

Anonymity and the Expression of Face on Facebook

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Abstract

This paper shows how the anonymity of person does not necessarily guarantee the anonymity of information/content, and how matters relating to the threat to one's face can emerge in such instances. To achieve this, twenty posts were purposively sampled from Rant HQ, a Facebook domain. Rants that were specifically tagged "anonymous" were analysed using Trepete's (2020) Social Media Privacy Model and Brown and Levinson's (1987) Theory of Politeness. Findings reveal that most of the anonymous posts contain personal issues that border on marriage, sex, relationships and different forms of negative addictions. The paper concludes that hiding one's physical identity does not immune one from the effect that the content of a message can have on their *face* because senders of these anonymous messages took actions capable of constituting a threat to their own *face*. It is recommended that matters of sensitive nature should be treated in close quarters by people who have the best interests of the senders at heart like close friends and family members, and not in a public domain like Facebook.

Keywords: Language, Anonymity, Identity, Face, Facebook

Introduction

Over the years, there have been significant change on how people use language for communication on the Internet (Ren & Guo 179-189; Chen 9-15; Dayter 91-102). One of the changes that has characterised human communication is anonymity. Anonymity in messaging refers to the ability to communicate without revealing one's identity (Cirucci 3). This concept has become increasingly relevant in the digital age, where online interactions have become a norm. Anonymity can provide a sense of freedom and liberation, allowing individuals to express themselves without fear of judgment, retribution, or repercussions (Li et al. 2; Christopherson 3040). In certain contexts, such as whistleblowing or reporting sensitive information, anonymity can be a crucial tool for

protecting individuals from potential backlash (Kersten and Lotze 125).

However, anonymity can also have a darker side. Without accountability, individuals may feel emboldened to engage in behavior they wouldn't normally exhibit in person, such as harassment, cyberbullying, or spreading misinformation. This lack of transparency and accountability can erode trust and undermine constructive communication. Furthermore, anonymity can make it challenging to verify the credibility and reliability of information, potentially leading to the spread of false or misleading information.

In some cases, anonymity can be a deliberate choice, such as when individuals use pseudonyms or avatars

to protect their real identities (Carr and Hayes 50). This can be particularly important for marginalized or vulnerable groups, who may face persecution or discrimination if their identities are revealed. Correspondingly, Kersten and Lotze observed that anonymity may be a technical feature in such a way that “the face-work strategies employed by users on social media are influenced by a desire to preserve privacy and, at least up to a point, anonymity” (126) designed to provide users with a sense of security and confidentiality.

The impact of anonymity on messaging dynamics is complex and multifaceted. While it can provide a safe space for self-expression and protect individuals from potential harm, it can also facilitate negative behaviours and undermine trust (Woo 954). As technology continues to evolve, it's essential to strike a balance between preserving anonymity and promoting accountability, ensuring that online interactions remain safe, respectful, and constructive (Masur 70). By acknowledging the benefits and drawbacks of anonymity, we can work towards creating more nuanced and effective approaches to online communication.

Literature Review

Anonymity on Facebook has been a topic of interest for researchers, as it presents both benefits and drawbacks. Studies have shown that anonymity can foster honest and open discussions, particularly on sensitive topics such as mental health, sexuality, or social issues. According to Zhang and Kizilcec, as social media usage grows, so do concerns about online privacy. This particular study explored how the controversial nature of content and social validation influence users' decisions to share information publicly or anonymously. The findings showed that

anonymous sharing is a preferred option, accounting for 59% of shares, particularly for content that is likely to spark debate, which is 3.2 times more likely to be shared anonymously. Interestingly, social validation only impacted sharing behavior for sports-related content. The study's insights have implications for designing social media interfaces that balance user needs for expression and privacy (1).

Similarly, Smith and Besalti investigated “(a) how the task relevance of postings differed between anonymous versus identified online discussions in elementary school, and (b) how game-like conversations with story characters impacted the task relevance of postings” (1). Their research showed that those who were online carried out more discussions than those who were anonymous. In another study, anonymous social media have been widely criticized for postings containing threats/harassment, vulgarity and suicidal intentions (Davidson 1). This also aligns with Yun, Allgayer and Park's submission that posts on social media can have negative and positive comment about users and these can have detrimental effects regardless of whether or not the users are anonymous (3418–3438).

