



## **ESCALATING RATES OF CRIME AND CRIMINALITY: ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN CRIME MANAGEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*The rates of crime and criminality are escalating in many parts of the world, particularly in Nigeria. The power and centrality of the media make them indispensable in whatever crime management actions that are being taken to arrest the worsening security situation and escalating crime rate in Nigeria. This paper is a discourse which highlights, against the backdrop of the prevalence of crime and criminality in contemporary Nigeria, the role of a professional media system as a major factor that can help mitigate crime and criminality in the country. Undoubtedly, responsible and professionally-oriented media can do a lot of good in crime management, and the media should rise to the occasion in the effort to arrest the present precarious situation.*

**Keywords:** Crime, Criminality, Crime management, Peace, Media

### **SETTING THE SCENE: THE WORSENING CRIME SITUATION**

There are clear indications that the rates of crime and criminality are escalating in many parts of the world. Using Nigeria as a microcosm of countries plagued by such deplorable situations, it has become common knowledge that the security situation in this country is worsening by the day, and that the crime rate is rising to an all-time high. From North to South, East to West, in all six Geopolitical Zones, crime and criminality are apparently taking over the country. According to *Nigeria 2020 Crime & Safety Report* of the United States Consulate, Lagos (2020):

- The current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory assesses Nigeria at Level 3, indicating travelers should reconsider travel to Nigeria due to crime.
- There is a wide range of violent crimes in the country, including armed robbery, assault, burglary, carjacking, rape, kidnaping, extortion, fraud etc.
- “Do not travel to Bornu and Yobe States and Northern Adamawa State due to terrorism; Adamawa, Bauchi, Bornu, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, and Yobe States due to kidnaping; and Coastal areas of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, and Rivers (with the exception of Port Harcourt) due to crime, civil unrest, kidnaping, and maritime crime.”
- “Crime is rampant throughout southern Nigeria, particularly the Niger Delta region....”



- "...mainland portion of Lagos has experienced periodic outbreaks of violence among localized street gangs known as "Area Boys."
- "Multiple armed criminal elements exist throughout Nigeria, ranging from low level to organized syndicates."
- Cultist or gang violence, which often erupts in supremacy battles between various groups, is a concern.
- Cybercrime has become a concern and is becoming more sophisticated.

The situation is becoming more and more terrifying. A typical example is the increasing rate of violent crimes against women, particularly rape. As documented by *Premium Times* (2020):

**Rising cases:** The past couple of weeks was filled with horrendous tales of young girls being raped across the country. PREMIUM TIMES reported the cases of Vera Omozuwa in Edo State and Barakat Bello in Oyo State, both of whom died from the assault. This paper also reported how a twelve-year-old girl in Ajah, Lagos, was raped by four masked men in her home....No fewer than 80 rape cases were recorded in various parts of Anambra State during the COVID-19 lockdown between April and May.

In the face of the incessant slaughtering of Christians in Northern Nigeria, Revd Edward Obumneme Joseph (2020), in his lamentation on Facebook titled "CALL FOR MEDIA ACTION", reveals the following horrifying situation: "107 killed in Kajuru, Kaduna State, 82 people killed in Bornu, 70 souls wasted in Sokoto, 60 lives terminated in Katsina, total of 319 deaths from same people all within one week!"

Indeed, given the power and ubiquity of the media in the modern world, *media action* is urgently needed to support whatever other crime management actions that are being taken to arrest the worsening security situation and escalating crime rate in Nigeria.

### THE POWER OF THE MEDIA

It is incontrovertible that in this 'Information Society' of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the media function as the most powerful tools for the dissemination of *information* – a function on which many other crucial functions of the media are predicated. This is probably because people no longer interact to the extent they used to, resulting to increased dependence on the media for news, views, information, enlightenment, education and even guidance on an astounding variety of issues and events. In fact, whether it is the 'traditional' mass media of radio, television and newspapers, or the new social media, the media are waxing stronger and stronger in their ability to provide information simultaneously to a vast, heterogeneous and scattered audience. Nkwocha (2016) refers to this power of the media when he states that "The mass media, as organs of information dissemination to very large and heterogeneous audiences, have tremendous power and influence in shaping public opinion and perception." Expressing a similar view of the power of the media, Okunna and Omenugha (2012) emphasize the indispensability of the media in the affairs of modern societies:

There is absolutely no doubt that, in the modern world, the mass media possess incredible power at the information level. ...the mass media have the marvelous ability to reach millions, to raise issues, to create awareness on topics and to disseminate information with great efficiency.



With the advent of the social media and all forms of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the media have become even more powerful and important in human communication by changing the way information flows because social media, according to Sevigny (2015) have:

- shattered the linear communication model by introducing the concept of user-generated content;
- introduced instant feedback into the structure, thus making ...[communication] more dialogical and interpersonal.

The strategic importance of online communication in the modern world is similarly underscored by Nkwocha (2016) as follows:

As a result of the internet, most media outputs are now released online, meaning that they can be read or viewed from anywhere in the world through the internet. This makes the news media much more powerful in influencing public opinion and perception.

### **ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SOCIETY**

Given their incredible power, it is not surprising that the media have the capacity to perform a wide variety of functions in the society, both at the individual and societal levels, including:

- Information
- Education
- Entertainment
- Advertising
- Socialization
- Promotion of culture
- Motivation and Mobilization
- Integration
- Provision of a platform for public debate and discussion which ultimately lead to the formation of public opinion.

Through the media's unique characteristics and the professionalism of the variety of people who work in the various mass media, the media are well positioned to perform their numerous functions in society and have various effects on individuals or the society as a whole.

Several theories and theoretical approaches of media effects have argued convincingly that, under varying circumstances, the media can exert tremendous influence as moulders of society and have the capacity to determine, to varying degrees, how media audiences react to particular issues and events, or how they perceive social reality generally. Some of these theories/theoretical orientations explain the power of the media in *agenda-setting*, *status-conferral*, and *framing*.

### **Agenda-Setting Theory of the Mass Media**

According to the *Agenda-setting Theory*, the media have the capacity to influence what members of the society think about and consider important. This theory explains the ability of the media "to influence the salience [importance] of topics on the public agenda ... [and] if a



news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard it as more important” (Wikipedia). Consequently, public discussions, and ultimately public opinion, tend to follow the headlines because the media are able to tell people what to think about through their agenda-setting function – by placing certain topics on the media agenda.

### **Media and Status-Conferral**

Agenda-setting goes hand in hand with status-conferral through which the media confer legitimacy and importance on people, issues and events, simply by reporting them – thus making they appear ‘right’ and important.

### ***The Framing Theory of the Media***

Framing Theory is very closely related to the Agenda-setting Theory. In fact, they are so closely related that Framing Theory is actually regarded as an adaptation of Agenda-setting Theory. However, framing is a step beyond agenda-setting because while agenda-setting tells us what (the things) to think about, framing tells us what to think about those things. This close relationship can easily be seen in the explanation of Framing Theory:

Agenda setting theory just tells what to think about but framing theory tells how to think about the information. So framing theory is also known as second level agenda setting theory ... Fram[ing] influences the mindset (perception) of people and impacts their decision making on the topic (Google).

### **CRIME AND THE MEDIA: ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN CRIME MANAGEMENT**

In its most basic definition, ‘crime’ refers to “activities that involve breaking the law” (Hornby, 2015), and ‘crime management’, which has to do with crime prevention, is concerned with efforts to reduce and prevent crime, and usually, such efforts are mostly made by governments/law enforcement officials. For any meaningful discussion of the role of the media in crime management, the following questions are pertinent:

- What is the relationship between media and crime?
- Why are the media so fascinated with crime and deviance?
- Is the media’s obsession with crime harmful?
- What influence do the mass media have on public perceptions of crime?
- How do the mass media influence crime?
- How can the media help in crime prevention and creation of a crime-free peaceful society?

Although the media are well positioned to perform a wide variety of functions in society, it is generally believed that the role of the media is particularly powerful and virtually indispensable in contemporary society in their functions of information, mobilization, motivation, and provision of a forum or platform for public debate/discussion/formation of public opinion. Understandably, therefore, the media can play a very crucial role in crime management by performing these functions in specialized ways.

### **Information**



As in other aspects of life generally, the mass media are increasingly serving as the primary public source of crime information, so much so that the reporting of crime and violence has become a primary preoccupation of the media. However, in performing this function, the media have been accused of sensationalism, as well as being obsessed with crime and criminality, by allowing economic and marketing considerations to shape their reporting of crime because the media are profit-oriented, and crime sells. Because of the nature of crime and the tendency of the mass media to seek out and report such negative and ‘newsworthy’ situations, the media are obsessively attracted to crime and criminal activities. Consequently, both the nature and extent of crime in society could become exaggerated. Thus, apart from the news content, the contents of film, television and computer technologies have become awash with images of crime and violence. This general media obsession with crime is believed to be making the public perceive the society as unsafe and leaving them alarmed and anxious about public safety. There is even a more alarming situation in the social media where, as a result of the ‘gatelessness’ of online media platforms, all manner of information on crime and criminality could be accessed by social media users, including fully illustrated step-by-step tutorials on bomb-making and how to commit the perfect murder!!!

Conversely, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, the media have also been accused of under-reporting crime by succumbing to propagandist tendencies of government information managers who (for whatever reasons) contrive through unethical media relations to create a false impression of a secure, crime-free society. This scenario could compromise public safety, and handicap crime management efforts, by making the public complacent, and thus vulnerable to the activities of criminals.

Overall, as information brokers, the media should serve as a strong partner in crime management, in line with the following:

- The media’s access to sources of information and capacity to gather, package and disseminate crucial information, particularly through investigative journalism, should be a great asset in crime management. Such information should be indispensable to crime management officials who should gain access to the information through effective *media relations* which is concerned with:

working with media for the purpose of informing the public of an organization’s mission, policies and practices in a *positive* consistent and *credible manner*. Typically, this means coordinating directly with the people responsible for producing the news and features in the mass media (Wikipedia, emphasis added).

Nkwocha (2009) defines media relations as:

The strategic public relations function which establishes and maintains mutual understanding, goodwill, cooperation, respect and support between an organization and the mass media practitioners/owners with the aim of achieving maximum positive publicity, media support, as well as well-defined corporate and public relations objectives.

Media relations is a specialized function of Public Relations (PR) and should best be handled by a PR professional in the crime management team. In fact, effective media relations is particularly crucial for effective crime management in a country like Nigeria where the image and reputation of law enforcement and crime management officials are of primary importance. For whatever reason(s), the image and reputation



of these officials are generally poor among Nigerians, and require drastic improvement in order for them to gain the confidence and support of the public; this should contribute to successful crime management. Generally, *reputation management, image management, and branding* have to do with “managing the image and reputation of important organizations and governments” (Nkwocha, 2016), and are core components of Public Relations which itself is *a strategic communication process*. Consequently, the role of the media becomes indispensable in all of these.

- Through their agenda-setting and status-conferral functions, the media should place crime management high on the media agenda, and therefore societal agenda, through crime reporting. However, the provision of crime information should be strictly guided by professional ethics to avoid the two extremes of over-reporting and sensational reporting on one hand, and propagandist under-reporting or suppression of relevant information on the other hand. In terms of crime management, as explained earlier, one extreme creates fear and anxiety in the society while the other extreme generates complacency, which is equally unhealthy for society.

By giving so much attention to crime and crime-related issues, as pointed out above in Section 3.1, the media are strategically positioned to play a role that can either promote crime management or escalate crime in society. The role of the media in crime management therefore depends on how the media deal with crime and criminality when, for whatever unfortunate reasons, they occur in the society. However, for the media to play a positive role in support of crime management, they must function in the tradition of **a peace media system**, through frequent and prominent coverage of people and issues that promote a crime-free society. This is in line with what Okunna and Popoola (2017) say about the role of the media in achieving a peaceful society generally by a peace media system “whose cultural dynamics is oriented towards peacefulness [and] can work towards the enthronement of a culture of peace.” In performing this crucial agenda-setting function, the media should be guided by professional journalistic ethics.

Professional ethics is also necessary as a check on the power of the media in their status-conferral function. This is particularly necessary in our type of society where media attention often glamorizes or eulogizes wealthy or influential people in society, thus conferring high status and importance on them, even when they are known to have acquired their wealth through fraudulent or criminal activities.

### **Mobilization and Motivation**

The media can also play a strong role in crime management through mobilization and motivation. As Okunna and Omenugha (2012) clearly state, in performing these functions, the role of the media should be:

to encourage and ginger people up to achieve the aims or goals of the society. These goals are promoted by the media which then stimulate and foster the aspirations and activities of individuals and communities to achieve such goals.

Through their ‘agenda-setting’ and ‘framing’ functions, the media could place crime management on the public agenda as important issues worthy of government attention and





action. Similarly, the public and other stakeholders could be motivated and mobilized for collaboration and positive action towards effective crime management. By drawing attention to behavior that is generally perceived as acceptable, and by exposing and condemning behavior that is criminal, the media can raise public awareness, activate anti-crime values, and generate outside pressure from the public against crime.

Ultimately, the way the media ‘frame’ crime, crime-related issues and the desirability of a crime-free society could influence people’s perception or mindset, determine their decision-making on crime and criminality, and be a major factor in enthroning a **zero crime-tolerance culture** among Nigerians. Obviously, a media system that glamorizes crime is totally incapable of achieving this purpose!

### **Provision of Forum or Platform for Public Debate/Discussion and Formation of Public Opinion**

Public opinion has to do with what the majority of people in a society think about a particular issue of public importance. Given their characteristics, the mass media are quite effective in shaping public opinion. This they do by providing a platform through which people can express their opinion and through which they can know what others are thinking about the issue under discussion, and consequently arrive at the aggregate opinion on the issue. This is one of the most fundamental functions of the media in a democracy.

This important function could be applicable to crime management. The media could create awareness on crime and crime-related issues, orchestrate and coordinate public discussion about them, and serve as the platform through which public opinion is crystalized on such issues. This ultimate widespread or popular opinion on crime and crime-related issues could guide public, government and law enforcement decisions and actions in support of crime management.

### **CONCLUSION**

Virtually all human experience today is **mediated/media-centric** experience, thus placing the wide variety of media channels right at the centre of all human activities. Activities like crime management and law enforcement are particularly media-centric, and their effectiveness is dependent on access to the media and proper utilization of mediated information. The media do not only raise public awareness about crime, its causes, consequences and possible remedies, but they also investigate and report incidents of crime, thereby supporting individuals and organizations who have the responsibility of crime management.

In this age of **convergence**, therefore, effective crime management requires crime management professionals to:

- Be knowledgeable about the various media channels and platforms
- Be abreast with trends in media literacy, and
- Be conversant with the workings of the various media, including the social media.

In fact, effective crime management should be anchored on effective information management which is guaranteed by the capacity to access and utilize information from both the ‘traditional’ mass media channels and the social media/new media. **Thus, for the media to play an effective role in crime management there should be effective information**



***management by crime management professionals, which will ultimately depend on effective media relations.***

Finally, because in today's world, people are now on social media, crime management officials must have a presence on these new media. Social media are primarily Internet- and mobile-based tools and are becoming the most dominant tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings in the modern world. In fact, anybody who has crime management responsibilities today but lacks a good knowledge of or access to or presence on the social media, is dangerously unqualified for his/her job!!!

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## **SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AMONG SELECTED ENTREPRENEURS IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Social media technology has become 'the mouth-piece' of the millennium, especially in Nigeria and Africa. It provides the much-needed oxygen for universal democratisation processes and considered as most suitable for expression of opinion on public issues, affairs and debates. Though its impacts are still incipient, it is palpable that social media platforms promote a new public sphere for negotiation between political, national, public and cultural interests, especially in Nigeria. The survey investigates how entrepreneurs are using social media to participate in governance actively and inherent challenges hinged on Technology Determinism and Agenda Setting theories. Deploying purposive sampling, to select 200 respondents from Enugu and Anambra States of Nigeria, findings show that social media, especially Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp augment interest, participation, interaction and socialisation among artisans and traders with regards to politics to a great extent. The findings, however, contrast the notion that media literacy is a barrier to social media use, which assumes that uneducated people may not be able to manipulate social media effectively. Results also demonstrate that social media could be an excellent strategy for futuristic political development in selected cities. The study, therefore, recommends a decrease in the cost of data tariff to enable artisans and traders, especially the rural-based entrepreneurs have access to the Internet and social media.*

**Keywords:** Political Communication, Social Media, Media Use, Entrepreneurship, Nigeria, Democracy

### **INTRODUCTION**



Citizens of every country have not only the potential but also the right to express their ideas and opinions worldwide through the new media, especially on social media. While talking about new media, it is apt to understand that what is an “old” or “traditional” media for the advanced societies may, for other regions, be a revolutionary new in its use— such as the community radio in India. The new media and access to them remain critical tools for democracies to correct themselves (Morah, Ekwenchi & Chiaha, 2019) and for citizens to become aware of their government's abuses and violations of human rights, and the right to be informed. Swanson and Mancini (1996) observe that "election campaigns are critical periods in the lives of democracies. They select decision-makers, shape policy, distribute power and provide venues for debate and socially approved expressions of conflict about factional grievances and issues".

There is no doubt that Internet penetration, has expanded in the last two decades, especially in Africa and Nigeria. Globally the Internet penetration rate as of June 2019, according to Internetworldstats report (2019) was 4422,494,622 while that of Africa was 525, 148 631. For Nigeria, with an estimated population of 200, 962, 417, as of June 2019, there is a massive transformation in internet use. The penetration rate increased sharply from 200,000 in 2000 to 123, 486 615 in 2019. The significant gap in the figures is a clear indication that most Nigerians became more Internet-hungry and conscious; probably because of the pervasiveness and disruptiveness of the new media technology. Social media, which is a new media offspring, however, ballooned over the past few years. Though Facebook has grown exponentially since 2006 worldwide, the leading global social networking site according to reports on (napoleoncat.com) has 22960000 users in Nigeria users who are 11.2% penetration rate of the Nigerian population as of December 2018. Majority of them were men (61.7%) demarcated within people aged 25 to 34; while the largest user group are young people within 18 to 24 years comprising 7800000 people. The report indicates that women had a total of 38.3% user only (<https://napoleoncat.com>)

The use of the new media technology in delivering campaign messages to voters during elections is not only critical to political parties and candidates but also in the election campaign process as social media is now affecting political campaigns. It plays a crucial role in informing the public about politics, campaigns and elections. Social media also influences what issues voters should care about in elections and what criteria they should use to evaluate candidates. In the past, traditional media in the forms of Newspapers, TV, Radio, billboards and printed material, such as pamphlets and letters were indispensable tools for delivering credible forms of political campaign messages despite their shortcomings of direct communication. The traditional media has intense competitions with social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. For instance, Smith (2011) found that one in five adults (22%) who were online used Twitter or a social networking site to make political decisions in 2010. Morah, Udeze and Ekwenchi (2019, p.8) establish that preponderance respondents (67.9%) reacted positively to the 2015 election results disseminated through Facebook in Nigeria. The preceding demonstrates a firm reliance on social media for political engagement.

Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) also argue that the growth of online political behaviour is aided partly by the recent emergence of new interactive, media-rich websites. The social media transformation initiated by new media in the political environment has globally impacted substantially on political campaigning. It is stimulating a move towards a more interactive form of campaigning, with politicians being in direct contact with constituents via



different platforms of social media. Haynes (2008) collaborates that new media are presently the leading innovation for presidential candidates, just like radio and television and computerised databases revolutionised the election process in earlier decades. Cary (2010) also agrees that Internet restructures how Americans do everything—including electing their leaders. The author thinks political candidates who would have had no chance before the Internet can now overcome tremendous odds; with people, they energise serving as the backbone of their campaign. This viewpoint propelled the trajectory of the study on social media use of selected entrepreneurs in selected cities in Nigeria with a concentration on their political decisions and activities.

