

# **Beyond the Failing Justice System: The Emerging Confluence of Mob Justice and Social Media in Nigeria**

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*The phenomenal frequency of mob attacks on suspects of varying offenses in Nigeria has ceased to be merely a local concern among justice dispensation stakeholders and within Nigerian communities. Social media is evolving as an instrumental trigger of “jungle justice” and has consequently situated mob justice as a global issue that requires critical academic attention. The essence of this research is to expound on the evolving journalistic functions of social media as projectors of actions and reactions of the mob and extra-judicial activities. The paper examines the social news channel, the nature of the news agents, the contents (mob attacks) and the effects of these contents on the users. (Social) Media Effect theory is employed to establish that there is a relationship between media and mob justice. This relationship is described via the accessibility principle that forms part of the cognitive process model of media effect theory. Netnography is used to obtain information by sending unstructured questions to social media users on online platforms, and the data obtained are qualitatively analyzed. Findings from the research establish that social media is an extension of the street mob and enabler of mob justice.*

**M**ob justice, also referred to as “mob lynching,” “mob action,” “street justice,” or, especially in the Nigerian context, “jungle justice” (Onuh 2012), has become of the major trending issues that have been widely discussed by linking it with the conditions of Nigeria’s judicial system. Previous studies have emphasized the direct relationships between the failing justice system and the formal justice administration institutions (Osasona 2015; Dada, Dosunmu & Oyediji, 2015; Nwankwo 2010; Okogbule 2004; Olonisakin, Ogunleye & Adebayo 2018). Though it is not out of place to associate the system’s lapses with institutional hiccups, the activities of the informal and ad-hoc justice agents and social propagators of information from the populace are also core perspectives that cannot be overlooked. They are now occupying a wide space in the course of explaining and justifying the cause and triggers of mob justice. Mob attacks, among other several manifestations of criminal justice chaos, are still under-studied and their correlation with social media is yet to be examined from an academic viewpoint. The phenomenal frequency of mob attacks on suspects of varying criminal offenses in Nigeria has ceased to be merely a local concern among justice dispensation stakeholders and within Nigerian communities. Social media is evolving as an instrumental trigger of “jungle justice” and has consequently situated mob justice as a global issue that requires critical academic attention.

Attaining fairness, equity/equality and freedom by members of any democratic society is complex and a work-in-progress, determined by putting in place the combinations of individual and social behavior (in terms of moral reasoning) as well as well-established egalitarian and democratic institutions and structures. It, therefore, becomes an issue of concern when several loopholes and alarming setbacks are identified within the system. It is from this background that this paper discusses the evolving journalistic functions of social media as projectors of actions and reactions of the mob and extra-judicial activities. This paper examines the social news channel, the nature of the news agents, the contents (mob attacks) and the effects of these contents on the users. (Social) Media Effect theory from the perspective of the cognitive process model is employed to justify that there is a relationship between media and mob justice. As media effect theories discuss the individualization and personalization of media use such that media contents are selected by media users to serve their needs (Valkenburg, Patti & Walther 2016); Ahn (2011) stressed the advent of the new media and examines the outcomes that arise when people use new technologies. Graduating from this background, the cognitive process model of media effect theory, rather than focus basically on the outcomes, takes critical look at the process in between content generation and content consumption or effects. It is within this context that one of the principles of the cognitive process model, the accessibility principle, is applied in this paper. This is the principle that focuses on social media effects on users and how the media have evolved as propagators of mob outbreaks.

In the course of the research, qualitative information presentation and analysis were employed, using descriptive research design. Primary data was derived from the use of netnography. Netnography, drawn from the words *internet* and *ethnography*, is an established approach to descriptive and qualitative research that enhances the wider and richer exploration of cultural diversities (from the internet world) by providing windows through which local context of cultural phenomena can be accessed, retrieving information in a flexible manner (Kozinets, Dolbec & Earley 2014). Unstructured questions were sent to social media users as cultural members on Whatsapp and Facebook to provide first-hand accounts of their online experiences. Information obtained from these sources were content analyzed using a descriptive method.