In another study, “the hypothesis for the study was that a higher level of anonymity reduces the feeling of responsibility, which causes a person to care less about her moral compass, and will therefore make more selfish choices. The results showed that this was not the case” (Simfors and Rudling 1). This study validates the proposition in this paper that anonymity of person does not translate into anonymity of content. Having reviewed these works on anonymity therefore, the gap that this paper tries to fill is that, anonymity of person does not mean anonymity of information. Therefore, an anonymous user is not immune from the responses generated by a message

sent to the public thus, the need for this paper to study anonymity especially of Nigerian users of Facebook to understand the use, implication and effects of anonymity.

Theoretical Frameworks: Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness and Trepete's Social Media Privacy Model (2020)

Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness, introduced in 1987, revolves around the concept of "face" and how individuals manage their self-image in social interactions (Ting-Toomey 1; Brown and Levinson 66; Massi 171; Mey 268). The concept of face was first introduced into academic discourse by Goffman, who defined face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (213). Also, the concept of face also has cultural implications, limitations and divergences (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 86).

According to the Theory of Politeness, every individual has two types of face: positive and negative. Positive face refers to one's self-esteem and desire for approval, while negative face pertains to one's freedom to act and make choices without imposition (Brown and Levinson 67-210). When interacting with others, individuals use politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) that may damage their own or others' face.

The theory outlines four main politeness strategies to address FTAs: bald on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record (indirect). Bald on-record involves direct communication without minimizing threats, often used in situations where efficiency is crucial or the speaker has a close relationship with the listener. Negative politeness

strategies, on the other hand, focus on avoiding imposition and show deference, such as using indirect language or apologizing. Positive politeness strategies aim to make the listener feel good about themselves, often through compliments or expressions of solidarity. Off-record strategies use indirect language to convey meaning without imposing on the listener. By employing these strategies, individuals can navigate complex social interactions and maintain their own and others' face. For convenience, Brown and Levinson's submission is further summarised in this paper in the table below:

Table 1: Examples of Face Threatening Acts

	Actions by others that threaten our face		Actions we take that threaten our own face	
Threatens Positive Face	i.	Compliments	i.	Apologies and confessions
		Introductions	ii.	Accepting a compliment
		Announcements	iii.	Misunderstanding/Requesting clarification
	ii.	Criticisms	iv.	Unintended emotional action (laugh)
		Demands or Dissatisfactions	v.	Unintended physical action (burp)

	iii. val Di sa gr eei ng iv. As ki ng for cla rifi cat io ns v. Ev alu ati on s	
Threatens Negative Face	a. Orders and request s b. Advice and Suggestions c. Threats and Warnin gs d. Remin ders e. Calling in a	a. Accepti ng an offer b. Accepti ng thanks c. Making a promise or offer d. Behavio ur that threaten s a relation ship

	debt	e. Do an unreque sted favour
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Trepete's Social Media Privacy Model (2020) model is built around four core propositions that redefine how privacy is understood and managed in social media contexts.

1. Interdependent Perception and Valuation of Privacy: The model posits that privacy in social media is not perceived or valued in isolation. Instead, it is interdependently perceived, meaning that users' understanding and valuation of privacy are influenced by their social interactions and relationships online. This suggests that privacy is a dynamic concept, shaped by the social context in which it is experienced.
2. Limitations of Control in Achieving Privacy: Given the interdependent nature of privacy, the model argues that achieving privacy through control alone is not always possible. Control mechanisms, such as privacy settings, can provide a sense of security, but they are insufficient to guarantee privacy in social media. This is because social media platforms are inherently designed for sharing and interaction, which can compromise individual privacy.
3. Interpersonal Communication as a Primary Mechanism for Ensuring Privacy: The model proposes that interpersonal communication is the primary mechanism for ensuring social media privacy. This involves negotiating boundaries, expectations, and norms with

others in one's online social network. By engaging in open and honest communication, individuals can better manage their privacy and build trust with others.

