EXAMINING JOURNALISTS' PRIVACY BEHAVIOUR ON WHATSAPP STATUS UPDATES IN KANO STATE, NIGERIA

Almansur Ado Sani
Department of Mass Communication, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the privacy bahaviour of the registered members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists in Kano on WhatsApp status updates. The descriptive survey method was adopted, and a structured questionnaire was used as a data elicitation tool. A total of 252 questionnaires were distributed, of which 246 were returned and analysed. Petronio's Communication Privacy Management theory was the theoretical framework that guided the study. The results show that the majority of the journalists occasionally select who can see their WhatsApp status updates. Results further reveal that a majority of the journalists updated their statuses for informative purposes, followed by entertainment motives. When the findings are cross tabulated by gender, the study finds that male journalists enact more control over the visibility of their status updates than female journalists, and female journalists are motivated to self-disclose on WhatsApp status for the sake of entertainment, whereas male journalists are motivated to inform people. The study recommends that journalists should be more cautious about what they put on their WhatsApp statuses, and privacy rules should be implemented to mitigate the likelihood of privacy linkages. It suggests that more research be done in this area of inquiry with a larger population by employing mixed methods on different social media domains.

Keywords: journalists, privacy behavior, privacy management, WhatsApp status updates

1. Introduction

Advances in information and communication technologies have changed the way people interact socially in recent years. The popularity of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) has exponentially increased globally due to its ease of access and the availability of cheaper devices (Miangah &Nezerat, 2012), such as internet mobile phones. Africa, being the poorest continent, has the fastest growing mobile phone users in the world. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country with more than 206 million people as at September, 2021 (Varrella, 2021), according to Internet World Stats (2021), has the highest internet users in Africa with a 73% subscriber base. The statistics show that penetration of mobile phones has reached a high level in Nigeria, and this user expansion facilitates social interaction among internet users, especially on the social networks and MIM. As of the third quarter of 2020, there were about 33 million active social media users in Nigeria, with WhatsApp as the most commonly used MIM in the country, with 93% (Tankovska, 2021).

Mobile Instant Messaging makes interpersonal interaction easier by providing users with the possibility to connect with family, friends, and acquaintances, and it further provides opportunities for effective and efficient real-time conversation where users share among themselves text messages, image messages, GIFs, files, and audio and video calls via the internet. However, benefitting from the opportunities provided by MIM, particularly WhatsApp, has encouraged individual users to increasingly disclose considerable amounts of private information free from the constraints of space and time (Faizin, Gunawan, Ramdhani, & Gojali, 2018).

Privacy issues on social networks and MIM have been increasingly reported across the globe due to users' cavalier attitudes or ignorance (Babatunde & Ezeah, 2020). Private information put on WhatsApp status updates can be saved and forwarded. Thus, this act is associated with considerable privacy challenges. Polakis, Kontaxis, Antonatos, Petasas, and Evangelos (2010) stressed that many users are unaware of the repercussions of such self-disclosures. Incidents of privacy invasions on social networks, including WhatsApp, have made many users rethink their disclosures on these platforms (Tulane University, 2021). Users, including journalists, are likely not mindful of their WhatsApp disclosures in the form of pictures, videos, and text that could be accessed by individuals who may eventually harm their lives or properties, damage or put their reputations at risk. Therefore, the unprotected self-disclosure may eventually run them into trouble, as listed by Veliz (2020), which includes fears, losses, failures, mistakes, traumas, among others.

Strict adoption of privacy settings provided by WhatsApp minimises the privacy issues on the platform for those who value their privacy. WhatsApp develops privacy settings that allow users like journalists to restrict or grant access to their status updates. They can share status updates with all of their phonebook contacts, all contacts with the exception of some selected individuals, or even just one or a few contacts. Users like journalists are also allowed to mute any status updates they no longer have an interest in seeing.