### **Literature Review: Justice**

Defining the concept of justice can be very difficult especially when in matters of state control and balance of individual rights, either as positions of criminals or victims. Stemming from the lack of absoluteness to the scope of justice, there are evolving arguments on the need to define justice not as an outcome (equality, equity and freedom) but rather as a process. Results can be just if they were obtained by a just or fair process. Justice is therefore the process that yields equal, predictable, accessible, rational outputs – based on the certainty of applying legal rules developed over time to prevent or remedy what would arouse the sense of injustice and to resolve disputes (Conflict Research Consortium, 1998). Rather than using justice to mean liberty or freedom, by defining it in terms of who shall make certain decisions, justice is seen as a process concerned with how decisions are made while taking note of the frame of mind and the expected results. Justice is concerned not only with the consequences of actions but with their significance. This is why, in legal matters, emphasis is placed on procedure that produces the expected outcome. This is in accordance with the work of Cooray and Leonard (1988), who argue that, aside being interpersonal adjudication and resolution of conflicts between persons, justice, is equally law based and can be broadly defined by process defined by law.

#### *Criminal Justice System*

“Criminal justice system” refers to the set of agencies and processes established by the state to manage crime and impose penalties on violators of criminal laws (Newman 1978). It is a system used by government to maintain social control, prevent crime, and enforce laws through procedures for arrest, charging, trial and confinement of a suspect (Osasona 2015). Its main objective is to reduce crime by bringing more offenses to justice and to raise public confidence that the system is fair and will deliver for the law abiding citizen (Nwankwo 2010). Okogbule (2004) adds that one of the requirements of the criminal justice system is the application of necessary rules and provisions for the protection of the rights of an alleged offender. The World Justice Project Report (2015) positions effective criminal justice system as very vital to state strength in all ramifications. An effective criminal justice system is capable of investigating and adjudicating criminal offenses successfully and in timely manner. This can only take place through a system that is impartial and non-discriminatory, free of corruption and improper government influence, ensuring that the rights of both victims and the accused are protected.

The effectiveness of the criminal justice system is assessed by measuring the components that constitute the system. These are the criminal legislations and policies, the law enforcement agencies and the investigative agents (the prisons and police) as well as the judiciary/court system (Osasona, 2015). As elaborated in the work of Dada, Dosunmu and Oyedeji (2015), criminal procedures pass through these agents in stages, all of which function together to ensure that there exist social influencing agents that are concerned with orderliness, peace and tranquility in communities. Cases enter the system either through the police’s detection and investigation and/or through public reporting of crimes. This is followed by prosecution and the pre-trial series of the police-court phase. The judiciary phase is identified with adjudication, sentencing and sanction which is followed by the enforcement of verdicts by correctional agents, the prison. When these organs fall short of their functions, there is a break in due process and procedural justice which consequently creates friction and room for illegal alternatives to the administration of justice, including “justice” from the mob.

### *Mob and Mob Justice*

A mob is a form of crowd, which is different from causal crowds that are without organization, conventional crowds that are assembled for a specific purpose such as witnessing a ball game, or expressive crowds that are involved in expressive behavior, such as dancing and singing. Several sociological perspectives have been employed to describe the mob. The works of Momboisse (1967), Canetti (1973), Schweingraber (2000) and Surowiecki (2005) point to the fact that mob is an expression of a type of crowd which is characterised by destructiveness. Momboisse (1967, pp. 80-89), while giving vivid illustrations of what mob means, explains it to be a kind of crowd that has latent potential for widespread civil disobedience. All crowds can transform into law-breaking mob, characterised by “leadership, organisation, a common motive for action, emotion, irrationality” and typically, “non-law abiding.” To Schweingraber (2000), crowds begin to become mobs with some climatic event. The mob is a form of hostile or aggressive organized crowd that are willing to be led into lawlessness.

