

## **MORALITY QUESTION IN SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' DANCE ART**

**By**

**Ajaegbu Charles Obinna**

Chukwuemeka odumegwu ojukwu university,  
Igbariam.

[ajaegbucharles33@gmail.com](mailto:ajaegbucharles33@gmail.com)

+2347030103137

**Asso. Prof. Nicholas Chielotam Akas**

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

[akasdancescholar@gmail.com](mailto:akasdancescholar@gmail.com)

+1647-804-3486

### **Abstract**

The truth about our today's reality is that social media and social media influencers have come to stay and the rate at which it is embraced especially among young Nigerian youths is overwhelming. The evolution of social media in our society today brings about the increase of countless social vices ranging from sexual immorality, drug abuse, thuggery, vulgarity in words and actions etc. No doubt it has also improved a considerable amount of our social activities, social development in business, education and cultural exchange. Social media influencers on the other hand, have not lived up to their expectations; rather than create contents that will promote the moral values of the society, they sit at the forefront of promoting things that devalue the very essence of our culture. The objective of this paper is to

express strong disapproval of these social media influencers, especially Instagram influencers' dance art, shed more light on the effect that such dances create in the mind of their viewers and followers and propose a positive way forward for upcoming aspirants to follow without being immoral.

## **Introduction**

The social media is created to effectively connect and build bridges of communication, where people can exchange ideas, make creative virtual content that mirror themselves and their immediate community, create a common ground for cultural exchange, business, create and exchange information, learn new ideas and sharpen existing one, and most importantly for the expression of one's self irrespective of age, gender, or race. No doubt, social media has gained all these achievements and more but the level of freedom of expression that exists in these social media platforms is unimaginable. The rate at which people are glued to these social media platforms cannot be overemphasized, especially the youths and the young ones who sneak themselves in one corner to take a glimpse at what is happening in these platforms. The level of immoral dance art performed and posted by these social media influencers who have gained popularity on these platforms is disgusting. In order to get more followers, views, likes and comments or at best 'traffic' they go as far as dancing naked, exposing sensitive parts of their body and making erotic movements around their lower body all in the name of creating social presence.

## **Social Media Meaning and Discuss**

Any form of technology that is computer based, that facilitates the dissemination of information, sharing of ideas, thought, creates common communities for people from far and wide to interact and receive immediate feedback can be referred to as social media. The fact that social media allows an individual to send electronically personal information, a considerable huge amount of documents, videos, and photos, as well as receive and download as quick as possible, makes the social media platforms much more efficient than imagined. In another perspective, digital media represent the innovation of technological development and can be used as an extension of oral communication. (Nwafor et al, 2022, p.6).

This form of media offers some sort of virtual community with the opportunity for people to communicate with other people no matter the distance. Esthela opines that individuals use social media for many reasons, including entertainment, communication and search for information (2021, p.1). That is to say, the media serve many purposes ranging from the purgation of emotion through various forms of art, inter and intra-personal communication and relationship, networking in terms of business as well as cultural cum religious exchange. As humanbeings , the need to interact with people around is highly exciting and intoxicating, and it is more enthusiastic when the interaction is between individuals of different socio-cultural background,

ethnicity, and race. In the same vein, social media have ways of connecting people together through networking and inculcating in them qualitative relationship to build broadcast channel for possible sales and marketing tools.

As fascinating and exciting as the social media seem, it poses certain negative effects which are very harmful to the users. Popularly amongst other effects are

1. Addiction: Unfortunately for users, all social media networking sites are created to keep the users constantly glued to the sites, Stegner laments that you might be surprised to learn that the negative effects of social media are both physical and mental. He further warns that "Social media can be more addictive than cigarettes and alcohol; it has a powerful draw for many people that lead to them checking it all the time without even thinking about it (2022, p.4)

The implication of Stegner's warning is that the people tend to visit these sites effortlessly, conscious or unconsciously spending real time on these social media, linking from sites to sites, surfing through profiles, pictures, videos, and comments; uploading and downloading files of different contents without giving attention to other things that matters in life. Social media addition around work space has proven to be harmful: ranging from the interference of productivity and can cause actual damage among coworkers. Lainie bemoans that social media addicts "develop the habit of checking their account multiple time during the day, even when they are at work" and not spending interactive time with their colleagues to develop quality work relationship

(2019, p.3). Generally, addicts have a way of isolating themselves away from others thereby cutting out physical communication and interaction. This behavior in real time poses a crumbling threat within workers and the work environment.