### **THE PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES**

Social media platforms like Facebook enable users to create profiles and establish connections with friends and acquaintances online. Some level of media literacy is required to manipulate social media platforms and the Internet. The condition equally applies to blogs, microblogs, and video sharing sites, among others. For all social media sites and platforms, an underlying commonality is a user-generated element characterised by openness and collaboration enabled by media literacy. Therefore, due to the opportunity offered to people to express political views and opinions online the social media plays a vital role in political campaigns. However, there exists little knowledge on the extent and pattern of use of social media among Nigerian artisans and traders with regards to political communication. Social media allow users to not only seek information but also interact with others through online expression such as posting political commentaries on blogs and social network sites and sharing multimedia commentary (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). It also makes the polity to acquire information and governmental communication for political empowerment (Duru & Morah, 2015; Morah, Udeze & Ekwenchi, 2019).

Therefore, effective use of social media for political purpose should require some level of media literacy and media availability. This study will be relevant in examining the adoption of social media among traders and artisans as a popular tool in terms of its potentialities, issues and role in political development in Nigeria. The following objectives inform what the study sets out to achieve:

- To determine how Nigerian entrepreneurs are using social media for political participation.
- To examine how social media are initiating new political sphere among selected entrepreneurs.
- To identify challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the use of social media in politics.

### **Research Questions**

- **RQ1:** How are Nigerians entrepreneurs using social media in political participation?
- **RQ2:** To what extent is the social media, initiating new political sphere among selected entrepreneurs?
- **RQ3:** What challenges are faced by Nigerians entrepreneurs in the use of social media in politics?

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**



The Technology Determinism and the Agenda-Setting theories formed the theoretical basis for this study. McLuhan's (1962) Technology Determinism theory states that media technology shapes how individuals in a society think, feel, act; and how society operates as there is a transition from one technological age to another. In essence, people learn and feel and think the way they do because of the messages received through the most current and available technology (social media). The theory further explains that when new systems of technology are developed, the culture or society is immediately changed to reflect the senses needed to use the new technology. It predicts that with every new system of media technology, society will change and adapt to that technology. There is a simple cause and effect analysis between the introduction of new technology and the changes in society's way of thinking, feeling, acting, or believing. Since humans do not have much free will at all, whatever society as a whole is using to communicate, people will always adapt. Therefore, people will quickly adapt to social media which is vague in today's politics- as it enhances interactivity and more democratic participation (Morah & Uzochukwu, 2019).

Theorists Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw propounded the Agenda-Setting Theory which states that the media (mainly the news media) are not always successful at telling people what to think, but specifically, what to think about each day. The agenda-setting process is an almost unavoidable part of newsgathering by the large organisations which make up much of the mass media. Stuart Hall points out that some media organisations are accorded a high degree of respect and authority because they produce contents which are often competent, impartial and severe. The public is bribed with good radio, television and newspapers contents into an acceptance of the biased, the misleading, and the status quo through the agenda-setting process.

The media are not, according to this approach, crude agents of propaganda. The interpretations provided by media, in the long run, are the most preferred by, and least challenging to those with economic power. Greg Philo demonstrates the reality of the preceding in his 1991 article, "Seeing is Believing". He showed that recollections of the 1984 UK miners' strike strongly correlated with the media presentation of the event, including the perception of the picketing as mainly violent when violence was rare; and the use by the public of phrases which had appeared originally in the media. Therefore the use of social media could help set some agenda for people in a developing economy like Nigeria. Social media is presently setting an agenda for the world, unbridled, including political agendas (Morah, Ekwenchi & Chiaha, 2019).

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND GLOBAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS**

Political campaigns have existed as long as there have been informed citizens about campaigning objectives. Politicians seeking victory at the elections need to persuade and convince the electorate in order to win their votes. It is now commonplace for politicians to use new media technology like social media in announcing their interest to vie for elective positions. Politicians, therefore, employ several channels of persuasive and interactive communication, including the new social media to communicate with their constituent and the electorates. The use of social media in political campaigns has drastically changed the momentum of politics all over the world.

Studies reveal that citizens increasingly use media technologies such as the Internet and social media to learn about political campaigns, follow the news, and engage in political



activities by volunteering, donating funds, or researching public policy options (Morah, Udeze & Ekwenchi, 2019; Morah & Uzochukwu, 2019; Howard, 2005; Hamilton, 2011). Political parties are becoming more aware of these new trends, and politicians are increasingly making use of social media tools for political campaigns, to make campaign announcements and to communicate with potential voters. YouTube and Facebook potentialities enable updates of voter's registration, political campaigns and debates, while Twitter is used for personal views and opinions about candidates, political parties and their ideologies. Today, every politician in Nigeria has at least one social media account which they treasure as their mouth-pieces and selling points.

During political campaigns, social media platforms provide real live political rallies and party conventions online, such that supporters who cannot participate physically are considered at a reduced cost. Even the media industry appreciates the potentials of social media during elections as the use of social media has made non-professional journalists and news commentators to become alternative commentators and opinion leaders in election campaigns through blogging and citizen journalism (Bruns, Saunders, Wilson, 2007). Many presidential candidates have provided notable cases in new media use for election campaigns. The United States Presidential campaign in 1996 of President Bill Clinton and Bob Dole was among the first campaigns that utilised the Internet on a national level. Howard Dean's 2004 bid for the Democratic presidential nomination offered a glimpse into what Internet campaigning was capable of producing. His use of the Internet leads to his rise to fame. Again, during the 2008 United States Presidential election between John McCain and Barack Obama, the Internet was extensively utilised by both candidates. Barack Obama's extensive use of the Internet during his campaigns earned him the name the King of Social Networking by the Washington Post.

Evans (2008) succinctly demonstrates the extent of politician's engagement on social media during the 2008 USA election's political campaign. He argues that in the US primary elections, both Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama utilised social networking sites to a great extent. Clinton however, only employed the main sites, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, to speak in communities, rather than making use of their full potential and engaging with her audience. Obama, on the other hand, operated at this engaged level, using Facebook, Twitter and YouTube page and niche community sites such as Faith-based and Glee. Obama reached out to individual groups in society including African American, Asian, Latino and religious-based communities. He was able to successfully tap into these communities where they were often more passionate and dedicated about particular causes (Evans, 2008).

President Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, however, changed the way political campaigns utilised the Internet, specifically the social media, for political purposes. According to an April 4, 2011 article on the political blog (Politico), Obama brought the long-promised political power of the Internet to bear on a presidential campaign, raising millions and organising thousands through a groundbreaking website and massive email list (Tau, 2011). Obama's use of social media in the 2008 campaign compared to former President John F. Kennedy's use of television. The election of Barack Obama as president was notable than others in history because he used the new media that has forever changed politics. Miller (2008) posits that both leaders initiated a new paradigm in political communication as Mr Kennedy, used television while Mr Obama, explored the Internet. In





addition to using email and a website, Obama concentrated on social media use to mobilise volunteers and reach young voters (Graber, 2010, p.194).

### **SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN AFRICAN POLITICS**

Social media generally used as a primary platform for disseminating information has undoubtedly become a powerful political communication tool in Africa and Nigeria is not an exception. It allows candidates and their party's privilege to reach larger audiences in shorter periods than the traditional mass media used formerly. Political candidates and parties use social media platforms for political campaign purposes, to drum up support for various candidates seeking positions in government and to publicise their manifestos and promote political party ideologies. Social media play useful and significant roles not only for mobilising voters but also in integrating all other facets of campaigns, including rally, organising and delivering campaign messages to potential voters consistently, at relatively no cost (Morah & Uzochukwu, 2019).

In the Nigerian political terrain, the new media of the Internet and social media appeared to be playing a massive role in shaping the country's political landscape. President Goodluck Jonathan made history as the first head of government to use Facebook to make his formal declaration to stand for election. The president's decision changed the political tide in election matters in the country. In the same vein, other politicians in the country also made concerted efforts to gain electoral relevance via the Internet, Facebook and Twitter. Although only a small percentage of the Nigerian electorate then possesses their computers, many people used internet cafes and increasingly mobile phones to go online and get political updates. The politicians also used social networking sites to leverage the younger generation and harnessed new phases in the country's online revolution.

The 2011 Nigerian general election witnessed the use of social media to announce the intention of the Nigerian presidential candidates, Goodluck Jonathan, to run for the presidential seat and to campaign during the election extensively. Also, other aspirants: Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and Nuhu Ribadu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) used social media extensively. The use of social media had a significant influence in the subsequent elections of 2015 and 2019 in Nigeria. In Tanzania, presidential candidate, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, in the 2010 general election also used social media. Since global leaders achieved political successes with social media adoption in campaigns and governance, empirical insight into the extent of social media use in Nigeria among artisans and trader will help appreciate its essence in African grassroots politics.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design employed in the study was the survey method. This method was adopted because it is suitable for examining issues in social media use in politics and for eliciting the response of the residents of Awka and Enugu metropolises concerning the objectives of this study. Survey research was, therefore, essential in collecting data for a population too large to be observed directly. The study adopted the questionnaire as a measuring instrument, while SPSS version 19 and the simple frequencies figures and percentages were utilised for data analysis.

### **Population and Sampling Technique**





The population of the study comprises residents of Anambra and Enugu State out of which a sample of 200 was drawn from Awka and Enugu metropolises through purposive sampling technique to represent this population. This choice emerges because there is always a heavy concentration of potential voters who are entrepreneurs in the two major cities. Purposive sampling was, therefore, deployed to select only 200 artisans and traders resident in the two cities in an equal ratio of 1:1 to attain the purpose of the study. The two purposively selected cities of Awka and Enugu are in Anambra and Enugu states respectively and found in the Southern part of Nigeria. They are predominantly of the Igbo extractions and are mainly business people and entrepreneurs.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data for this analysis was collected from a sample of 200 residents of Awka and Enugu metropolises who are artisans and traders. A response rate of ninety-eight per cent recorded; that is, 196 copies of questionnaires were completed and returned.

Table 1: *Demographic Patterns of Respondents*

Variable	Frequency	%
Age		
18-24	45	23
25-34	68	35
35-44	30	15
45-54	18	9
55-66	12	6
65+	23	12
Total	196	100%
Sex		
Male	105	54
Female	91	46
Total	196	100%

The demographic data presented in Table1 indicate that out of the sampled population for the study, 54 per cent of the respondents were males, while 46 per cent of the respondents were females. The finding affirms research (Morah & Omojola, 2018) that more males are entrepreneurs in Nigeria than females. Males are more likely to be interested in politics than females.

In terms of the age distribution of the respondents, 35 per cent of the respondents were 25-34 years, 23 per cent were 18-24 years, while 15 per cent constitute respondents within age brackets 35-44 years. The finding implies that most of the respondents are young people aged 18- 34 years. These respondents are regarded as millennial and are most likely to use social media technology for political engagement more than other age brackets.



Other tables generated in this study were used to answer the various research questions raised in the study. For research question one that sought to find out if the Nigerians/audience uses the new media to participate in politics actively, responses on Table 2 provided the answer.

**RQ1:** How are Nigerians entrepreneurs using social media in political participation?

Table 2: *Frequency of social media use in political participation*

Response	Frequency	%
Always	102	52
Often	68	34.6
Sometimes	16	8.2
Rarely	5	2.6
Never	5	2.6
Total	196	100

Data on Table 2 shows that a majority of 170 respondents (86.6%) mostly use social media to participate and get political information. The finding implies that entrepreneurs are conversant with the application of social media, which influence their interest in use and fall in line with Morah &Uzochukwu (2019). The finding further affirms the assumptions of Technology Determinism theory.

Table 3: *Social media use and active participation in politics*

Response	Frequency	%
Agree	84	43
Strongly Agree	68	35
Disagree	34	17
Strongly disagree	10	5
Total	196	100

In Table 3, the result of the survey shows that majority of the respondents (78%) agree that social media make them participate actively in politics. The above is a reflection of both high internet penetration and acceptance of the social media in Nigeria as a futuristic means of political engagement. The finding corroborates data on Table 2 and attests the findings of Morah, Udeze & Ekwonchi (2019). It is, thus, plausible that given the political space, most Nigerians entrepreneurs are likely to have increased active participation in politics and governance in the next five years.

**RQ2:** To what extent is the social media, initiating new political sphere among selected entrepreneurs?

Table 4: *Social media and promotion of interactivity and understanding about politics*

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	127	65
No	69	35
Total	196	100

Data on Table 4 indicates that the majority (65%) of the respondents agree that social media promotes interactivity and understanding about Nigerian politics. This finding implies that,



even though the social media dramatically plays a role in political development in Nigeria, its ability to stimulate interaction and improve the understanding of politics has not been fully achieved among selected entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The real-time interaction, most often possible with social media, makes it attractive as a tool for political communication. The finding is a deviation from the findings of Morah & Uzochukwu (2019) that found small and medium scale entrepreneurs mostly using Whatsapp for commercial purposes.

Table 5: *Potentialities of social media as a tool for political development*

Response	frequency	Percent
Necessary for political development	67	34
Not necessary	78	40
To an extent, important	45	23
No opinion	6	3
Total	196	100

The potentialities of social media as a veritable tool for political development, according to Table 5, is yet to be appreciated by a good number of respondents (40%). However, 34 and 23% of the respondents think that social media is necessary and to an extent significant respectively, for political development. The finding, therefore, showed that the majority of respondents (57%) regard social media as an indispensable tool for political development. Further probe shows that selected respondents mostly prefer using Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp for political communication and news because of the features of those platforms. The findings further substantiate <https://napoleoncat.com> report on connectivity static in Nigeria. It is reasonable to see Nigerians as a people eager to affect the political process using new media technology such as social media platforms.

**RQ3:** What challenges are faced by Nigerians entrepreneurs in the use of social media for political communication?

Table 6: *Challenges in Social media by Nigerian entrepreneurs*

Variables	Frequency	%
High Tariff cost	97	49.5
Connectivity issues	50	25.5
Availability of technology	30	15.3
Media Literacy	15	7.7
No Idea	4	2
Total	196	100

Responses on Table 6 demonstrate that significant challenges to effective use of social media among artisans and traders for political development are high tariff cost (49.5%) and connectivity issues (25.5%). Availability of technology (15.3%) was mentioned as another obstacle; while media literacy (7.7%) was the least challenge to social media adoptions among selected entrepreneurs. The finding here implies that media literacy is no longer a serious threat to the internet and social media usage in Nigeria. Table 6 data is in agreement with the 2019 [www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com) report on African internet penetration and demonstrate that the media are setting exciting political agendas for Nigerians.



*Table 7: Dispositions of respondents toward the utilisation of social media*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Positive	90	46
Negative	54	28
Indifferent	30	15
No Idea	22	11
Total	196	100

Data on Table 7 indicates that a higher percentage of respondents (46%) have a positive disposition towards the use of social media by politicians in Nigeria. While only 28% has a negative disposition, 15% of the respondents are indifferent to the use of social media by politicians in Nigeria. The results suggest that for social media to contribute substantially to the development of the political process in Nigeria, more work done in order to elicit more positive disposition to social media.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The potentialities and challenges of social media use in politics have been demonstrated in the study. The expansion of social media in Nigeria, and its exploitative nature, should, therefore, be effectively manipulated in its use in a political campaign. Though Jonathan used social media effectively during the 2011 election, Nigerians were somehow unpersuaded by his numerous Facebook messages resulting in the January 2012 fuel subsidy protest that shook the PDP regime and queried the people's trust on the government. Likewise, since 2015, President Buhari could not control the freedom of speech enjoyed by Nigerians online and on social media despite the proposal for anti-hate speech regulations, the Social Media Bill and the Cyber Crime Act. These instances affirmed the finding that inadequate media literacy does not have a significant effect on social media usage in Nigeria. With most Nigerians having access to the Internet; discussion of the democratising potential of internet-related social media technology seems not hurried. At present, political discussions online is a privilege for those with access to smart devices, computers and the Internet. Those who would benefit the most from the democratising potential of social media technology do not have much access to it. Much participation in political discussion helps but does not ensure a healthier democracy. Social media technology enhances increased, but not necessarily more diverse, participation in political discussion since they are still only available to a small fraction of the population.

Social media platform makes participation in the political sphere more convenient. Though they do not guarantee active participation, online political discussions are limited to those with access to computers and the Internet. Therefore, people without access to the Internet do not necessarily pursue political discussion. As a result, online discussions are mostly dominated by a few. While social media has the potential to advance the public sphere, at least in terms of the information that is available to citizens, only a few people are able or willing to take on the challenge. There abound cases of legal entanglement by individuals and governments on victims of perceived hate speeches online. Access to more information might not necessarily create more informed citizens or lead to more excellent political activity or ensure election victories. Even though access to information is useful to socialisation, the democratising potential of social media remains obvious as examined earlier. Also, responses from selected entrepreneur show that social media provides information on political matters and is therefore vital for political development in Nigeria. Though access to information is



not universal and equal to all with mainstreams, social media allows freedom of speech and is proximal to people. Those who can access online information are guaranteed additional tools to be more active citizens and participants of the public sphere under the social media dispensation. The findings and literature demonstrate the tenets of the technology determinism theory and the agenda-setting theory. The study, therefore, situates on the words of Cary (2010): “Politicians have long sought to go around the mainstream press filter—from fireside chats, to whistle-stop tours, to snail-mail newsletters—but the new media take it a step further by even more directly connecting them with voters.”

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that selected artisans and traders in the two selected cities in South Eastern Nigeria use social media for political decision makings to a great extent. There are critical limits to the political influence of social media, however, as findings demonstrate. Social media is expected, for instance, to lose some of their disruptive impact as politicians and others learn to take better account of them. However, the researchers predict that social media will eventually become an increasingly pervasive tool through which politicians and others will seek to influence political debate soon. The implication of the paper so far remains that; social media is a two-sided sword that should be handled with care. The findings of this study are thus a beginning, not an end to social media studies.

The political consequences of social media are unlikely to be limited to the particular mechanisms explored here. Fortunately for political scientists, social media provide a uniquely rich set of data exploited in order to explore a variety of research questions. Relevant research remains to be done, for example, on the consequences of blogs, Facebook groups, Twitter groups and Instagram for political mobilisation, and fundraising in other regions of Nigeria and Africa. The study recommends a decrease in the cost of data tariff to enable artisan and traders; especially the rural-based entrepreneurs have access to the Internet and social media. The study further recommends that the Nigerian government formulates a proactive regulation to control the abuse of social media in the country.

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## **APPROVING OR MORTIFYING ONLINE AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM BY MAINSTREAM JOURNALISTS: A CASE FOR CREDIBILITY TRANSFER HYPOTHESIS**

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### **Abstract**

*The relationship between online and mainstream journalism, over the years, has been critically reviewed negatively by practising journalists. Among the mainstream practising journalists, online and citizen journalism are peddlers of uncensored and junk contents. This study, though a review of reported events, looked at the relationship between mainstream and online contents. The purpose of the study is to verify whether the mainstream media mortify or certify online journalism. This study adopted the critical discourse analysis in reviewing what was reported in both mainstream and online media. The study, which made a case for the credibility transfer hypothesis, revealed that rather than spread junk contents, the online press helps the mainstream*



*media in explaining to the world what is happening around them. Drawing from the outcome of the study, it was found that the online media and citizen journalists break the news while the mainstream media follow suit with few additional contents that give more insight into the stories of the moment. The study concluded that rather than mortify the contents of online media, the mainstream media transfer credibility to it by drawing their publications from the online materials. The study, therefore dismissed allegations from mainstream journalists against online and citizen journalists that they spread junks. It was recommended that the mainstream media journalists and media experts should desist from making some derogatory remarks about online media contents but rather, incorporate online and citizen journalists' contents in their mainstream reports for adequate and on-the-event coverage of issues*

**Keywords:** Credibility transfer hypothesis, online media, mainstream media, Mortifying, Approving, Junk

## INTRODUCTION

A cursory look at media practitioners' positioning of online media reports among mainstream media journalists sets the mind in motion for specific probing questions concerning the relationship between the two. In the eye of many mainstream journalists and reporters, every piece of information from the online versions is seen with a certain level of credibility and acceptability. Some call it junk journalism and all sorts of names to ensure that they ridicule the contents of online press. At this point, it becomes ultimately fascinating to probe the contribution of online press in development of media in this modern age? It is expected that the advent of the online media networking system should encourage and strengthen the means of information dissemination by reducing the time-cost of the passage of information from one end to another. The view above negates the view expressed in the work of Anderson (2010) who noted that the advent of new media technology had a substantial impact on media and its audience for the past decade.