4. Trust and Norms as Crystallized Privacy Communication: The model suggests that trust and norms are essential mechanisms that represent crystallized privacy communication. Trust refers to the faith that individuals have in others to respect their privacy boundaries, while norms refer to the unwritten rules that govern behavior in online communities. When trust and norms are established, individuals can feel more confident in their online interactions, knowing that their privacy is respected and protected.

Methodology

Data for this work was collected from an online platform known as Rant HQ (Headquarters) on Facebook. It is an online social platform with over one million people (1.1 Million Members) founded by one Susan Ade Coker. The group is a non-political, non-religious and non-ethnic organization mostly made up of Nigerians within the country and abroad. The researcher collected over one hundred messages on this platform from 2019 to 2021. Using purposive sampling method, the paper focused only on those posts that are tagged “anonymous” and specifically deals with private issues in the areas of marriage, sex, love, romance, family and business only.

The messages are further divided into two sections. Section A (*Datum 1 to 10*) has to do with indicating “anonymity of persons” while Section B (*Datum 11-20*) proves that “anonymity of information/content is impossible, and could constitute a threat to face. The

data presentation begins with the anonymity of person and then proceeds to the anonymity of content.

Rant Group Pictures:



Data Presentation and Analysis

As stated in the methodology, the data presentation begins with the anonymity of person and then proceeds to the anonymity of content.

Rant 1: “#anonymous please”

The use of “#anonymous” in this rant explicitly conveys the desire to remain unnamed or unidentified. This hashtag-like phrase is a direct request to keep the individual's identity hidden from public view. By including “#anonymous”, the person is signaling that they want to share their thoughts or feelings without being tied to their real identity. This could be due to various reasons, such as fear of judgment, repercussions, or social consequences.

The phrase “#anonymous please” is a clear and concise way to request anonymity. The word “anonymous” itself means lacking a name or identity, and in this context, it's being used to convey a sense of detachment from one's online presence. By using this phrase, the individual is hoping to create a safe space for self-expression, where they can share their thoughts without being personally identified.

Rant 2: “#hide my identity”

The phrase “hide my identity” is a direct and explicit request to conceal one's personal details, ensuring anonymity. This phrase emphasises the importance of protecting one's identity in online interactions. By asking to “hide my identity”, the individual is acknowledging that their online presence could potentially reveal their real-life identity, and they're seeking to prevent that from happening.

The use of “hide” in this context implies that the individual wants to keep their identity concealed or protected from public view. This could be due to concerns about privacy, security, or social repercussions. By requesting to “hide my identity”,

the person is seeking a level of anonymity that allows them to share their thoughts or feelings without fear of being personally identified or judged.

Rant 3: “#pls hide my identity”

The phrase “pls hide my identity” is a polite request to maintain anonymity, similar to Rant 2. The use of “pls” (please) adds a courteous tone to the request, while still conveying the need for confidentiality. By asking to “hide my identity”, the individual is demonstrating a desire to keep their personal details and identity private.

The politeness of the request (“pls”) suggests that the individual values the platform's or administrator's discretion in maintaining their anonymity. This could be due to the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed or concerns about potential repercussions. By using a polite tone, the person is showing respect for the platform's or administrator's role in protecting their identity.

Rant 4: “#Hide my ID”

The abbreviation “Hide my ID” is a concise way to request anonymity. “ID” typically refers to identification, and the request to hide it implies that the individual wants to keep their personal details and identity private. By using this shorthand, the person is quickly and directly conveying their desire for anonymity.

The use of “Hide my ID” suggests that the individual is aware of the potential risks associated with sharing personal information online. By requesting to hide their ID, they're taking steps to protect themselves from potential judgment, repercussions, or social consequences. This concise request demonstrates a clear desire for anonymity and confidentiality.

Rant 5: “#pls hide my Id”

The phrase “pls hide my Id” is another polite request to maintain anonymity, similar to Rant 3. The use of “pls” adds a courteous tone to the request, while “Id” is a shorthand for identity, emphasizing the need for confidentiality. By asking to “hide my Id”, the individual is demonstrating a desire to keep their personal details and identity private.

The politeness of the request (“pls”) suggests that the individual values the platform’s or administrator’s discretion in maintaining their anonymity. This could be due to the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed or concerns about potential repercussions. By using a polite tone, the person is showing respect for the platform’s or administrator’s role in protecting their identity.