The mob, compared to individual destructive or violent tendencies, is more extreme. This is because, according to Canetti’s (1973) description, when human beings find themselves within a crowd that pursue similar goal, whether destructive or not, they care less of the risk of being surrounded by alien bodies. They are therefore prompted to engage in unpleasant acts without minding the consequences on their individual safety and security. Within a crowd, human beings are capable of being free of the fear of being touched, armed or oppressed and they perceive themselves as equal. This peculiar feature is a basis for the formation of an aggressive crowd or a mob. In addition to the desperation of the mob to carry out a particular act, irrespective of threats to individual safety, the mob is equally dangerous because of its inherent capacity to rapidly increase in size. This striking power of the mob is what Schweingraber (2000, pp. 371-389) describes as its “spiral of stimulation” that creates an urge to continuously grow in size. The mob’s growing density becomes an additional strength it has over individual capacities. As tension mounts, individuals within this crowd become less and less responsive to stimulation arising outside the group and respond only to influences from within the group itself. This process creates internal rapport among members of the crowd whereby each individual loses his self-control, self-consciousness, rationality, individual responsibility and respond only to the dictates of the crowd as a whole. Each individual within this crowd is absorbed into it and eventually gets controlled by the “crowd-mind” to be violent and destructive (Schweingraber 2000; Momboisse 1967; Canetti, 1973).

The destructiveness of the mob as a kind of crowd is often discussed as its most conspicuous quality in any given community, irrespective of its level of civilization. The mob’s feature of damaging human lives is explained in the work of Canetti (1973) where the mob is characterised with the use of stones (from the primitive times) and fire as impressive means of killing and destruction. Momboisse (1967, pp. 80-89) classifies mobs into four types on the basis of the motive behind their formation. Among these types – including the “escape mob,” “acquisitive mob” and “expressive mob” – the “aggressive mob” are the most destructive as they engage in riots and are particularly identified with carrying out “jungle justice,” including the lynching of suspected criminals.

Mob justice can therefore be defined as a form of judgment passed by the aggressive mob on persons suspected to have been involved in crime rather than following due process through the

criminal justice system of the society. It is an act of disregarding the rule, whereby, persons hand over perceived criminals to angry mob who take laws into their hands and inflict punishment on these victims. These punishments range from verbal harassments, various levels of physical assaults, beating and lynching with the use of stones, rods, bricks, ropes, and fire. By carrying out this act, discredited members of the public, in attempts to play judicial roles of the legitimate criminal justice system, disregard the applications of legal procedures and fundamental rights of suspects.

### **Social Media**

The advent of computer networks has brought about the introduction of “new media” in addition to other existing large scale channels of conveying information, thereby two separate distinctions are created. The old (or traditional) media such a television, books and magazine are the agents of communication, based on a one-way process of producers creating information that is transmitted to large number of consumers. Old media rely on expensive gadgets and equipment to transmit signals and are limited to a fraction of given geographical location (Alejandro, 2010). The new media (internet) involves two-way communication within a mass audience who are both producers and consumers (Dutton, O’Sullivan & Rayner 1998).

The new media has been identified with the advent of digital revolution and rise of mobile technologies which has significantly determined not only the nature of the information being transmitted but equally the speed at which the information reaches wider audiences (Aslam 2014). This is why Alejandro (2010, pp. 3-15) describes the new media as the “web” that has “changed the world and revolutionized how information is stored, published, searched and consumed.” News consumption, according to her, has metamorphosed from the pre-satellite era, when it was dependent on newspapers (print media), to the era of electronic media. Gilboa (2009, pp. 97-99) also describes new media an “evolution in communication technology.” This subsequently has created global networks and various online social networks. Though the print media and other conventional electronic media are still relevant, the growing competition trend between them and the internet-provided information channels is evident in the expanding number of readers, viewers and listeners of online news.

Social media are components of new media that encompasses more of interactive participation, which goes beyond mere broadcasting and centralized information dissemination that is peculiar with old media (Manning 2014). Social media, as added by Alejandro (2010) is about networking and communicating via text, video, blogs, pictures, status updates on sites such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn or micro blogs such as Twitter. The internet has paved way for what Gilboa (2009, pp. 97-99) describes as “unprecedented interactivity” which allows people to access news from different sources including simple texting and videoing. Social media have subsequently enabled the emergence of highly networked individuals who break the geographical and time barriers that existing institutional media have faced for several decades. There now exist “citizen journalists” (Alejandro 2010; Gilboa, 2009) that employ combinations of advanced cell phones and social networking apps to report on events.