Considering the position held in Anderson above, new media impact on media development and evolution should be encouraged rather than discouraged as can be found in the castigating views held among the mainstream journalists in the wake of the new media information dissemination to the public. The view was fundamentally that the operators in online media networking sites are not professionals and therefore are not ready and cannot produce a content professional enough to be credible, hence the name "Junk journalism." This view was justified in the words of Reese (2016) who argues that manipulation in the online media will affect the mainstream media to a large extent. The authors further, confirmed that online media had become an indispensable means of passing information around the world and the greatest disseminator of current information from one end to another.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a kind of antagonistic relationship existing between the online media operators and the mainstream media journalists, this makes them see online media contents with contempt. Despite this critic against online media, it perseveres. The pervasiveness of the online media in society has led to much speculation about its consequences for journalism and, more generally, the socio-political engagement of citizens. While there have been some dramatic changes for journalists and professional news organizations as a result of technological developments, it is the discussion around



participation of the non-professional in the editorial process that has moved to the fore. The non-professional operators in the system are the base for the credibility issue that this papers set to address. In this light, Deuze, Bruns and Neuberger (2007, p. 323) contend that “digital and networked journalism in whatever shape or form must be seen as a praxis that is not exclusively tied to salaried work or professional institutions anymore.” The contention above points at the fact that online media practice has made journalism profession less professional with little or no pay at times yet disseminates information. To Bakker and Paterson (2010), the crises between online media and the professional media handlers are anchored on the superiority of one over another which media scholar had neither acknowledged nor dismissed. Carefully considered, all mainstream professional practitioners subscribe to online media network to get one item of information of the other.

Proponents of the credibility question on the online media contents argue that the sources are not attributed, and the facts not accurately stated (Nwabueze and Ikegbunam, 2015, Asemah, Olumuji and Edegoh, 2013, Agbanu, 2013). These views also mount severe pressure and suspicion on the contents of online media indirectly, pre-empting the criticism that the mainstream journalists level against online journalism. Research evidence has shown that, the online media information came faster than those of the mainstream media (Nwabueze and Ikegbunam, 2015) and sometimes formed the base of mainstream media reports. This is the question that begs for an answer. Why should the traditional journalists after borrowing sources and citing online media contents, claim that they are junk in the eye of experts? It is against this background that this study sets to probe the position of the mainstream journalists: are they mortifying or approving online journalism based on their actions and words concerning contents.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Media experts and mainstream journalists have been castigating online media contents for lack of quality, negligence of journalism ethics (Nwabueze and Ikegbunam, 2017), poor gate-keeping function, lack of accuracy, user-generated contents, all man’s affair and inadequate attribution to sources (Nwabueze and Ikegbunam 2015; Agbanu, 2014). All these cast terrible images on the contents of online media outlets, making them look inferior and unbelievable before the people. To this end, a reasonable number of people today never accept that what they see or read from online is accurate or valid until the mainstream journalists report the content, many a time with the online media that carried the story earlier cited.

Again, many researchers have examined the credibility of the sources of online media outlets, and the results always indicate that the advent of online media has drastically dragged the journalism profession to ethical criticism. Unfortunately, little or no attention has been paid to the fact that mainstream media sometimes cite the online media which they always criticize for lack of accuracy, negligence of ethics and weak gate-keeping role. The position of this paper therefore is to establish the realities on the antagonism between online and mainstream media journalists.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The mainstay of this study is establishing the antagonistic relationship between the mainstream and online media practitioners, and the measurable research objectives are:



- To ascertain whether mainstream media reporters reference online media contents in their reports on the select activities understudy.
- To determine the level of referencing online materials by mainstream media reporters on select events understudy.
- To verify the level of accuracy of the information in the mainstream and online media reports on the select events under investigation.

### **THE SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study is focused on selected events in the country that attracted media reactions in both mainstream and online media reports. The activities under investigation were the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018 episode in the red chambers where the mace was stolen at the floor of the senate; the operation python dance II in southeastern Nigeria as announced in August against September 2018, the Senator Dino Malaye result scandal of March, 2017, and the President Buhari's comment on the lazy Nigerian youths of April, 2018. This study examined the contents of these select events. It pays attention to details on the relationship between reports from select online media outlets and what their mainstream counterparts issue on same activities.

Any other contents of the online media reports done on other issues other than the ones above were not considered. The consideration was based on the contents of the above selected online media against their mainstream counterparts *Daily Sun, Vanguard and Guardian newspapers*. Other newspapers in the country were not covered in the study. However, the implication of the choice of the above online and mainstream media outlets is that they may not be able to represent the two groups of media structures under review and that recommendations and conclusions were based on their contents specifically on the select issues under study. Another study in the same direction may supply different conclusions and recommendations if taken out of these areas under consideration. These media organizations under study were selected for this study because of their wide readership and circulation in the country. Moreover, the researchers' discretion also informs the choice of the media outlets under study.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study examines the contents of mainstream and online media on the selected events above that took place in the country to revealing whether the mainstream journalists approve or mortify online media contents given the kinds of criticism that online media get from them over the accuracy, gate-keeping and all other professional journalistic requirements. Being a new area in communication studies, the study revealed the antagonistic relationship between the two categories of journalism. It exposes the hypocritical nature of mainstream journalists' mere claim of lack of credibility on the part of online journalism by showing that their contents tally in some cases.

The study also introduced the concept of credibility transfer hypothesis into media and communication studies. Based on the premise of this hypothesis, the study reveals that integration of the two categories of journalism is a perfect means of making a breakthrough in the satisfaction of the necessary information need of the fast-growing society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study, therefore, is an attempt at putting to a stop, the height of negligence of online contents among the people simply because of mere mainstream journalists' public condemnation of its contents and subtle tapping from the wealth of its globalization tendency for their survival.



Generally, this study benefits all media scholars in the sense that it has introduced a new concept “*credibility transfer hypothesis*” in journalism study. The study has also exposed the hypocrisy of mainstream media reporters against their online counterparts. At the same time, the paper has settled the age-long antagonism and provided a template for understanding the nexus between online and mainstream press. On this background, the study is pertinent to both mainstream and online reporters because it has provided a link between what is published in online and mainstream press. Incorporating one another’s contents and materials which this study advocates will go a long way in improving the qualities of contents and timeliness in media practice. Upholding the contents and materials of one another in the practice will help restore the credibility and trust of the public which is gradually going sour against journalism profession.

### **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

The researcher in this study examined the relationship between these two categories of journalism using available empirical and theoretical literature. Earlier media scholars have attempted an exploration into the relationship between mainstream and online media in different ways. Kwak, Kim, and Zimmerman, (2010) in their study, confirmed that media audience perceived user-generated content as equally reliable and likeable as mainstream content. They further stated that although the previous persuasion literature has tended to employ expertise and trustworthiness as two main sub-dimensions of source credibility.

Similarly, Kellner, (2012) affirmed that the relationship between the mainstream and the internet media has been very much like that of the cat and dog when credibility is concerned. Because of that the author concluded that the persevering nature of internet media in sending messages to many people at the shortest possible time made it more thriving in the society in an era of information consciousness (O’Keefe, 2002), their results indicate that they are two distinct concepts. The results showed that people who think the source is an expert might not always believe the source to be trustworthy. This is because expertise and trustworthiness reflect two different elements that contribute to source judgments among the audience.

Using the Arab Uprisings that began in 2010, Bahja, (2013) demonstrates how citizen journalists were able to utilize novel forms of communication, ranging from blogs to social media, to ensure that their voices are not silenced even in the face of severe government clampdown on media. The author concluded that these voices from the internet enabled media platforms become a vital source of information for the mainstream media around the world. For the mainstream media, citizen journalists offer local “scoops” from the ground that would otherwise be inaccessible and, for citizen journalists; the mainstream media offer a platform to share their stories with the world. The import of this is that there is the need for collaboration for international best practices and not antagonism with each other. Nah and Chung, (2016) reveals that online media can coexist, compete, collaborate, coordinate, and compromise with professional journalism through communicative action, such as mutual understanding, reason-based discussion, and consensus building for enhancing international best practices in journalism profession.

Unfortunately, internet media cannot be deleted from the media space, instead incorporating them may be the best for journalism practice. The above view was supported by the idea expressed in Kellner, (2012) where he stated that the internet makes accessible more





information available to a more significant number of people, more efficiently, and from a more extensive array of sources than any instrument of information and communication in history. This fact underscores the importance and indispensability of the internet media in the media studies and communication discipline. Nwabueze and Ikegbunam, (2015) after a cross-examination of specific issues covered in the mainstream and social media landscape concluded that the internet blog stories are not that bad as the mainstream journalists and media experts are assuming them.

In another study, Višňovský and Radošinská (2017) explored the theoretical issues of online journalism and discussed the specific forms of internet-delivered journalistic production and professional requirements placed on journalists who specialise in online news-making. The requirements under review were based on the current development tendencies of digital communication forms. One of the key issues discussed by the researchers in this study is that of credibility. The study examined how consumers measure values among, elite media institutions, with their gatekeepers, resources, and professional codes and training, on one hand, and, the bloggers; wiki-ists and e-mailers, with their editorial independence, collaborative structures, and merit-based popularity on the other hand (Russell, 2013). The study which adopted the critical discourse analysis method concluded that contemporary journalism needs to implement innovations very quickly. It also suggests that online versions of the press and mobile applications have to closely watch all emerging trends in digital communication in order to maintain their competitiveness.

Noor, (2017) examined how journalists perceive the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream journalism and their work. The study also investigated whether citizen journalism pose threats/challenges to the mainstream media. The study which used the survey of journalists from Kashmir found that citizen journalism serve as both alternative news source to the people and exposes mainstream journalist to news events that are inaccessible to them. It was also found that the online media does not pose any challenge to the mainstream media. This was collaborated by the Karlsson and Clerwall, (2019) who argue that a remedy to the decreasing trust in news may not be blamed on the changing of norms in journalism brought by online media, but rather on how the already established norms and values of the journalistic professions are performed.

Yamamoto, and Nah, (2018) found that as structural pluralism is negatively related to local newspaper credibility, conservative ideology, newspaper use, social trust, and political trust are significantly related to local newspaper credibility. The basic issue here is the credibility of the source of information which is dependent on how the source presented itself to the audience. Luo, & Harrison, (2019) study concluded that the online media does not only act collectively to influence and contribute to the content of the traditional media but also influence policies that the government considers, and in so doing, changing the nature of journalism and public sphere in china.

Of all these studies, the researchers are interested in the relationship between the two fourth and the fifth estate of the realm. They were more interested in the link shared in stock by the contents. This study is different because it sets to examine the materials from the view of the crisis existing between them over the credibility question. Against this background, the researchers considered the contents from the transfer of credibility position. They focused attention to the believability of the sources among the audience. Because the work was





premised on the credibility transfer hypothesis, the researcher dwells on establishing how and when credibility is transferred from a source of information to another in journalism practice.

### **SOURCE CREDIBILITY THEORY**

The source credibility theory as propounded by Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1963) stated that people or receivers are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. Furthermore, Hovland (1963) and Weiss (1974) later studied the influence of sources in persuasion. The study was done by comparing reliable and non-credible sources using the same persuasive message to test if the sources seen as reliable could influence opinions to change in the message receivers more than the non-credible source. The study confirmed the assumption that trustworthy sources tend to create the desired impact on the audience. The credibility of the media source has been studied in various disciplines.

Eisend (2004) studied credibility of the source in marketing, Arpan, (2002) in crisis management, Clow, James & Stanley, (2008) in advertising, and Bates, Romina, Ahmed & Hopson, (2006) examined the credibility of the sources in health information. The reliability of the sources has also been used in measuring the influence of source credibility in advertising on consumer attitudes in the service industry. Clow, James and Stanley (2008) used the dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity and liking to measure source credibility. Bates, Romina, Ahmed, and Hopson(2006) has been testing the credibility of the source to measure the quality of health information on the website by using the dimensions of reliability of information; informed consent; legibility of the data; and completeness of the information. Drawing from this postulation, the acceptance of data from the online media is a matter of understanding sustained by packaging, which is dependent on the media outlet.

### **Credibility Transfer Hypothesis**

Given the nature of this research, the researchers came up with the “Credibility Transfer Hypothesis (CTH)”. This hypothesis was brought forward to help explain the antagonism of criticism thrilling the relationship between online and mainstream media reports among professionals. In media practice, what every media outlet struggle to get among its audience is credibility. It sustains the media outlet, and its lack spells doom for any journalist and organization. The reason is that the journalism industry survives on adverts and, no corporate organization can give out their products’ advert to a non-credible organization. This was captured in Saad, (2016); Barthel, (2016) studies which reveal that loss of public confidence in any media industry will result in declines in circulation, readership and advertising revenues. The above scholarly findings were made more clear in Yamamoto and Nah, (2018) study which argues that loss of credibility undermines the role of any media outfit to inform the people on events around them.

*Credibility transfer*, as the name implies means the act of giving the impression that a news source is reliable. The authors of this paper define credibility transfer as the act of making a source of information reliable by lifting materials from the source and citing the source. The position of the credibility transfer hypothesis is that credibility, trust, and reliability can be transferred from one media organization to the other. The authors opine that once a source accepted by the public as reliable lifts materials from another source suspected to be unreliable and cite same, credibility is transferred. In Nigeria, for instance, readers have trust in different newspapers. Their trust sustains their patronage of the news source.



The authors in this study are of the view that the mainstream newspapers transfer credibility to any online media outlet when they cite them in their stories. Based on this ground, this hypothesis, states that once a media organization accepted among the readers to be credible cite(s) other organization that is less accepted among the readers, the former has transferred its credibility to the latter. It is the position of the proponent of this hypothesis that any organization that cite(s) a less reliable media outlet cannot adjudge the media cited as not trustworthy and inaccurate; neither can they accuse them of eroding the ethical precepts of journalism.

On this ground, should the data from this study show that the mainstream media after criticizing the online media outlets go undercover to tap information from them and cite them, the researchers will conclude that mainstream journalists rather than mortifying online media, are approving it. This is because, by citing Premium Times in national dailies, the readers of such national dailies who accept their contents to be reliable will equally begin to see Premium Times as a reliable media outlet in future reports.

The hypothesis is an off-shoot of the source credibility theory which proposed that the audience of any media content tend to see the contents as credible if the supplier of the information is seen as reliable. Be that as it may, there are two most commonly visible elements which positively influence source credibility and they are: perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the source. Commenting on this, Cornan, Hess and Justus (2006), submitted that there are three key dimensions of credibility which are trustworthiness, competence, and goodwill. These three dimensions are not empirical realities but perceptions that can be created, managed over time, and cultivated in the audience. This requires a coordinated approach to message design, delivery, and most importantly, adaptation to the given audience and current media situation (Umeogu, 2012).

## **METHOD**

This paper adopts the textual analysis research method in evaluating the contents of mainstream and online media coverage of issues concerning the selected events in Nigeria that constitutes the study scope. The choice of textual analysis was basically because it lends the researcher the opportunity to examine both the online and mainstream media contents with a view to finding if there is an element of resemblance on one side and citation of the online source in the mainstream media on the other side. Textual analysis is concerned with the gathering and critical evaluation of media messages from selected media outfits.

The research uses McKees (2003) post-structuralist view that “educated guesses can be made about the most likely interpretations of texts based on ‘given cultural contexts.’” *Premium Times, Sahara Reporters, and Linda Ikeji blog* represent the online media while *Daily Sun, Vanguard and Guardian newspapers* represent the mainstream media in the study. The choice of these newspapers and the online media organizations was informed by their wide readership in Nigeria, accessibility and the researchers’ discretion.



Any online news story with pictures, by-line of the reporter, the source of the story, the names of the actors or preys in the story are classified as accurate in this study. On the other hand, any story found in the mainstream media citing any of the three online media outlets understudy is classified as “cited or acknowledged” while those without citation were classified as lifted without citation if they report the same event after the online media must have aired the publication. The level of referencing was measured by the percentage of what is lifted and what is cited by the mainstream media.

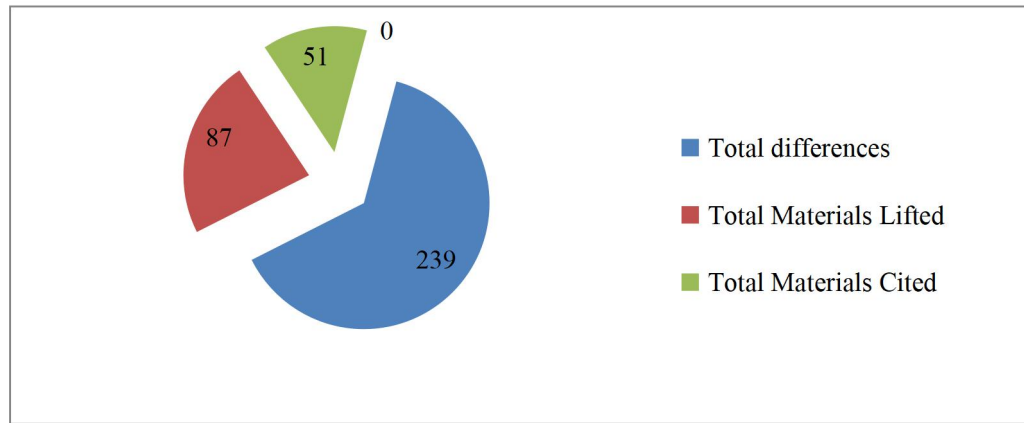
The population of the study was drawn from the days of the months upon which the events under investigation took place. The population covers all contents covered by any of the select media outfits within the specific month when the event took place. Thus there are a total of four months in the study period which covered from March, 2017 when the Dino Malaye’s Result scandal sprang up in the media; the operation python dance II in southeastern Nigeria of September 2017; the stolen mace at the floor of the senate of April 2018 and the President Buhari’s comment on the lazy Nigerian youths of April, 2018.

This means that a total of 121 news editions from each event are covered making a total of 726 editions for the six media outlets covered in the study. Drawing from the fact that the media organizations do not report a particular event every day of the week, the researchers adopted the purposive sampling technique in analyzing news contents covered by any of the six media outfits on any of the four events under investigation. In doing that a total of 326 news stories on the selected events were discovered to have been reported in the six media outfits selected for the study.

#### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This study presented all data collected in the qualitative and descriptive analysis all against the research question that calls for it. From the information obtained in the field, the researcher found that there are a total of 326 stories published by the selected online and mainstream media under study. From these 326 stories 205 were from online media while 121 other stories were from the three selected newspapers concerning the salient issues selected for the study.

A breakdown of these stories shows that the *Sahara Reporters* news items were on the lead with a total of 75 stories followed by *Linda Ikeji blog* which carried 67 items while *Premium Times* reported a total of 63 items. Of all the issues under reporting, the Operation Python Dance II was the most celebrated issue in social media while that of the Senator Dino Malaye’s result scandal was more visible in the mainstream counterpart. The reason for this may not be too far from the fact that it happened earlier than the other two events which took place in 2018. On the mainstream media reports on the issues under study, *Daily un* was on the lead with a total of 47 items followed by *Vanguard newspaper* with 39 items while *Guardian newspapers* had a total of 35 items



Source: Researchers' field study

The figure shows the differences and similarities in news story contents between mainstream and online media. The figure revealed that there was a total of 326 news stories on Senator Dino Malaye's result scandal, Buhari's speech on the lazy Nigerian youths, the Operation Python dance II and the stolen mace at the floor of the senate chambers. Of these news stories, mainstream media published a total of 121 among which a total of 87 (71.9%) of the items/materials were lifted from the online media. Among the 87 items lifted, 51 or 62.9% of all the items lifted from online media were cited by the mainstream media. This implies that the online media serve as source of information for the mainstream media. In the views of these researchers, citing online sources as the originators of news materials as revealed in this figure, means 'transfer of credibility' to the online media channels.

Table 1: Showing number of stories per event understudy in online media

Variables	SaharaReporter s	Premium times	Lindaikeji	Frequency	%
Python Dance II	30	24	21	74	36.0
SDM Result issue	17	11	14	42	20.4



Senate stolen mace	21	18	12	51	24.8
Lazy Nigeria youths	7	10	21	38	18.5
Total	75	63	67	205	100

Source: Researchers' field data, 2020

This table shows the individual online media news stories on the four selected events under investigation. The data in the table implies that Operation Python Dance II and the stolen mace at the floor of the senate were given more attention in the online media. The table revealed that the Senator Dino Malaye's result scandal controlled 51 news stories of the 205 stories observed and studied in the online media. This table shows the power of the online media in enhancing democracy in Nigeria. Considering the number of stories published by the online media, the era of limited space in the traditional media is gradually getting under control.

