THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE ENDSARS PROTEST IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Nigerians heavily promoted the #EndSARS protest using social media to the fullest extent, which caught the attention of the international and national communities in the year 2020. Nigerian police brutality was the target of the decentralized protest #EndSARS. Social media was largely used by Nigerian youths in disseminating information, mobilizing resources and people to protest against police brutality. However, social media was equally used for misinformation and fake news which turned the people against the police and the destruction of private and public properties followed suit. The study investigated the role and rationale behind the usage of social media during the Endsars protest. This study employed the Descriptive survey research design. The study employed the use of key informant interviews, In-depth interviews, and structured questionnaires as research instruments. A total of 16 interviews were conducted across the three senatorial districts in Lagos with 359 questionnaires administered as well. It was found out that Social media was instrumental to the endsars protest as it was the engine of information and mobilization. Social media was also used to protest online with the use of Hashtags which has been discovered in this study as the digital means of protesting. A recent development in social protest in Nigeria is the phenomenon of using social media as a catalyst of social protest. The study came to the conclusion that as internet use and adoption rise in the nation, social media would be utilised more frequently to compel the government to deal with more pressing concerns.

Keywords: *Social protest, #EndSars, Social media, Social media information, Social media misinformation, Nigeria*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has infiltrated all facets of the information society, accelerating democracy and political processes. The media has become an essential component of individuals' life, impacting their social, political, and economic endeavours. It has broadened communication beyond conventional methods of engagement and socialization, becoming a contemporary trend in knowledge dissemination (Omotayo & Florunsho, 2020). Although the Internet has historically served as a news source, contemporary societies are increasingly reliant on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. A significant use of social media is the establishment of online networks that provide interaction among millions of individuals through the exchange of text, audio, photos, and video (Alquraan et al., 2017).

In recent years, social media has become a potent tool for social movements, facilitating both awareness-raising and the mobilization of resources and individuals. The emergence of social media has facilitated the ability to engage an audience of millions with relative simplicity. The majority of individuals under thirty utilize social media platforms to maintain connections with family and friends, as well as to engage with global events. Approximately 72% of American adolescents (ages 18 to 29) utilized social networking platforms such as Facebook and MySpace in 2010, as reported by Lenhart et al. (2010). According to Johnston et al. (2013), Twitter and Facebook ranked as the most favoured social computing platforms among university students in Cape Town, South Africa, while Onah and Nche (2014) discovered that Nigerian teenagers exhibited a greater receptivity to social media technologies compared to other technological forms. Contemporary research indicates that young individuals, particularly college students, serve as pioneers, early adopters, early majority adopters, and users of social media; this corroborates the assertions made by Ahmad et al. (2019), Jamil (2018), Mahmud and Amin (2017), Williams and Adesope (2017), Abodunrin (2017), Drakovic et al. (2017), and Fasae and

Adegbilero-Iwari (2016). Wilson and Boldeman (2011) and Adaja and Ayodele (2013) assert that young individuals are inherently familiar with social media, having been raised in an environment saturated with information and communication technologies. Nche (2012:19) supports this claim, stating that "the phenomenon of social media (networking) has permeated every corner of Nigeria, captivating a significant portion of its youth, and that social media usage has become so prevalent among the youth that it is now considered unfashionable not to participate in at least one social networking site." Nnamonu (2013) asserts that most social media platforms are hosted online and that the predominant user demographic consists of young individuals. Social media facilitates political engagement by providing citizens with a platform to observe and impact governmental actions through a medium seamlessly incorporated into daily life. As the number of social media users increases daily, experts are examining its impact on democratic society and daily life, particularly on protests and social movements. The buzz right now is social media. For news and information, people now frequently use social media platforms (Adepetun, 2020). They include Twitter, Tiktok, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Telegram, and so forth. People use social media when an event occurs, be it a pandemic, banditry outbreak, a terrorist attack, an illegal act, or an economic collapse (Shaw, 2016).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Social media has shown to be an effective tool for information exchange in Nigeria, regardless of its intended use for development. In 2020, Nigerians maximised social media to advocate for the #EndSARS protest, attracting attention from both domestic and international organisations. The decentralised protest termed #EndSARS sought to highlight the brutality of the Nigerian police force. The social movement aimed to abolish the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notoriously violent faction of the Nigerian Police with a controversial history (Adekoya, 2021). The event first focused on police brutality but expanded to include government corruption, violence, and human rights violations (George, 2020). The main role of social media during the demonstration was to convey information about its objectives and implementation (Uwazuruike, 2020). Social media significantly influenced the #EndSARS protest, uniting youth from several places to advocate against the atrocities of the now-disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad and to demand improved governance in Nigeria. Currently, individuals encounter both accurate and inaccurate narratives regarding occurrences on social media. The objective of spreading misinformation is to mislead individuals. Parrot Nigeria (2018) asserts that social media is inundated with incorrect, deceptive, and badly composed content. This assertion is indisputable; nonetheless, it remains ambiguous if it accurately represented the essence of the #EndSARS protest in 2020. It is essential to examine the utilisation of social media during the 2020 Endsars protest and the rationale behind it.

The present condition of social media in Nigeria illustrates that, even amid crises, individuals may disseminate both factual and erroneous information. This research aims to investigate the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria and the influence of social media on it.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To determine the role of social media in the Endsars protest
2. To affirm the rationale behind the usage of social media during the Endsars protest.
3. To examine the way at which information sharing and misinformation circulated on social media during the #EndSARS protest.

1.4 Research Question

1. What are roles did social media played during the Endsars protest?

2. What are the rationale behind the usage of social media during the Endsars protest?
3. In what ways are information sharing and misinformation circulated on social media during the #EndSARS protest?