2. Mental health: WHO (2017, p.710) describes mental health as the state of well-being in which individuals realize their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to their communities. Whenever mental health is mentioned the three most common consequences that come to mind are stress, anxiety, and depression and how they affect individuals' creativity and productivity cannot be overlooked. Being deeply engaged in social media can cause an individual to be in a permanent state of worrying and also being nervous at every given time. This anxious behaviors that are mainly motivated by addiction to social media platforms can breed panic attack and in most cases compulsive behavior. Nervousness gives no room for physical activity such as exercise and sports and too much tensed up emotion can lead to stress and finally depression.

Fake Lifestyle: in order to keep up with favorite celebrities' lifestyle such as movie stars, musicians, athletes, famous footballers, and other social media celebrities lifestyle people tend to fake themselves on these social media platforms to draw attention to their profiles and gain more view and followers. By so doing, it leads others to create for them unrealistic and unhealthy competition. Most users lack authenticity, with the help of Photoshop, they create exotic adventures

to deceive people but in reality, "you have no way of knowing whether this is all a farce. While it looks great on the surface, that user might be in great debt, on bad terms with their significant others, and just desperate for social media likes as a form of validation"(Stegner, 2022, p.5)

The effect of fake news and the damage it has caused individuals and organizations is heartbreaking. People manufacture news to tarnish others reputation, to sabotage activities, create divided attention or worse steer up commotion. Alan on this issue of fake news, argues that the prevalence of fake news on social media has harmed democracy rather than improve it (2018, p.1). Just like wildfire spread in the dry season, so does fake news and lifestyle spread wildly and fast, corrupting every good mind it comes across, steer up uncontrollable commotion and causing users to be anxious, stressed, depressed and unfortunate death.

Inasmuch as social media has contributed immensely in making communications easy and fast, so it enables people to communicate evil activities that ordinarily will not be easily accessible. In our present society, herbalist, priest, and charm makers who in the past find it difficult to expose their activities, now use social media to display their charms and activities thereby, making it easy to reach a wider range of audience with little effort. A recent research on the Psychological Effects of Social Media Use in Communicating "Okeite" Traditional Charm on Youths in Anambra State, and it was discovered that "75% of the participants admitted that the social media platforms

increased their knowledge of Okeite"(Nwafor et al, 2022, p.11).

## **Morality in Discourse**

Morality can be defined as a set of principles, values, beliefs and standards adopted by the society to shape, influence and give direction on what is reasonably right or wrong for harmonious cohabitation. Morality can be seen as a set of standards that enable people to live cooperatively in groups. It is what the society determines to be right or acceptable. (Morin, 2021, p. 3) Therefore, individuals who go against these standards may be considered to be immoral. So long as society exists, morality exists. Every culture is established with seasoned standards by which every individual builds one's life and activities around in order to cohere and resist any temptation of separation. Nonetheless, morality stands deferent from one individual to another, that is, what one individual judged as being moral can be judged as immoral by another. The same goes to society and culture: meaning what is considered an acceptable behavior in one culture can turn out to be unacceptable in other cultures. Ayala argued that: "Actions that may be thought to be evil or sinful in some moral system" he personally, "might not be included either in my use of "morality" so long as the action have no consequences for others" (2010, p.9016).

Discourse on morality has been divided into three fundamental types which include:

1. Religious morality

2. Individual morality

3. Social morality

1. Religious Morality: refers to the individual's state of connectedness with the superior being or beings. Hence anything that hinders this relationship is counted as immoral before the supernatural begins.

2. Individual Morality: this refers to the individual's relation to his or herself. Here, it is possible for a person not to perform some certain act, not because of society, law or religion say he may or may not, but because to himself, it is wrong or right from within his own conscience (Pearsen, 2009, p. 3).

3. Social Morality: majority of this aspect of morality is what forms every other standard. This aspect of morality deals with individual relation to other. To shed more light, Adler & Cain explains that when faced with the question of moral obligation, decisions and actions, Kant reiterates that no amount of sense experience whatsoever can possibly be a moral ground of my will (1962, p.263). That is his personal experience (individual morality) can't stand as basis for his action especially towards other people or the society. Social morality is what shapes what an individual thinks, does, and does not do: even religious morality is centered on man's behavior in the society.

## **Theoretical Framework**



For the purpose of this research, theory on human behavior as regards to media will be explored to guide our understanding on the subject matter. In this exploration, the Cultivation theory as propounded by George Gerbner in 1967 will be examined because it has since shaped the growth of media production. The Cultivation theory states that "... high frequency viewers of television are most susceptible to media messages and they believe that the messages are real and valid" (Math & Wok, 2021, p.112). They both insist in Gerbner's voice that: "Heavy viewers are exposed to more violence and therefore are affected by the Mean world Syndrome, which is belief that the world is a far worse and dangerous place than it actually is" (Math & Wok, 2021, p.113).