Rant 6: “#No explicit request for anonymity”

In this rant, there is no direct request to hide one’s identity or remain anonymous. The individual seems to be seeking help and guidance without specifying a need for anonymity. This could suggest that the person is comfortable sharing their thoughts or feelings without fear of judgment or repercussions.

The lack of an explicit request for anonymity might imply that the individual is seeking a more open and honest discussion about their concerns. By not requesting anonymity, they’re potentially opening themselves up to more direct feedback or support from others. However, it’s also possible that the person simply didn’t feel the need to request anonymity or assumed that their identity would be protected.

Rant 7: “#hide my identity”

The phrase “hide my identity” is identical to Rant 2, emphasizing the importance of concealing one’s

identity in online interactions. The request to “hide my identity” demonstrates a clear desire to maintain anonymity and protect one’s personal details. By asking to hide their identity, the individual is seeking to prevent their real-life identity from being tied to their online presence. The use of “hide” in this context implies that the individual wants to keep their identity concealed or protected

In this section, each sender initiates the anonymity of persons only; and in some cases, it is boldly written in the message. Instances where the anonymity of person has either been boldly written in the message have either been highlighted or have an implied anonymity status. The next thing to consider is lack of anonymity of information/content. In this section, using separate data, this paper shows how anonymity of information/content cannot be guaranteed when senders solicit for responses after preferring to remain anonymous. The focus of this following discussion is on the responses of the public which can be injurious to the face of the sender whether he or she chooses to remain anonymous or not.

Rant 8#:

Pls help me share on ur post and don’t mention my name I will be reading comments. I lost my husband 2020 and the family took over everything he had and support me and the kinds with what they want. Recently I started seeing someone and I think am beginning to fall for him but that’s by the way. I started falling down recently from places I use to walk before and injure myself, not once or twice. So I went to see our pastor after telling him this, he said my late husband is not happy that am seeing someone that I should stop seeing the person.

The question is have anyone been in this type of situation I don't know what to believe.

Response 1

When your husband's people maltreated you and your kids, your husband keep quiet until you started seeing another man. My sister, it's not true! See your doctor first. Second, tell your pastor to advise your late husband, since he the pastor sees him often, to rest and stop serving as ancestors. African people hardly rest, even after they died.

Response 2

My friend go and date the person u falling for. una don start o. Ok, apart from falling what other thing they happen to you? Enjoy yasef jare, u don day fall before before you met man, if na won u won take as excuse.

The responses to the anonymous post can be a threat to face and privacy by subjecting the individual to public scrutiny, judgment, and potential criticism. The comments, such as implying the late husband's spirit is causing harm or dismissing concerns, can be perceived as personal attacks or insensitive, damaging the individual's emotional well-being and face. Furthermore, the exposure of their personal life, including relationships and family dynamics, can compromise their privacy, potentially leading to unwanted attention, gossip, or speculation. The public nature of the discussion may also make the individual feel emotionally vulnerable, exacerbating feelings of guilt, anxiety, or uncertainty, and potentially threatening their privacy and well-being.

Rant 9#:

Pls, I'd like to remain anonymous as u help post my request for everyone, who is willing to release a car to my hubby for taxi business, here in Abuja. We are presently challenged as my husband recently lost his job, and I'm six month's pregnant. Pls help my family.

Response 1

No be to buy the car be problem....Him go remit? When him go use car kill am finish and him no fit balance. Abuja drivers dey somehow

Response 2

Go and post this on women in Abuja group. So sorry! All is well.

The responses to the anonymous post can be a threat to face and privacy in several ways. Response 1's comment about Abuja drivers being "someway" and implying that the husband might not be responsible enough to manage a car can be perceived as judgmental and stigmatizing, potentially damaging the family's face. Additionally, the responses, although well-intentioned, might inadvertently expose the family's personal struggles and financial challenges to a wider audience, compromising their privacy. The suggestion to post on a specific group (Response 2) could further increase the visibility of their situation, potentially leading to unwanted attention or scrutiny.