2.0 Literature review

2.1 The Concept of Social Media

A lengthy history exists about the utilisation of social media to disseminate knowledge and instigate social change. Fasuwon (2019) asserts that social media is a cutting-edge network and technology that enables effective human contact and communication. Obar and Wildman (2015) define social media as online networks that facilitate the creation and dissemination of knowledge, opinions, and diverse forms of expression through interactive digital tools. Uwazuruike (2020) asserts that interpersonal communication and information exchange have undergone significant transformation in contemporary society as a result of social media. A diverse array of information formats, such as text, photos, and tables, must be easily accessible across different social media platform interfaces.

2.2 Misinformation through Social media

Social media can serve as either an advantage or a disadvantage for users, contingent upon their behaviours (Eke, Obiora, and Odoh, 2014). In contemporary society, social media undeniably function as a catalyst for social reform. Social media has the capacity to disseminate misinformation (Adepetun, 2020). The term "misinformation" denotes the intentional dissemination of false or erroneous information aimed at deceiving individuals. Baseless anxieties have escalated owing to misinformation on social media in recent years (Allcott Gentzkow & Yu, 2018).

Leading news organisations have invested in digital journalism, content improvement, and the expansion of their online and social media platforms. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) and Ahn et al. (2007) contend that social media is rapidly emerging as the preeminent medium for information dissemination, as its primary objectives for users are communication, networking, and knowledge sharing. The emergence of social media coincided with technological breakthroughs that facilitated the global dissemination and democratisation of knowledge. Burkhardt (2017) asserts that knowledge facilitates access to novel concepts and previously inaccessible locations. It enables customers to determine the utilisation of the data they obtain and offers a platform for diverse perspectives.

Burkhardt (2017) asserts that in a wholly unregulated, advertising-driven media environment, the pursuit of profit often outweighs the motivation to act ethically. This significantly impacts the medium's development over time. Burkhardt noted the development of misinformation as a consequence of technological advancements associated with social media. She raises a pertinent observation that, while misinformation exists, its velocity and extent of distribution have reached unprecedented levels due to technology improvements.

The widespread use of smartphones and social media facilitates the rapid and effortless dissemination of misinformation (Fox, 2018). Fasunwon (2019) asserts that social media has transformed into a medium for disseminating information and ideas, while also fostering collective violent social activities. A novel global threat has emerged: the dissemination of misinformation and propaganda via social media platforms. Fasunwon (2019) asserts that certain individuals have utilised social media to disseminate misinformation in an attempt to incite insurrection against the government.

2.3 The role of social media in protest formation and sustenance

Numerous demonstrations in the past decade have significantly depended on social media (Silva, 2015). Mobilisation can significantly benefit from social media, as it enables extensive connections, promotes the building of collective identities, and acts as a conduit for information distribution (Valenzuela, Arriagada and Scherman, 2012). Academics, however, readily assert that social media does not inherently induce individuals to devise novel protest methods or to entirely overhaul conventional organisational practices. Valenzuela et al. (2012) assert that activism extends beyond the digital realm. In summary, it is not unusual for social media to advocate or support traditional methods of protest. Protesters organised demonstrations and condemned police brutality via social media, which they also utilised as an alternative information source and to contest the official narrative.

2.4 Endsars protest

The #EndSARS campaign was started when convener Segun Awosanya published a petition (Oloyede & Elega, 2019). #EndSARS began as a call for the dissolution of SARS, a component of the Nigerian Police Force that has come under fire for its brutality and violations of human rights. Nigerian citizens' incomprehensible dissatisfaction with the police agency's service delivery system was the target of the #EndSARS protest.

2.5 Social Media and the Endsars protest

During this era of globalisation, characterised by increased digitalisation, the utilisation of social media as a communication instrument is substantial across economic, social, political, and business domains (Ajisafe, Ojo, and Mayonmi, 2021). This is especially accurate in Africa. An increasing number of individuals are utilising social media for self-expression and interpersonal communication (Oginni and Moitui, 2015). Since its establishment in the 1990s as a communication network, social media has emerged as a significant development (Cammerts, 2015). Digitalisation has transformed billions of individuals globally into internet users. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated that individuals remain indoors or maintain physical distance, so rendering technology the sole means of communication and compelling the world economy to adopt technological compliance. This demonstrates the essential role of social media as a communication tool in today's highly digitised and networked society.

In addition to its role in distributing government communications, policy-making processes, and choices, social media has influenced enterprises, social groups, and movements through the digitalisation of information and communication (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020). The emergence of social media has signified a pivotal milestone, initiating a new epoch of global social movement mobilisation. The substantial rise in social media usage in Nigeria has significantly impacted the nation's recent social movements.

The #Endsars protest, a peaceful demonstration against police brutality and a demand for comprehensive reform of the national police force, prompted young Nigerians to utilise social media to express their concerns, subsequently impacting the nation's social policy and security measures (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020). This emerging tendency requires rigorous academic discourse on how citizens in Nigeria and elsewhere might leverage social media to influence governmental policy and decision-making. Social media was important in organising and mobilising participants during the #Endsars protest.

The principal individuals responsible for leading and organising the demonstration have consistently participated in social movements (Ajisafe, Ojo and Mayonmi, 2021). Social media has effectively replaced the former mobilisation framework and is now a crucial tool for the global

organisation and coordination of social movements (Ojedokun, Ogunleye & Aderinto, 2021). Social movements have utilised social media as a forum for protest, as it unites individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds through a common identity (Cammerts, 2015). The #Endsars protest utilised social media as a venue to express grievances against police violence. This platform allows for dissent against the government and its propaganda, representing a significant improvement over the biassed reporting that has afflicted most news channels. It was revealed that social media, while crucial for communication and information dissemination during the demonstration, also served as a conduit for the propagation of incorrect and misleading information. Conversely, social media significantly influenced the #Endsars protest through communication, formation, organisation, coordination, and mobilisation.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive survey methodology and focused on the state of Lagos. We deliberately selected Lagos State as it was the location of the Endsars protest. The study's population comprises individuals residing in the three senatorial districts of Lagos State: Central, East, and West senatorial districts.

