MEDIA IN AN ERA OF DIGITAL GLOBALIZATION: THE ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT
The 21st century has witnessed unparalleled digital revolution, driven by the proliferation of digital technologies, which has transformed how individuals' access, consume, and engage with information. The internet, mobile devices, and social media platforms have connected people across the globe, creating a global digital ecosystem where information transcends physical boundaries. This digital globalization has introduced numerous benefits, including democratizing knowledge access and fostering cross-cultural understanding, but it has also raised complex ethical challenges. This text explores the complex ethical considerations that arise in the era of digital globalization. It addresses issues related to media ethics, social media use, data privacy, and the impact of legislation on digital citizenship. The Social Responsibility Theory was used as a critical framework emphasizing the need for responsible and ethical media practices in a rapidly changing landscape. One of the primary ethical concerns in the digital age is the safeguarding of individual privacy and data security. The collection, storage, and utilization of personal data by corporations, governments, and online platforms have raised significant ethical dilemmas. Additionally, the ease of information dissemination on digital platforms has led to the rapid spread of disinformation, misinformation, and fake news, challenging the ethical responsibility of individuals and organizations to verify and counter false narratives. This study concludes that, the digital age's ethical landscape is complex and multifaceted, shaped by technology, society, culture, and individual agency. Understanding and addressing these ethical challenges are crucial as societies adapt to the opportunities and complexities of digital globalization. This study thus called on individuals, organizations, policymakers, and educators to navigate the digital era with responsible and ethical practices,

upholding democratic values while embracing the benefits of digital interconnectedness.

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented revolution in communication and information dissemination, primarily driven by the proliferation of digital technologies. This digital revolution has reshaped nearly every aspect of society, including how individuals' access, consume, and engage with information. The advent of the internet, mobile devices, and social media platforms has connected people across the globe in ways previously unimaginable, facilitating the rapid exchange of ideas, news, and culture.

In this era of digital transformation, the concept of globalization has taken on new dimensions. Geographic borders have become increasingly permeable in the digital realm, allowing information and content to flow seamlessly across national and cultural boundaries. This phenomenon has given rise to a global digital ecosystem where information transcends physical limitations. Scholars and communication experts argue that, while the digital globalization of information and media has brought about numerous benefits, such as democratizing access to knowledge and fostering cross-cultural understanding, it has also introduced a complex web of ethical challenges. These challenges emerge from the intersection of technology, communication, and culture and require careful consideration to navigate ethically. (Ward, 2010).

There is no doubt that, with the digitization of personal information and the pervasive use of data-driven technologies, concerns about individual privacy and data security have intensified. Ethical dilemmas arise from the collection, storage, and utilization of personal data by corporations, governments, and online platforms. This position is buttressed by Ward (2010), that the ease of spreading information on digital platforms has led to the rapid dissemination of disinformation, misinformation, and fake news. These phenomena challenge the ethical responsibility of individuals and organizations to verify information and counter the spread of false narratives.

Despite the global reach of digital media, not all populations have equal access to technology and information. The digital divide, characterized by disparities in internet access, digital literacy, and technological infrastructure, raises ethical questions related to equity and inclusivity in the digital age. According to Rao & Wasserman (2007), the globalized digital environment creates opportunities for cross-cultural exchange but also poses ethical dilemmas regarding cultural sensitivity, representation, and the potential for cultural appropriation in digital content. Thus, balancing the fundamental right to freedom of expression with the need to combat online harassment, hate speech, and the spread of harmful content presents ethical challenges for online platforms and governments.

In view with the above statement, as individuals participate in the global digital discourse, questions of digital citizenship and responsibility come to the forefront. Ethical considerations include online behavior, digital etiquette, and the responsible use of technology. (Christians et al, 2008).

The ethical landscape of the digital age is complex and multifaceted, shaped by the interactions of technology, society, culture, and individual agency. Understanding and navigating these ethical challenges are imperative as societies continue to adapt to the opportunities and complexities of digital globalization. (Radojković & Miletić, 2006). As such, this study seeks to delve into the intricate ethical dimensions of the digital globalized environment, shedding light on the multifaceted ethical considerations that underpin this transformative era. Through rigorous analysis and exploration, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ethical implications of digital globalization and provide insights for individuals, organizations, policymakers, and educators to navigate this complex ethical terrain.

Conceptual review

The concepts of digital globalization and media have been reviewed in this section of the study.

Digital Globalization

The term is used to describe the process of global interconnectedness and interdependence that has been greatly accelerated and facilitated by digital technologies and the internet. It refers to the global integration of digital systems, data, and information flows, transcending geographical boundaries and transforming various aspects of society, economy, culture, and communication.

