

TOWARDS IMPROVED CYBER ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR OF NETIZENS IN THE CYBERSPACE

Aboloko, Sylvester Oberoro

Delta State Polytechnic,
Otefe - Oghara, Delta State Nigeria
ICT Centre
ABOLOKO.sylvester@ogharapoly.edu.ng

Odulaja, Godwin Oluseyi

Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijagun, Ogun State Nigeria
Computer Science Education Department
odulajago@tasued.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Issues of moral behaviour in connection with the use of computing devices and Smartphones while in cyberspace and on the Internet, in general, constitute the term Cyber ethics. It borders on what computing machines are programmed to do and the effects of these on individuals and the global society at large. Based on various media reports and the will to educate willing individuals to know what it takes to be a responsible netizen, this paper attempts to provide perception on the moral fears emanating from the use the internet through illustration method.

Keywords: Cyber Ethics, Netizen, Internet, Computing devices, Cyberspace

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethics entails uprightness, it involves demonstrating honest actions and the ability to do the right thing always. It shows behaviors that are right or wrong and describes an individual character concerning integrity. Various religious faith and professional bodies sometimes share a similar ethical belief. Society considers ethics or morals as guidelines for differentiating between honest conduct and dishonest behavior (Simpson, 2004). Examples of these instructions include the ten commandments and the code of professional conduct. However, the rotary club provides a four-way test of what we can consider as ethical conduct. The most acceptable general definition of ethics describes it as a standard manner that decides tolerable and proper conduct. The sense of ethics by many people develops from childhood in the home, at school, and in the religious organization throughout their lifetime (Nivedith, 2012).

Cyberspace is the man-made conceptualized virtual space offered by the conglomerate of networked computers (such as the Internet) and accessible only through computing machinery for machine and human interaction and resource sharing. This man-made concept of space is an outcome of human imagination that is yearning for space without social discrimination, where the fair use of the information will be protected by law. The internet offers man the largest cyberspace ever (Philip, 2005). Cyberethics denotes a moral code of conduct used within the internet space. It scrutinizes the influence of communication and information technology on our social life and moral structure. It evaluates the constantly changing nature of technology on human conduct in the cyberspace (Frances, & Herman, 2008)

In recent years, nearly every activity found in the real world has been replicated in cyberspace. The sinful nature of man and the irrational behavior of Software agents, Internet agents, and mobile codes, that are applied on the internet to carry out different activities are already producing moral concerns on the internet (Aboloko, 2018). These issues are made possible by the use of information technologies (Longe, & Chiemeké, 2008). Therefore, this paper provides awareness of the ethical questions from the use of information technologies in the cyberspace. This paper employs the method of Illustration of Social Media concerns and examines the ethical issues involved

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid development of information and communication technology has shown some consistent ethical concern (Janna & Baum, 2008). Early cyber ethical studies focused on programmer intention and the welfare of codes or program in the cyberspace, more also emphasizes on the need for programs or codes to well behave during implementation (Etzion & Weld, 1994). Programmers find it difficult to add ethical values to their programs or codes and taking an ethical decision is arguably

a thought-provoking task for programs or codes, hence the behavior of programs or codes within the internet must be specified such that it does not jeopardize the integrity of its environment (Adebayo, 2014).

The evolving nature of Information and communication technologies made new ability or conduct of programs or codes possible through the various application (Apps) or a device like electronic mail (email), Facebook, WhatsApp, and messenger. This has resulted in the interpretation of longstanding ethical values in new ways (Capurro, 2008). Some good example of this new ability is to send unsolicited commercial messages via email (spamming), digital photography making the altering of images untraceable (Photoshop), duplication of Intellectual property in digital format (Piracy) and easy contact to unsuitable materials (Pornography) (Herman, 2002). All these actions were not possible without physically meeting with the naïve prey before the creation of the cyberspace, which has altered the ethical system (Capurro, 2008). Hence there is a need to provide insight into the ethical predicaments in the cyberspace

3. CYBER SPACE CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL ISSUES

The use of Information technology has had either a positive or negative impact on the moral, social and legal system of our society. Many have argued that Information technology is all about the good, the bad, and the ugly because it has introduced new and unique challenges (Nivedith, 2012). The cases of Cynthia Osukogu's murder (Evelyn, 2012 & Onozure, 2017); Army Boyer cyberstalking (Herman, 2002) and Emmanuel and Obinna his businessman friend, are good illustrative cases (Odita, 2019).

3.1 Illustration one

In October 1999 Army Boyer was slain through cyberstalking by Liam Younes, a cyber-stalker. The stalker executed his persecution by gathering the personal information of the Army online (Frances, & Herman, 2002). Information such as where she was working and her residence was gathered. He went further to create two websites dedicated to Army where her private videos and photographs were posted. Liam used these two websites constantly to stalk Army to death (Herman, 2002).