In each of these three senatorial districts, one local government area was selected each. Thus, Ikorodu, Eti-osa, and Ikeja local governments were the selected study Local Government area. Furthermore, these local government areas were clustered into Registration areas of INEC where the RA's were further broken down into Pooling Units has shown in table 3. The study made use of systematic sampling of households at the 5th term was used to select the 359 respondents has shown in Table 1.

The participants for the in-depth interview and key informant interviews were purposively selected on the basis of their knowledge, role, and involvement in the Endsars protest as shown in table 2.

The study engaged in a sequential triangulation approach where both qualitative and quantitative research methods were adopted as methods of data collection. Structured interviewer-based questionnaires, In-depth Interview, and Key informant interview were adopted as the instrument of data collection.

To identify inconsistencies in the responses, cross-check questions were inserted into the questionnaire items. All items underwent a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha to select constructs with higher values of alpha, desirable to measure the variables. The instrument underwent face and content validity testing, and the internal consistency and reliability were confirmed. All components have high alphas which is 0.7 or above.

The quantitative data was analysed with the use of descriptive statistics and the use of Chi-square to test for association. The qualitative data was analysed with the use of content analysis.

Table 3.1: Summary of quantitative and qualitative sample size distribution

S/N	Senatorial district	Quantitative sample size (Questionnaire)	Qualitative sample size	
			IDI	KII
1	Lagos Central senatorial district	120	2	2
2	Lagos East senatorial district	160	2	2
3	Lagos West Senatorial district	120	2	2
	Total	400	6	6

Table 3.2: Matrix for determining the sample size for the In-depth Interview

Categories	Respondent
Religious leader	1
Police Officer	1
Civil servant	1
Community leader	1
Traders	1
Youth	1
Grand total	6

Table 3.4: Copies of questionnaire retrieved

Local Government Area	Number of Copies Distributed	Number of Copies Retrieved	Percentage
Ikeja	120	100	27.9%
Ikorodu	160	151	42.1%
Eti-Osa	120	108	30.1%
Total	400	359	100%

4. FINDINGS

The findings of the research are presented in this section.

The table 4.1 presents the distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics. The table revealed that 30.1% of the respondents reside in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, 27.9% resides in Ikeja Local Government Area while the majority of the respondents 42.1% reside in Ikorodu. The reason why majority of the respondents are from Ikorodu Local Government area is because Ikorodu is a semi-urban area that is highly residential by people of the middle class unlike Eti-Osa and Ikeja Local Government area that is urban and highly commercial which makes it quite difficult to access residents.

The table shows that majority of the respondents totaling 70.5% are within the age range of 18-28 followed by the age category of 29-39 with 23.4%, 4.7% are within the age category of 40-50, 1.1% are aged 51-61 while 0.3% of the respondents are aged 62 and above. This shows that majority of the respondents are relatively young and this is because the Endsars protest was largely protested by the youths of that age grade.

The religion of the respondents shows that majority of the participants are Christian with 73.5% followed by Islam with 24.6%, 1.1% of the respondents are Traditional religion with only a fragment of the respondent totaling 0.8% claiming to practice none of the 3 listed religions. This means majority of the respondents are Christians.

The table shows that majority of the respondents are HND/Degree Holders with 59%, 17.3% are SCCE holders, 10.9% are ND/NCE holders, 11.1% are Masters holders, 0.8% has PhD, 0.3% has no formal education, 0.3% has primary education, while 0.3% are professionals. With regard to gender of the respondents, more than half of the respondents (59.3%) are male while the remaining 40.7% of the respondents are female.

The ethnicity of the respondents shows that 7 out of 10 of the respondents (76.6%) are from the Yoruba ethnic group, 2.2% are Hausa, 12.8% are Igbos while the remaining 8.4% are not from the three major ethnic group in Nigeria. This shows that majority of the respondents are from the Yoruba ethnic group and this might be because the study was conducted in Lagos state which is predominantly a Yoruba state. The marital status of the respondents was also presented. It was revealed that 8 in 10 of the respondents (79.1%) are single, 0.6% are divorced, 18.9% are married,

1.1% are separated while the remaining 0.3% are widowed. This shows that majority of the respondents are Single and this is because they are mostly youths.

Table 4.1: Socio Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic Variables	Eti Osa LGA	Ikeja LGA	Ikorodu LGA	Total
	n=108 (30.1%)	n=100 (27.9%)	n=151 (42.1)	n=359 (100%)
Age				Mean age: 26.42 (7.4$\pm$)
18-28	76 (30.0%)	76 (30.0%)	101 (40.0%)	253 (70.5%)
29-39	23 (27.4%)	20 (23.8%)	41 (48.8%)	84 (23.4%)
40-50	6 (35.3%)	3 (17.6%)	8 (47.1%)	17 (4.7%)
51-61	2 (50.0%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	4 (1.1%)
62 and above	1(100%)	0	0	(0.3%)
Total				359 (100%)
Religion				
Christianity	86 (32.6%)	75 (28.4%)	103 (39.0%)	264 (73.5%)
Islam	17 (19.3%)	23 (28.1%)	48 (54.6%)	88 (24.6%)
Other	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	0	3 (0.8%)
Traditional Religion	4 (100%)	0	0	(1.1%)
Total				359 (100%)
Education				
No Formal Education	1	0	0	0 (0.3%)
Primary	1 (100%)	0	0	0 (0.3%)
SSCE	29 (46.8%)	10 (16.1%)	23 (37.1%)	62 (17.3)
ND/NCE	15 (38.5%)	2 (5.1%)	22 (56.4%)	39 (10.9%)
HND/Degree	54 (25.5%)	70 (33%)	89 (41.5%)	212 (59%)
Masters	8 (20.0%)	17 (42.5%)	15 (37.5%)	40 (11.1%)
PhD	0	0	3	3 (0.8%)
Professional	0	1(100%)	0	1 (0.3)
Total				359 (100%)
Gender				
Female	45(30.8%)	40 (27.4%)	61 (41.8%)	148 (40.7)
Male	63 (29.8%)	60 (28.2%)	90 (42.3%)	213 (59.3%)
Total				359 (100%)
Ethnicity				
Hausa	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0	8 (2.2%)
Igbo	24 (52.2%)	11 (23.9%)	11 (23.9%)	46 (12.8%)
Others	16 (53.3%)	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)	30 (8.4%)
Yoruba	61 (22.2%)	81 (29.5%)	133 (48.4%)	275 (76.6%)
Total				359 (100%)
Marital status				
Divorced	2 (100%)	0	0	2 (0.6%)
Married	25 (36.8%)	12 (17.6%)	31 (45.6%)	68 (18.9%)
Single	80 (28.2%)	88 (31%)	116	284 (79.1%)
Separated	1 (25%)	0	3 (75%)	4 (1.1%)
Widowed	0	0	1 (100%)	1 (0.3%)
Total				359 (100%)