Madden (2011) reports that 65% of adult internet users use social media. The usage of social media accounts for about a quarter of the entire online users by surpassing gaming by 10% and email by 8% (Casey 2016). Social media use, according to socialnomics.net (2012), has become the most common activity on the web. A large percentage of these social media users comprise

non-state actors, including non-governmental organisations, terrorists and criminal organisations and individuals (Gilboa 2009). These are people who have access to people and information across the world and have endless opportunities to debate events. With a camera phone, key board and internet connectivity, several individuals have resorted to what Alejandro (2010, pp. 3-15) termed as “personal media” and “self-publishing,” and this explains why journalism, in particular, is changing to become more open-sourced. The traditional news reporters have recently been challenged to “release the news” as early as possible and, at the same time, to “find some angle to the story that has not yet been talked about” (Alejandro 2010, pp. 3-15). This is because social media, with active participations of amateur bloggers, citizen journalists and twitterers, are already and constantly out on the web and on the street, to spread the stories and proliferate their contents. Whether the power of social media to rapidly disseminate highly diversified and varied contents to an infinite audience (Boothe-Perry 2014) always comes out “appealing” is questionable. This is because the sensitivity of these contents in relations to the motive of the senders is a factor to consider.

### **(Social) Media Effect Theory – The Cognitive Process Model**

The postulation of the model is borne out of recent scholarly debates and critiques of previous media effects research (Higgins, 1996). Among several criticisms, these media theories have been identified to lack “any focus on explanatory mechanism” (Shrum 2002, pp. 49-50). The media effects theorists have centered their discussions on the relationships between input variables (media contents) and output variables (consumer/audience attitudes, beliefs and behaviour). Their concentration has been limited to evidences or extent of the effects of the media information on the people with minute “consideration of the cognitive process that might mediate these relations” (Shrum 2002, p.50). This process model provides clear links between the stimulus (media consumption) and the response (beliefs and behaviour). This model is that explanations that answers the “how” and “why” questions of the media effects thereby increasing what Shrum (2002), Higgins (1996) and Hawkins and Pingree (1990) refer to as the internal validity of the media effect explanations. The social cognition research, from social psychology point of view, focuses on the cognitive processes involving the relations between information and reactions or judgment.

The two important principles that define the social cognition research are the sufficiency principle and the accessibility principle. The sufficiency principle dictates that rather than search memory for all information relevant to make judgment, only a small portion of the information available is being retrieved to construct a judgment. The determinants of this sufficiency are motivation and ability to process information (Shrum 2002). The accessibility principle dictates that the small subset of information retrieved and subsequently used in constructing judgment are those that come readily to mind. The accessibility level of information is influenced by the following determinants: 1) frequency and recency of construct activation; 2) vividness of construct; and 3) relations with accessible construct.

Constructs that are activated very often tend to be easily recalled (Higgins & King 1981). Just as we have with television viewing, heavy users of social media do, more frequently, activate constructs than light users and equally have high probability of being used recently than light users. The vividness of the construct is also a key determinant of accessibility. Practical situations, extreme instances, case studies, among others, are forms of information presentations conveyed through social media which are easily remembered. The links between related

construct is another factor. As the accessibility of a particular construct increases, so does accessibility of closely related construct. Constructs are stored in memory in form of nodes and links are formed between the nodes. The activation of a particular node brings about the activation of other constructs related to that node. Shrum (2002, p. 5) gives an example of the activation of a particular construct like how aggression or anger may similarly activate behaviors like crime and violence that are closely related to these constructs.

The effect of media portrayals of aggression is a vital perspective especially as far as social media contents and usages are concerned. The concept of accessibility has also been useful in explaining the effects of exposure to media violence on behaviour. Frequent viewing of violent media portrayals primes particular constructs like aggression and hostility.

### **The Emerging Confluence of Mob Justice and Social Media**

This part of the paper discusses the relationship between mob justice and social media, emphasizing that the latter plays a significant role in triggering more occurrences of “jungle justice.” To justify this position, information is gathered using netnography. This is a qualitative research where data is sourced from social media users in form of in-depth interview and group discussions, the essence of which is to obtain information concerning certain aspects of human behavior. Facts were obtained from respondents who are social media users on Facebook and WhatsApp. These respondents are purposively selected from the researcher’s Facebook friend lists and WhatsApp contacts, considering accessibility and convenience. 20 Facebook users were interviewed and 20 were group-chatted (40 respondents from a total of 401 friends). 20 WhatsApp users were also interviewed and 5 were group-chatted (25 from a total of 245 WhatsApp contacts).