Rant 10#:

Good morning mama and happy new month, please post for me and keep this anonymous. Irony of life...can I get true love as a single mother of one who got pregnant and rejected by my baby's father 7 years ago? (He doesn't even know the boy), I'm not understanding it anymore, God has been faithful to me, I am financially blessed by God...or should I just not give love a chance again in life? But then, I need a companion...To my surprise a guy I have been dating for the past 1 year called me an animal on Sunday morning...just because a lady called him and I asked him who the lady was? But can I ever forgive him again? So many questions in my mind? I have so many questions in my heart to ask God if I am opportune to see him...

Response 1

I think your problem is that you're too emotional. If he calls you animal you call him boyfriend of an animal. Try not to be petty because in marriage quarrel comes up, you can't end a marriage because you were called an animal.

Response 2

Na animals dey make you like this? If he insult you...give him back...men get bad mouth.

The responses to the anonymous post can be a threat to face and privacy by dismissing the individual's emotional pain and hurt with tones that seem insensitive, such as being told not to be "petty" or to simply "give him back" after being insulted. This lack

of empathy can minimize their feelings and make them feel unheard and unsupported. Furthermore, the public discussion of their personal struggles and relationship issues, despite the request for anonymity, could lead to unwanted attention or scrutiny, compromising their privacy and potentially making them feel vulnerable.

Rant 11#:

Good day Ma, kindly help me post this ma I am going through something serious, I noticed something since some years back, if am dating a guy if things is going well before we met or as we just met, before I know it he will start complaining of things not going well again, at first I used to think it is just coincidence, but along the line I realize it is not, I have done personal prayer about it to stop it all to no avail, I am already of marriageable age, I cannot continue like this. My location is Ibadan in case some of our followers know where I can go for prayer or deliverances. This is a big deal for me. Thanks in anticipation.

Response 1

My dear everything for this life no be prayers oo. You need to settle with your spirit world that you came to this world with. Appease them and trust me things will start going well. E no pass like that. Experience!!

Response 2

I have a small question for those of you who have recommended men of God here and there, is it possible that you will have father living with you and then you need a third

*party to talk to your father on your behalf
without having a disjointed relationship?
...God is our father...*

The responses to the anonymous post can be a threat to face and privacy by potentially exposing the individual's personal struggles and spiritual concerns to a wider audience, despite their request for anonymity. Response 1's suggestion to "appease" their spirit world may also be perceived as judgmental or stigmatizing, implying that the individual has not properly managed their spiritual affairs. Response 2's rhetorical question, while thought-provoking, may come across as dismissive of the individual's concerns and experiences. Overall, the responses may not provide the emotional support or practical guidance the individual is seeking, potentially leaving them feeling misunderstood and vulnerable.

Rant 12#:

Hello Auntie Suzzy please I need your advice on this to know if this is normal with men, I'll remain anonymous pls, its about my husband, Suzzy my hubby is addicted to licking my anus, he does this on a regular basis, both when I'm in the kitchen and elsewhere around the house, if we're making love and he hasn't lick my anus, he wont get a full hard on, I thought it only pussy that men lick, he licks my pussy too, but his main focus is always on my anus, I find it repulsive because I like kissing a lot and it is sometimes difficult for me to kiss him after licking my back there. I've asked him to stop else I'll never kiss him again but he refused, in fact he agreed on licking my anus to kiss during sex, I'm really missing good kissing

because I like it a lot, o I just want to help me ask your audience if this is normal, are there other women with similar experience??

Response 1

Women sef. He will eat your pussy you will be okay with it. But he eat your anus you de complain. WHY? That's what turns the young man on. So please enjoy the pussy own.

Response 2

Must this be discussed in public if were the man I will not be happy with you. bedroom issues should be kept secret.

The responses above show that while the sender may remain anonymous, the threat to face and privacy is unavoidable. The vulgarity in the responses show that the sender has neither respect nor sympathy for the sender not to mention the encroachment into the private life of the sender. The sender, in this instance, cannot control the negativity in the responses, and therefore face is threatened and privacy encroached.