x**Source:** Field work (2024)

Table 4.1.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Qualitative respondents
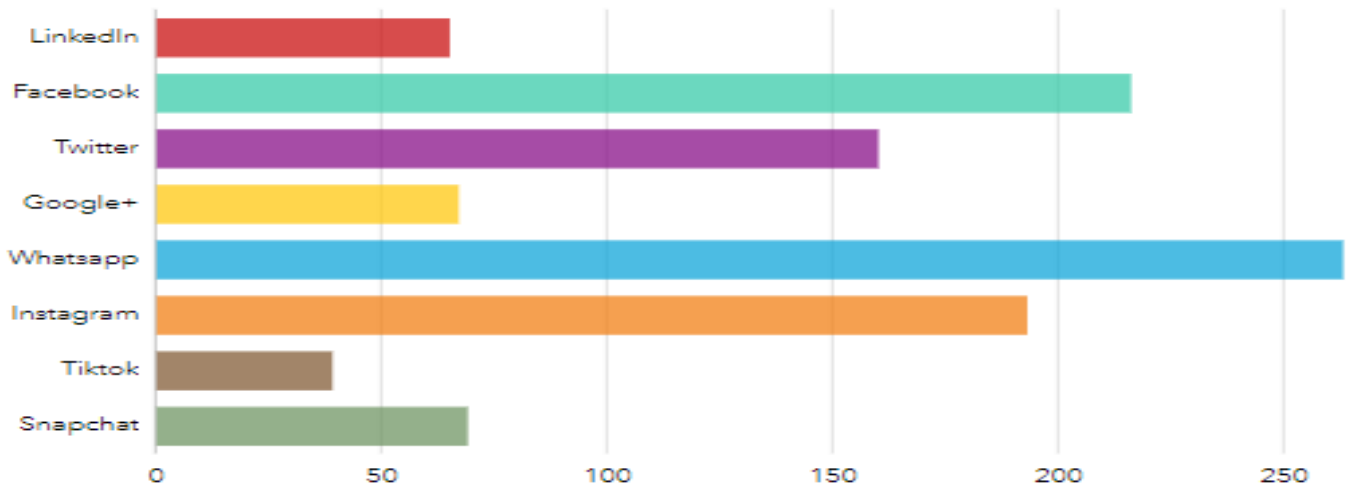
	Age	Gender	Location	Occupation	Marital status	Religion	Educational Qualification	Interview type
R1	33	Male	Eti-Osa LGA	Un-Employed	Single	Islam	Degree	IDI
R2	36	Male	Ikorodu LGA	farmer and a Business man	Married	Christian	Degree	IDI
R3	27	Female	Ikorodu LGA	Health worker	Single	Christian	National Diploma	IDI
R4	25	Male	Eti-Osa LGA	Program Officer	Single	Christian	Degree	IDI
R5	21	Male	Ikeja LGA	Self-Employed	Single	Islam	Degree	IDI
R6	32	Male	Ikorodu LGA	Student	Single	Christian	Degree	IDI
R7	45	Female	Ikeja LGA	Trader	married	Islam	SSCE	IDI
R8	53	Male		Lawyer and Human right Activist	Married	Christian	Ph.D	KIi
R9	42	Male	IKEJA LGA	Police Officer	Married	Islam	Degree	Kii
R10	54	Male	Eti-Osa LGA	Lawyer and Human Right Activist	Married	Christian	Masters	KII
R11	48	Female		Trader and Human right Activist	Married	Islam	Masters	KII
R12	46	Male	Eti-Osa	Member Lagos state End sars judicial panel of enquiry and reform police advocate	Married	Christian	Degree	Kii
R13	33	Male	Ikorodu LGA	Youth leader and Journalist	Married	Islam	Degree	Kii
R14	51	Male	Ikorodu LGA	Religious leader	Married	Chritain	HND	Kii

Source: Field work (2024)

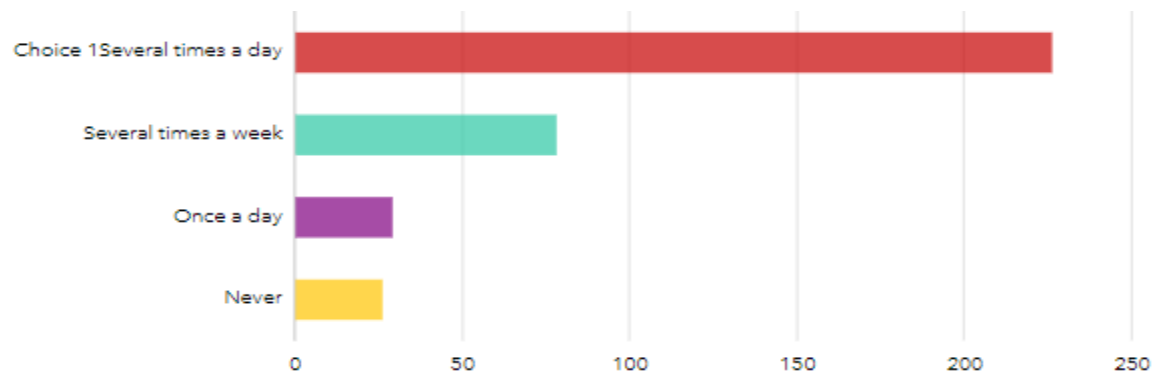## 4.2 The role of social media in the Endsars protest