Table 2: Showing number of stories per event understudy in mainstream media

Variables	Daily Sun	Vanguard	Guardian	Frequency	%
Python Dance II	13	9	11	33	27.2
SDM Result issue	12	15	14	41	33.8
Senate stolen mace	12	9	5	26	21.4
Lazy Nigeria youths	10	6	5	21	17.3
Total	47	39	35	121	100

Source Researchers' field data

This table shows the individual mainstream media news stories on the four selected events under investigation. The implication of this data is that the mainstream media is more interested in covering Senator Dino Malaye's certificate scandal than severe issues of national concern such as the Operation Python Dance II in the southeastern Nigeria and the stolen Mace at the floor of the Nigerian senate. The hypocrisy of the mainstream media and the shrinking civil space was brought to the fore in the above data, especially considering the manner in which the press is being rough handled by successive administration in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first research objective considered whether mainstream media reporters cite online media contents in their reports. On this note, this study revealed that the mainstream media diligently draw their contents from the online and citizens journalism materials and at times cite or abscond from citing them as well. The implication of this finding is considered impactful in that rather than ridicule journalism profession, online and citizen journalists have positively influenced the development of journalism by encouraging prompt and timely dissemination of messages to the public. It means that the online media augment the



mainstream media contents by appearing faster and serving as the first source of breaking news. This finding is in tandem with the view expressed in Ján and Jana, (2017) where the authors agree that the online and internet media have made their mark in improving on the development of journalism. The finding also corroborates the views of Eldridge II, (2017, p. 45) who holds that journalists' use of social media, interactive live blogs or the work of more activist oriented interloper media like *WikiLeaks*; the work of new digital journalists is increasingly commonplace and becoming very visible.

Considering the position of the researchers on the credibility transfer hypothesis, this study had shown that the mainstream media criticism of the online journalism is unwarranted since they lift their sources to augment their news stories. Mainstream media do not only cite the online media as the source of their information but “copy” them even exactly in their own reports. A look at the number of stories in the entire events covered by the two media platforms and the synchronization between the online and the mainstream contents justifies this finding. On September 7, 2017, *Premium Times* break the news of the operation python dance II. With a headline: “*Breaking: Nigerian Army to begin exercise Python Dance II in South-East*”

With this report the *Premium Times* has taken the lead on the operation python dance as all other media channels continue to flow this report and subsequently make references to their reports based on interviews they revealed to the public. The following day, the report went awash in different mainstream media with different headlines. Similarly, *Premium Times* news published on 5<sup>th</sup> June on Senator Dino Malaye's result scandal found its way in the mainstream media three days later but the source was never cited by Vanguard. (See vanguard news of June 8. Video: Declaration of result for the recall of Dino Malaye).

However, this relationship came at the expense of the once highly valued media pillar of “Verification” or “Objectivity”. The coverage of the selected events that took place in the country demonstrated how the mainstream media's reliance on citizen journalism came at the expense of accurate and objective reporting. Should the online media be accused of lack of accuracy and objective investigations of facts, what then will be said of these mainstream media outfits which lift materials from the online contents? This is to say, that if the mainstream media after accusing the online media as being incredible, tap from their content, then all will be guilty of unverified dissemination of information to the public. It would be recalled that the reliance on citizen journalism increasingly threatens the credibility of the mainstream media and in turn transfers same to the online media copied. However, by relying on the contents of the online media for information among the mainstream media, the much desired credibility which was alleged to be lacking among the online media have been bestowed on them, and thus makes it believable among the audience.

On the second research objective that considered the level of online media contents cited by the mainstream media, this study revealed that there was a high level of citations of online news media in the mainstream stories. Of the 326 news stories on the four events under investigation, mainstream news media covered a total of 121 from where 87 (71.9%) were lifted from the online media. From these 87 news stories lifted, 51 or 62.9% were cited (see figure one). Looking at these data, 71.9% and 62.9% are all above 50% which can best be regarded as pass mark. This means that the mainstream media have high level of acknowledging materials that they lifted from the online media. This finding disagrees with





Ude-Akpeh And Ukwella, (2017) which condemns online media contents on the basis of the allegations of disseminating unprofessional contents.

Drawing from the proposition of the credibility transfer hypothesis, for citing online media as originators of contents, the mainstream media have transferred credibility to them. It is of no use going behind the backdoor to call them unqualified, uncensored and quacks. This finding also is linked to the source credibility theory which maintains that sources of news stories are perceived to be reliable if they present their contents in manners that convince the readers to accept them as reliable (Clow, James & Stanley, 2008). Relying on the data from the field, this study revealed that the online media have demonstrated a high sense of responsibility for their news stories. For instance, on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2017, *SaharaReporters* came up with a story on Operation Python Dance II with the headline: '*Our Lives under Python Dance II: South-East Residents Speak*'. This story captured the position of some prominent men in southeastern Nigeria on the influence of the military operation mounted in the zone. The next day, the mainstream media resumed to publish views of the people on the operation and made some references to *SaharaReporters* on the issue. *SaharaReporters* 19<sup>th</sup> April once again opened the space for the reports on the Mace scandal in Nigeria when the suspects were named with a headline: '*Stolen Senate Mace: Names of Suspected Thugs Released*'.

The above was quickly followed by Premium Times on 20<sup>th</sup> April with a caption: *Senate, Thugs and the Mace: Understanding Parliamentary Misconduct*, By Jibrin Ibrahim. This was in tandem with Miller (2010) who reported that online media journalists can be active in the creation of news and very fast in reporting events more quickly and reach a larger audience than traditional media. The high sense of responsibility in attribution to sources and provision of by-lines make the online media more credible in their reports. This may account for the reason mainstream media was found lifting and citing them. The finding further brought the all-round drastically improving importance of online news sources to the survival of journalism in this fast growing world (Zerfass, Verhoeven, Moreno, Tench, and Verčič, 2016).

Every other report from the mainstream media followed suit but were emanating from these reports blown above in the online media. This finding shows the complimentary role of the online media to the mainstream. As for the credibility of the contents, the implication of using the online source is that the mainstream media have acknowledged that online media contents are credible. Then, why the criticism of the online media contents by media professionals? Considering the impact of the online media to mainstream media, former head of global news for the BBC Richard Sambrook said "people were participating in our coverage in a way we had never seen before (Sambrook, 2005). By the next day, our main evening TV newscast began with a package edited entirely from video sent in by viewers." This statement means that the people in the streets hunt for news and send same to the various online media for publication.

Unfortunately, the people may not have access to the mainstream media and therefore left with the only option to send to the online media who now break the jinx for the mainstream media to follow. It cannot be out of place to state that some of the mainstream media organizations have User Generated Content (UGC) editors whose duties are to monitor what comes in from the users on daily bases for further investigation of content before use. Many discussions of user-generated content have been along the lines of "Do people find user-



generated content credible?” or “Are bloggers more powerful and persuasive than traditional media?” (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Dearstyne, 2005; Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007). Previous studies have shown that the communicator’s occupation-expert vs. non-expert determines source evaluations (O’Keefe, 2002). The views above by these scholars are now questionable in the light of the findings of this study.

Moreover, expert and non-expert factor never played in from the research findings because the experts now copy and reference the non-experts. The finding justifies the glaring impact of the internet media on the mainstream media of communication and therefore agrees with Ekele and Enobakhare, (2013) who argued that any manipulation in the internet media is most likely to influence the originality and as well the credibility of the mainstream contents.

On the level of accuracy of the information in the mainstream and online media reports, the researchers found that both the mainstream and online media share almost the same level of accuracy because of the fact that they tread on the same coast for their information. It was found that in some cases, the mainstream media gather their information from the online and do no further investigation to get more details on the facts reported for public consumption. However, it is pertinent to state that some of their reports, the mainstream media add some substances to the news already covered in the online media. This study found that the online media outfits which survive on the clicks have adopted the professional style of not only attributions to sources, by supplying of all necessary details for verifications of the news stories.

For instance, *Premium Times* on 5<sup>th</sup> June came up on Dino Malaye with a headline: Bribery Tape: Dino Melaye, Smart Adeyemi tango on TV. The story was written by Hassan Adebayo. The story detailed the incidence on Dino Malaye’s result scandal from a thorough investigative angle exposing the nutty gritty of the case. The story provided all the elements of good news reports and presented itself to be reliable.

Similarly, the *Vanguard* newspaper published a story on operation python dance II with a headline: ‘*Operation Python Dance II: One week after*’. This story was published on September 23 as a news comment with a bye-line: Vincent Ujumadu and Anayo Okoli. Inside the story, the details of the comments made by the Army Chiefs in-charge of different divisions selected for the operation were the same with the one contained in *Premium Times* story published on 20<sup>th</sup> day of the same month and that of *Sahara Reporters* published on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the month and *Lindaikeji* published on 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the month. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of September, the position of the Abia State Governor, Okezie Ikpeazu on the curfew was made known to the public in a media chat and the comment he made was captured by all the media channels the same way. The curfew statement reads:

Abia state has for the past few days been the focus of security searchlight occasioned by the reported skirmish between some groups in the state, especially Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) with men of the Nigerian Army. Government notes and has observed the frenzy of activities of members of IPOB within Afara-Umuahia, the ancestral home of the leader of IPOB for some months now. Government is equally aware of the recent proclamation by the Nigerian the Nigerian Army of Operation Python Dance II within the south-East geopolitical region of Nigeria.



This statement was earlier published in the night of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017 in all online media including facebook in this very way. The implication of this is that the online media equally attend media chats and tender their reports on issues covered. The only difference with the reports is their headlines and styles of writing which usually differs even among mainstream media organizations. The above finding disagrees with the position held in Mandlios, (2013) that stories from the internet media are often characterized by made-up contents published to gain clicks. In summary, the finding shows as can be found in Nwabueze and Ikegbunam (2015) that there are no much differences between the contents of internet media and the mainstream media stories especially, when they report the same event.

Further investigations revealed that as the mainstream media cite online media contents on some issues, the online media also cite the mainstream media on certain issues depending on which media is basically grounded on the event under investigation. However, it could be recalled that some of the stories from the online media examined in this study have bye-lines showing the names of the writers as in mainstream media. This finding is in line with the provision of the source credibility theory of the media which proposes that a story attracts and holds attention of the public and is therefore, considered to be credible once the source of the story presents itself as credible (Lasica, 2003; Asemah, 2011; Murphy and Auter, 2012).

With the presence of by-line and attribution to sources, the online media in this study has vindicated itself from lacking credibility. So rather than ridicule journalism practice, online media outfits have changed the narrative by making news available from all corners of the world. This finding is in line with the position held in Bahja, (2013) who stated that unprecedented rise of citizen journalism had impacted significantly on the mainstream media in the last few years. Among the online media examined, it was found that not even all the public comments or contributions made by the readers are reflected on air. This is some kind of gate-keeping which puts the online media editor(s) on the obligation to check what comes up and what goes down.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings made above, this study concluded that rather than mortifying the mainstream media, journalists approve the online media and citizen journalism and as well, transfer the much desired credibility that was alleged to be lacking in them through borrowing or lifting contents from them either with or without being acknowledged as found in them. This study draws from Višňovský and Radošinská (2017) who state that the key to economic success and popularity regardless of which kind of media or distribution channels always lies in understanding the audiences, their behavioural patterns, expectations and needs to dismiss the criticism of online media by the mainstream media practitioners and experts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings and conclusion of the study, the researcher recommended that:

- The mainstream media journalists and media experts should desist from making some derogatory remarks about the online media contents but rather incorporate them in their reports for effective and on-the-event coverage of issues.
- The mainstream media reporters should be objective enough to cite the online media channel when their contents are lifted.



- The online media should strive the more to attribute to sources, provide accurate details and by-lines to earn the credibility that has been bestowed on them by the mainstream media.

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## **EXPLORING NEWS EDITORS' ADVOCACY ON SOOT AND WASTE DISPOSAL IN PORT HARCOURT NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was undertaken to explore the practice of advocacy journalism among news editors in Port Harcourt on the menace of environmental challenges of soot and solid waste disposal in the Rivers State metropolis. News editors of 13 private radio stations in Port Harcourt formed the population for the study. The research instrument was an interview that was based on structured questions framed to extract primary data from the population. The qualitative method was adopted in analysing the data. Among other findings, the study unravelled that the practice of advocacy journalism among news editors on soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste is weak in Port Harcourt. More so, the study ascertained that none of the news editors adopted news commentary as an approach in the advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt. Given the findings, it is recommended that news reports on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt should be done regularly to strengthen the advocacy and contribute to change of attitudes of the masses toward the environment. It is also recommended, among others that news commentary should be adopted by news editors in Port Harcourt as part of the strategies to advance advocacy on soot menace and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in that city, due to the educative, expository and detailed nature of the commentary.*

**Keywords: Explore, Advocacy, Journalism, Editors, Environment**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The mass media play significant roles in the societal watch in all forms. They are exercised within the responsibilities that are available to the media. One of the responsibilities of the mass media, as espoused by Harold Lasswell in 1948, is surveillance of the environment. Theorists and media critics have noted that media surveillance of the environment is tied to the news function of the mass media. However, the mass media have now adopted different approaches for societal surveillance. One of the approaches is advocacy journalism which is a subjective style of journalism that is aimed at championing a course for improvement of the fortunes of the masses and the good of the society. Through advocacy journalism, the media push for a change of situation, improvement of the situation, or maintaining a situation that is considered satisfactory. So, the mass media by doing this, move away from deadpan reporting and adopt a subjective method of journalism that is focused on fighting for a legitimate course, and not just mere reportage of societal issues. Advocacy journalism is applied in seeking justice for the less privileged people, raped victims, flood victims, widows,



pensioners and different social issues that require improvement and/or sustenance for the good of the masses.

In Port Harcourt, soot and solid wastes are grave environmental problems that are confronting the people and the government. The problems require advocacy journalism due to their negative effects on the residents of the city and the environment. The environment is the backbone of man's physical existence. Human beings rely largely on the environment for their survival. So, the basic needs of human beings: food, cloth and shelter cannot be achieved if the environment is destroyed. Also, societal development cannot be discussed without reference to the environment, therefore, it requires preservation. Given the above, Ite (2016) says environmental sustainability requires the use of environmental goods and services in such a way that their productive capacities are not reduced, nor their overall contribution to human well-being diminished (p.4).

However, human beings for whom the environment is created and whose responsibility it is to ensure the safety of the biosphere have failed to protect the environment from depletion. Accordingly, man's actions have continued to cause great damages to the environment. Worried by man's action on the environment, Usua (2016) notes that many of the resources that serve as life supports are rapidly disappearing and this has happened mostly as a result of man's attitude towards the resources themselves (p.235).

Man's negative action on the environment has been aggravated due to increase in population, industrial activities and other economic ventures. The consequences of industrial, economic activities and consumerism include an increase in solid waste. In Nigeria, federal, state and local government authorities are battling to control solid waste disposal. Rivers State is one of the states in Nigeria that has continued to battle with the consequences of solid waste on the environment.

As a result of this, beginning from the 1980s several efforts had been put in place by the Rivers State Government to address the environmental menace. In recent time, the government of Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi adopted a strategic approach in the evacuation and management of solid waste generated by residents of the state. As noted by Reuben (2018, p.106), yet, owing to the increasing challenge of rural-urban migration and overpopulation of Port Harcourt with the resultant problem of heaps of waste in the metropolis, a more strategic action plan on the state environment was established in 2013. And this is known as the Rivers State Waste Management Agency.

As people of Rivers State continued to battle with the situation amid an upswing in the population of people living in Port Harcourt, another environmental challenge surfaced in November 2016. This environmental menace is known as soot. This black substance that dots the atmosphere and later settles on cars, houses and being inhaled by the residents of the state especially those living in Eleme, Oyigbo, Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt Local Government Areas, has been described by environmental and medical experts as dangerous, cancerous and deadly. In the words of the chairman of the committee inaugurated by the Rivers State Government to find a solution to the soot menace, Professor Precious Ede, (<http://www.bbc.com>, on December 9, 2019) "medical investigations reveal that black soot accounts for four per cent of lung infections in Rivers State from 2016 when the hazard



started. If in the next five years nothing is done to tackle it there will be more sickness like respiratory tract infection and increase in cancer cases”.

Amid this situation, accusations and counter-accusations have continued in Rivers State. Civil Society Organizations have consistently called on the Rivers State Government, the Federal Government and agencies of government charged with the responsibility of tackling environmental hazards to exercise their responsibilities. However, while the federal government through its agencies always blame criminals who engage in illegal refining of crude oil (referred to as *kpo fire* in local parlance) for the hazard, the Rivers State Government on the other hand always accuse law-enforcement agents of being behind the situation, noting that the security agents engage in unprofessional methods in confiscating seized petroleum products from suspected criminals. The Rivers State Government had also accused the law enforcement agents of burning boats and seized petroleum products in defiance to environmental laws and practices.

As the blame game continues, the masses are looking up to societal institutions, including the mass media for solutions to the situations. Mass Media roles in championing a good course on behalf of the society have been acknowledged by experts including Okon (2013) who notes that indeed the press has a cardinal responsibility of making sense out of what goes on around us to sensitize the individual, in the society, on the goings-on in his immediate environment. The primary concern of the press, in a socio-economic system, like Nigeria, should be geared towards bringing problems to light so they can be resolved (p.7).

The press includes radio, television, newspaper, magazine and in contemporary time, the social media. Meanwhile, news editors, as framers of issues that are reported in the mass media, to a very large extent, also determine approaches to be taken in the reportage of issues. The focus of this study is, therefore, news editors of radio stations in Port Harcourt, because Ochonogor (2016) notes that “radio, with its extensive outreach, has a great potential for uniting people and helping to shape their thoughts, opinions and introducing new ideas to those living in the most remote places”.

Port Harcourt has 16 radio stations. So, considering the number of radio stations in Port Harcourt, their perceived effects and availability plus the power of news editors as noted by (Beder, 2004; Fred et al, 2003), cited in Amanah and Ekwebelem (2019), that media owners or proprietors control the news selected and reported. This is done through the appointment of editors who become their voice within the newsroom, thus ensuring that journalistic independence conforms to the preferred editorial policy. These editors act as the final gatekeepers in deciding what to publish and what news stories reporters should gather. Interestingly, the power of the media is not just in its editorial policy but also in its coverage of some issues rather than others...(p.344), this study seeks to explore news editors advocacy on soot and waste disposal in port Harcourt, Nigeria.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

While driving into Port Harcourt or walking around the city, it is very common to see heaps of refuse in sacks and polythene bags littering the roadside. Solid waste is dumped on the elevated parts of roads (the median) in Port Harcourt and other parts of the state indiscriminately. Officials of Rivers State Waste Management Agency (RIWAMA) are



expected to evacuate it regularly but most times it is left on the road for many days. And even when evacuated, some residue of particles of the debris is left on the median.

Such improper disposal of waste constitutes a threat not just to air quality, land, water sources, and the city's aesthetic value but also to human beings. This is because, during decomposition, it produces bad smell and serves as a breeding ground for pest that spreads diseases.

Another environmental problem that is threatening the existence of residents of Port Harcourt is soot which effect became noticeable in November 2016. Soot poses tremendous harms to public health particularly because of its size. It can easily go into the human lungs and bloodstream and cause great damage, even to the entire body system.

The mass media, especially the broadcast media are expected to create awareness on different issues as their programmes are received by large audiences. There are sixteen radio stations in Port Harcourt. Consequently, it is expected that enlightenment on proper disposal of waste as well as actions by government and relevant agencies in tackling soot menace would have been done greatly; contributing to change of attitudes of the masses toward the environment. However, indiscriminate disposal of solid waste with soot hazard has remained unabated despite the existence of these media houses. The problem of this study is, therefore, expressed in the foregoing.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The major aim of this study is to explore news editors' advocacy on soot and waste disposal in Port Harcourt, while the goal of the study, among others, revolves around the need to:

- Ascertain approaches adopted by news editors of radio stations in Port Harcourt in carrying out advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt,
- Find out if news editors of radio stations in Port Harcourt attach seriousness to advocacy journalism on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt,
- Identify major obstacle confronting the news editors in their advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What approaches do news editors of radio stations in Port Harcourt adopt in carrying out advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt?
- Do news editors in Port Harcourt attach seriousness to advocacy journalism on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt?
- What is the major obstacle confronting the news editors in their advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt?