Actually, the idea that can in actual fact, force viewers to think in a direction that it dictates, is a more dangerous situation than it appears especially, if there are no ways of verifying such media. Basically, just as those who consistently are glued to television, they cultivate the perception that social reality is consistent with the world portrayed on television, then the more they watch television, the more they're forced to believe that the real world resembles the television world (Shrum, 2017, p.1). So it is with those who are constantly and consistently surfing through one social media site into another, downloading contents that can both be fake or untrue and then without verification, perceive that the world is exactly what they see on social media. However, as the viewers and views deepen, their view of the real world changes, their view point about some certain issues are altered, and their morals, values,

beliefs, and attitudes are all tilted towards what they see on social media.

## **Dance Discourse**

Every dance is a reflection of its' cultural milieu. It is an embellishment of the overall social construct, the mainstay of religious interactions through rituals between the supernatural and man, between man and man in the exploration of political, environmental, and even his ecological and ecosystem are all represented. It is man's interaction with these organisms that facilitate his well-being and are staple determinant for the content of his dances. In every way, the first language of dance is culture. It is saddled with the idiom of tradition and it's passed down from generations to generations. In fact, the beauty of dance is the candid expression of a unique and universal language, the day to day activities and even to the end of man. In plain terms, the "lifestyle of such a society reflected in these activities which range from music, dance, pantomime, and other performances which seek to celebrate the life of the people" (Tuluma, 2015,p. 2). Suffice it to say that:

The Dance art is so woven around the fabric of the traditional society especially the sociopolitical and economic life of the people that it's documentation and preservation become imperative this to a large extent embodies the symbolic and cultural identities of the people.(Ugolo, 2006, p.46)

In essence, dance and culture are one: culture is the main content of dance, and it provides the context for the

development of dance. And as culture upholds societal norms, values and morals, they are all also embedded in dance to retain and preserve the true nature of the culture.

Dance also serves as the medium of expressing collective advancement, occupation, experience, expedition and communication. Individuals can also express sadness, joy, hope, aspirations, anger, hatred, and peace. Dance has transcended more beyond mere recreation and entertainment purposes. Its tool is potent enough for the impartation of knowledge whether modern or traditional. "It is capable of checkmating; conscientizing and sensitizing the society against incessant frailty that can cause the society lose its moral standards" (Awuawuer, 2014, p.252). However, with the rapid development in technology that has led to series of dance shift and modification, the norm and value of some dances are being questioned. Anything less than the original perception, content, and context of dance, which seek to uphold the very fabric of cultural norms, morals, and values would lead to the bastardization of the dance and should be shunned in all entirety.

### **Instagram**

The rise if social media platforms have made networking and communications easy and accessible. It has created a ground for someone in a remote rural settlement to reach almost anyone in the world, bringing to their consciousness different types of businesses, cultures and sorts of pleasure. By so doing, it is connecting users and exchanging information and ideas with almost an incredible speed. There are about

hundreds of social media platforms: all of them serving different purposes to different classes of users depending on where the user's interest lies. Popular amongst these social media platforms are: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Badoo, Instagram, Tic tok, WhatsApp and a host of many others. Therefore for the purpose of this study Instagram will be our scope study to avoid ambiguity of social media.

Instagram is one of the five leading social media platforms in the world. It was founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010 in the United States of America. The platform is primarily for image and video sharing, modify the images and videos with various kind of filters depending on the mood and choice of the user. These videos and photos after being modified can be posted for the general public or carefully selected followers; who view like, and make comments. Instagram was sold to Facebook in April 2012 and since then being experiencing tremendous increase from the consumer perspective. It is recorded to have a boost of about one billion active users up to date.

### **Social Media Influencer**

Social media influencers are people who have credibly established themselves in a particular platform over a given period of time either with the content of their post, video, art, sport, and have access to a huge number of audiences that they can persuade or dissuade to act in their favor through their recommendations. For the purpose of this paper, two popular Instagram influencers: Janemena and Korra respectively

1. Usiwo Orezinema Jane (Janemena): was born in Delta state, on April 3rd 1993. It is rumored that she had her early education in her home state, after which she proceeded to Delta state University to study and graduated with a degree in Mass Communications. Jane is married to Andre Plies, and she recently is blessed with a baby. She is a dance lover who has always desired to make a living through dance arts. She eventually rises to limelight in 2017 when she won the Instagram twerking competition hosted by popular Nigerian musician Kaycee. Since then, she has been posting her twerking skills on her Instagram page, with over four million followers and about 2,129 post, making her one of the most popular dancers in the country.