Figure 4.2 presents the frequency distribution and percentage count on the role of social media in protest formation. It is shown that nine in ten of the respondents owns a social media account with a few respondents 6.1% claiming not to have a social media account. Hence, it is obvious that the findings of this study is in tandem with the globalization and technology age that we are in where everything has been digitalized.

Figure 4.3: Regularly used Social media Platforms

Furthermore, the figure 4.3 shows that Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram and twitter are the most used social media platforms.

Figure: 4.4: Frequency of Visit to Social Media Platforms

In addition, figure 4.4 shows that majority of the respondents 62.9% visit their social media platforms several times a day, 21.7% visit their choice of social media several times a week while 8% visit once a day. This shows that people make use of their social media several times a day and social media has become part of the daily lives of people for several reasons.
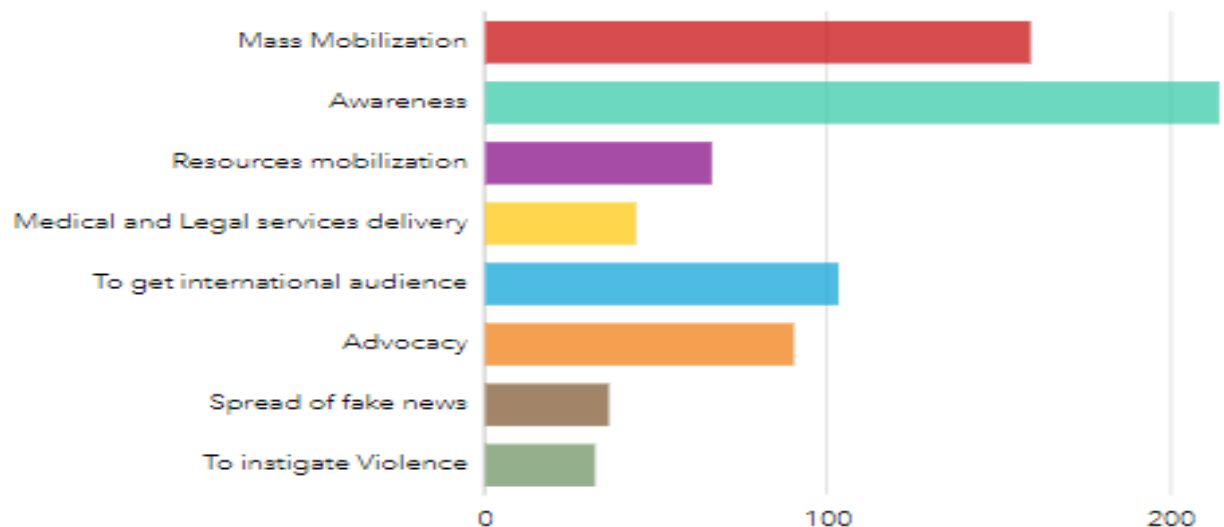
Table 4.2

S/N	Variable categories	Response categories	n=359	(%)
1	Instrumentality of Social media during the Endsars Protest	Yes	350	97.5%
		No	9	2.5%
2	Rationale for using Social Media During the Endsars Prote	To find out the causes of the protest	36	10%
		To know about the extent of police brutality	61	17%
		To hear people's view about the protest	0	21.7%
		To secure information about the extent of vandalization that happ ed during the protest	35	9.8%
		To know the steps government was taking to stop the protest	49	13.7%
		To ascertain the number of arrests made during the protest	13	3.2%
		To confirm the position of political figures about the protest	10	2.8%
		To know the view of the international community about the prote	32	8.9%
		To know the views of people on social networks	45	12.6%
3	Circulation of false information sharing and misinformati on social media during the #EndSARS protest	Yes	240	66.85%
		No	119	33.15%

Source: Field Work (2024)

The table 4.2 shows that almost all of the respondents 97.5% agreed that social media was instrumental during the Endsars protest with only a fragment of the respondents 2.5% who indicated that social media was not instrumental during the Endsars protest.

The data indicates that the Endsars protesters utilised social media for multiple purposes. During the Endsars protest, 10% of social media users sought to comprehend its origins, 17% sought information regarding the extent of police brutality, 9.8% enquired about the level of vandalism, 13.7% sought details on governmental measures to suppress the protest, 3.2% aimed to ascertain the number of arrests, 2.8% sought to verify the positions of political figures, 8.9% aimed to understand the international community's viewpoint, and 12.6% sought to grasp the opinions expressed by individuals on social networks. This indicates that individuals' objectives for using social media during protests differ, however most respondents at the Endsars march primarily aimed to assess public sentiment on the issue.

We ascertain that social media played a pivotal role in the extensive propagation of misinformation and false news throughout the rally. Of the participants in the #EndSARS demonstration, 66.9% reported witnessing the dissemination of inaccurate information and misinformation on social media, whilst 33.1% did not. This demonstrates that demonstrators employed social media to disseminate rumours and falsehoods, perhaps inciting extensive destruction of both public and private property.