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study, having being undertaken following the problem posed by soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt and the need to unravel news editors' advocacy on this problem, will be significant to different people and organizations. Consequently, results from this study will fill the literature gap in this area and contribute to knowledge in the field of communication study. It will also be significant to the Rivers State



Government, Rivers State Waste Management Agency and other environmental agencies. Researchers and students of mass communication and those in environmental sciences will equally find this study useful.

### **THEORETICAL SUPPORT**

This study is based on Yale's Persuasive Theory and Social Judgement/Involvement Theories. Yale's attitude change theory is the social psychological study of the conditions under which people are most likely to change their attitude in response to persuasive messages. It is believed that this method to persuasive communication was adopted by Carl Hovland and his associates at Yale University around the 1940s and 1950s but was later referred to as the Yale attitude change approach.

There have been hundreds, if not thousands of experimental studies that might influence comprehension, acceptance and retention of persuasive messages. Hovland et al, cited in Asemah, et al (2016) assert that whenever any persuasive information is offered by a source that is not trusted, it tends to be discounted by the audience. As a result, immediately after exposure, there is little or no attitude change; but then, after several weeks, the source is no longer associated with the issue in the minds of the audience with positive attitude changes appear. The theory states that many factors will affect how likely a change of attitude through persuasion can be, stressing that behavioural change cannot occur without attitude change also having taken place. The three most prominent factors are the source, the messages and the audience. The Hovland-Yale model says the content of the information is a crucial factor. So, an argument is more effective if you show both sides of the argument, but then show why your opinion is correct (Asemah et al, 2016). Ajzen (2014) corroborates Asemah et al (2016) view when he asserts that:

the most frequently studied source factors, however, are the communicator's credibility and attractiveness. Credibility refers to the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the communicator. In other words, does the communicator have the knowledge to provide an informed opinion on the issue in question and, if so, can he or she be trusted to present all relevant information in an unbiased fashion? As noted earlier, persuasion is generally assumed to increase with credibility. It has similarly been proposed that the amount of change is influenced by the attractiveness or likability of the source, whether attractiveness is defined in terms of physical features or psychological and behavioural characteristics (p4)

It implies that the source or the person who is presenting a message can influence its persuasiveness. This is usually referred to as source credibility. It could be stated that people are more likely to be persuaded by the words of experts than that of those who are inexperienced. Similarly, if people do not trust the source of a message they will not be persuaded by the source. Three important areas of investigation into the content of persuasive messages are message arguments (quality and quantity of arguments), evidence and fear appeals. Research demonstrates that the strength of an argument is directly related to attitude change.

It means the stronger the argument, the more the attitude change it creates and the weaker the argument, the less attitude change it creates. So, arguments that are stronger or of higher





quality would be more persuasive than weaker arguments. Messages with more argument are more persuasive than those with fewer arguments. The more arguments in a message, the more likely it will seem to be true or the more likely that message will include at least, one argument that appeals to the audience. These factors probably influence persuasion.

Another theory adopted for this work is advocacy theory. According to Diri and Ezeji, (2019) advocacy communication theory argues that there should be an injection of the media and communication advocacy brand in championing certain issues in society. Media and communication advocacy is going beyond and above the routine journalism of reporting and writing to positioning journalists as advocates for social change through their writings-news, features, columns, editorials, documentaries, commentaries, etc. Advocacy means any action geared towards changing the policies, positions or programmes of any institution. The first step is to identify a problem in the community. One needs to understand all the aspects of the problem and find ways to help others to understand the problem fully. Then one can find ways to solve the issue (p.307). In solving environmental problems, Ukala (2010) argues that environmental communication messages should serve to educate, alert, persuade and help solve environmental problems.

From the foregoing, it can be asserted that advocacy journalism is both a philosophy and an action. A philosophy because it takes on a subjective approach in the practice of journalism, aimed at interpretation and analysis of situations, issues and policies to enhance understanding of the issues by the masses. It approaches the subjective discourse with the responsibility to the society and commitment to journalistic ethical considerations while advancing a cause or suing for a change in action. On the other hand, it is an action because it involves an implementation or adoption of well-thought-out communication strategy and approach to seeking a change of policies or improvement of a situation. This approach could also aim at suing for maintenance of a policy that has given relief to the masses but which the government or the policymakers want to change. The messages that are promoted under this genre of journalism are illustrative, interpretative, fact-based and persuasive in nature. This will lead to the actualization of the view expressed by Aigbe et al (2017) that to enjoy a clean and healthy Nigerian environment, there is an urgent need for dissemination of information, education and enlightenment of environmental issues to the public...The absence of enlightenment is the cause of the lackadaisical attitude of most Nigerians towards the environment and environmental concerns (p.43).

The above view corroborates the submission by Akporido (1997), cited in Okoro et al (2012), that:

public awareness on environmental issues will intimate man on the effects of some industrial operations on his health and the physical environment, enlighten him on various environmental laws and regulations that are available in our society and inspire a greater sense of respect for the environment. Bearing in mind that problems of environmental pollution are traced to man's activities that accumulate in bits and consequently altering his environment negatively, environmental information and awareness campaign will enlighten the people to understand the consequence of their action to avert any further degradation of the environment

Woodruff (1996), notes that "media advocacy was instrumental in the success of a campaign that pressured the alcohol industry to change how they portray women in much of their advertising".

The two theories are, therefore, relevant to this work. While Yale's attitude change theory notes the conditions under which people are most likely to change their attitude in response to



persuasive messages, advocacy journalism takes it upon itself to champion the course for a change of bad policies and/or maintenance of good policy, while maintaining journalistic responsibility to the society. So, people and/or situation can be changed due to the nature of advocacy communication.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

All environmental media-the atmosphere, groundwater and surface water, and soil-are vulnerable to hazardous waste contamination. Ocean pollution, soil contamination, disease, fish kills, and livestock loss are among the potential damages. The health and ecological effects can be severe and long term (Thomas et al, 2007). Other contaminants are anthropogenic, meaning caused by human activity. These include such substances as carbon monoxide from tailpipe exhausts and sulfur dioxide emissions from electricity generation. Although these types of pollutants are controllable and generally present a greater environmental risk than natural contaminants, they cannot be avoided completely without incurring the unrealistic opportunity cost of no industrial activity...Using economic, we can identify an efficient level of air quality where the associated marginal social benefits are balanced with the marginal social cost...However, the real-world complexities of government procedures, scientific uncertainty, and political pressures tend to delay or even prohibit the realization of an economic approach (p.190). Mugenda et al (2014) had noted that sudden and unexpected concentration of people in urban areas places a stream on the environment far greater than absolute numbers of people. High-density population in every small urban area means that wastes and all other aspects of pollution are also concentrated, often to such a degree that natural processes are unable to cleanse the environment of contaminants.

The above submissions are lucid demonstrations of environmental problems in the world. In Nigeria, the government and people are seriously facing environmental problems. In Port Harcourt, environmental problems are common. Major among the environmental hitches that are threatening the lives of people in Port Harcourt are soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste. Consequently, studies have been done on these problems in Port Harcourt and elsewhere, to find solutions to them. A few of these studies are reviewed in this work.

Obuah and Okon (2017) while highlighting the deplorable state of solid waste management across the country, in their study on “Environmental Communication Strategies of the Rivers State Waste Management Agency (RIWAMA): Implications for Sustainable Waste Management in Nigeria”, noted that environmentally harmful practices seem to be commonplace phenomena in Rivers State and by extension Nigeria. Citing The United Nations Environmental Programme(UNEP) report on Ogoni land and Emeribe (2000), the duo went further to assert that the waste problem is as old as man. They added that it is dynamic and has evolved. At the centre of it all, are practices such as uncontrolled urbanization, population explosion and speedy industrialization which have generated a very high rate of the waste.



In what appears to be a corroboration of Obuah and Okon's position, Ifeoluwa (2019) conducted a study on "Harmful Effects and Management of Indiscriminate Solid Waste Disposal on Human and its Environment in Nigeria". The study established that in most parts of Nigeria like Lagos, Delta State, Oyo State and Abuja, it has been noticed that heaps of littering wastes dumps are in virtually all market areas, outskirts of the cities and even on roadsides for weeks without devising any adequate means of wastes collection either by private sector or government. The study noted that the present environmental pollution derived from solid waste littering has created a lot of health challenges to household residents around the dumping sites. On the other hand, Yakubu (2017) conducted a study on "Particle (soot) Pollution in Port Harcourt Rivers State Nigeria-Double Air Pollution Burden: Understanding and Tackling Potential Environmental Public Health Impact". Citing data from World Health Organisation (WHO), the study linked 90% of air pollution-related deaths occurring in low-and middle-income countries to non-communicable diseases which include cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung cancer.

Nwachukwu et al (2012) in their survey of a 5-year (2003–2007) epidemiological data discovered that the levels of all the criteria air pollutants in Rivers State were significantly higher than the World Health Organisation's (WHO) specification. The study noted that air pollution was associated with air-related morbidities and mortalities in the state. Among the air-related morbidity assessed, which include cerebrospinal meningitis, chronic bronchitis, measles, pertussis, pulmonary tuberculosis, pneumonia and upper respiratory tract infection, pneumonia was the most prevalent for all of the years that were studied and was responsible for the highest number of deaths in 2005.

In another study to ascertain the disease prevalence associated with industrial-related air pollution in specified Niger Delta communities, Godson et al (2010) established strong relationships between air pollutants, with morbidities, such as respiratory diseases, traumatic skin outgrowth, and child deformities. The study compared health effects in Eleme, a highly industrialized community with those observed in Ahoada East, a less industrialized community. A separate study conducted in 2010 by the duo further substantiated the health consequences of air pollution in Port Harcourt, and the prevalence of lung and skin cancers were found to be higher in Port Harcourt than in Ibadan.

Port Harcourt as an urban area plus its industrial status has continued to attract people. This has brought about an exponential population in the city. Because of this glitch in most urban areas, Kolstad (2011) asserts that to a large extent, air pollutants are at their worst in urban areas due to the concentration of people, both as sources of pollution (directly or indirectly) and as victims of the pollution. Air pollution can lead to health problems, including sickness as well as physical irritation and reduced human performance (p.9). Meanwhile, a study by Ojobor (2016) entitled "The role of communication in waste management: the ESWAMA experience" ascertained that ESWAMA, which means Enugu State Waste Management Agency uses radio more than all other communication methods. He argues that its ubiquitous nature, cheapness, as well as freedom from the problem of electricity, may account for this.

However, none of the above-cited studies and works investigates or explores the practice of advocacy journalism among news editors of radio stations in Port Harcourt on soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste in the street of Port Harcourt. This is the gap in the



literature which this study seeks to fill. Moreover, According to Friedman (1990), cited in Batta (2013):

Interest in environmental issues among journalists began in the 1980s. In 1988 Time Magazine named the earth as the planet of the year. In 1990, Pulitzer Prize was won for reporting environmental issues. Many media of mass communication including television stations in the United States began to increase their coverage of the environment. Given this background, news directors, particularly in the United States predicted that environmental issues were the issues of the 1990s (p.256)

Despite the interest of journalists on environmental issues, Asuquoet al (1992), cited in Batta (2013) contends that "the amount of vital information that are needed to either sustain the momentum of current environment efforts or are necessary to mobilise public opinion to become aware of and identify key environmental issues are still grossly inadequate". This is why this study is necessary.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researchers adopted the interview as the research instrument to generate primary data from the population of the study, while a qualitative approach was used to analyse the data. The interview was done on WhatsApp to generate data from news editors who were purposively sampled. The same questions that were scripted out were asked all the news editors. Thereafter, the researchers interpreted the findings. Highlighting the importance of interview in understanding events in our immediate society and environment in general, Ihejirika and Omega (2013) notes that "an interview guide or simply interview is a data collection instrument, usually, but not always, in a face-to-face setting...Interviews can also be done through telephones or internet chats".

The population of the study were news editors of 13, out of the 16 radio stations in Port Harcourt that broadcast news programme. The reason is one of the radio stations does not broadcast news programme while two other radio stations are owned by the Rivers State Government. So the study involved only the 13 privately-owned radio stations in Port Harcourt that broadcast news programmes. However, only ten news editors participated in the study out of the 13 radio stations that were chosen. Three other news editors turned down several efforts made by the researchers to involve them in the study. This, however, shows that 77 per cent of the population participated in the study.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

All but one, out of the 10 news editors that participated in the study is a woman. Meanwhile, apart from two of the news editors that are holders of Higher National Diploma (HND) degree in Mass Communication, eight others have Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree in Mass Communication and Linguistics and Communication Studies.

*Interview question 1 for psychographic data is "As a news person have you heard about advocacy journalism?" Responses to the question by the news editors show that all of them have heard about advocacy journalism, and have attended training on advocacy journalism. Only one of the news editors is yet to attend any training on advocacy journalism. This followed question two which is "In the course of your job have you attended any training on advocacy journalism"*



*Interview question 3 “In your opinion, what is advocacy journalism”.* The various definitions of advocacy journalism by the news editors, in summary, show that they view it as a well-intended form of journalistic writing adopted in advocating for political or social change. Therefore, all, except one of the news editors, clearly understood what advocacy journalism stands for.

Meanwhile, all the news editors considered soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt as serious environmental problems, and have been reporting them in the news. This followed their responses to interview question 4 which is *“Have you considered soot and solid waste as environmental problems in Port Harcourt?”*

In the view of one person (the only female respondent), apart from the straight news report, the issue is also treated by the radio station she works for, under special report, while six others said the issue is also treated during interactive talk show and news analysis. The remaining three news editors said it is given news analysis. However, none of the editors and by implication, the radio stations, embrace news commentary as an approach in the practice of advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt. This followed their responses to interview question 5 which is *“Apart from the straight news report, what other news treatments do you give soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt?”* This has answered research question 1 which is *“What approaches do news editors of radio stations in Port Harcourt adopt in carrying out advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt.”*

Four, out of the ten news editors (radio stations) regularly give news report about the danger of soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt. This followed their responses to interview question 6 which is *“Have you been reporting soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in your news and how often do you do this?”* The news editors said they always consider critical views by environmental experts against the government and its agencies responsible for controlling soot and waste disposal, as ‘hot news’ that should be reported to enable government take action. However, only three, out of the ten news editors embrace this advocacy often. This followed their responses to interview question 7 which is *“In reporting soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste, do you interview environmental experts and members of the Civil Society Organisation to air their views and do you consider views by them as ‘hot news’ that should be reported to enable government take action?”* The stories on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt are always given headline treatment by all the news editors. This followed their responses to interview question 8 which is *“Do stories on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt make headline?”* Therefore, responses to interview questions 6, 7 and 8 have answered research question 2 which is *“Do news editors in Port Harcourt attach seriousness to advocacy journalism on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt?”*

In the meantime, the news editors said despite their advocacy journalism on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt they have never been threatened by the government or its agencies, stressing that they would continue with the advocacy. This followed their responses to interview question 9 which is *“Have you been threatened by government or its agents as a result of your advocacy journalism on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt?”*. This has answered research





question 3 which is “*What is the major obstacle confronting the news editors in their advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt?*”

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

From the data analysis, it means that in Port Harcourt, news editors, who in most cases are the Heads of News Department of the radio stations, are aware of advocacy journalism and have undergone training on it. However, one of the editors has not had any training on advocacy journalism. Due to the danger that is caused on daily basis by soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt, various approaches have been considered by the news editors to fight the environmental hazards. The approaches include: straight news, news analysis and interactive talk show. More so, the issues are reported and given headline treatment. It means that the news editors adopted different approaches in treating the soot menace and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt.

Meanwhile, none of the news editors considers news commentary critical in the advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt. This would negatively affect the advocacy drive because news commentary is like the editorial that is written in the newspapers. It is detailed and educative. Through news commentary, issues are interpreted to put them in proper perspective and to give the audiences a better understanding of the issues. Though written by one person among members of the editorial team, which reflects the views of one person; it serves as an aide that helps in understanding complex societal issues that are reported through straight news. The non-inclusion of news commentary, therefore, by the news editors in their advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of waste in Port Harcourt, will weaken their campaign for a healthy environment. This is because, for advocacy that requires the change of attitude of a people to be successful, it should be persuasive and enlightening.

The finding that only four, out of the ten news editors regularly give reports about the dangers of soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste to people's lives is an indication that the advocacy by news editors in Port Harcourt on the environmental problems is weak. It means that only forty per cent of the news editors consider soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste in Port Harcourt as environmental problems. Given this, the fight against these environmental problems will be weak because Pershuck and Wilbur (1991), cited in Okon (2013) note that the key to a successful media campaign is to have the same message conveyed through multiple channels. Okon (2013), while analysing the assertion, maintains that “the imputation, therefore, is that advocacy does not provide a platform for lone rangers. A lone voice will inadvertently be drowned. Advocacy campaigns must be pervasive and collaborative – different channels must be used at the same time and in the same context”. Furthermore, it is only when issues are reported regularly that they become the societal agenda.

Interestingly, none of the editors has been threatened by the government or its agents as a result of their advocacy journalism. This is in pursuit of environmental friendly attitude by the masses. It means, therefore, that advocacy journalism on these environmental problems has no obstacle.





## CONCLUSION

From the data analysis and discussion of findings, it shows that advocacy journalism by news editors on soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste in Port Harcourt is weak. This conclusion is drawn from the finding that sixty per cent of the news editors seldom give reportage on soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste in Port Harcourt. Moreso, the failure of the news editors to consider news commentary as a critical approach in their advocacy for a better and healthy environment, has weakened the campaign. It also shows that the news editors do not attach seriousness to the advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in the streets of Port Harcourt. Straight news, news analysis and interactive talk show that are adopted by the news editors are not enough in the enlightening process of the masses. This is why Usua (2016) maintains that the way to go about this is sustained public enlightenment and advocacy, which calls for deep concern and continued sharing of information on the part of the communicators and advocates about the practice and its implication on humans. Sustained enlightenment and advocacy entails not only deliberately designing messages that aim at persuading people to take specific actions to reduce greenhouse emissions, but also adopting different communication approaches and media to effectively reach all segments of society... (p.250). On the other hand, the revelation that the news editors are not threatened in their advocacy on soot menace and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt gives hope that advocacy journalism on these two environmental challenges can receive a boost in that city. Despite this, to ensure effective advocacy journalism, the assertion by Fisher (2011), cited in Omoshue et al (2016) that 'enforcement of standards is very important since man is known to be more interested in doing what is wrong than what is right. He argues further that the combination of both the media and law enforcement would yield better result', should be adhered to.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings of this work, the following recommendations are made:

- Reports on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt should be done regularly. The sustainability of the advocacy will tell the masses the seriousness of the issues and make them think about the issue which is capable of making them have good or better attitudes toward the environment, depending on other societal factors.
- News commentary should be adopted by news editors in Port Harcourt as part of the strategies to advance advocacy journalism in that city, with the ultimate goal of achieving a clean and healthy environment. If and when embraced, it would help a great deal in driving the advocacy on soot and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste in Port Harcourt, due to the educative, expository and detailed nature of the commentary.
- Editors and by extension the various radio stations in Port Harcourt should close ranks in the approaches adopted for the advocacy on soot and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste in Port Harcourt. The collaborative effort will give strength to the campaign and determine the perception of the masses about it.