In the course of obtaining information from the respondents, the following questions that cover the scope of the paper and its objectives were raised:

1. What is the major source of mob attack information in Nigeria?
2. In what forms are information on “jungle justice” or mob justice presented?
3. How is mob attack information imported into and accessed from social media?
4. What effects do the dissemination of mob attacks through social media have on occurrences of mob justice in Nigeria?

The above patterns of social media usage in relation to mob justice are discussed in turn below.

Information obtained from the respondents establish the following:

1. The majority of social media users get information about “jungle justice” or mob attacks from social media.
2. These information come in forms of videos and pictures of incidences of mob attacks
3. These incidences are mostly captured by amateurs who are at the scenes of mob attacks, most times, received and forwarded by social media users.
4. Spreading and viewing of images of mob attacks have not aided the reduction in the frequency and intensity of mob justice but have rather increased them.

### **Social Media as Reporting Platforms for Mob Justice Incidences**

What mob justice and social media have in common is that they both involve activities, actions and inactions of people from different walks of life. While the former is defined by its perpetrators, the latter is defined by their users. In both, the active roles of the people who make

things happen cannot be overestimated. Like any other types of news, social media spread news of mob attacks fast and more frequently. The level of people participation in the coverage is increasing because of the simplicity of journalistic activities involved (Alejandro 2010). Social media provide information on mob attacks that are more frequent and are always up to date. This is in agreement with the explanations of the cognitive process model's accessibility principle. All the social media users on Facebook and WhatsApp say their major source of information on mob attacks is social media (netnographic in-depth interview and focused group discussion, 2017). Users of social media are able to construct judgments on mob attacks at any point in time because they come readily to their minds.

### **The Spread of Extremely Vivid and Uncensored Images of Mob Attacks**

The vividness of the construct, as described by the cognitive process model, explains why social media have largely contributed to the propagation of mob attacks. Busching, Allen and Johnie (2016) opine that the presence of violence in electronic media (including social media) content is almost as prevalent as the media itself. The recording and sharing of uncensored videos and pictures of mob attacks on victims means that practical situations and extreme instances are easily remembered by viewers and constitute a basis for them to continuously take cognizance of the viability of mob justice. To the sender and receivers of mob justice images, social media serve as a vivid reflection of reality. It is from this perspective that Mengu and Mengu (2015) argue that social media is an important platform to realize social practices and for sharing of realities. Some possible consequences of exposure to violent media content are an increase in aggressive violent behavior, a more hostile perception of society, and less empathic reactions to victims of mob justice.

For those not physically present at mob scenes as perpetrators, social media creates avenues for an increase in aggressive thoughts and sharing of violent mob attacks. Busching, Allen and Anderson (2016, p. 2) describe this as "cyber aggression" by emphasizing the fact that aggressive behavior is not limited to "overt physical behavior like punching or kicking. This is evident in the interview conducted with Kehinde, one of the WhatsApp users, who argues for ruthless justice dispensation for sexual abusers:

Whenever I receive jungle justice videos or pictures, I don't keep them so myself. I send them to all my friends on my list. How can I pretend that I am not pleased that a notorious rapist has eventually been killed? There are different ways of dealing with a fifty-year old man who have been molesting small girls without waiting for ...police... It may not be ok to put laws in your hands but even the parents of this poor girl have been wounded forever. (Kehinde Ijtona, WhatsApp chat, 20th August, 2017).

The above voice from a social media user supports Boothe-Perry's finding (2014, p. 53) that social media is just like a "sewage culvert" because it captures pictures, personal profiles, gossips, news and series of "unfiltered opinions and punditry" and it is therefore "subject to misuse." However, cases of "photoshop" images are equally evident in online reports and may render the vividness of social media contents unworthy of being perceived as social realities and facts. Social media users have also been misled to accept what Yomi Fadamitan (Facebook messenger chat, 21, August, 2017) describe as "certain computer-created falsehoods" as evidences of violent attacks. Though these "fake" images are present on social media platforms,



Yomi Fadamitan, a social media/Facebook user for eleven years said:

“...they (Photoshop images) are too minute, compared to real videos of people killing anybody they suspect of any little crime on the streets that we all walk in and can recognize. These are videos that have been confirmed by some of us, including news reporters, to be true” (Facebook messenger chat, 21, August, 2017).