Figure 4.5: Impact of social media on the Endsars protest

The Figure 4.5 shows that social media had several impacts on the Endsars protest. To 44.3% of the respondents, social media was instrumental in mass mobilization during the protest, to 59.6% of the respondents, social media influenced the protest via awareness, 18.4% indicated that it was for resource mobilization, to 12.3% it was vital for medical and legal services delivery, 28.7% indicated that it impacted the protest by granting the protest international audience, 25.1% states that social media provided advocacy for the protest, 10% indicated that social media was used to spread fake news during the protest while 8.9% of the respondents stated that social media was used to instigate violence during the protest. This shows that to majority of the respondents, social media influenced the protest via awareness.

Table 4.6: Chi square Test of association between membership of social media and the instrumentality of social media during the Endsars protest
 Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. sided)	Exact Sig. sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.603ª	1	.438		
Continuity Correctionᵇ	.005	1	.942		
Likelihood Ratio	1.153	1	.283		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.562
N of Valid Cases	359				

 a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .55.
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The result shows that we have not violated the assumption. The footnote (b): 0% cells have expected count less than 5. The main value we are interested in the output is 0.438 level of significance (Asymp. sig). To have a significant relationship, the Asymp sig. value needs to be 0.05 or smaller. Therefore, the conclusion for the test of association shows that there is no significant association between membership of social media and the instrumentality of social media during the endsars protest.

Impact of social media on the Endsars protest

The findings from the interviews affirmed the findings of the quantitative data. The qualitative study showed that social media was instrumental to the endsars protest as it was used as the engine of information and mobilization. One thing that was distinct in the Endsars protest and previous protests in Nigeria is the usage of social media. The social media was used as a platform for the voice of the protesters to be heard globally and the news of the social demonstration was all over the globe due to the spread and reach of social media. Social media was also used to protest online with the use of Hashtags which has been discovered in this study as a new form or digital means of protesting. Social media can play a vital role in mobilization because it enables access to a huge amount of contacts, create collective identities, and serves as a site for distributing information. Additionally, social media is used in coordinating protests and to condemn police violence, it is also an alternative source of information, a space to publish a narrative that counters those of pro-government propaganda channels. The engine room of the Endsars protest was social media because it served as the engine room and it was used to mobilise, raise funds, coordinate, and get information about the protest.

Emerging from one of the respondents:

> *"The, the social media particularly in the our 21 century, in this age, the impact of the social media cannot be overemphasized, I would say that the social media really help a lot, it really gives a lot of momentum, a lot of advantage, a lot of impetus to the endsars protest, because the social media was use as a very good platform , as a veritable platform to pass a message and it influenced our youth to be more engage about what the endars is all about and how they could be involved in the process. So the social media to me it helps in 3 aspect, in terms of the advocacy, it helps to pass the message to the general public, in terms of mobilisation, it helps to involve more youth in the process and at the same time it's also helps to reach out to the international community as far as the endsars protest is concern"*
> **(Kii/Male/Youth Leader/Journalist/ Ikorodu/ 08/03/2024).**

Another respondent opined:

> *"The End SARS movement was largely an hashtag, hashtag movement outside the virtual space the End SARS protest did not exist as a physical, as a physical, as a physical organization, it was basically a visual movement ehn that was highly localized with a, with a microblogging site, twitter, instagram, facebook, facebook, so the question of mobilization, the question of educatory, question of resourcing, question of recruiting ehnnn were done just on a visual on the visual space, so social media had tremendous impact on the protest on the protest all and all on the protest on the protest itself. Organization like we saw were conducted in the open, mobilization of resources you know was open up, was conducted in an open, and in a virtual space and in a way because, because it happen in the visual space of social media, there was some semblance of democratization of the struggle itself because everybody had a voice, everybody participated in what was going to happen, what was going to happen the next day, and the decisions that were arrived at, virtually everybody, you know, driven by you know by hashtags, hashtags were formed by that single hashtag End SARS"*
> **(Kii/Male/Human Right Activist/ Lawyer/16/03/2024)**

One of the respondents argued that:

> *"social media lend itself as a force during that season so you cannot begin to underestimate the power of social media and lots more, if it wasn't for social media, instagram to be specific, we will not have the record of what transpired at toll gate, they or if we had it they would have been able to discredit it, but because this was an instagram live feed, there was nothing they could do to discredit it, so they had to be lying in the face of the fact, that is one of the things that we got, essentially what you then find is that social media was a very very useful tool during that season"*
> **(Kii/Male/Human Right activist/ Lawyer/16/03/2024)**

Emerging from another respondent:

> *"Social media was actually everything about the End SARS protest without the social media there wouldn't have been the End SARS protest. social media was the means through which information was ahh designated and also let people know that no, and one of things you must understand about social media is that social media as democratize media, media is aah, is now in the hands of almost everyone, if you have a smart phone media is in your hands, unlike before when government was the one that controlled information and controlled the media, so with the social media first of all, people were able to know what was happening, and then on that same social media, people were able to come together, and that was also when people were able to raise funds that, that sustained the movement, as the End SARS protest ahh, its its more of an occupying than a protest, it was just beyond being just a protest, you know what you are doing you occupy, you need money to be able to sustain it, unlike a protest that one days or two days it just come, it just go back home, there were some people had to stay, it was more or less than an occupying, social media was used ahh, in terms of being able to get people together and having them raise money, having them do all of these things, so social media I will say played all the role than, aah it, it was the main ahh reason why that protest could hold and in such a way that it is, where people from not just only Nigeria in Nigeria, but from all over the world were also partaking part in the End SARS protest and you saw the fact that when it was trending, the Hashtag itself was trending all over the world, the world started paying an attention to it, to what's happening in Nigeria, what's this that was going on, and it was talked about, and you have more and more Nigerians in different part of the world actually coming out to organize their own aah protest, so indeed, I will say that social media was truly the everything in that protest". (Kii/Female/Human Right Activist/Trader/21/03/2024).*

4.3 Misinformation and spread of fake news on social media about the Endsars protest

The findings of this study shows that social media was used to spread fake news, misinform the public about the protest and which led to the destruction of properties and loss of lives in some instance. Social media was used to instigate violence in some instances. However, findings of this study showed that the government was the main sponsor and instigator of these fake news and misinformation in a form of countering the protesters.