Dimitrios (2018) opine that globalization is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that encompasses the interconnectedness of economies, cultures, societies, and nations on a global scale. The stressed that, it involves the increasing interdependence and integration of various aspects of human life, such as trade, finance, technology, communication, and culture, across national borders. Globalization reflects the growing interconnectivity and interdependence of the world's nations, leading to a more interwoven and interrelated global community.

Waters (1995) cited in Mylona & Dimitrios (2018) define globalizationas a social process in which the constrains of geography on social and cultural agreements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receded. It is argued that globalization is traced through three areas of social life. Firstly, the economy: social arrangements for the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and tangible services. Secondly, the policy where social arrangements for the concentration and application of power, especially insofar as it involves the organized exchange of coercion and surveillance as well as such institutionalized transformation of these practices as authority and diplomacy, can establish control over population and territories. Finally, culture, where social arrangements for the production, exchange and expression of symbols that represent facts, affects meanings, beliefs, preferences, tastes and values.

Thus, globalization is a multidimensional and intricate process that has evolved over the past few decades, profoundly impacting the world in various ways. While it's challenging to encapsulate its complexities in a single definition, it can be elucidated as the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence among countries and regions on a global scale. McKingsey Global Institute (2016) explains that, the interconnectedness of globalization manifests across several domains:

At its core, economic globalization refers to the integration of national economies into a single global economy. It involves the flow of goods, services, capital, and technology across borders, facilitated by trade agreements, multinational corporations, and advancements in transportation and communication.

According to McKingsey Global Institute, cultural globalization encompasses the dissemination of ideas, values, beliefs, and cultural products (such as movies, music, fashion, and cuisine) on a global scale. It leads to greater cultural exchange, hybridization, and the sharing of diverse cultural elements worldwide. Ultimately, the diversity of these cultural elements plays pivotal role such as technological advances, especially in information and communication technologies, have played a pivotal role in globalization. The internet, smartphones, and social media platforms have facilitated instant global communication, the spread of information, and the rise of the digital economy.

In tandem with McKinsey Institute assertion, Gazi Md. Muidul Haque (2020) contends that political globalization involves the increasing interconnectedness of political systems and governments. International organizations like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and regional blocs such as the European Union exemplify efforts to address global challenges and promote cooperation among nations. He stressed that, it environmental concerns transcend national borders. Issues like climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss require international cooperation and agreements to address effectively. Environmental globalization acknowledges the shared responsibility of all nations in preserving the planet.

Social globalization relates to the global flow of people, ideas, and social norms. Migration, for instance, leads to multicultural societies, while global movements for human rights and social

justice advocate for common principles and values worldwide.

Financial markets and institutions operate on a global scale, affecting economies and financial stability worldwide. The global financial system allows for the movement of capital across borders, impacting currencies, interest rates, and investments.

The spread of diseases, such as pandemics, illustrates health globalization. Additionally, advancements in medical research and pharmaceuticals are often the result of international collaboration and information sharing.

Education has become more international, with students studying abroad and universities collaborating on research projects. Online learning and the availability of educational resources worldwide have furthered this trend. Dimitrios (2018) affirms that, globalization has its proponents which emphasizes on its potential for economic growth, cultural enrichment, and the spread of knowledge. However, it also has critics who point to issues like income inequality, cultural homogenization, environmental degradation, and loss of national sovereignty. In essence, globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that has far-reaching consequences, reshaping the world in ways that are both promising and challenging. Each of the above elements mentioned plays a significant role in fostering economic growth in all nations.

Media

The word media is the plural form of the word medium. They are Latin in origin. Medium means an agency or means of doing something. In other words, it can be called as means, method, way, form, agency, avenue, channel, vehicle, organ, instrument or mechanism. If we go for a broader definition of media then we can say that the intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed to the senses or a force act on objects at a distance, (Gazi Md. Muidul Haque 2020). Now if come to the word media it means a series, collection, or aggregation of medium through which mass people can be reached. In technical sense the word has a different meaning which refers to;

i. Objects on which data can be stored. These include hard disks, floppy disks, CD-ROMs, and tapes.

ii. In computer networks, media refers to the cables linking workstations together. There are many different types of transmission media, the most popular being twisted-pair wire (normal electrical wire), coaxial cable (the type of cable used for cable television), and fiber optical cable (cables made out of glass).