Yomi Fadamitan’s submission indicates that despite the possibilities of the spread of fake images of mob violence, vivid and real images are easily identified by users. Incidences of mob violence are in most cases presented more in short videos than in photos (Bolaji Aremu, WhatsApp chat, 20th August, 2017). The background noises that correlate with the moving images are evidences of genuine and unfiltered information that cannot easily be doctored.

### **Images of Mob Attacks are Captured by Amateur Journalists and Shared by Other Social Media Users**

With access to broadcasting gadgets, some individuals present at the scenes of mob attacks have the urge to become original producers of violent images of lynching rather than directing their efforts to reporting to constituted criminal justice authorities. This, according to Mengu and Mengu (2015) is based on the premise that social media create avenue for everyone to write their own scenarios in order to become “heros” and “heroines.” Alejandro (2010, p. 14) argues that even when the new media (social media) “open new opportunities for the news industry,” they, at the same time, increase “the possibility of a professional crisis for journalists and media organisation.” Attacks of suspected criminals have ways of pulling the crowd, becoming news-worthy (especially to unprofessional ad-hoc reporters) and equally form part of the unavoidable “media-war axis” (Aslam 2014). With the advent of social media, the traditional dispatching of news (in whatever crude or barbaric manner the incidents may have occurred) has left the scene to become “more entertaining, interactive and instantaneous” in the hands of social media users. Most of these propagators do not have formal journalism expertise, but according to Boothe-Perry (2014, pp. 51-53), the communication system “allows for (content) personalization” because social media users have the “ability to control the flow of information.” As explained by one of the respondents of the online interview conducted:

I still cannot understand how it is possible to get people present at the scene of the horrible attacks [where] people are maltreated and burnt to ashes just so that they can record the entire event and not to report the perpetrators to the Police. People take their time to take pictures and record the attacks. ... Their major concern is to upload these pictures and send to their friends on [F]acebook... The one that they burnt a boy last year because he stole garri really pained me. I can never forget. I had to speak up. (Olayinka Animashaun, WhatsApp group chat, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2017).

Olaitan Adedeji adds that rather than being a positive supplement for certain news reporting, social media’s manner of reporting jungle justice is “barbaric and not professional journalism” (WhatsApp group chat, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2017).

The new media have brought the aspect of entertainment to news so much that people have started “enjoying the killing of an enemy” and “enjoying watching it done” (Aslam 2014), just as we have experienced with the advent of video games. The introduction of social media have successfully expanded the scope of mass communication because people have started enjoying

the recording of what they watch, not only for their consumption but for those who might not be present at the attack scenes. Olaitan Adedeji opines that some Nigerians “like nasty stories, like bad news, like shock values and have lost their sense of value and responsibility” (WhatsApp group chat, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2017).

Online respondents’ perspective may vary, but the majority of them who might not have been involved in the recording and uploading of mob attack scenes have nonetheless shared such images and downloaded them on their internet gadgets for further consumption (netnographic in-depth interview and focused group discussions, 2017). Bolaji Aremu, a WhatsApp user, provides explanations for the source of the online “jungle justice” uploads:

...These scenes are usually filmed by individuals who are at the point where such things happened...Channels Television got it from the internet...through eyewitness platform. (Bolaji Aremu, WhatsApp chat, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2017).

Yomi Fadamitan, talks further about the motive behind the recent springing up of “jungle justice journalists” to include the need “to serve as deterrent to others, to expose the perpetrators (attackers)” and lastly “for the fun of it” (Facebook messenger chat, 21, August, 2017). This point raised by Fadamitan is what Toafeek Akintola refers to on WhatsApp chat (23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2017) as “feeling good about sharing bad news.” Akintola adds that some have resorted to uploading videos of mob attacks in order to “attract viewing traffic to their page or site as the case may be.” As Fadamitan concludes, “the internet traffic enjoyed by bloggers and other social media providers is another reason for the increase in video uploads.”