According to one of the respondents:

*"The greatest purveyor of failure of fake news in Nigeria is the Nigerian government. The Nigerian state and its agencies are the greatest purveyors of fake news in Nigeria, now if you have a situation where you cannot trust the news coming out of your own government and then you find that in immediate, in the immediate aftermath of DJ switch instagram feed, the Nigerian army deployed online throws to be releasing fake videos in other to discredit the original one that came out of DJ switch feed. They created fake account in her name. The Nigerian army created fake account in DJ switches name, so that they can be tweeting out fake videos in other to discredit the one that she sent out, so when you ask this question what do you know about fake news, that is not on the protesters, that is on the Nigerian state, which is meant to be the pervasion of justice, equity and lawfulness, but which became the chief promoter of fake news and till tomorrow your government is still busy denying what is obvious and lying on top of lies in other to sustained the lies" (Kii/male/Human Right Activist/Lawyer**/16/03/2024**)*

Emerging from one of the Respondents:

"The fake news that you made mention in relation to social media, I would say that fake news during the endsars protest, was majorly sponsored by the government as a counter reaction to what was going on over there, I particularly am a major actor during the endsars protest and I played a fair dominant role because then and up till now I'm a comrade and I'm a youth leader. Being a youth that leader that people within my constituents we're looking up to, I played a major role then and I'm talking from experience but that is me as a major actor, the government as at then sees the endsars as being targeted towards them and they have to react, so by their reaction, they made use of fake news, sponsoring different news in order to counter what we were doing then. So that is the fake news as at then".
(Kii/Youth Leader/Male/Journalist/ Ikorodu/ 08/03/2024)

4.4 Role of the print media and the mass media in the Endsars protest

The study shows that the print media and the mass media played a minimal role during the Endsars protest due to the digitalization of the media and the spread of social media. Also, the fear of government and the extent to which government control the mass media and print media limited the role of the print and mass media during the Endsars protest.

One of the respondents pointed out that:

"The Nigeria mass media has been lost for a long time, it didn't get lost today and its role in the last End SARS protest were more or less reactionary and they were just more or less speaking to the government, reading, more or less, they were just saying whatever the government wanted them to say. Once the, once the press in Nigeria occupy a physical space and could be visited by the S, DSS of the police or EFCC, those ones are very careful about the kind of news that they disseminate, so I think to a very large extent you can say that the print media was largely uninfluential on the End SARS protest, then might, they might become veritable source of material for historians in future because they were reporting news but if you consider the fact that the average Nigerian newspaper is actually carrying 24-hour old news, meanwhile in the news media age, news is breaking every second, so you find very quickly that the generation Z, which were the ones at the forefront of End SARS they are not the kind of people waiting to read

> *your guardian, your daily times, your, they don't want to read newspaper. They get their news from instagram, from, they get their news from social media" (KII/Male/Human Right activist/Lawyer/16/03/2024)*

Another respondent argued that:

> *"local print and electrons media, the government could curb alot of, a lot of the stations and had control over, some of those media outlet, both print and electronic media, so the fact that there were a whole lot of stations that were not, either that were not talking about the End SARS protest at all, did nothing or the they will just glance over it or they will look at it from the aspect of government, and likewise with the print media, also we had a few stations like Arise TV which stood out and with report the incidence as it were happening, most of them they were even doing live, of the event that was happening and the way and they were very few of them, and even at that they were, they were also threatened, there were a lot of threat, from government to the media to people, to protesters and also to people" (KII/Female/human right activist/Trader/21/03/2024)*

4.5 The role of International Media Houses

The international media houses played an important part in the protest due to their global audience in ensuring that the protest was given a wide publicity. However, findings showed that the role of the international media was minimal.

One of the respondents has to say:

> *"The BBC, Ajazera, CNN, are global television houses, they command house viewership across across the world, so in a way when they set their camera on the street of our country, they provided global viewership to what was happening in our country, don't forget that when those pictures you know first came out of Lekki toll gate, Lekki toll gate, people from around the world were tweeting, were you know, were facebook facebooking, were instagraming"*
>
> **(KII/Male/Human Right Activist/Lawyer/16/03/2024)**

Emerging from one of the respondents:

> *"So when it came to the End SARS protest, the international media became particularly useful when it came to the establishment of facts in the public space, we knew the fact, but we didn't have the channel for dissertation of this fact and all attempt"*
>
> (**KII/Male/Human Right Activist/lawyer/16/03/2024)**

4.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study showed that nine in Ten of Nigerian youths has membership in one or more social media platforms. Majority of which owns a Whatsapp account, facebook, Instagram, and Twitter which they visit several times daily. This finding support the argument of Oginni and Moitui (2015) that Social media has become increasingly popular amongst individuals due to the available means of communication and self-expression (Oginni and Moitui, 2015).

The study showed that social media was instrumental during the Endsars protest. Majority of the respondents used social media for several reasons during the protest of which majority of them were to know the views of others about the protest and police brutality, to know the steps government was taking to stop the protest, to know the view of the international community on the protest, and to find out the cause of the protest. Social media was used for mass mobilization, resource mobilization, advocacy, to get international audience, and to raise awareness. This study fining corroborate that

of Ojedokun et al (2021) that the preexisting mobilization structure has been successfully replaced by social media and has become a vital tool used to organize and coordinate social movements globally. The study support the findings of Uwazuruike, (2020) that social media was used a s a source of information on the causes of the protest and the way the protest was staged.