Past studies on privacy behaviour on WhatsApp have been carried out in countries such as Saudi Arabia, India, and China(Dev, Morino, & Camp, 2020; Rashidi & Vaniea, 2015; Gao, 2016). The studies conducted focused on the adoption of general privacy settings on messages disclosed across the WhatsApp platform, such as group communication and last seen. None of the studies specifically focused on WhatsApp status updates, which have more privacy issues than group

communication, because by default, any information a user uploads on a WhatsApp status update is visible by everyone if they mutually save their mobile numbers in their phonebook. In Nigeria, studies have yet to investigate users' privacy behaviour on WhatsApp, particularly on their WhatsApp status updates.

In view of this, the study is motivated to examine the privacy behaviour of journalists in Kano state towards self-disclosure on WhatsApp status updates. The study aims to examine the journalists because of their training, it is likely that they have been exposed to the privacy risks associated with these platforms due to their increasing use of social media to carry out their tasks. It intends to specifically investigate the question of whether journalists adopt privacy measures provided by WhatsApp Company to control the visibility of their status updates, what motivates their self-disclosures, and how demographic variable of gender influence their privacy behaviour. To explore these variables, the researcher formulated the following three research questions:

RQI: How frequently do Kano journalists change their privacy settings in order to control the visibility of their WhatsApp status updates?

RQ2: What are the motivations for journalists' self-disclosures in WhatsApp status updates?

RQ3:How does demographic variable of gender influence journalists' privacy practices in WhatsApp status updates?

Therefore, this paper aims to describe the privacy attitudes of journalists in Kano while using WhatsApp status updates by adopting Petronio's Communication Privacy Management theory. The paper begins by reviewing relevant literature on the subject before outlining the theoretical framework and methods. It also presents and discusses the research findings before concluding with a list of challenges that may necessitate further research.

2. Privacy

Privacy is a basic human need and has existed as old as mankind. Its relevance to the life of humankind cannot be overemphasised, as it is closely related to human dignity, freedom, and independence. History demonstrates that privacy is associated with the home, family life, and correspondence that people recognise as exclusively personal, and access to each must have been consented to. From the period of the 18th century up to the 19th century, people took legal action against others for unauthorized access to their correspondence, specifically letters. Towards the end of the 19th century, people, being the sole owners of their

information, changed the emphasis from family life to personal information (Holvast, 2008).
In 1890, Louis Brandeis and Samuel Warren published their work on the concept of modern privacy, *The Right to Privacy*. Their definition of privacy was "the right to be let alone." Other privacy scholars, such as Westin (1967), define privacy as "the claim of an individual to determine what information about himself or herself should be known to others." Fried (1968) defines it as "the control we have over information about ourselves". All these definitions unanimously contain one category: every individual should be able to have privacy. Individuals should decide how much private information they share and with whom, as demonstrated by the Westin and Fried decisions. The right to take decisions makes them the owners of their information. Our behaviour on social networks seems to make our lives transparent. Veliz (2020, p. 8) buttresses this point, arguing that "much of our privacy was gone."

3. Self-disclosure and privacy issues

Jourard (1971, p.2) sees self-disclosure as "the act of revealing personal information to others." The process of sharing information with another person or persons is known as self-disclosure (S.R. & K.L. 2010). This process of sharing information with others facilitates maintaining relationships between people. It is inherently built into human nature to socially connect with other humans through revealing information. Such revelation of personal information carries risks unless a person limits intimate self-disclosure, uses vendor privacy settings to control access to the disclosed information, or adopts both.

Nowadays, social media users, especially adolescents on WhatsApp, regard the platforms as social communication tools. The importance of controlling their disclosure is largely taken for granted (Jain, Sahoo & Kabiyal, 2021). However, users become the victims of privacy issues, likely due to the negligence or ignorance of proper privacy management consequences of routine updates that could attract malicious users or cybercriminals. Cybercriminals could generate users' usernames and passwords to hack their profile accounts for mischievous purposes. Also, some malicious users could access and store all the information that the target users upload with the ill-intention of hurting, harassing, humiliating, extorting, blackmailing, embarrassing, or ruining their established reputation.