2. Anita Chukwufumnanya Obidi (Korra): was born on the 23rd of June 1994 in Delta state. She grew up in Lagos where she attended her primary and secondary education. The major part of her life has been in Lagos so is her university education. She attended the University of Lagos where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Business Education. Anita got married to Dr. Justin Dean in 2018 and has since celebrated four wedding anniversary, until in April 2022 when their divorce was made public on social media. Anita Obidi is a professional singer, Dancer, and model and she's blessed with two children. Her dance carrier started when she was in school, dancing for top Nigerian artists and has since trained herself in belly dance and other modern dance forms. She has featured in many dance videos by top Nigerian musicians and her Instagram handle has about one million followers and 2,295 posts,

making her one of the most popular dancers in Nigeria today with net worth of about \$350-\$1million

### **Dance Examination**

In this section we are going to examine randomly dance clips of the social media influencers under study (Korra and Janemena). These dances, although with different backgrounds and upbringing, but when it comes to their Instagram posts their dances are almost the same. Majority of their posts are filled with "twerks": which is a provocative dance performance that involves squatting down with the legs widely spread and the butt popped out, and then frantically shaking the butt back and forth, and at intervals, staccatorical, in various styles and different locations.

There are other forms of hip hop and some attempts to make traditional dances but the erotic videos are much elaborate that one would not find any interest in the traditional dance form. Apart from twerking, there are seductive dances that involve wriggling of their body that suggests sexual advancement and some of these performances are done with the presence of the opposite sex, who poses as the receiver of the sexual. And in other clips, they perform alone in bed yet the overall sexual feeling is still prevalent.

There are attempts on afro-pop dances which also form part of their video-clips: it involves hip hop movements in African styles with more stomping and hopping.

Others are duet performances performed with foreign dances such as hip hop, salso dance, and Caribbean pop dance are all parts of their post.

**Setting:** social media has dissolved the use of conventional spaces for the expression of dance. Users can choose to perform in the comfort of their rooms so long as it is convenient enough for the performance. Likewise Janemena and Korra's performances are done mostly in the convenience of any part of the houses, kitchen, parlor, staircase and sometimes the balcony. They also make use of open space that suggests rural setting and some of the duets are done in the open, like in festivals.

**Costume:** The costume worn is mostly pants and any pieces of clothing to slightly support their breasts in their desired direction. These costumes instead of covering the sensitive parts of their bodies, properly exposes them to the view of the viewers. In some videos, especially twerking videos: a piece of transparent chiffon material is worn around the waist to create aesthetics as they shake their buttocks. This piece of material exposes their pants and other visible parts of their buttock and it shimmers more as they shake their buttocks. Their bodies are usually left bare when they twerk: although they back the camera, but their bare breasts are sometimes exposed to the camera when they turn around to make eye contact or raise their hands. Others costumes include bumpshort, skimpy and net crop-tops, which also expose their bodies.

**Music:** The music played is usually the kind that suits the type of dance they are making: ranging from hip hop, high life, India beats, and Caribbean songs, so long as it suits the dance. What is demeaning is the content of the lyrics: they are highly filled with words are sexual, erotic and uncensored.

## **Evaluation**

The Cultivation theory asserts that repeated exposure to television over time subtly cultivates viewer's perception of reality. Its effect is that it has the ability to shape and reshape the viewpoint of the viewers on a particular issue, people's moral values and their belief of the world around them, which in turn affects their attitudes and behaviors. In the same vein, social media possesses equal or even greater amount of danger to the user. Anyone who is consistently on social media is bound to be controlled by the views, posts, and comments that flood the media. In reality, it is the young youths who form the bulk of the unemployed community, and are idle most of the time surf through these social media platforms to keep themselves busy, connect, and communicate. They are the ones who are most susceptible to believe that what they see on social media is real and valid whether it is moral or immoral. Therefore viewing Janemena and korra's posts constantly is liable to develop the following in them:

1. **Wannabees:** Those who follow these Instagram Influencers view their posts, are amazed with the number of followers they have, the amount of likes, comments and trends they make on the platform would want to



emulate their lifestyle so as to gain the exotic lifestyle and also become influencer like them. No wonder there are lots of incidents of underage children secretly having Instagram accounts, making nude videos and posting without knowing the consequences of their actions.

