tries to explain what the relationship of meaning and identity are to the psychic and cultural forces” (42), while Monte opines that “Psychoanalytic theories assume the existence of unconscious internal states that motivate an individual's overt actions” (8).

The irrational and crude self, id, “the part of the mind that determines sexual drives and other unconscious compulsions that urge individuals to unthinking gratification (Kirszner & Mandell, 2055)” and the civilized superego that “seeks to repress the demands of the id and to prevent gratification of basic physical appetites” (Kirszner & Mandell, 2055) are controlled by ego, which serves as a nexus and nucleus of the human rational mind. However, the id and superego can at times overwhelm the ego due to high cultural influence, making the mind to act impulsively in an uncivil and cruel manner.

Hence the aspect of culture becomes important in the discourse as the workings of the mind are usually influenced by cultural issues like trends, popular opinions and secular views which inform the unconscious and the psychic to form a social norm and behavior. As these trends, opinions or views keep spreading, they keep influencing the society positively or negatively, depending on the standard and quality of what is being spread. It should be noted that the id responsible for impulsive cultural influences is often at the extreme, which suggest negative upon the society. Apparently, the attitudinal disposition of the ‘Gen Z’ generation has a lot of cultural influences which is orchestrated by social media, being the setting of all activities. Hymes views setting as the “psychological space linked with cultural definition of an occasion” (60). So, it seems the psychological formation of this generation is altered negatively due social media. According to Erica Coe and co, Gen Zers, on average, are more likely than other generations to cite [imitate] negative feelings about social media. They are also more likely to report having poor mental health. But correlation is not causation, and our data indicates that the relationship between social media use and mental health is complex. Evidently, these present content creators and influencers are the Gen Z generation who believe their action on the social media is to strictly generate funds while discarding and disregarding every sense of communality and humanity in them. Below are some reported cases and contents that display high level of insensitive and inhuman dispositions on social media.

Collected Data

First Case

Adaobi Amadi: “I just watched the video of that young man gasping and asking for oxygen... They said it happened in Ogun State (Someone says it's Lagos) and he died later.

It broke me completely.

I can't help but wonder why the person making the video continued, unbothered.

In isolation centers, regular people aren't allowed to visit, so wouldn't it mean that it most likely was a health worker who made that video?



It just made me feel some type of way to imagine that someone was dying and asking for oxygen only to be seeing a person recording him and not be able to do anything about it.” (Facebook)

Second Case

Godwin Niger: “I’ve seen the video, it was too horrific to watch, I closed my eyes in fear at some point, I watched a life saver scrambling to save his own life, with his face shattered. I heard voices from the callous cooperative spectators. They spoke Igbo, they seemed to enjoy watching a man struggle to live, instead of helping, they happily filmed him struggle for breath till death found him alas.

The bystanders at the scene of the incident could be heard saying that the killers probably mistook him for a politician, because he had security details, and because they were shouting “there won’t be an election in Anambra come November!”.

Dr Chike Akunyili’s death is awful to the memory of his late wife Professor Dora Akunyili, to have had her husband’s body lay struggling for breath on the ground like this, in the same country they both gave their all to... My thoughts are with his entire family.

The callous and heartless people, busy looking at, and filming a dying man, instead of offering help to rescue the life of the dying husband of a woman who has meritoriously and patriotically served the nation is far beyond words to convey condemnation.

This stupid habit of watching and recording without making any attempt to help a victim(s) is not right!” (Facebook).

Third Case

Gerald Nwokocha: “I saw a disturbing video of BBN season 3 housemate, Rico, lying helplessly at the emergency unit of a hospital, maybe “LUTH”, prior to his death. I couldn’t finish watching the video. My sadness is, why are people always so eager to make video records and upload online without assisting to revive the person? Even the nonchalant attitudes of the health workers present, was disturbing. Of course, the video is an evidence to show how they handle patients there. We’ve had series of heartbreaking stories of senseless deaths from “LUTH” and some other hospitals.” (Facebook)

Fourth Case

Yabaleftonline: “The deceased’s uncle, Francis Ayobo, has urged the police to begin an intense investigation into the matter, adding that Ajimowu was not remorseful after his wife’s death. It is so surprising that the wife was dying and the husband started videoing her. The videos were more than 40 minutes. He sent it to Priscillia’s sister in South Africa. By that time he would have rushed her to a hospital for treatment.