Importance of media

Mass communicated media saturate the industrialized world. Omojola (2010), cited in Joshua Suleiman (2018) contends that, the television in the living room, the newspaper on the doorstep, the radio in the car, the computer at work, and the fliers in the mailbox are just a few of the media channels daily delivering advertisements, news, opinion, music, and other forms of mass communication. Because the media are so prevalent in industrialized countries, they have a powerful impact on how those populations view the world (Barnes, 2006).

Nearly all of the news in Africa comes from a major network or newspaper. It is only the most local and personal events that are experienced first-hand. Events in the larger community, the state, the country, and the rest of the world are experienced through the eyes of a journalist. Not only do the media report the news, they create the news by deciding what to report. The "top story" of the day has to be picked from the millions of things that happened that particular day. After something is deemed newsworthy, there are decisions on how much time or space to give it, whom to interview, what pictures to use, and how to frame it, Liutauras Ulevičius (2005). Often considered by editors, but seldom discussed, is how the biases and interests of management will impact these determinations. All of these decisions add up to the audience's view of the world, and those who influence the decisions influence the audience.

Theoretical perspectives

The study is anchored on the social responsibility theory. The theory emerged as a response to the criticisms and concerns about the functioning of the media, particularly in the United States, during the twentieth century. This theory advocated for a more responsible and ethical role for the press in society, recognizing that the media wielded significant power and influence over public opinion and had the potential to shape the direction of a nation.

In the early to mid-twentieth century, the press in the United States was facing criticism for various reasons. Some of the major concerns included: In response to these concerns, the Commission on Freedom of the Press was established, with Robert Maynard Hutchins serving as its chairman. This commission issued a special report in 1947, which called for a socially responsible press. The report highlighted the need for the media to recognize their role as stewards of public information and to act responsibly in the interests of society.

Later, scholars such as Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm expanded upon the Social Responsibility Theory. They elaborated on the principles and responsibilities that the media should uphold in a democratic society. These principles included accuracy, fairness, balance, and a commitment to public service. This theory advocated for media accountability, that the media organizations should be accountable for their actions and decisions. This includes owning up to errors, correcting misinformation, and being transparent about their sources and methods.

In the context of the present digital globalization, the concept of social responsibility remains relevant. With the internet and digital platforms, media outlets have a global reach, and their impact is profound. Ensuring that media organizations act responsibly, ethically, and in the best interests of society is a shared responsibility among media professionals, regulators, and the public.

Thus, Social Responsibility Theory emerged in response to concerns about the role and conduct of the press, particularly in the United States. It advocates for a responsible and ethical media that serves the public interest and upholds democratic values. In today's digital globalized world, the need for a socially responsible media remains essential to maintain the integrity of information dissemination and promote a well-informed and engaged citizenry.

Literature Review

This section of the study reviewed relevant literature to the study.

Netizens in era of digital globalization

The term Netizen has spread widely since it was first coined. Welcome to the 21st Century. You are a Netizen (Net Citizen), and you exist as a citizen of the world thanks to the global connectivity that the Net provides. You consider everyone as your compatriot. You physically live in one country but you are in contact with much of the world via the global computer network (Hauben, and Hauben, 1997). Micheal Hauben and Ronda Hauben, as far back as 1995 propounded the concept of “Netizens” which happens to be a portmanteau of the words net and citizen. The word, which was simply a reflection of the early stages of the global evolution from social citizenship to digital citizenship argued that social limitations and conventions no longer prevented potential friendships or partnerships. In this manner “Netizens” are today meeting each other from far and wide, close or far, it is also true that they probably wouldn’t have met were not for the internet and social media. It can be said that with globalization, the internet now has its own citizens, as well as what qualifies them as such. Thus, it can also be argued that the boundaries shattered by the internet gave birth to the present-day digital citizen.

According to Oxford University Press (2020) cited in Lynch (2021), we live in the information age era, also known as the computer age, the digital age, and the new media age. Mckinsey Global Institute (MGI) (2016) explain that “the world has never been more deeply connected by commerce, communication, and travel, than it is today.” It is however, not surprising to see that digital globalization is the main reason for this transformation. Digital globalization, which is defined largely by flows of data and information, is now considered a new form of globalization. It is also clear to see that the soldiers of the present global digital transformation are the netizens, it can easily be argued that the internet has helped present day “Netizens” and in other

words digital citizens to reach audiences that were once thought of as unreachable, and this reach is not restricted to one area alone. Digital technology as well as digital globalization has brought about the democratization of the media by creating channels for participants. It is now possible for people to get information in real-time and in many cases, with digital video evidence. Anyone can sit on his computer, or mobile device and disseminate information to a very wide audience, sometimes this type of freedom leads to the spread of false and libelous content. This of course has brought up a lot of ethical issues that have quizzed both experts and scholars. Using today's high digital technology, a journalist shapes reality and sells it as a product to users, on the market. The ethics of this profession depends on self-control or self-censorship of a person who selects the product – a journalist. In the confusion and race for time of a modern man, and trying to follow some streams of modern communication in the new media, there is another issue of responsibility imposed on a consumer of media. Media should educate the public about their basic human rights. What is the objective of media quality, in other words what is the method by which media achieves quality? Which is more important, ethics or a method of obtaining information? Ethics depends on the method. A good or bad method sets an ethical limit, within which is the ultimate ideal – the truth lies.