**2. Nudity:** In September 3rd, 1974, a New York Times author James Sterba laments that nudity is regarded "as the beginning of a trend in which toleration and acceptance of nudity could become commonplace within the next few years" (1974, p.93). By Sterba's stand, we can say that the social media platforms have become a commonplace for influencers, and celebrities to post nude pictures, and video clips in exotic places which they believe should be the new norm, thereby forcing viewers to imitate nudity.

**3. Increased Sexual Drive:** considering the general content of their dance clips, the level of nudity propagated and the high rate of sexual-desire-movements embedded in these dance will always trigger sexual urges in the viewers and can serve as stimulant for other sexual behavior and vices such as rape and abuse.

## **Conclusion**

Korra and Janemena have both made nudity and sexual desire the content of their dance clips without considering the effects they pose on the young generation. Our future leaders are growing and they are growing up with the speed of the ever rising technology, is this type of values and moral standards they should emulate from their role models, influencers, and celebrities? The answer is NO, and such immorality

should be frowned at. It is crystal clear that the prevailing content in these influencers dance have deprive them of venturing more into other forms of dance, thereby hindering their creative imagination. It would be unfair to not do more creative works on other forms of dance for the followers. Rather than dwell solely on nudity and sex, they should be creative on other content. There are so many things to talk about in our society, they should seize that opportunity to create more social content that will be beneficial to the society. Young talents should not fret or be swayed away by the huge number of followers these influencers have acquired over the years or by their content but be focus on their creative works: with hardwork and consistency they can achieve a greater height.

## **References**

- Adler, M. J. & Cain, S. (1962). Ethics: The Study of Moral Value. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. USA, (p. 263).
- Alan, R. D. (2018). Fake News on Social Media: People Believe What They Want To Believe When it Makes No Sense At All. SSRN Electronic Journal. Indiana University Bloomington. (p. 1)
- Awuawuer, T. J. (2014). Towards The Theories And Practices Of Dance Art. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science. Vol. 4. No. 4. Centre For Promoting Ideas, USA. (p. 251-259)
- Ayala, J. F. (2010). The Difference of Being Human: Morality. Department of Ecology & Evolutionary

- Sociology, University of California. Irvine. CA 92697 (p. 9016)
- Esthela, G. V. (2021). Effects of Social Media Use On Psychological Well-being: A Mediated Model 2021.  
<http://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.6787/full>
- Lainie, P. (2019). The Negative Effects of Social Media on the Society and Individual.  
<http://www.smallbusiness.chrom.com/negative-effects-social-media-society-individuals-27617.html>
- Math,K. & Wok, S. (2021). Social Media Addiction and Its Influence On Mental Health Among University Students in Cambodia: Beyond Cultivation Theory. <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/351248808>.
- Morin, A. (2021). Morality: Definition, Formation, and Examples. <http://www.llergwellmind.com/what-is-morality-5076160>
- Nwafor, O. A & Amatu, C. U & Nwodu, G. E. (2022). Psychological Effects of Social Media Use In Communicating "OKEITE" Traditional Charm On Youths In Anambra State: An Exploratory Study. A Seminar Paper Presented at the 2022 Faculty of Social Science Conference, COOU.
- Pearson, S. (2010). The Nature Of Morality.  
<http://www.pearsonhigered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/2/0/5/0205053149.pdf>
- Shrum, L. J. (2017). Cultivation Theory: Effects and Underlying Process. International Encyclopedia of Media Effects © John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (p. 1)

- Stagner, B. (2022). 7 Negative Effects of social media on People and Users.  
<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/negative-effects-social-media/>
- Sterba, J. (1974). Nudity Increase in American; Trend Viewed as Step Towards Tolerance And Openness. New York Times archives. (p. 93)  
<http://nytimes.com/1974/09/03/archives/nudity-increase-in-america-trend-viewed-as-step-towards-tolerance-a-html>.
- Tuluma, J. D. (2015). Demystifying The Tiv's Tsuetsere Dance in The Contemporary Nigeria Society. Masters Seminar Paper Presented to The Department of Performing Arts Unilorin. (p. 1-14)
- Ugolo, C. (2006). Dance Documentation and Preservation in Nigeria. In Yerima, A. Bakare, O. Udoka, A. Eds. Critical Perspective on Dance in Nigeria. Ibadan: kraftbook limited. (p. 56-65)
- World Health Organization. (2017). Depression and other Common Mental Disorders: Global Health Estimates. (p. 710) Geneva. Switzerland.