Jain, Sahoo, and Kaubiyal, (2021) stress that people use geotagged applications to reveal their current geographic location and tag relatives and friends who are in

company with them. The repercussions of such behaviour could invite undesirable elements to harm their lives or properties.Unprotected self-disclosure may eventually land us into trouble, as listed by Veliz (2020), which includes users' fear, loss, failures, mistakes, traumas, among others. Being open on WhatsApp status updates means sharing information without control, which weakens them by giving others power over them and eventually hurts them.

4. Literature **Review**

Dev, Morino, and Camp (2020) conducted a comparative study of WhatsApp privacy issues and attitudes among Saudi and Indian users. The findings show that there are differences and similarities between the two samples. Saudis are more concerned about being contacted by strangers than Indians are. In contrast, Indians are more concerned about being contacted by professionals. Both samples shared sensitive information and expressed dissatisfaction with being added to a WhatsApp group without their permission. When the samples are compared by gender, Saudi males and females are more concerned with their privacy than Indian males and females.

Rashidi and Vaniea (2015) investigated how Arabs manage their privacy settings via WhatsApp settings. According to the findings, users are aware of the existence of WhatsApp settings and the applications to manage their personal information. The majority of respondents never use WhatsApp settings to control the visibility of their pictures and statuses, but 31.3 percent change the settings to hide their last seen time. In terms of gender differences, it appears that both male and female users tend to block WhatsApp users, but women (81 percent) adjust the blocking feature to block strangers or those with whom they have had a fight. Recheal, Peck, Inaba, Bisrat, and Chawla (2020) investigated privacy perception and privacy management among South African social media users. According to the findings, participants are unaware that service providers are collecting their personal data for monetary gain. The findings also show that participants expressed concern about their user-to-user privacy, particularly with regard to their families, relatives, and respected elders.

Oh and Syn (2015) conducted research into the motivations behind social media self-disclosure. Mturk (Amazon Mechanical Turk) was used to recruit 1–56 people for the survey. According to the findings, learning and social engagement are the two most influential reasons for sharing. As revealed by the study, female users are more driven by social engagement, community interest, and personal gain than male users. Gao (2016) conducted a comparative study of Chinese and

European motivations for posting and liking on social media. Their study used qualitative interview where 40 people were conveniently sampled. Most of the respondents were postgraduate students, while the remaining were undergraduates. Findings show clear differences between Chinese and Europeans when it comes to posting and liking. On postings, Chinese participants have more expressive and appealing motives, while in terms of liking, they have more preferential motives. As a result, Chinese people use social media more to express themselves, whereas Europeans use it more for practical purposes.

Cheung (2011) examined what makes university students want to use Facebook. Respondents were largely recruited through online social groups for students on Facebook, where questionnaires were distributed to 182 respondents, comprising 68% of females and 32% of males. According to the findings, the most compelling reason to use Facebook is to maintain a social presence, meaning that most individuals use Facebook to communicate and engage with friends in real time. Other social factors include maintaining interpersonal connectedness and social enhancement, which come next, followed by the entertainment factor. Krasnova, Spiekermann, Koroleva and Hildebrand (2010) investigated the factors that encourage and discourage self-disclosure on social media. Findings revealed that the convenience of relationship maintenance was by far the most critical reason for users to disclose private information via social network sites. Perceived privacy risks were a privacy factor preventing users from sharing information on the cost side.

5. Theory

The study employed communication privacy management (CPM) theory as a theoretical framework. People's interactions with one another in communicative contexts such as face-to-face, social media, and group communications are central to CPM. Through the use of privacy management systems in everyday life, the theory demonstrates that privacy is not a paradox, but rather a continuous process.