Rant 13#:

Good morning Ma, thanks for all you do in the group. Please help me post and hide my identity. My husband had prostate issues 5 years ago which we have been treating both local and orthodox. He's 40 years of age. My husband doesn't last up to 20 seconds now and after the first round no matter how I play with him his organ will never rise up. It is tearing us apart. I don't want to cheat on him but am already getting tired. He takes any drugs given to him just to see that he

becomes a man again. Please I need help if anyone has experienced such and what the man took to cure this. Pls help me. Thank u Ma.

Response 1

Thank GOD 4 UR OWN U BETTER APPRECIATE ND GET SATISFU B4 U LOOSE HIM

Response 2

It is normal for a forty year old, prostrate or not. The older they get, the weaker. God will see you through. Give him peace of mind, please.

The responses show that there is an obvious disregard for the sender's face and privacy. While this is expected, the audience seems to be more sympathetic to the man than her. This statement is expected to have the opposite effect on her. This may not be the anticipated response that the sender had expected. It could be guessed that while she expected sympathy and some kind of consolation instead, she received verbal outburst of outright condemnation. From the responses, it appears as though the woman is not appreciative of what she is getting from an already health challenged man.

Rant 14#:

Good morning ma, pls post on Rant for me, my husband is US and am in Nigeria, we waited for 5years before God bless us with twins, have always be peace maker in the marriage, my twins were admitted and one was not responding to treatment, called him to inform him and the next thing he said was

why am aggressive and till now he hasn't call or pick my calls, am bothered now it seems he doesn't love the kids, how do I handle this.

Response 1

Madam why must you come over social media to discuss your family problems besides did you care to know how your husband is or did you find him here on social media....

Response 2

By bringing this issue out here without sorting it out with ur inner family members have already shows u're not a good wife to begin with...

The responses above constitute a threat to face and privacy. There is a direct attack on the sender for bringing family matters to a social space. The responses prove that this woman is not a sensitive woman neither is she sensitive enough to the plight of her husband. It is obvious that instead of bringing this to the public space, she should have gone on a fact-finding mission and privately resolve her issues with her husband. For refusing to this, the second messenger concludes that she is bad wife. It is possible that she is not, but given that she brought this issue to the public, she has been tagged thus. Surely, these responses are not the anticipated responses not to mention that they constitute a serious threat to the sender's face and image.

Rant 15#:

Here is my story. I was rape when I was in higher institution and I gave birth to a beautiful daughter I got married when I graduated from school. I told my husband all my past stories and he accepted the child as his own but whenever we have a little quarrel he use to insult me with the child that I was a prostitute then that's why I got rape. Here is the problem anytime he made mention of the incident to me I feel like ending my life. Am confused should I leave my marriage or stayed with him because of my children because I gave birth to a child for him. Sorry for disturbing you ma.

Response 1

He can never change n don't need to leave or kill yourself, make research about wat will pain him enter blood...

Response 2

U made a mistake of telling him u were rape, u could have use something else like maybe her father is somewhere or whatever cos men if the want to get back at u, nah ur past they go dey use.

Unlike most of the responses, these ones appear to generate the right responses that is, if sympathy is the intention of the sender. But if sympathy is not the intention, then the responses will not have the desired effect on the sender. In the responses, it is obvious that they are advising the sender to go on the defensive. Being "on the defensive" means being prepared to protect oneself or one's ideas from criticism, attack, or perceived threats. In this instance,

the responses suggest that the woman should protect herself from whatever is unleashed on her by her husband. This would invariably involve anticipating potential objections or challenges, justifying or explaining one's actions or beliefs and deflecting criticism or negative feedback. By their statement have the intention of becoming more reactive and argumentative. This is capable of creating more chaos in the home than peace.

Rant 16#:

Good morning ma, please I need you to post for me and hide my id. I'm an expectant mom and I have a pet dog dat I love a lot but a lady in my compound told me to stop caring for the dog cos it can get jealous and cause me delay or something evil, I didn't listen to her at first cos I didn't believe such but this morning, another woman in my compound also, told me something similar, that I should stop caring so much for the dog that my baby doesn't have the same character with a dog please does anyone have an idea or a family that have a dog,. I just want to know cos I'm kinda scared.

Response 1

People still listen to neighbors talk like this one. Okay oo.

Response 2

Werin make white people wey get belle, but dey sleep on same bed with their pet come do...it's just superstitious belief. Thank you.