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## **AN APPRAISAL OF THE USE OF GESTALT PRINCIPLES IN LOGOGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION AMONG SELECT GRAPHIC ARTISTS IN A NIGERIAN URBAN CITY**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper appraised the use of Gestalt design principles in logo graphics communication, in recognition of the role logos play in image-making and the identity of companies, businesses and brands. When a new business is planned, the need to find a logo designer who can come up with a creative and exclusive business logo arises. Elegance, creativity and excellence of design help business logos to give unlimited boost to organizations. Against this backdrop, the purpose of this study was to ascertain the use of the Gestalt principles by logographic artists in select business areas in Awka urban. We asked, how aware are logographic artists of Gestalt principles and whether they applied these principles in their logo designs. The Gestalt principles of design were employed as the yardstick for this study. Data were collected from a selected number of logographic artists in Awka Urban, Anambra*



state, using IDIs (In-depth interviews), from the business areas in town. The major findings of this study suggested that more than two-third of the artists studied were aware of the Gestalt principles but were not so keen in applying them to their designs due to the dictates of client's choice and satisfaction

**Keywords:** Gestalt principles, logo designs, logographic artists, logo graphics communication

## INTRODUCTION

The various principles of Gestalt, the organization of perceptual scenes, came up in the 1920s. Max Wertheimer, a German psychologist distinguished the various principles of Gestalt, some of which, includes the principle of proximity, the principle of similarity, the principle of continuity, the principle of closure and the figure-ground principle. As a result of these principles, Gestalt psychology became popular in Germany. Max Wertheimer and his German associates Wolfgang Kohler and Kurt Koffka had ever since been held as the founders of Gestalt psychology (Hergenhahn, 2009).

## GESTALT PRINCIPLES

Gestalt psychology was first proposed by German psychologists in the 1920s. It was used to explain how people organized visual information. Gestalt psychology was defined as the investigation of conscious experience through introspection and see things in meaning, whole intact configurations (Bradley, 2014). The term *Gestalt* is a psychology word. It refers to a "unified whole". It is based on the theories of visual perception developed by German psychologists in the 1920s. These theories picture how people would organize visual elements into groups or *unified wholes* when certain principles are applied (Szwemin, 2015). These principles are:

**Similarity:** When objects look similar to one another, *Similarity* occurs. These objects are often perceived as a group or pattern.



Figure 1: Gestalt principle of similarity (Szwemin, 2015)



The example in Fig. 1, containing 11 distinct objects, appears as a single unit because all of the shapes appear similar. Unity occurs because the triangular shapes at the bottom of the eagle symbol look similar to the shapes that form the sunburst.

When similarity occurs, an object can be emphasized if it is *dissimilar* to the others. This is called anomaly.



Figure 2: Occurrence of anomaly  
(Szwemin, 2015)

In Fig. 2, the figure on the far right forms a focal point because it is dissimilar to the other shapes.

**Continuation:** When the eye is compelled to move through one object and continue to another object, *continuation* occurs.



Figure 3: The principle of continuation  
(Szwemin, 2015)

Continuation occurs in the example in Fig. 3, because the viewer's eye will naturally follow a line or curve. The eye is led directly to the maple leaf by the smooth flowing crossbar of the "H".

**Closure:** When an object is incomplete or a space is not completely enclosed, *Closure* occurs.





Figure 4: The principle of Closure  
(Szwemin, 2015)

Although the panda in Fig. 4 is not complete, enough is present for the eye to complete the shape. Closure occurs when the viewer's perception completes a shape.

**Proximity:** When elements are placed close together *Proximity* occurs. Such elements tend to be perceived as a group.

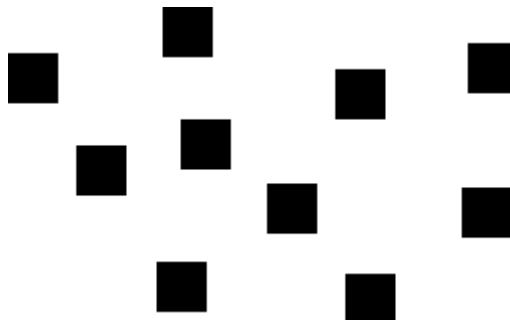
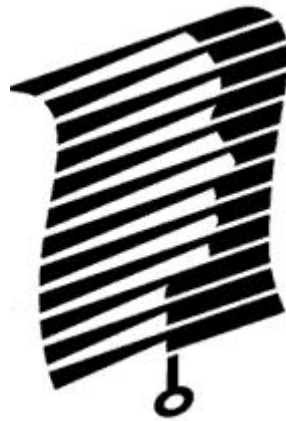


Figure 5: The principle of Proximity  
(Szwemin, 2015)

The nine squares in Figure 5 are placed without proximity. They are, therefore, perceived as separate shapes.

**Figure and Ground:** The eye differentiates an object from its surrounding area. A form, silhouette, or shape is naturally perceived as **figure**(object), while the surrounding area is perceived as **ground**(background). Balancing figure and ground can make the perceived image clearer. Using unusual figure/ground relationships can add interest and subtlety to an image.



*Figure 6: The principle of Figure and Ground (Szwemin, 2015)*

### **WELL-KNOWN LOGO EVOLUTION**

Logo design is an important area of graphic design, and one of the most difficult to perfect. The logo (ideogram) is the image embodying an organization. Because logos are meant to represent companies' brands or corporate identities and foster their immediate customer recognition, it is counter-productive to frequently redesign logos (Carrie, 2020).

The evolution of logo designing could be traced back to the Ancient Greece, when the rulers and their dynasties used to use cipher as a monogram in their coins. However, the modern logo designing dates back to the early days of the Renaissance, around the 13th Century. Goldsmiths, masons, paper makers, and potters, were among the first trades people to use marks-pressings into gold, chiselled symbols, watermarks on paper, and simple thumb-prints on pottery (Mertes, 2020).

Today there are many corporations, products, brands, services, agencies and other entities using logos, which have undergone some evolution. The following are a few examples of these logos:



Figure 7: Evolution of Pepsi logo (Source: Pinterest)

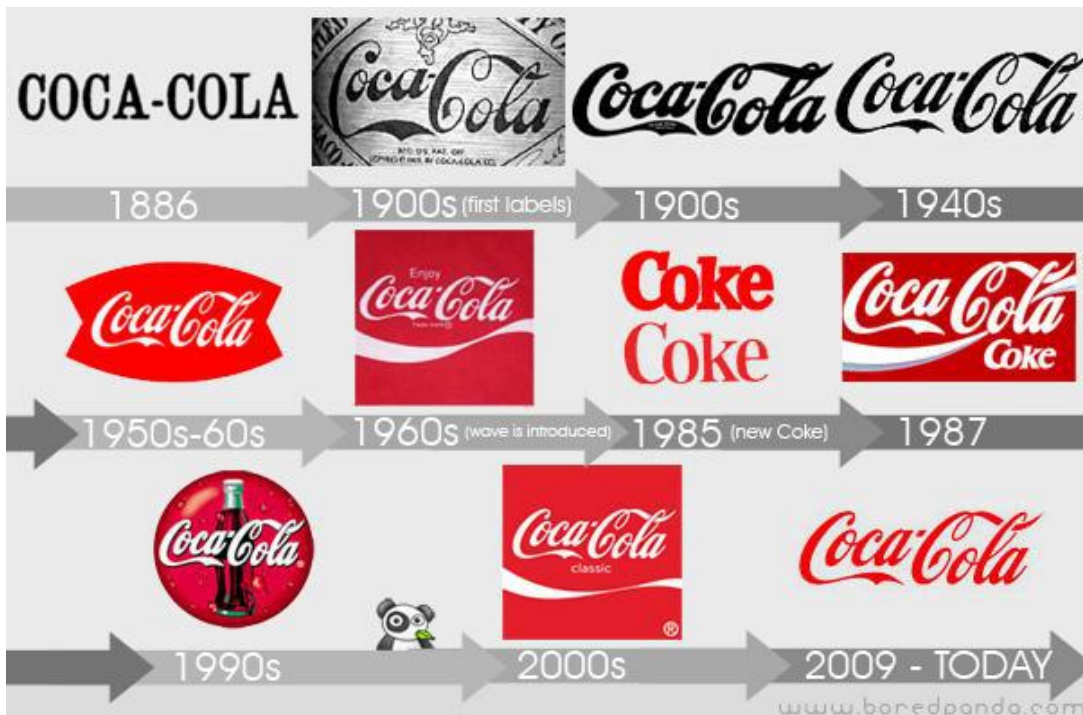


Figure 8: Evolution of Coca-Cola logo (Source: Pinterest)



Figure 9: Evolution of Nike logo (Source: Pinterest)



Figure 10: Evolution of Nokia logo (Source: Pinterest)

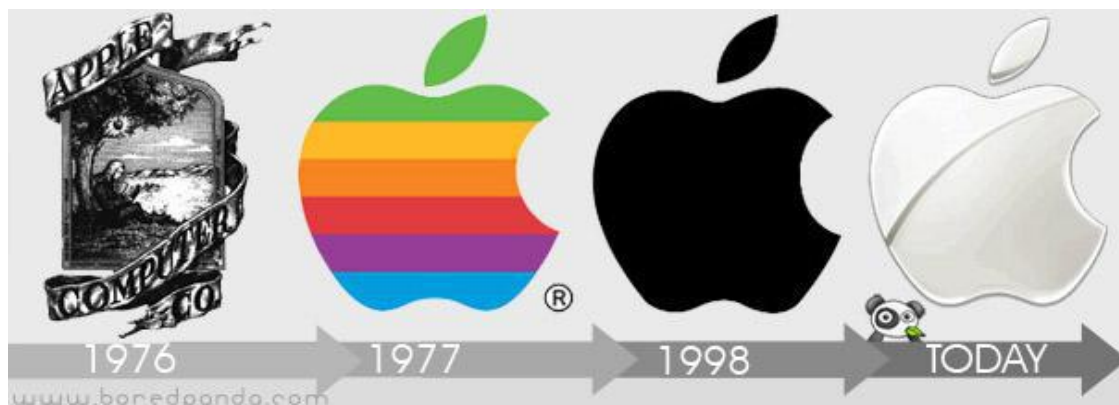


Figure 10: Evolution of Apple logo (Source: Pinterest)



Figure 11: Evolution of Google logo (Source: Pinterest)



Figure 12: Evolution of Microsoft logo (Source: Pinterest)

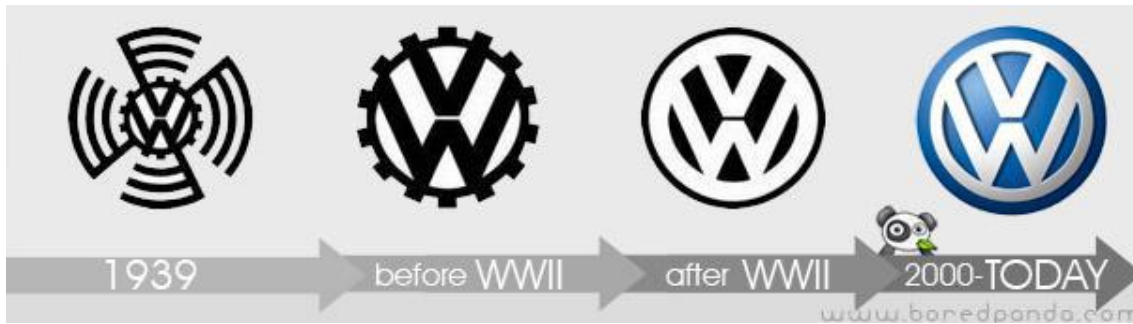


Figure.13: Evolution of Microsoft logo (Source: Pinterest)

### REFLECTING THE GESTALT PRINCIPLES IN LOGO DESIGNS

The human brain is subconsciously guided by Gestalt Principles while observing the physical world. Logo designers can use these to make business logos memorable. A few practical applications for each of these Gestalt principles, in the design of the logos of well known companies, shows how visually stimulating logos that are based on these principles could be.

#### Similarity:



Figure. 14: Netflix brand logo (LaRosa, 2019)

The example in Fig. 14 is the iconic typography style from Netflix’s “Stranger Things”. There is a sense of cohesion throughout this brand; everything from the colours to the shapes that were used.





Figure 15: Antarctic Voice logo (Source: Austronaut design)

Similarity suggests cohesion to the human eye but anomaly, as depicted in Fig. 15, can be inspiring. The two symmetric pikes represent both an iceberg and a vice equalizer.

### **Continuation**

Continuation, here, implies natural flow; just as rivers flow. Rivers have continuity; they ebb and flow yet every twist and turn feels cohesive. This sort of flow in a logo leads the eye along, in a way that demands the brain's attention. This principle comes to life when the brain sees a logo as a unit rather than a sum of letters or parts.



Figure 16: Coca-Cola logo (LaRosa, 2019)

One good example of continuation is Coca-Cola; the brand that has affected humans around the world. As depicted in Fig. 16, even though "Coca" and "Cola" are separated by a hyphen the eye moves across the logo fluidly.

### **Closure**

The principle of closure revolves around the idea of two or more shapes coming together and creating something new in the negative space. When this happens, the brain tends to notice the obvious structure of the shapes first and then catches on to the hidden shape over time. This execution has the strongest effect when the hidden shape communicates something powerful about the brand (La Rosa, 2019).







Figure 17: FedEx Logo (LaRosa, 2019)

The shipping company FedEx, employs closure very intelligently in their logo, as shown in Fig. 17. The vibrant colors and strong text of the FedEx logo, catches the eye at first glance and gives a strong impression which inspires trust and confidence. A closer look at the logo shows a shape hidden in plain sight. The letter E and the letter X, in the logo, join together to create a rightward facing white arrow. Arrows would suggest speed, progress, and forward-thinking – an arguably, powerful shape to associate with a brand that is focused on cross-continental package delivery.

### **Proximity**

Proximity entails the relative distance between objects in relation to one another. When objects are close together they are assumed to be part of a group. On the other hand, when objects are displaced they are assumed to be alienated. The human brain tends to group objects as part of a collection regardless of their actual relation to one another.



Figure.18: Mystery Islands logo (Gert van Duinen)

In Fig. 18, the example of the logo Mystery Islands created by Gert van Duinen, reflects the principle of proximity. The designer used the proximity principle to create a shape of an island its reflection on the sea, the customer activity, dance music producer and recognizable as equalizer lines. This appears a perfect combination for the brand name: Mystery Islands.

### **Figure and Ground**

Figure and ground principle holds that our perception tends to separate images into figure, or object, and ground, or background.



Figure 19: Feathers & Fur Pet Store logo (Lumo)

By following the Figure and Ground principle in the Feathers & Fur Pet Store logo, the logo designer, *Lumo*, created a recognizable parrot on a branch and a dog's face in the logo to reflect the company's core business.

### WHY THE EMPHASIS ON GESTALT PRINCIPLES?

Logo design is the result of creativity. Gestalt principles when used in tandem with the basic principles of design – visual proportion, colour dominance, elements organization, etc – offer the recipe for effective logo design (Kimbarovsky, 2020).

LaRosa (2019) opines that the biggest advantage of using Gestalt principles is that they give logos sticking power – they make the thing that represents businesses, fun, thoughtful, and memorable. That is why building the logo design of a brand around these principles is always desirable.

### THE PROBLEM

Organizations often request for a logo design, unaware of the branding fundamentals and benefits. Many consider logos as mere symbols or signs, and truly undervalue the importance of professional logo designs, and the impact that bad logos can have on business (Cass, 2010). There is, also, the issue of some graphic artists not knowing the elements of good design or using mere raw talent in their creations (Hardy, 2009). Against this backdrop, it might be worthwhile to ask: what do graphic designers know and do with design principles like the Gestalt theory? Are they aware that the application of the Gestalt's principles of design can make for good professional logo designs? Do they actually apply these principles for their business Logo graphics or do they rely on instinctive raw talent to make their designs?

### AIM OF STUDY

Based on the foregoing curiosity, the objective of the study was to examine the awareness and application of Gestalt's principles of design in business Logo graphics creation among Graphic artists in Awka urban area, Anambra State, Nigeria.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to aid the investigation of the research problem, the following questions were posed:

- What do logographic designers in Awka urban area know about the significance of good logos in business image-making?



- How aware are they of the Gestalt principles?
- Are they aware that these principles could aid the design of effective business logos?
- Do they apply these principles of design or 'raw' talent in creating logos for their clients?

## **METHOD**

This study was designed as in-depth interview (IDI). The interview sought to elicit answers from respondents with regard to their awareness of the Gestalt principle and application of these in logo designs.

A purposeful decision was made to use Awka urban, Anambra State as a test case. The population for the study comprised six logo graphic designers in Awka urban business areas. There was apparently no data on the population of logo graphic designers in Anambra state, so the population centred on the available logographic designers who were evidently in business within three visibly major business areas in Awka urban namely, Unizik junction Eke-Awka, Amawbia, and Aroma junction. In-depth interviews were conducted with these people.

## **RESULTS**

Data from these six IDIs were, analyzed and emerging themes interpreted in the light of the research questions.

The first IDI was conducted with a professional Graphic Artist / Designer in Amawbia area, this interviewee admitted to specialize in business logo designing apart from the general graphics. He knew what a logo was and the benefits of a good business logo. In his words "a good logo can attract people to your business and boost sales". However he sounded a bit hesitant when asked "do your clients decide their logo turnout or you do?" which gave an indication that he let his client's decision and choices prevail in his logo designs: he said "Hmm, I let them decide what they like oo!, afterall, they are the ones that end up using it not me, so I gladly give them what they want for my money".

In response to the question, "Do you work with design principles", the interviewee's face lightened with smiles. In his words, "well, every business has its own trade secrets, so does mine, I have principles and techniques, kind of like....my laid out presets!"

When asked what guides his creativity and what he considers when making client's business logos, the interviewee confidently said "as a graphic designer, I consider many things like what the client really wants, his taste as in class, what he deals in/services he renders, his company colour etc". Proceeding to the elements he considers when making logo designs he said, "I consider colours, fonts, symbols, balance, harmony aesthetics etc".

Narrowing down to the subject of the study, the interviewee was asked "Are you aware of the Gestalt principle of design?" He said "Yeah, we were taught that back in my school years, all about visual perception and unified whole abi [isn't it]?, I still remember that one".

When asked "So, do you apply this Gestalt principles on your client's logo design?" he smartly answered "Well, it depends on the class of the client, like I said most of these business people don't know all these details, they care about their banners with their business



name's boldly written on them more than logos, they will prefer just an acronym of their business name as logos; logos are just to add a sense of completion for many of them so why bother for such a client? Unless we are talking corporate bodies that know what's up....then I can go back to my school fine arts notebooks, Gestalt principles and what have you."

The second IDI was with a roadside graphic artist also in Eke-Awka market area. This IDI reveals that this graphic artist was also into business-logo designing. On the benefits of a good business logo, he said, "A good business logo will always leave a symbol in the minds of your customers, so that each time they think of buying a particular product, they will quickly be confronted with the picture of your brand replaying in their minds, a good business logo is highly beneficial."

On the question "who decides the logo turnout, you or your client?" The interviewee said he just plays according to his client's desires, since it is all about customer satisfaction at the end of the day.

The respondent was not emphatic about design principles, he strongly emphasized how his designs come from inspiration, in his words "I just go ahead and design the logo according to my inspiration at the time, I believe in the freedom of expression to achieve the best results, I do not believe in all these principles that could limit or cage my creativity."

The IDI revealed that this logo graphic artist relies solely on the client's instructions if any and adds a bit of his "inspirations" to perfect it. He is concerned with commercial appeal and he was not aware of the Gestalt principles of design and therefore do not apply it as He said "I don't know what that is, I have never heard about him or it"

The interviewee obviously was not aware of how to apply the gestalt principles to his logo creation and for that couldn't tell why it should be applied to his logographic designs.

The third IDI was with a professional graphic designer at Unizik Junction, this interviewee admitted to also offer the services of logographic designing. He also knew about the benefits of a good business logo. In his words, "a good business logo enhances brand preference among customers and ultimately promotes sales."

On who decides client's logo turnout, the respondent made a brilliant remark; "I usually don't pull a switch on my clients' requests but I diplomatically advise them according to the best of my work experience. Even when they won't listen I still find a way to show them what I mean by giving them varieties and letting them make a choice, that way everybody is happy, the client gets their dream business logo and I'd have my reputation and bragging rights intact".

Asked if he works with design principles, he responded "of course, I do work with basic design principles".

On what guides his creativity and his considerations when making a business logo he said "I get inspired by the nature of the client's business, it is easier when just an object, a tool or material can represent the entire business.eg, "an automobile servicing firm could be represented by a simple spanner or steering".



Asked if he knew about the Gestalt Principles of design, He said “Yes I am aware of the Gestalt principles and I even apply them to my logo designs.”

The interviewee also explained the reasons for making use of the Gestalt principles in his client’s business logo design: “the Gestalt principles makes my work easier, rightful applications of any of the principles gives any logo a professional touch effortlessly”.