### **Social Media Trigger Increase in Mob Attacks Incidences**

Taking cues from the cognitive process model, it can be deduced that the presentation of mob attacks via social media creates avenues for the users to react in accordance to the nature of information received based on “relations with accessible constructs.” In this respect, the “activation” of an “anger or aggression node” brings about the activation of “crime or violence nodes,” with which they are related (Higgins 1996; Shrum 2002). This position from the theory illustrates that sighting incidences of mob attacks influences violent attacks. This position equally aligns with that of Boothe-Perry (2014, p. 54) that social media has “created an unprecedented participation culture” in which it is not only about watching and consuming culture but where culture is now to be created, shared and interacted with. Sola Adepoju, while putting the journalistic function of social media into perspective adds to the affirmation:

The social media has its pros and cons which I think its disadvantages outweigh the advantages when it comes to [reporting of] jungle justice...Social media further spread the evil and rather than helping to solve the problem, it [jungle justice] is on the increase...An individual who may not be be “certain computer-created falsehoods old to do such, on viewing such (mob attacks) becomes bold and feels the need to witness and partake” (WhatsApp chat, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2017).

Olaitan Adedeji adds to her submissions on the direct relationship between social media and “jungle justice”:

...people get worked up and angry at the rituals and killings they see and so, they take [it] out on anyone suspected [whether reasonably or not] to be involved. The comedian that was killed in

Ikorodu as he was returning from a show just because people have been waiting to catch *Badoo* members is an example. (WhatsApp group chat, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2017)

Olayinka Animashaun equally positions social media as a propagator of jungle justice. She adds in her conclusion that

[t]he Nigerian mentality is very warped. We like shock value-sensationalism. Therefore, people are looking for an opportunity to satisfy their persona[l] urges for this. The more of these videos/photos they see, the greater the desire to create theirs.

### **Conclusion**

Mob justice is becoming not only a social menace but also of global concern. It has developed to be an international issue because the internet has expanded its scope beyond the geographical entity called Nigeria. Concerns have shifted from the general understanding that these illegal activities of ad hoc groups, who unlawfully and indiscreetly administer justice, are manifestations of failing criminal justice system. Other perspectives to explain the increasing level of jungle justice are emerging. Social media, along with its several positive functions, has been identified, on the basis of theoretical assumptions and empirical findings, as not only a trigger for mob attacks but as an extension of the mob, the perpetrators and keen onlookers. These are the categories of crowd who find jungle justice to be an appealing and justifiable alternative to the formal justice administration system.

### **Recommendation**

The researcher, while in the field, observed heavy, uncontrolled traffic of mob justice scenes. There is therefore an urgent need to put cyber-laws of this nature in place so as to check these excesses. Continuous efforts that identify several aspects of cyber-crimes are ongoing. Cyber terrorism, malware, drug trafficking deals, cyber stalking, and “Yahoo-Yahoo” (internet fraud), among others, are aspects of crimes committed via the internet and are gradually gaining legislative attention. Crime against persons that includes the posting and sharing of offensive images and videos of brutally killed crime suspects equally constitutes one of the most significant cyber-crimes. It can therefore not be ignored but be given adequate legal attention. Bloggers should take legal responsibilities for all posts and news on their blog. As jungle justice is criminal, the act of filming mob attacks by members of the mob should also be explicitly classified as criminal as a matter of law. Enforcement of these proposed cyber-laws is also absolutely important to keep the escalation of mob justice in check.

In order to enhance effective enforcement of law against “cyber-mob justice,” reformation of the Nigeria Police Force and other law enforcement agencies should be seriously adhered to. It is crucial to continuously improve on funding, training and equipping of Nigeria law enforcement agencies. For example, to meet the UN recommended ratio of one policeman to 400 residents of a country (Nwanze, 2014), the police force would need to be staffed with over 100,000 personnel. This will include the recruitment of cyber-experts among the law enforcement agents to effectively trace the sources of uncensored and obscene videos and pictures and prosecution of suspected perpetrators.

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