The main argument of the theory is that privacy rules are developed through interpersonal boundary control and collaborative negotiations. The privacy rules are being developed through the three elements, which facilitate an understanding of how people control their private information. These elements are *privacy ownership, privacy control, and privacy turbulence.* Privacy ownership means that people believe they are the sole owners of their private information, and they have the authority to reveal or conceal it. When the original owner decides to reveal or share his private information with another person, that person becomes

an authorized co-owner. Second is privacy control, which is the engine room of privacy management. People believe they solely own their private information, so they control the flow of private information by developing and adopting privacy rules. These rules are derived from decision criteria such as motivations, cultural values, and situational needs, as well as gender and privacy orientations. Privacy turbulence is the last component of the theory. It states that privacy rules are frequently unpredictable, ranging from disruptions in the system of privacy management to total breakdowns (Petronio, 2013). When a disruption occurs in the privacy management system, it can be recalibrated. However, if the disruption is beyond the recalibration, the entire system fails, and a breakdown occurs, which may likely create havoc for the original owner and co-owners.

6. Method

The study used a survey method to obtain a numerical description of the attitudes of journalists in Kano toward privacy behavior on WhatsApp status updates, with the goal of generalizing the findings to the entire population. The purpose of the survey is to either describe or explain the phenomenon under investigation. As a result, the study used a descriptive survey to explain what is currently known about population privacy behavior. The target population's privacy behavior on WhatsApp status updates was numerically described using a questionnaire as a data collection tool. The study's participants were registered members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Kano branch, with a total of 730 members across the 14 chapels as of November, 2021. The figure and list of membership were obtained from the NUJ council secretariat, Kano branch. The target population was chosen because of their professional training. They are likely to be aware of the risks associated with disclosures on WhatsApp status updates, and they are likely to use privacy settings to control access to their disclosures. However, the journalists were chosen as units of interest for the survey using simple random sampling, which was used to select a sample population to participate in the survey directly. The study used the Survey Monkey online calculator to calculate the sample size of the total figure

7. Presentation of Results

The study was aimed at investigating privacy behaviour among journalists in Kano. Three research questions were raised to provide answers using a questionnaire tool for data elicitation. Two hundred and fifty-two questionnaires were distributed; two hundred and sixty- four were retrieved and valid for analysis, while six copies of the questionnaires were not returned. Below is the

data which was analysed with SPSS. A 5-point Likert scale was also adopted to measure the privacy behaviour of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic distribution of the population

Demographic	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	133	54.1
	Female	113	45.9
Age	18-23	53	21.5
	24-29	70	28.5
	30-35	71	28.9
	36-41	22	8.9
	42-47	17	6.9
	48-53	8	3.3.
	Above 53	5	2.0
Education	Masters	27	11.0
	First Degree	86	35.0
	HND	30	12.2
	Diploma	103	41.9
Total		246	100.0

Table 2: Privacy settings usage, motivations for updating status and gender influence on journalists' privacy practices

Q No.	Description	Likert				
	Privacy settings usage	1	2	3	4	5
1.	How often do you update your WhatsApp status?	19	7	106	46	68
2.	How often do you use WhatsApp privacy settings to select who can see your status updates?	54	17	98	46	31
	Motives for self-disclosures	Categorical				
3.	To inform	95				
4.	To educate	72				
5.	To entertain	79				
	Gender influence on privacy practices	Cross tabulation				
6	Updating WhatsApp status	1	2	3	4	5

	Male	9	4	65	23	32
	Female	19	3	41	23	36
7	Use of privacy settings	1	2	3	4	5
	Male	30	8	62	18	15
	Female	24	9	36	28	16
8	Motives for updating status	Inform		Educate		Entertain
	Male	57		38		38
	Female	38		34		41

Table 1 contains demographic information about the sample population, such as gender, age, and educational level. Table 2 contained the answers to the research questions. For RQ1, the researcher examined responses to the level of usage of WhatsApp privacy settings for controlling who can see the respondents' status updates. To answer this research question, the variables were tested on a 5-point Likert scale, which is a nonparametric test. The study tested three categories (to inform, educate, and entertain) in measuring the motives behind updating WhatsApp status. RQ2 asked for motivations for self-disclosure on status updates. RQ3 sought to ascertain how the gender variable influences respondents' privacy behavior. Using cross tabulation, the researchers compared privacy behavior by gender.