The fourth IDI was with a graphic designer at Unizik Junction business area. This respondent was into logo designs. He knew what a logo was and the benefits of a good business logo. Regarding the benefits of a good logo”, he said, “Generally, a good logo has a way of adding a touch of class to your business while a poorly done logo could devalue a brand”.

On who makes the decision of the logo output, he responded, “Well, they say the customer is always right, but I won’t fail to give my good guidance and professional touch finally”.

The respondent admitted to be working with basic design principles as his guideline; he also stated that he considers the basic design elements while working “e.g. shape, size, colour, balance and the rest of them”.

On his knowledge about the Gestalt principles, he said, “Yes I do, if you are a true professional like me, you must have come across it one way or the other”.

Asked if he applies them to his logo design his response was “Yes I do, though unconsciously. You see, often times, these principles play into my designs and they end up looking great but we don’t always bear the Gestalt principle in mind while working. For me, it’s all about the practical application and result”.

On why he applies the Gestalt principles in his client’s business logo designs, he said, “I apply these principles because overtime they’ve yielded awesome results for me. I’d advice my fellow graphic artists to read about it or at least know its application because it will enhance their productivity”.

IDI number five was with a young female graphic artist in the Aroma business area. The interviewee showed she knew a lot about logo design and its benefits. She said, “ I know good logos have the ability to give brands and businesses a memorable face, take a good look at LG, SONY,NIKE etc, and the way their logos represent them all over the world, it is a seal of pride, a mark of good quality and a symbol of what a brand stands for”.

On “who decides the logo turnout,” she said, “Well, for me, nobody should call the shots. It is better when ideas are combined, if the clients can do it, then why would they need my services? And if I go ahead and do logos my way, am I the person to use them? And that’s why we all need to rub minds together for a great output”.

Asked if she works with design principles, the respondent said, “Sure! There are rules and guidelines for virtually everything.” For her, she considers “the clients’ plan; they are the ones that need the logo, they are the ones that will use the logo, and so all I do is to make sure they end up loving what I give them at the end of the day”.

In explaining the elements she focuses on when creating a business logo, she said, “lines, proportion, hue and value, colour balance and gradient and more”.



The respondent's reply was "yes!" when asked if she was aware of the Gestalt principles. She continued; "we were taught that in school and they are helping me right now".

When asked if she applies the Gestalt principles and why she uses them in her client's business logo designs, she readily concluded "I apply them because as far as logo design is concerned, who can do without them? They are the backbones of all good logos out there including all the ones you know".

The sixth IDI was conducted with an amateur graphic artist at Aroma Junction business area.

The respondent quickly accepted that he offers the services of logo design, then went on to state confidently "isn't it that thing beside a company name, more like a signature?" On the benefits of a good logo, he said, "A good logo will benefit a brand because the owner would be happy with himself".

When asked if the logo turnout was his decision or the client's, he responded "well, here, all the client has to do is to bring his business name to us, trust, I always know what to do, once they pay me, they shouldn't worry".

Asked if he works with design principles, he answered, "Well, I work as I was taught". On what guides his creative flows and consideration when making client's business logos, he said, "shaa [really], it depends on the amount the person paid, you can't pay me one naira and expect a 5,000 naira job, no way!".

When asked the element he focuses on when designing a business logo, he said, "you know, everything nowadays is about swag [status] and 'pinging' [beautiful colours]".

About his knowledge of the Gestalt principles of logo design, he said, "I don't do that one. See my brother, all those ones are for those that have time, time is money, all these people (businessmen) don't even care so much about logo sef [even]! The banner is the main thing".

## **ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The analyzed data was used to answer the four research questions posed in this study.

- **Research question 1:** *What do logographic designers in Awka urban area know about the significance of good logos in business image-making?*

In the First IDI, the respondent said "a good logo can attract people to your business and boost sales". In the Second IDI, the respondent said, "A good business logo will always leave a symbol in the minds of your customers, so that each time they think of buying a particular product, they will quickly be confronted with the picture of your brand replaying in their minds, a good business logo is highly beneficial". In the Third IDI, the interviewee said, "A good business logo enhances brand preference among customers and ultimately promotes sales". In the Fourth IDI, the respondent had this to say, "Generally, a good logo has a way of adding a touch of class to your business while a poorly done logo could devalue a brand". The respondent in the Fifth IDI said, "I know good logos have the ability to give brands and businesses a memorable face, take a good look at LG, SONY, NIKE etc, and the way their logos represent them all over the world, it is a seal of pride, a mark of good quality and a





symbols of what a brand stands for”. Finally the respondent from the Sixth IDI said, “A good logo will benefit a brand because the owner would be happy with himself”.

From the six IDIs there is a suggestion that the respondents are aware of the significant benefits of good logos in business image-making.

- **Research question 2:** *How aware are they of the Gestalt principles?*

In the First IDI the respondent said “Yeah, we were taught that back in my school years, all about visual perception and unified whole abi [isn’t it]?I still remember that one”. In the Second IDI, the respondent was totally not aware of the Gestalt principle as he bluntly replied “I don’t know what that is, I have never heard about him or it”. In the Third IDI, the respondent said, “Yes I am aware of the Gestalt principles and I even apply them to my logo designs”. The respondent in the Fourth IDI had this to say too, “Yes I do, if you are a true professional like me, you must have come across it one way or the other”. In the Fifth IDI the respondent exclaimed “yes! We were taught that in school and they are helping me right now”. Finally in the Sixth IDI, the respondent said, “I don’t do that one. See my brother, all those ones are for those that have time, time is money, all these people (businessmen) don’t even care so much about logo sef [proper]! The banner is the main thing”.

Excerpts from the Six IDIs for this study show that only two respondents (the Second IDI and the Sixth IDI) were not aware of the Gestalt principles of design.

- **Research question 3:** *Are they aware that these principles could aid the design of effective business logos?*

Excerpts from the foregoing analysis of the research question 3, shows evidence that the three respondents (Third, Fourth and Fifth IDIs) who applied the Gestalt principles were also aware of how they could aid them create effective business logos. Therefore, their responses sounded like words of advice.

In the Third IDI, the respondent replied, “...rightful application of any of the principles gives any logo a professional touch effortlessly”. In the Fourth IDI, the respondent knew certainly and for this he advised his peers, “...I’d advice my fellow graphic artists to read about it or at least know its application because it will enhance their productivity”. The respondent in the Fifth IDI said, “...They are the backbones of all good logos out there including all the ones you know”.

- **Research question 4:** *Do they apply these principles of design or ‘raw’ talent in creating Logos for their clients?*

In the First IDI, the respondent said “Well, it depends on the class of the client. Like I said, most of these business people don’t know all these details, they care about their banners with their business name’s boldly written on them more than logos, they will prefer just an acronym of their business name as logos, logos are just to add a sense of completion for many of them, so why bother such a client, unless we are talking about corporate bodies that know what’s up....then I can go back to my school fine arts-notebooks, Gestalt principles and what have you”.



In the Second IDI, The interviewee obviously was not aware of how to apply the gestalt principles to his logo creation and for that couldn't tell why it should be applied to his logographic designs.

In the Third IDI, the respondent replied, "the Gestalt principle makes my work easier, rightful applications of any of the principles gives any logo a professional touch effortlessly".

The respondent in the Fourth IDI added a piece of advice; "I apply these principles because overtime they've yielded awesome results for me; I'd advice my fellow graphic artists to read about it or at least know its application because it will enhance their productivity". In the

Fifth IDI the respondent said, "I apply them because as far as logo design is concerned, who can do without them? They are the backbones of all good logos out there including all the ones you know".

The respondent in the Sixth IDI was rather ignorant of the Gestalt principles and did not see the need to apply them in creating logos for his clients.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study sought to establish awareness and application of the Gestalt principles of design in logo graphic communication among graphic designers in Awka urban areas.

The major findings of this study would suggest that the respondents were majorly aware of the gestalt principles but some did not end up applying them, and even when they do, they applied them wrongly. This leads to the conclusion that there is likelihood that the logographic designers in Awka urban, in the main, do not rightfully apply the gestalt principles of design, for effective logographic communication; obviously neglecting a handy tool in the professional design of logos.

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## USE OF RADIO AS A TOOL OF LEARNING IN CRISIS PERIOD

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### Abstract

*Radio has remained a powerful medium of communication and this is due to the fact that its message contents can be received at distant places as a result of its wide coverage and its ubiquitous nature. It has the ability to reach large audiences because it is relatively cheap and can function without electricity. Therefore, it is regarded as the most accessible tool of technology used for information dissemination. Studies have found out that radio is the most popular broadcast medium used for teaching in times of crisis all over the world. This is due to the fact that it is relatively cheap and can be easily accessible. Unfortunately, little attention is being given to radio as a tool that can enhance education especially in crisis period. An instance is the COVID-19 pandemic that has shut down the academic walls in Nigeria and elsewhere around the globe. Against the foregoing, this paper sought to conceptually look at the power of radio broadcasting as a platform that will not only provide a new way of teaching, but make available*



*effective tool that will augment class room teaching during and after the ravaging Corona virus pandemic. The paper highlighted the role radio could play as well as the benefits of radio as a tool for educational learning in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study highlights the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic effects on education could have a lasting impact on the trajectory of education in Nigeria if not tackled with the utmost urgency it deserves.*

**Key words:** Radio, Radio Education, Crisis, COVID-19, Pandemic, School closure

## INTRODUCTION

The world has suffered from some pandemics that have brought its socio-economic activities to a standstill. The Corona virus disease (COVID-19) which is the latest pandemic the world is currently experiencing started out as an epidemic in Wuhan China in December 2019 and ended up as a pandemic that has thrown the whole world into a war like situation with thousands of deaths recorded in many countries, Nigeria inclusive. Health systems are bewildered, local and global economies are at their worst in decades and the educational sector of the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions closed down.

The past months have heralded an array of government regulations across Nigeria and other parts of the world in a bid to decrease the spread of this deadly corona virus disease. Starting from airport closures, to nationwide closure of schools and lockdowns in different states of the country, these strict regulations were put in place to forestall an epidemic that could put a lot of lives at risk. These regulations did not come with its own drawbacks especially in the educational sector. The impact of school closures has been felt largely by students and pupils as they had to stay home with little or nothing to do. As children stayed home and time went by, it became increasingly necessary for some form of learning to be taking place to keep the children engaged as the solution to the deadly virus is sought. While the government released a COVID-19 contingency plan, the information contained within the document focused on keeping schools safe during the pandemic, counseling and providing information to the students about preventive measures and actions to curb the spread. However, with this contingency plan it was evident that there was a gap that needed to be filled – to ensure that learning continued even in the face of stay at home and lockdown directives. For an existing ailing education system, the COVID-19 presents monumental challenges on the government, students and parents that will highlight and could amplify some of the cracks in the system. Given the situation of events today, the nation's capability to continue learning will hinge on their ability to quickly utilize available technology, make available adequate infrastructure and deploy stakeholders to prepare substitute learning programmes.

In most cases, Nigeria's educational sector is not adjusting and is likely to struggle on that front for the expectable future. However, the major socio-economic burden will be shared excessively by students in public schools as compared to those in private schools. As most private schools took the direction of online learning for its pupils and students, it became evident that most pupils and students particularly those from public schools where internet connectivity might not be certain may miss out from the online teachings. Obiakor & Adeniran (2020) noted that while private schools have started to establish distance learning programs and getting benefit of the host of ICT learning amenities offered by the international community, the government constrained by funds and incessant inadequacies in planning are still to announce any official strategies for providing distance learning amenities,



particularly for public schools. The consequence being that these students and pupils presently have no formal learning arrangements and could be missing learning entirely.

Broadcasting educational programmes during the COVID-19 period can be done speedily and easily and if done correctly, will produce exceptionally satisfactory education outcomes for learners. And utilizing radio remains one of the only ways to impact majority of the most deprived students and pupils at a reasonable cost. This paper looks at how radio as a cheap and accessible communication tool can be maximized to ensure sustained learning, even in the period of the lockdown. Radio according to Onyejemezi (2006) is recognized as a useful and most accessible means of providing learning experiences for a large number of students.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The Corona virus disease, a highly infectious disease which started as an epidemic in Wuhan China and has gradually become a world pandemic has without doubt negatively affected the global economy. It has compelled many businesses to temporarily shut down and governments across the globe had to place a restriction on movement while exempting purveyors of essential services who are to accurately observe social distancing rules while offering services as a way to contain the spread of the virus. Obiakor & Adeniran (2020) states that there has been an array of control measures by the government in their bid to curtail this pandemic which has become a worldwide problem. From a nationwide closure of schools to several lockdowns in various states, a decline in the educational learning process of children is expected. Access to vital educational services provided by schools have been denied most Nigerian students as a result of the school closure. Most private schools in an attempt to close the gap that trails the lockdown have resorted to online teaching. But the question is: how many children would gain from the online teaching considering the current economic situation in the country? Even where some of them might profit from the exercise based on their social status, how many would generally have this benefit when the monetary competence to power most of the platform that enhance e-learning is capital intensive? This of course, is where radio comes in as a panacea. Several studies amongst (Onyejemezi, 2006; Akpan, 2008; Owuamanam, 2010) have demonstrated that radio is the cheapest and most affordable technological means of information dissemination. Unfortunately, radio has been under-utilized when it comes to educational learning, this is especially in Africa, Nigeria in particular where this platform has not been successfully employed as a learning tool. What could be the cause of this? These are the particular problems that necessitated this study. Can radio be maximized effectively in Nigeria as a tool for educational learning? It is against this backdrop that this paper tries to highlight the benefits of radio as a tool for educational learning and critically assess how it can be maximized towards ensuring a constant learning experience for Nigerian schools. This is from the beginning to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Radio is one of the most popular means of communication. It was first utilized by the government and military to transmit information to each other especially in times of war. As time went by, it became a popular means of receiving information for many people as well. It permitted the common man to have a voice that could be heard. Duby (2006) asserts that radio is one of the simplest and most affordable broadcast media technologies and as a result is being used for educational purposes especially in time of crisis.





Onyejemezi (2006) states that using radio as an educational tool allows the students to listen and get a feel of what their teachers are talking about. Sometimes, some of the lessons are written in a way that allows the students to have a grip of the information temporarily but the radio is often more entertaining than reading the same material. Circell (2004) opines that radio helps bring students together and connects them to one another; hence, the usefulness of radio in times of crises. Educational radio aids the students to continue learning especially in the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria; thus, helping to keep the students at home to reduce the spread of the disease and at the time keeping them busy with academic teaching.

According to Duby (2006), educational radio has been applied within a wide collection of instructional design contexts. In some cases it is assisted by the use of printed materials, by local discussion groups, and by regional study units. It is sometimes designed so as to allow and inspire listener reaction and comment. In some cases, there is opportunity for the audience to raise questions and to receive feedback.

In their evaluative study focusing on interactive radio, Bansal and Choudhary (1999) revealed that radio holds great prospects in terms of assisting students who are learning at a distance or who are confined at home as a result of a crisis breakout or pandemics. The first program of study to use interactive radio as a mode of distance education delivery was a radio project focusing on students enrolled in IGNOU's Management and Bachelor Preparatory Programme. Students registered in this introductory effort reported that the interactive radio sessions proved functional in helping them achieve their coursework targets. Students registered with other institutions and the general public also partook in these interactive radio sessions. These two groups remarked interactive radio as an 'interesting experience.' Fundamentally, the Management and Bachelor Preparatory Programme students also enrolled a higher rate of involvement using interactive radio, than during teleconferences and even face-to-face sessions.

Karim, Kama, and Islam (2001), examined the role of radio and TV programmes used in distance open learning system at the Bangladesh Open University. They revealed radio and TV programmes aid learners on how to utilize the courses, and provide adequate explanations of concepts.

Sukumar (2001) conducted a study of interactive radio counseling as applied in IGNOU. He found that radio counseling makes available an excellent opportunity for learners in remote areas to point out their concerns, ask questions, and generally interact directly with teachers and speakers. Interactive radio counseling also provides a chance for the general public to connect with speakers, thus adding a brand new and enhancing dimension to the general publics' learning experiences. Sukumar's study also revealed listeners considered radio counseling as both popular and successful.

Sambo (2012) stated that radio is a tool that invests the past with an air of reality. They provide the learners with realistic experience, which capture their attention and help in the understanding of the historical phenomena. They appeal to the mind through the visual auditory senses. Also, Ortyoyande (2006) noted that we receive knowledge through our senses; they also noted that if we hear we forget, if we see we remember, and if we do something we know it. So, access to educational radio makes learning process more effective and productive which is why radio learning is advocated for especially in the time of crises





like the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria and the world at large. Also, those educational programs can be recorded to benefit Learners by listening and viewing the lesson programs severally, hence aids their retention. Therefore, educational radio encourages learning, makes it easier and interesting.

Eyyam and Menevis (2010) found that teachers agreed that the educational radio has a positive impact on their experience. In the same way, Ozcinar, Hursen, Ozdamli (2009) observed that teacher trainees believed in positive effects of educational radio in times of crisis. More so, educational radio can provide instruction for one group of students whilst the teacher is occupied with another. As a medium that can be listened to in the privacy of one's home or room, they are often the preferred choice in times of pandemics like the COVID-19 where students are expected to be indoors and still be engaged in learning.

Jaminson and MC Anancy (1978) report four main advantages of educational radio which are; improve education quality and relevance especially in crisis times, lower per student educational costs; enhance access to education especially for under-privileged students or groups and ; It provides an evident clear audio and visual signal, which is specially necessary in instructional programs. Thus, radio remains a medium that had proven its educational worth in terms of both pedagogical relevance and geographical reach.

Right from the early days, the Nigerian Broadcasting system has given preference to educational service (Agba & Brown, 2012). According to them, the kind of selection then was the informal and mobilization kinds. At best, their concept and method of educational broadcasting was the mobilization kind that was planned towards mobilizing the populace. In the context of African struggle at that time, mobilization was educational. Agba & Brown (2012) stated that by 1954, it was observed that radio broadcasting can be utilized for comprehensive formal educational purposes.

According to them, a pilot study was carried out by the western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS) under the direction of one Tom Chalmers. The assessment was on subject lessons to schools in Lagos area. It was then realized that schools broadcasting could be of great use in inspiring and assisting teachers and pupils alike could hasten the speed of educational advancement in Nigeria. This discovery led the British government to send Richmond Postgate to Nigeria to study the potentiality of beginning school broadcasting in Nigeria. He was directed to report to the federal adviser on education "a comprehensive programme on broadcasting on English and the main vernacular at primary and secondary school levels with special reference to regional essentials. In 1955, Postgate in his report suggested school broadcast. He also recommended that school broadcasting should be partnership between National Broadcasting Service (NBS) and educational establishments. The role he anticipated for NBS are: Set up the broadcasting apparatus; recruit broadcasters, scriptwriters and performers and assist in training teachers in the use of broadcast. The role for educational authorities was to:

- Confirm that inspectors and teachers receive proper training to use broadcasting.
- Establish the content of syllabus of the subject to be taught.

Agba & Brown (2012) noted that the Postage submission could not be carried out by the Federal government due to lack of money. But the northern government according to them, in



May 1957 started school broadcasting on Radio with a programme on English Language for primary schools. Regardless of the set back encountered in the purpose of using broadcast amenities for formal educational objectives; there has always been the resolve on reviving the concept. La'aro (2004) states that in the early 80s, several state broadcasting stations developed educational programmes on radio that were created after the schools' curriculum. He noted that the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, the manager of "Radio Nigeria" produced many programmes that are derived from the books produced by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) or other materials approved by the council. The target audience for such broadcasts was Junior Secondary School Students, Senior Secondary Students and Primary school teachers, particularly the pivotal category. La'aro (2004) again noted that the objectives were the augmentation and strengthening of what the children have been taught in classroom and to stimulate the minds of the teachers focused on. But regrettably, such programmes could not be maintained due to lack of funds and they were sidelined to the background.

Obiakor & Adeniran (2020) states that the advent of the corona virus has brought about a rude awakening to the necessity of using radio for formal education in times of crises as children are not in school as a result of the lock down. Government in its bid to keep the children busy at this period has resuscitated the use of radio for formal education. Though most private schools took to online teaching to continue the learning experience with their students and pupils, Radio is adjudged to be the best tool for continuing the learning process in times of crisis.

