



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION
BAC 2104: TRENDS IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION
END OF SEMESTER EXAM

DATE: Tuesday, 29th October 2019

TIME: 10:30 – 12:30

1. Read the following blog excerpt and answer the following questions:

EXCERPT

During the late 90s, 22-year-old Samille, an American college graduate, was caught up in a whirlwind romantic relationship with her older married boss. Two years later, with the advent of the digital age, the private intimate details of their affair was thrust into the rabid attention of the public eye across the world. Overnight, Samille was caught up in a maelstrom of public shaming and harassment, a harrowing experience that was only years later given the term: cyberbullying. The public shaming left Samille so distraught that she said, in later media interviews, that her mother had to sit next to her bed night by night and make her shower with the bathroom door open, fearing that their only child would be humiliated to death, literally. You may probably grasp the magnitude of the international scrutiny and scorn that Samille went through if you get to know her full name: Monica Samille Lewinsky.

Her boss and then lover, former President Bill Clinton, managed to shrug off the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and retire from public office as one of the lost loved American presidents in recent memory, thanks to an army of public relations and image experts. But for Lewinsky, any attempt to rebuild her life from what she has since described as ‘a deeply regrettable mistake’ was thwarted. She has been constantly jerked back into the past by the vicious tentacles of online tormentors who keep resuscitating tales of her old torrid affair with one of the most powerful men in the world.

While bullying may be as old as mankind, its online version is part of the digital revolution that came to the fore on the cusp of the millennium. And in many ways Lewinsky can be described as the firstborn of a generation of victims of cyberbullying. Just recently, the world was shocked to hear about a case in a community college in Utah where some of the male students secretly filmed their sexual acts with different female students from the same college. The boys eventually released all the videos online and the girls whose faces were clearly visible and recognizable got caught up in the crosshairs of packs of social media bullies. Following the onslaught of online ridicule and shaming, three of the female students committed suicide. People, and especially young people, taking their lives because of Cyberbullying is so much on the rise that there is now an official word for it: Cyberbullicide. According to a survey by the international organization Pew Research Center 66% of adults have witnessed online harassment, while 41% have been victims. In addition, the survey states that victims of Cyberbullying are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide than those who were not.

Here in Kenya, we do not yet have the full statistics of how many people may have been trolled to an early grave but from time to time, through personal testimonies by local celebrities and public figures, we catch a glimpse of the devastating impact of humiliation that is driven by the internet. These individuals tell of how personal details of their marriages, private intimate moments and even documents of their financial information have quickly gone viral on Twitter, Facebook and even become a meme of its own. And very rarely do people take on online bullies, probably afraid that the bullies will viciously turn and train their virtual guns on them instead. These scared and terrified people are not alone. Lewinsky was shamed and trolled into a decade of silence but she says she is now back to lend a voice to the victims. Her first public stop was as a speaker at a TED Talk event where she gave a speech titled, 'The Price of Shame.' She called out online content producers, comedians and other creative leaders who have perhaps unknowingly, created a marketplace where shame is a commodity and public humiliation an industry that makes money off the back of someone else's suffering. The more shame, the more online user clicks and the more clicks, the more advertising profits.

Lewinsky's message reached more than 11 million viewers. And while not everyone has such a big platform, each social media user can still have a positive impact. Compassion and empathy are desperately needed in the online community and this can be shared using a simple three-tier approach. Firstly, choose not to be caught by the click bait temptation because every click means more humiliation for the victim. Secondly, a kind word to the victims goes a long way in giving them the much needed comfort. Go to their social media pages and post something positive, not necessarily about the current gossip. It may be a comment on an old post made by them or a dated picture. Finally, before you post, share publicly or privately, comment or click to view, be guided by the first three questions that form the Rotary International moral code: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships?

- a) In 3 or less words, state the main story in the excerpt (2 marks)
 - b) Identify at least 4 news values applied by the blogger in this piece, and explain how these news values were applied in this story (8 marks)
2. (a) The advent of the internet has greatly affected traditional media (ie television, newspapers and radio). Discuss any two negative effects that have been brought about (4 marks)
(b) Social media continues to change the way we interact with information, and specifically how we consume news. Discuss any three of these changes using relevant examples and illustrations (6 marks)
 3. In the last decade, especially with the growth of social media, we have witnessed a global steady growth of citizen journalism. This form of journalism has been responsible for numerous social and political revolutions and activisms. Using any relevant local or international example, discuss how citizens have used social media to raise awareness and/or bring about change. Ensure that you utilize relevant examples and illustrations in your discussion-mention the key players, and specify which social media was utilized and how it was utilized (10 marks).
 4. The emergence of the internet has shifted the traditional public sphere from the physical world to a virtual one, thanks in large part to bloggers. Discuss any 5 advantages that have emerged as a result of this shift (10 marks)