8. Discussion

For the first research question, results show that 98 (39.8%) of journalists in Kano occasionally adopt privacy settings to select who can see their WhatsApp status updates, whereas 54 (22%) have never used privacy settings to control the visibility of their status updates. It also shows that 31 (12.6%) every time they edit privacy settings to select who can access their status. The study further reveals that 106 (43.1%) journalists in Kano occasionally update their WhatsApp status, whereas 68 (27.6%) update their status every time, and 19 (7.7%) have never updated their WhatsApp status. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the participants had moderate privacy bahaviour. It was also indicated that substantial number of the respondents had averagely update their status. Our findings support previous research in which Oduba (2017), Mathiyalaken, Heilaman, and White (2014) discovered that the majority of their respondents used privacy settings to control access to their private information. Contrasting these studies, our findings refute the findings of Babatunde and Ezeali (2020) and

Rashidi and Vaniea (2015), who discovered that the majority of their participants did not use privacy settings to control access to their self-disclosure.
Pertaining to the second research question, motives for updating WhatsApp status, the study reveals that the majority of journalists in Kano, which constitutes 95 (38.6%), were motivated to inform people about happenings around them, and followed by 79 (32.1%) updated their WhatsApp status for entertainment, whereas 72 (29.3%) updated their status to educate people. Based on the results, it indicates that the majority of the respondents' have extended their reach and gatekeeping to social media to give information to people based on their judgmental values (opinion). The result also concludes that entertainment is the second drive for self-disclosure on WhatsApp status updates. Our findings corroborate those of Al-Kandari, Melkote, and Sharif (2016), who revealed that social interaction, opinion, and entertainment are the motivations for their respondents' self-disclosure on social media.

Self-disclosure in a WhatsApp status update carries significant privacy risks. Our findings are consistent with the communication privacy management theory, which states that people are the sole owners of their information and have the right to choose who has access to it by erecting boundaries around the information they post on status updates and allowing co-ownership. What matters in terms of the study's findings are boundary ownership and boundary permeability.of Kano journalists occasionally control their disclosures, which is consistent with boundary ownership and boundary permeability. The behavior of journalists who have never established rules (control) for their disclosure is best explained by boundary permeability, as they can be classified as open or closed. According to the theory, people reveal or conceal information based on their cultural orientations.

Concerning privacy behaviour based on gender, the results reveal that the majority of male journalists (62) and female journalists (36) in Kano occasionally edited privacy settings to control who could see their status updates. The result shows that male journalists used privacy settings to control their visibility more than female journalists, according to the study. It also shows that 30 male journalists and 24 female journalists have never edited privacy settings to control access to their WhatsApp status updates. This shows that male respondents wanted to be more secretive than the female respondents which contradicts some past studies. Mazaji (2016) and Walrave, Vandwesenbeeck and Heirman (2012) discovered that female respondents edited privacy settings to regulate access to their social media disclosure more than male respondents. Kanampiu and Anwar

(2018) reported that both genders rarely use privacy settings to control their visibility.

Our findings are consistent with boundary permeability which explains people can decide the extent to which they can adopt rule to control their self-disclosure. People with low level of privacy management may likely to be more open on WhatsApp status update than those who are closed to reveal. The theory discusses the findings as both male and female journalists in Kano belong to closedness and openness categories respectively.

On the gender comparison by motives for updating WhatsApp status, the study reveals that the motives behind the majority of male journalists' (57%) updating WhatsApp status was to inform the people, but, by contrast, the majority of female journalists (41) updated WhatsApp status to entertain the people. This shows that the female gender likely concentrates more on pleasure and leisure than the male gender. This is in line with Bowden-Green, Hinds and Joinson (2021) who reveal that the two motivations that drive the female gender to disclose information on social media are 'relationship' and passing 'time'.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study indicates that journalists in Kano had moderate privacy bahaviour and were motivated to inform people about what was going on around them. Male journalists used privacy settings to control their visibility more than female journalists. The study found that male journalists wanted to be more secretive than female journalists when it came to using privacy settings to control the visibility of their status updates. The study recommends that journalists should be more cautious about what they put in their WhatsApp statuses, and privacy rules should be implemented to reduce the likelihood of privacy linkages that could lead to privacy issues. It is suggested that more studies in this field be conducted with a broader population using mixed methods across various social media domains.