3.2 Illustration two

Cynthia Osukogu a postgraduate student of Nasarawa State University in Nigeria was murdered by her facebook friends Echezona Nwabufor, and Olisa Eloka, all undergraduate students of the University of Lagos, Nigeria (Evelyn, 2013). They met Cynthia, the daughter of a retired General via Facebook and open up a chat with her through Facebook (Evelyn, 2012). Using social engineering they were able to gather her personal, financial and business information (Onozure, 2017). She was lured into a fake business deal which led to her being invited from Abuja to Lagos. She was accommodated in a hotel, where she was given overdosage of drugs, raped and murdered (Evelyn, 2012).

3.3 Illustration three

Emmanuel John Amadi a 19 years' old who lives at Iyana Isashi Lagos Nigeria met and make Ekemezie Obinna a businessman his friend in July 2019 via Facebook. In one of their normal chat and post, Emmanuel told Obinna his businessman friend that he was a forex trader and he required potential investors or buyers. Emmanuel with the aid of his father, Mr. Amadi his partner in crime swindle Ekemezie Obinna the sum of N1.2million. Finds show that he entices and trap his unsuspecting innocent victim wishing to buy forex and cryptocurrency with a moderate price (Odita,2019).

4. THE ETHICAL DILEMMA

From the above illustrations, one may argue that there is nothing new or unique about using cyberspace and information technologies as platforms to commit crimes. Regardless of whether a computer is used as the tool or the target of crime, somehow, the rule of ethical behavior (or better still cyber ethics) has been infringed upon as someone is made to suffer unjustly. However, on a closer look, some may argue that the form of behaviour made possible through information technologies has indeed raised new and special ethical problems (Aboloko, 2017). For example, from the cyber stalking illustration, one can see the ease with which stalking can be carried out with the use of technology, one can stalk his or her victims without leaving the comfort of his or her home. A stalker can access his or her victim's personal information because they are made available online. Furthermore, a stalker can stray the cyberspace secretly, which makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to track down the stalker either before or after the stalker have caused harm to the victim (Frances, & Herman, 2002).

However, in the case of Cynthia Osukogu's death, traditionally it would have been very difficult, if not impossible for Cynthia who lived and schooled far away in Nasarawa state to have met with these cybercriminals in Lagos who murdered her (Onozure, 2017). These criminals used cyber technology tools, like Facebook, yahoo messenger, blackberry and some other

software to gain unauthorized access to Cynthia's personal, financial and business information which attracted them to the crime.

The case involving Emmanuel and his businessman victim raise some ethical concerns. These issues include pretense, deception, scam, and anonymity. Some pertinent and relevant ethical questions like Are Emmanuel's action to Mr. Obinna honest, what is the impact of Emmanuel action on his victim and what is the reaction of other Facebook users. If the answer to these questions is negative, it implies that the cyberspace which makes Emmanuel action possible is faced with ethical distress

In all these cases, Cynthia Osokogu, Emmanuel and Amy Boyer, each provides us with reasons and context within which we can begin to think about a cluster of ethical issues affecting the use of information technologies in the cyberspace.

4.1 Cyber ethical measures for responsible netizens

A responsible Internet citizen (netizen) is an Internet user who contributes to the Internet's use and growth positively. A good netizen must ensure that he uses Internet resources responsibly and constructively in such a way that fosters free and fair cyberspace behavior. To model the behavior of the Internet users the government and its agencies have to partner with the application developer to develop and apply models that check against unethical behaviors. Also, a responsible netizen is expected to be a watchdog to others, and report any suspected behavior to the appropriate regulating agency. Internet Service providers (ISP) should include and enforce compliance with established cyber-ethical behavioral laws as part of their subscribers' terms and conditions of service for resource subscription and utilization. This is to check their subscribers' unethical behaviors (Philip, 2005). Software filters that can detect and filters unethical behavior should be installed in the subscriber's internet gateway to the cyberspace

5. CONCLUSION

The trending news in all our daily mass media always carries various cyber ethical concerns. However, the different professional codes of ethics and code of conduct express the sense of right and wrong of the profession. Nevertheless, the association of computing machinery (ACM) code of ethics is concerned with how fundamental ethical principles apply to a computing professional's conduct in the real-life, however, due to the malleability of technology in the cyberspace such code of ethical conduct is not in play in the cyberspace. Hence there is a need for programs or applications (Apps) to be wired with code of conduct or ethical values and algorithm to express the sense of right and wrong in the cyberspace should be developed and implemented to mold the behavior of netizen and other cyberspace users

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