I noticed that about three other guys were in the background of one of the video because somebody was giving her water and she was foaming in the mouth. Those things should be questioned.” (yabaleftonline)

Data Analyses/Discourse

First Case

Adaobi Amadi reported a circulating video on Facebook about a patient in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), at a hospital in South West Nigeria. ICU is usually for patients with critical health



conditions, according to National Health Service (NHS) “Intensive care units (ICUs) are specialist hospital wards that provide treatment and monitoring for people who are very ill. They're staffed with specially trained healthcare professionals and contain sophisticated monitoring equipment” (web). So, this particular patient was in need of serious medical attention, as he is seen gasping for breath while asking for oxygen. But on the contrary, the medical personnel, who were expected to give him a swift attendance, were excitedly videoing him. Consequently, the ‘recorder’ posted the disturbing video on social media thus generating traffic through comments and reactions, invariably generating income. It was later confirmed that the patient died afterwards, but the circulating video was not brought down.

Second Case

The gruesome murder of Dr Chike Akunyili which happened in South Eastern, Nigeria, came as a rude shock upon the populace, as he was a respected medical practitioner at Enugu State, also the husband of the late Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and former Minister of Information, Prof Dora Akunyili. According to the online report of Inem Udodiong in Culture Custodian, “Dr Chike Akunyili, the husband of late ex-Information Minister, Prof. Dora Akunyili, is dead. He was murdered by unknown gunmen yesterday, September 28, 2021. Akunyili was reportedly on his way back from an event to honour his late wife, Dora, who passed away in 2014”.

However, according to Godwin Niger, on the report of the video, that was being shared on the social media, it is seen that instead of the witnesses to have taken him to hospital for immediate treatment, they were videoing him as he was struggling in the pool of his blood to get up from the ground till he died. Majority no longer have human sympathy for the sake of generating online traffic. Gradually, the society is becoming more toxic or hostile, hence, Robert Burns warns that “man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn!” (web).

Third Case

The late Patrick Fakoya, with a stage name, Rico Swavey, was one of the housemates of Big Brother Naija (BBN) reality television show, season three (3), 2018, where he got his fame in the entertainment industry in Nigeria. Apparently, his celebrity status made the medical personnel to starting videoing him in his critical state instead of attending to him. Because, being a celebrity will help the recorded videos to generate more traffic, which will also increase the income. So this brings the idea of commodification, since those around him did not think of saving him but were seeing his close-to-death condition as an avenue to generate income. Thus, Azumara maintains that “commodification is the act of measuring the worth of a person or an object in terms of its monetary or social value. It can also be defined as the act of relating to objects or persons in terms of their financial and social worth and benefit. (16)”. Rico, as seen in the wildly spread video is objectified, monetized as well commoditized, hence, commodification.

Fourth Case

From the above collected data, it is seen that Oluchi Ajimowu was not remorseful for videoing his dying wife for almost forty minutes, instead of taking her to hospital. She eventually died while the video recorder was on. The concern of this research is that he shared the video on



social media, showing how his wife died a horrible death by poisoning herself. This shows that impulsive id in Freud's discourse; how it usually makes individual to act without processing the impact of their actions. It further shows the state of cultural influence, as there have been videos of dying persons being circulated on social media. Hence, he carried out his action because there is platform where it will be 'celebrated', as these content creators and influence are ready to share it in order to make profit.

2. CONCLUSION

Evidently, through this study, it is discovered that there is a lack of the 'latter Kelvin Carter's spirit' of regret, pain, humaneness and communality in the society generally, as a result of the new culture. This new culture is devoid of natural love and concern, as the real world appears less important to that of social media. There is a disconnection from reality and humanity to the ever glossy yet disjointed lifestyle in the Social Media. In assessing the four different cases involved in this study, starting from the ICU experience, Dr Chike Akunyili, Rico Swavey to that of Oluchi Ajimowu, a husband, who was recording his dying wife instead of helping her to survive, depict a generic paradigm shift from the normal to the abnormal is observed. As is seen in some cases, some supposed medical personnel whose primary duty is to save life are doing the opposite, even in emergency cases. There seem to be an alteration of the natural order or rule by humans due to quest for fame and fortune. This aberrant behavior by the Gen Z has largely been attributed to the influence of social media.

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