On the surface, these statements have the tendency to either appease the woman or make her look for more help. This paper suggests that it is more likely to do the former. Clearly, they dismiss the claim of the lady's neighbours as "superstitious" and nothing more. In the first statement, the sender attacks the lady's inability to distinguish between good neighbours and bad ones. In so doing, the sender seems to question her ill-sense of judgement

Rant 17#:

Good morning Ma. Please help me. My name is Udeme. I am looking for my father I heard his name is Itoro from Ikonu LG in Akwa Ibom State. My mum's name is Aret, Nwaeka. I know my mum very well but only see my dad once. I grew up hanging around from under bridge to staying in church. I've tried creating relationship with my mum severally but she keep cursing me. I feel sad and unfortunate when I read other people's caption about their mother especially mothers' day. Right now I as if I fell from the sky, I don't have any relative. I hate telling people about myself cause no one believe I don't have a family.

Response 1

See ur face, ur father might be here

Response 2

Where is ur mother? is She...

From the message itself, it is a genuine plea for help searching for one's father. Regardless of the intention in the message, some of the responses constitute a threat to his face and privacy. First response begins with an insult, "see your face". It is this paper's submission that the statement is used as a direct insult, and is therefore considered as a threat to "face". Again, the expression, "ur father might be here" is very derogatory. A derogatory statement is a comment or remark that belittles, criticizes, or disparages someone or something, often in a way that's intended to hurt or offend. Derogatory statements can be verbal or written and may target a person's character, appearance, abilities, or affiliations. This statement is therefore dismissed as damaging and has a negative impact on the self-esteem of the sender. Ironically, one of the senders asks, "where is ur mother?" This statement appears harmless on the surface but it could have many negative interpretations. One of them is that the sender intends to liken the sender to a "bastard". This is quite hurtful and stigmatizing.

This paper has shown that Facebook, as a widely used social media platform, presents various challenges related to privacy, public image, and user interactions. One significant issue is privacy. When users share personal information, photos, or updates on Facebook, they may not always be aware of who can see their content. Despite having privacy settings, users might unintentionally or intentionally expose sensitive information to a broader audience than intended. This can lead to privacy breaches, where personal details are accessed by individuals or entities that the user did not mean to share with. This, as this paper has shown, often leads to threat to face and one's self- image.

The threat to public image is a critical issue in this paper. Social media platforms are often used by individuals and organizations to project a certain image or reputation. However, a single post, comment, or shared content can quickly go viral and potentially damage one's public image. This can happen due to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or even deliberate attempts to tarnish someone's reputation. In this paper, people deliberately post issues of a very personal nature on line. Consequently, a negative post or comment can lead to widespread criticism, impacting one's reputation and even leading to real-world consequences.

This paper has further shown that people's comments on Facebook can also be a source of concern. The platform's comment sections can sometimes become breeding grounds for negativity, harassment, or cyberbullying. Users might face hurtful remarks, personal attacks, or unwarranted criticism, which can affect their mental health and well-being. Furthermore, the anonymity provided by the internet can embolden some individuals to post comments they might not otherwise make in person. This can lead to toxic online environments where constructive dialogue is overshadowed by hostility.

Moreover, the permanence of content on Facebook adds to these challenges. Unlike face-to-face interactions or even some other forms of communication, content shared on Facebook can be difficult to erase completely. Even if a user deletes a post, it might have already been shared by others or captured through screenshots. This permanence means that both privacy breaches and threats to public image can have long-lasting effects. Additionally, comments, once made, can resurface at any time, potentially reigniting controversies or negative perceptions. This aspect of Facebook requires users to

think carefully before posting anything especially about their private life, and to be aware of the potential long-term implications of their online activities.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that in social media, privacy is not a private affair. It is at the center of communication. Therefore, users of social media platforms like Facebook are advised to be aware that they are out of control because they have so much to share. Therefore, whether they use a fake name or none at all, which is pretty much what happened in the context of this paper, or whether they use a fake email or fake date of birth, that is the only control they have, they do not have control over content at least not in this digital age. Therefore, their ability to mitigate against the threat to their face is directly proportional to the amount of information they are willing to share in a public domain like Facebook or any social media platform for that matter.

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