References

Al-Kandari, A., Melkote, S. R., Sharif, A. (2016). Needs and motives of Instagram users that predict self-disclosure use: A case study of young adults in Kuwait.*Journal of Creative Communications, 11*(2), 85 -101. doi:10.1177/0973258616644808

Asher, S. R. & Mc Donald, K. L. (2010). *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed). Los Angeles: Elsevier.

Babatunde, O. M., & Ezeali, G. H. (2020). Social media use and privacy settings on selected social media sites. In D. Gambo, & H. Batta (Eds,), *Digital media communication, and civic engagement in Nigeria* (pp. 187-207). Uyo, Nigeria: African Council for Communication Education (ACCE, Nigeria).

Cheung, M. K. C., Chiu, P. & Lee M. K. O. (2011). Online social networks: Why do students use Facebook? *Computes in Human Behaviour, 27* (4), 1337-1343.

Dev, j., Morino, P., and Camp, L. J. (2020). Lessons learnt from comparing WhatsApp concerns across Saudi and Indian populations. *Proceedings of the sixteenth symposium on usable privacy and security.*

Faizan, B., Gunawan, B. Ramddhani, M. A., & Gojali, D. (2018). Speech acts analysis in WhatsApp status updates. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Media and Communication Studies.*

Gao, L. (2016). *Motives for posting and liking on social media: Comparing differences between Chenese and European users.* (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of Twente, Netherlands.

Holvast, J. (2008). History of privacy. In V. Matyas, S. Fischer-Hubner, D. Cvrcek & P. Svenda (Eds.), *The future of identity in the information society* (pp. 13-42). Brno, Czech Republic: Springer.

Jourard, S, (1971). *The transparent self.* New York: Van Nostrand.

Krasnova, H., Spiekermann, S., Koroleva, K. & Hildebrand, T. (2010). Online social networks: Why do we disclose? *Journal of Information Technology, 25* (2), 109-125.

Miangah, T M. (2005). Mobile-assisted language learning. *International Journal of Distributed and Parallel Systems, 3* (1), 3-9-319.

Oh, S. & Syn, S., Y. (2015). Motivations for sharing information and social support in social media: A comparative analysis of Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, YouTube and Flickr. *Journal of the Association of Science and Technology, 6*(10), 2045-2060.

Petronio, Sandra (2013). Brief status report on communication privacy management theory. *Journal of Family Communication*, 13(1), 6–14. doi:10.1080/15267431.2013.743426

Petronio, Sandra (2013). Brief Status Report on Communication Privacy Management Theory.
Journal of Family Communication, 13(1), 6–14. doi:10.1080/15267431.2013.743426

Polakis, I., Kontaxis, G., Spiros Antonatos, E. C., Petasas, T., & Evangelos, P. M. (2010). Using social networks to harvest email addresses. *Proceedings of*

the 2010 ACM Workshop of Privacy in the Electronic Society. Chicago: USA.

Recheal, j., Peck, F., Inaba, M., Bisrat, B. & Chawla, B. S. (2020). Understanding South Africans mobile users' perception of privacy and current behaviours on Facebook and WhatsApp. *Proceedings of the 29th USENIX security and symposium.*

Tankovska, H. (2021). Most popular globe mobile messenger apps as of January 2021 based on number of monthly active users.Retrieved from http://www.statista.com/statistics/258749/most-popular-global-mobile-messenger-apps/

University, T. (2012). Key social media privacy issues for 2020. Retrieved from https://sopa.tulane.edu/blog/key-social-media-privacy-issues-2020

Varella, S. (2021). Population of Nigeria in selected years between 1950 and 2020**.** Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1122838/population-of-nigeria/#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20Nigeria's%20population%20was,most%20populous%20country%20in%20Africa

Veliz, C. (2020). *Privacy is Power: Why and how you should take back control of your data*. London: Transworld Digital.

Westin, A. (1967). *Privacy and freedom.* New York: Altheneum.