Social Media Use and Ethics

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 by allowing the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It can be argued that social media is a social tool of communication that allows for interaction in multiple ways. Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) explain that internet use was primarily configured around “passive” consumption of static content posted on websites without any meaningful input or interaction on the part of the content's readers or viewers and this era marks the first generation in the evolution referred to as Web 1.0. In pursuit of modernity through the use of social media, normal citizens as well as journalists along with citizen journalists, need to realize that there is a need to have the values of ethics and integrity in the management and handling of social media tools, be it in their personal life or even in their professional life. Ethics means sound moral principles and it focuses on a good grip of clean character, while integrity refers to the set of superior quality that exists among individuals and the quality is based on the principles that adhere to honesty and high moral practice. If ethics and integrity are ignored while using social media, the problem of misuse will appear. Social media users freely give their personal information as a prerequisite for joining social networking as well as social media sites (Barnes, 2006). It can be argued that though the angle of fake and libelous content is an issue of concern in terms of the use of social media, there are are also questions about legislation of laws that bother on social media particular and digital citizenship in general, issues such as whether or not our present laws are up to date with our present digital realities always spring up from time to time. Other issues such as digital rights and responsibilities are sensitive areas that must be given close attention. It is also true that the way big social media sites like Facebook handle big data and algorithms raises serious ethical questions. A good example of data mismanagement and target marketing through the use of algorithms as in the case of the Facebook and Cambridge Analytica scandal in which private data was shared with a third party, has opened a can of worms that also begs for urgent legislation.

The 2019 Social Media Bill

The bill aims to prevent the transmission of false statements or false declaration of facts with a view to counter the effects of such transmissions in Nigeria. Among the ways of achieving this would be to suppress the financing, promotion and endorsement of whatever is considered a false statement. Measures will be put in place to detect, control and safeguard against coordinated inauthentic behavior, including the misuse of online accounts, and defaulters will be sanctioned.

The bill equally describes what should be seen by law as constituting a false statement of facts that warrants sanctions. This includes being prejudicial to the security of Nigeria, to public health, public safety, public tranquility and public finances of the country. Other ways in which one could be liable is by transmitting statements capable of influencing the outcome of an election, inciting feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between differently groups of persons. It can however be argued that for social media to

be regulated, states must reflect through their laws and policies to ensure that same rights that individuals have offline are protected online, particularly the right to freedom of expression, speech, and access to information.

It can be said that the 2019 social media bill was long awaited and anticipated, but at the same time it must be noted that the bill should not stop at the desk, it should be applied without prejudice or partiality. Also, the new laws must not trample on the democratic rights of the citizens, especially when it comes to the issue of freedom of speech and access to information.

Conclusion/Recommendation

The digital era has ushered in unprecedented opportunities and challenges for individuals, societies, and the media. Digital globalization, driven by technology, has transformed the way we access and share information, transcending geographical boundaries. While this transformation has brought many benefits, it has also given rise to complex ethical dilemmas. Media ethics, particularly in the age of digital communication, have become a central concern. The Social Responsibility Theory underscores the importance of responsible and ethical media that serve the public interest. However, the rapid dissemination of information through social media has introduced new challenges, including the spread of false information, misuse of personal data, and the need for legislation to ensure responsible online behavior. The study thus recommends that:

1. Educational institutions and media organizations should collaborate on initiatives to promote media literacy. It is crucial to enhance media literacy and digital citizenship education, equipping individuals with the skills needed to critically assess and navigate the digital information landscape.

2. Media organizations should adhere to ethical standards, promote accuracy, fairness, and transparency in reporting, and hold themselves accountable for errors. Journalists should prioritize responsible reporting over sensationalism.

3. Media organizations should establish mechanisms for public accountability, including ombudsmen or independent bodies to address complaints and ethical violations.

4. Efforts should be made to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all populations have equitable access to technology and information. This includes investments in digital infrastructure and digital literacy programs.

5. Companies that develop algorithms for content curation and distribution should prioritize ethical considerations, such as minimizing the spread of harmful content and promoting diverse perspectives.

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