At 0438, the chi square test showed that there is no significant association between social media membership and instrumentality of social media during the endsars protest. The findings of this study showed that social media was instrumental to the endsars protest as it was used as the engine of information and mobilization. One thing that was distinct in the Endsars protest and previous protests in Nigeria is the usage of social media. The social media was used as a platform for the voice of the protesters to be heard globally and the news of the social demonstration was all over the globe due to the spread and reach of social media. Social media was also used to protest online with the use of Hashtags which has been discovered in this study as a new form or digital means of protesting. Social media can play a vital role in mobilization because it enables access to a huge amount of contacts, create collective identities, and serves as a site for distributing information. Additionally, social media is used in coordinating protests and to condemn police violence, it is also an alternative source of information, a space to publish a narrative that counters those of pro-government propaganda channels. The engine room of the Endsars protest was social media because it served as the engine room and it was used to mobilise, raise funds, coordinate, and get information about the protest.

On the other hand, the findings of this study shows that social media was used to spread fake news, misinform the public about the protest and which led to the destruction of properties and loss of lives in some instance. Social media was used to instigate violence in some instances. However, findings of this study showed that the government was the main sponsor and instigator of these fake news and misinformation in a form of countering the protesters.

The study shows that the print media and the mass media played a minimal role during the Endsars protest due to the digitalization of the media and the spread of social media. Also, the fear of government and the extent to which government control the mass media and print media limited the role of the print and mass media during the Endsars protest.

The study's results showed that social media was used during the #EndSARS protest for a variety of purposes. The results of this study provide unequivocal evidence of how individuals use social media during societal upheaval and disasters. According to Onaleye (2020), several Nigerians were unaware of the immediate and distant reasons of the #EndSARS protest when it first started. As a result, individuals made an attempt to research the causes of the protest (Oloyede and Elega, 2019). The results indicating social media was used to solicit opinions from the public and disseminate up-to-date information on the protest's activities were not dissimilar from past instances in which social media was utilised (Okoro and Nwafor, 2013). Social media platforms offer channels for exchanging opinions and information about relevant topics (Uwazuruike, 2020).

The social media accounts of police misconduct in Nigeria help to highlight the ongoing abuse of power by the government against the subjects (George, 2020). Videos, images, and audio recordings made available to the world's population exposed the scope of police violence (Fasuwon, 2019). By doing this, Nigerians demonstrated their will to not have their basic humanity rejected. The analysis also revealed a significant use of social media during the #EndSARS demonstration. According to the responders, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram were effectively utilised to gather and disseminate up-to-date information during the demonstration. These are not too dissimilar from Eze's (2020) claim that social media is a quick and easy way to spread information about current national and worldwide challenges.

The extent to which individuals utilise social media to mobilise and sensitise people against laws and practices that are abhorrent to society and social justice has also been documented by Shaw (2016) and Onaleye (2020).

The social media users who participated in the study asserted that the types of misinformation that were spread during the #EndSARS protest included, among other things: false information spread

incorrectly without intent to deceive others, insufficient information that failed to capture the true purpose of the protest, inaccurate images and videos, reconfigured misinformation, and disinformation (when an individual decides to invent the truth to mislead people).

Findings showed that social media was used to instigate violence and attack on individuals and properties. However, these fake news and misinformation didn't emanate from the protesters but from elements who wants to use the protest to perpetuate evil and commit criminal atrocities in the name of Endsars protest. While conducting this study, there was no literature on the types of false information that was spread on social media in relation to the #EndSARS protest accessible for reference. However, research on social media misrepresentation during the #EndSARS demonstration is comparable to past research in tumultuous protest scenarios. The present analysis discovered that the two main categories of disinformation regarding the #EndSARS protest were insufficient information that never caught the true purpose of the protest and misleading information spread incorrectly with no effort to fool others. This supports the assertion stated by Eze (2020), Jamieson, and Albarracin (2020), according to which a number of people have used social media to disseminate untrue rumors and spread fake news. Parrot Nigeria (2018) also covered the normal oversaturation of false, dishonest, and amateur information on social media. Allcott, Gentzkow, and Yu (2018) issued a warning that false information on social media might cause generalised anxiety.

Conclusion

Social media was instrumental to the endsars protest as it was used as the engine of information and mobilization. One thing that was distinct in the Endsars protest and previous protests in Nigeria is the usage of social media. The social media was used as a platform for the voice of the protesters to be heard globally and the news of the social demonstration was all over the globe due to the spread and reach of social media. Social media was also used to protest online with the use of Hashtags which has been discovered in this study as a new form or digital means of protesting. Social media can play a vital role in mobilization because it enables access to a huge amount of contacts, create collective identities, and serves as a site for distributing information. Additionally, social media is used in coordinating protests and to condemn police violence, it is also an alternative source of information, a space to publish a narrative that counters those of pro-government propaganda channels. The engine room of the Endsars protest was social media because it served as the engine room and it was used to mobilise, raise funds, coordinate, and get information about the protest. The social formation of the Endsars protest started via a Twitter hashtag #Endsars, first surfaced on Twitter in 2017. The hashtag became famous online gradually became a social movement in Nigeria. The protest was largely coordinated on social media and the protest was held at some very strategic locations across the country to draw attention of government and international communities.

Recommendation

In accordance with the research's findings, the following recommendations are stated:

1. Social media should be used for social change in a positive way to protest against offensive behaviour that is thought to be detrimental to social fairness and human dignity.
2. When spreading information on social media, the proper checks and balances must be in place. The social media sector should put more effort into stopping the spread of false information, hate speech, and misinformation on the various social media platforms.
3. In order to permanently put an end to the #EndSARS protest, there needs to be a concerted effort on both the national and international levels. At the same time, it's important to make sure that problems that might lead to a repeat of this situation are dealt with immediately.
4. Youths should make use of social media in a more positive ways for development and social progress.
5. Government should implement the recommendation of the Lagos state judicial panel of enquiry police brutality

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