### **Modes of Radio use in Educational broadcasting during Crisis period**

The concept of radio educational broadcasting means the system through which radio is used to attain the objectives of formal, informal and non-formal type of education particularly in times of crises or pandemics such as that of the COVID-19 which is currently ravaging the world. Radio educational broadcasting can pertain to programmes that are enlightening, informative and intellectually stimulating. It can be introduced at home or at school. It is often directed to a target audience at desired locations. La'aro, (2004) in Agba & Brown (2012) stimulates that radio educational broadcasting can be observed from four different modes of education which are:

- **Formal Educational Broadcasting:** Addresses the use of radio for instructional objectives that conform to the characteristics of formal education- a formal syllabus, stringent grade system, formal school hours, formal certificates and general formal school experiences.
- **Non-formal Educational Broadcasting:** This means a situation in which the resources (human and material) of radio services are utilized to obtain the needed skills of adults without extracting them from their work-day habits. It involves the procuring of functional knowledge that is meaningful to the adult social/ working responsibilities.
- **Informal Educational Broadcasting:** This means the daily encounter with radio programmes that assist individuals to gain knowledge; however, the individual did not set out to acquire it but does through daily encounter with radio broadcasting. It is in



this reason that radio broadcast houses affirm to be educating their audience. The layout may come in different formats like news, drama, discussion programmes and documentaries.

- **Mobilization Educational Broadcasting:** These are the purposively planned radio broadcast messages intended to encourage, convince, dissuade, motivate the general public to conduct themselves in certain, desired ways. It is about urging people to agree to the perspective of the sponsor. The format may be in Jingles; basically composed lyrics or any other broadcast programme pattern.

### Radio Educational Broadcasting Strategy

According to Agba et al (2012), the strategy applied in using radio to promote the objectives of education in periods of school closure as a result of crises is different depending on the type of education under study. La'aro (2004) cited in Agba & Brown (2012) has discovered the following strategies:

- **Substitute for Teachers:** Direct classroom teaching can be organised through radio broadcasting. This kind of radio teaching is adopted where there are many pupils but fewer teachers and also in crisis situations that require students and pupils to be out of the school environment for a period of time. The growing necessity for constant learning inspite of the hindrances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in our country, where there is a temporal school closure call for the application of these educational broadcasting strategies to fill the gap. This strategy is most appropriate for educating pupils and students at home. This will go a long way in continuing the pupil's learning process that had been halted as a result of the pandemic.
- **Supplementary/ Enrichment Role:** This is utilizing radio broadcasting to complement the efforts of teachers. In this case, radio programmes are prepared in accordance with the curriculum content of specific subjects. The planning of the broadcasting programme will be based on research findings regarding the time use pattern of the target audience. The teacher would then turn the attention of the students or pupils to the programme as enhancing or augmenting what has been discussed in normal classroom setting. For absolute utilization of the programme, the teacher must emphasize the importance of the programme to their students' or pupils' academic performance. As most private schools have taken to online teaching, this strategy would supplement the teaching and enrich the students with a more rounded knowledge of a particular subject.
- **Distant Learning:** Radio broadcasting is fundamentally used as part of the distance learning plan to reach students in the comfort of their homes. This is completely dependent on the success of the operational arrangement. Though it is prone to large operational and environmental challenges that may be discouraging, it could go a long way to aid in the continous learning of students in a crisis period.

### COVID-19 Crises and the Educational sector in Nigeria

According to Obiakor & Adeniran (2020), in Nigeria, on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Federal Ministry of education permitted an approval for the closure of all schools to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. School closure has not only had a distressing impact on students and pupils, teachers and their families, but has led to far-reaching economic and societal consequences. There is the worry that if schools continue to stay shut down, the



learning process of students and pupils will be highly threatened. According to UNESCO as cited by Obiakor & Adeniran (2020), about 35.9 million primary and secondary school learners in Nigeria are currently out of school as a result of the school closures. They further stated that in Nigeria, school advantage is connected to income level and public schools differ from private schools in the populations they serve. While private schools benefit learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds who are ready to pay more to obtain the better resources provided by private schools, public schools which are often free constitute students from lower socio-economic households and low income earners. In cases, where distance learning opportunities are accessible, response will be low from the students in the public school section and this could be as a consequence of poor infrastructure such as lack of electricity or poor/no internet connectivity.

A longer term aftermath of school closures will intensify educational inequality as findings have revealed that most private schools have started online classes with their students and pupils while those students from public schools are left behind as this ICT based resources to promote learning relies largely on the level and quality of digital and internet access of both the learners and their school management. This introduces a major challenge around educational inequality, given the technical landscape and income driven digital-divide, how then can accessible technology be utilized to support already marginalized students and pupils during these closures?

### **Radio as a tool for Educational learning in crisis times**

Reaching the susceptible population in Nigeria will necessitate adopting a learning delivery technique that can be easily available to the poor. Studies have proven that over 80 percent of the adult population in Nigeria have contact with radios and phones; it would then be possible to reach most children that may have been left out in the online classes through this medium. (Obiakor & Adeniran, 2020) Radio is a powerful medium for mass communication. This is because of the fact that broadcasts from a powerful transmitter can be received at distant places; however remote the place is situated. Radio can play a major role in transmitting knowledge to school children. Buttressing the above view, Agba & Brown (2012) observed that “such broadcasts are used during particular days and specific school hours mainly to the advantage of the educational institutions”

Radio broadcasting continues to be recognized as a useful means of offering learning experiences for larger number of students. Onyejemezi (2006) posits that radio has a lot to offer especially in African schools where there is a dearth of competent and specialist teachers. The radio serves a combined purpose in the sense that on one hand, the learners profit much from the skilled and expert demonstration through the radio, the teacher on the other hand comes into interaction with the expert tutor of his special subject. Thereby they acquire in knowledge and methodology. Radio broadcasts assist teachers in the field where they find themselves relatively ignorant and inexperienced. It plays an important role in reaching, informing and educating people in periods of crisis; Mohanty and Rath (2007) note that it is one of the best educational media that can be applied to communicate educational programmes to distinct classification of audiences anywhere on earth. Again, Mason (2004) notes that radio in education can offer useful answers which different learners can easily utilize. He further maintains that radio can be significant to distant learning for students in primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities. He also believes that radio programmes can provide flexibility and exposure and easy reachability to knowledge as well



as better outstanding order thinking and skill transformation with high tech learning environment. According to him, radio can produce new distance milieus in which learners are able to take greater responsibility for their own in creating their own knowledge. Circell (2004:48) asserts that learners can share and communicate ideas, beliefs, opinion, knowledge and information through educational radio. Radio permits for live interaction among learners, instructors and resource persons. As most private schools have resorted to online teaching through the internet, it is estimated that most students from low income homes who cannot afford the cost of data might be left out in the continuous learning process.

According to the Digital 2020 Global Overview published in January 2020, about 60% of Nigerians are not connected to the internet. The statistics for mobile phones which could also be utilized as a learning medium are more certain. According to the report, around 169.2 million people that is 83 percent of Nigerians have opportunity to mobile phone connections, however of these, 50 percent that is about 84.5 million people live in urban areas. For the population with access, the percentage would be slanted towards high socio economic households and urban households; a massive majority of whom are private school students who already have a learning leverage over their public school peers. For children from poorer backgrounds who are inclined to have less opportunity to internet connectivity, computers and other devices and live in rural areas where local languages take precedence over English, ICT learning uptake will be inadequate. Obiakor & Adeniran (2020) opine that the disparity in access to ICT based learning has the negative effect of further aggravating the existing disparities in learning resulting along socio-economic lines and the urban-rural divide. Given that the school closures are currently indefinite, these students and pupils would continue to fall further behind. To avoid this set back, radio is best suitable for this continuous learning to take place. This is because studies have revealed the simplicity and affordability of radio as regards access to educational broadcasts in times of crisis.

### **Benefits of Radio as a tool for Educational learning in the Crises times**

The advantages of using radio as an educational medium in crisis times cannot be over emphasized. Besides the affordability of radio, below are some of the benefits of using radio for educational learning:

- Radio can connect to a wide audience, as wide as distance and reception will permit.
- Radio administers a less-expensive means for reaching a large geographically scattered population with consistent classroom teachings.
- Radio lesson can provide up to date or latest and accurate information about classroom teachings on different subjects.
- It sometimes supplies source of materials for the main stream of classroom work.
- It composes a supplementary source of information enabling the pupils to listen to original instructional talk by the experts of the subjects under study.
- Radio is readily accessible.
- Radio is easy to use. Almost everyone is conversant about and comfortable with the use of radio.

### **Radio Educational Learning: A Reprieve for Nigeria Education in times of crisis**

The instant results of the pandemic might be critical, but this crisis provides a unique turning point; a chance to learn, reshape, and build doggedness into the educational system in Nigeria. The crisis has referred to the fact that there is a necessary need to entrench suitable





technology into learning. Technological solutions, like the use of radio in classroom learning can guarantee continuous learning outside the classroom and has the possibility of delivering better learning experiences at low costs.

Obiakor & Adeniran (2020), state that the post crisis period is a chance to invest in technology in both private and public school systems. To realize this system wide, it will be necessary to enforce public-private educational partnership. The crisis is an addition to the policy menu towards managing the out of school children as the forced closure of schools has emerged various modalities in reaching children when out of school.

COVID-19 has accentuated a critical gap in school based learning crises planning and emergency preparedness inside the education sector in Nigeria. Learning based contingency planning is important to make certain learning continue during times of crisis, to protect students and educators and to build doggedness within the education sector. The radio plays an essential role in conveying instructions and knowledge to school children.

Onyejemezi (2006) posits that radio has a lot to offer especially in African schools where there is a paucity of competent and specialist teachers. According to him, the radio serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, the learners gain much from skilled and expert presentation through the radio while the teacher on the other hand comes into communication with the expert tutor (master teacher) of his special subject. They both gain in knowledge and methodology. This is where the role of the Ministry of Education will essentially move beyond traditional policy making and regulations but to instruct Commissioners of Education to employ and utilize radios for educational learning within states, while the federal government harmonizes the state efforts by improving capacity and finance gaps. The government could extract from the experience of Sierra Leone, where the Ebola crisis caused school closures for about nine months. To reach the most vulnerable and excluded children, the government of Sierra Leone utilized radio to deliver lessons. The government chose this strategy because it is cost-effective and easy to use.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This article is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory which discusses the effects of media on people. How people use the media to satisfy their needs. The theory challenges the direct impact of the media on people. It affirms that as rational human beings, people make choices of what they want and the possible media they can use to satisfy their need.

This theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurvitch in the year 1974. It explains how people use the media for their own need and get satisfied when their needs are fulfilled. In other words it relies on two principles about media users. First, it characterizes media users as active in their selection of the media they consume. From this perspective, people don't use media passively. They are engaged and motivated in their media selections. Second, people are aware of their reasons for selecting different media options. They rely on their knowledge of their motivations to make media choices that will help meet their specific wants and needs. The implication of this study is that people use the radio for the gratification of their educational needs. They are motivated to use the radio for their learning needs because perhaps it is affordable and simple to use. It is a mass medium that can be harnessed to enhance an education campaign since it can span great distances and reach a large number of listeners. Because of its wide coverage, relatively low unit cost,





ability to reach those who are illiterate and without the use of mains power, it has proved to be an effective educational medium. The fact that it is non-visual can be harnessed to improve education quality since the listener is compelled to support the sound message by using his/her own imagination. No other medium has this educational power of stimulating and developing the abstract thinking of its audience and enriching and activating the listener's imagination. Education stakeholders and the audience in general could be made aware of the cogent reasons that make radio suitable for teaching formal education to children in this period of the Covid-19 pandemic. The simplicity and affordability of radio could motivate them to make it their choice in meeting this specific need.

## CONCLUSION

Since its evolution, radio has played a crucial role in the field of education. Radio itself has advanced over the centuries. But the basic principle has remained the same: reaching to the masses at a lower cost. The immediacy, the accessibility, the simplicity of the medium has the wherewithal to sustain its importance in the educational system in time of crisis.

The central view of this paper is to draw attention to how radio can be used as a tool for continuous educational learning in crisis times especially that of the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to shut down of schools in Nigeria. The point of priority of this paper however is on the prospect of discerning effective curriculum delivery at the various levels of education through the amenity of existing radio stations considering the fact that schools are closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without deliberate and concerted efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic effects on education could have a lasting consequence on the trajectory of education in Nigeria. The onus is now on us; do we permit this crisis to further intensify our education crisis or do we seize the chance to affect change that could address both pandemic-driven and pre-pandemic difficulties especially through radio educational learning?

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## **EXPLORING THE AESTHETICS OF AWON MASS WEDDING FESTIVAL AS POPULAR CULTURE**

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### **Abstract**

*Popular culture or popular literature is often being referred to as trivial literature or para literature as it possesses virtually similar characteristics of writing. Among its other genres, abound in popular culture are the festival aesthetics which constitutes its dramatic genre. "Awon" Mass wedding festival is one of such festivals celebrated annually in Shao, Moro Local Government, Kwara State. The festival has its many features which are rich in oral tradition and tourist events deployable for modern cultural entertainment. This paper considers the aesthetics of Awon Festival as an exemplary popular culture with a view to explore the richness and impact of the mass wedding festival on the cultural landscape of Nigeria and*



*global setting. The objectives of this essay are: to project the aesthetics as popular culture; to explore the role and tourist potentials of the festival towards the development of Kwara State; to promote the festival for global audience. The researcher participated in the annual two editions (2017 and 2019) of the festival to enable him obtain firsthand information for the analysis. Interviews and recordings were also carried out. The findings of the paper are that Awon festival is both entertaining and didactic as a popular culture in terms of events, oral texture and significance. It is capable of boosting the economy/IGR of the host state and the nation at large. The festival is recommended for global tourism and that the Kwara State Government and the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture should adopt the festival for invigoration interms of packaging for international audience.*

**Key words:** Awon festival, Popular culture, Tourism, Shao, Aesthetics

## INTRODUCTION

It is high time literary minds looked beyond the projection of festivals for mere entertaining effect. Instead, we should begin to embark on literary exploration or artistic exposition of cultural festivals for adaptation and competitive consumption of global audience. This will help to drive home economic viability and development of not just the immediate context of production but in the continent as a whole. At the disposal of a writer are artistic materials/creative gadgets with which to explore, adapt, expose and present the rich and inexhaustible cultural milieu in the aesthetic repository of Africa for the consumption of the international audience. This paper sets out to explore a unique cultural mass wedding festival celebrated in Shao, Moro Local Government of Kwara State of Nigeria, West African sub-region as popular culture. Popular Culture is that artistic event which is meant for the consumption of the ordinary people but spread by means of technology. Examples are festivals, popular songs, drama, popular dance etc.

By its content and form, Awon Mass Wedding falls within the repertoire of oral aesthetics. It is a cultural festival which is both narrative and performative... An artistic exploration of the mass wedding festival presents a rich historical background as well as performances as may be inherent in poetics, narratives and spectacle. The term aesthetics is a branch of philosophy which has to do with beauty or ugliness as may be inherent in an object. Akano (2012:2-5) observes that aesthetics in its literary meaning entails both functional and formal elements of a work of art as the basic distinguishing feature either in the oral or literary form. Aesthetics is what Stephen Pepper (1970:2) refers to as 'a science, a department of the science of value'. It means the ornamental or embellishing artistic techniques inherent in a work of art. Aesthetics is the sum total of values, characters, themes or meanings in a literary piece. In undertaking an aesthetic appreciation, the result is usually edifying or delightful through interpretation or explication of the formal or functional materials in a work of art as contended by Yanai (1978:472). On the other hand, the term globalization covers the evolution of a global society in which economic, political, environmental and cultural events in one part of the world quickly come to have significance for people in other parts of the world. It results from advancement in communication, transportation and information techniques underlining the growing linkages of governments, individuals, communities, businesses around the world through economy, politics, technology and culture. Similarly, the term tourism according to Bonink C. and Richards G. (1992) has to do with traveling for recreation, leisure, holidaying.



This study approaches the global and economic exposition of Awon Mass Wedding Festival from the social role of art. Raji-Oyelade (13-20) has a more insightful observation:

Like all other material productions, the literary artifact is a capital superstructure of the base of national wealth, condition, policy and privacy. (And) In its grand conception as an artistic mode in the production of knowledge, literature is a cell of many other networks which determine the quality and extent of national development

Art harmonizes existence giving meaning and interpretation to interrelationship and interaction between man and his environment. Africa as a continent is not just blessed with cultural festivals; its cultural content is fathomless. The artist taps in creatively and produces for global audience with the aid of digital technology. As Ogunsina (297) puts it, “the kernel of literary sociology is that literature does not only reflect, it affects the society; Obafemi (2013:4) opines that the writer does not just reflect his society, he responds and reacts to socio-political happenings around him or her.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The annual Awon mass wedding festival is a tourism event that can catalyze development. The festival requires international tourist packaging for global marketing but as it is at present it does not have the touch of international tourism standards.

### **Research questions**

- Q1. How effective/rich is celebration of Awon festival for tourist development of Kwara state?
- Q2. What is the role of Awon festival in cultural promotion of Kwara State?
- Q3. What challenges militate against the acceptance of Awon festival as popular culture?

### **POPULAR CULTURE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The invigoration of the study of popular culture or popular literature as the case may be is being emphasized on daily basis as researches keep pouring in from scholars. The field lends itself to oral rendition with a touch of artistry or performance. As observed by Tomlinson (1991), the content is so diffused that it is almost confusing demarcating between what is ‘popular’ and what is ‘unpopular’ in terms of cultural practices. There is also the delineation of the folk’s or cosmopolitan artistic ingredients especially distinguishing between old and modern, rustic and refined or primitive and civilized. Two things are clear about the term popular culture or popular literature; popular culture is para literary, sharing literary features just as its sociological or scientific flavour. This is why popular culture is referred to as para literature or trivial literature. In other words, the field is artistic and entertaining; it has content and form; it can take a narrative, poetic or dramatic form. Thus, the entertainment may veil its didactic flavour just as literature can be interpreted. Popular culture has its genres as literature but its packaging and value may not be a serious artistic finesse. This implies that that practice or tradition realized as ‘popular’ can also be literary. It is both thematic and formalistic. What then is popular culture?

Raymond’s taxonomy of the form and content of pop culture may be instructive here. Popular culture could be referred to as a cultural product that are deployed, narrated, staged or practised for entertainment purposes as well as for moral lessons. According to Raymond Williams (2016) popular culture encompasses two main aspects: culture and media. He goes further that it is an artistic material that is a by-product of cultural practice and its spread to different parts of the world or target audience via certain channels. Thus a material that is



cultural and made popular or known to a wider audience via technology which may be traditional or modern. The other aspect or meaning of popular culture is whether it is rustic or civilized. The word culture connotes a way of life that concerned with spirituality, entertainment, intellectualism and aesthetic of a particular people, race or group.

Culture as defined by Tomlinson (1991) can be considered to mean ceremonial processes; a people's belief, ethics, customs, social codes, religion, value system and behavioural codes among other things. On the other hand, literature refers to oral or written artistic materials which bear permanent values. Popular culture is a subset of both culture and literature.

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines popular culture as popular art that embraces any dance, literature, music, theatre, or other art form intended to be received and appreciated by ordinary people in a literate, technologically advanced society dominated by urban culture. Popular art in the twenty century on such technologies of reproduction or distribution as television, printing, photography, digital compact disc and tape recording, motion pictures, radio and video cassettes.

Popular culture encompasses the artistic values emanating from folk's culture and propagated or advertised through the entertainment industry, the media and targeted at ordinary people in society. Popular culture abounds in stories, events plays, poems, music, chants being written or performed by an individual or a group of performers but that is resplendent of cultural echoes of a given setting. Karin Berber(1999) captures the two components of popular culture as "visible things which would have otherwise been ignored; it is an area of traditional and elite culture, the vast area that is flexible and ever changing, representing a loose collection of different cultural expressions".

In categorizing popular culture as a literary product, Peter Swirski argues that popular culture is popular literature which is referred to as paraliterature in French and trivial literature in German and that it is a literary phenomenon and not a mere cultural nuisance because it has its socio-aesthetic status which demarcates it as the beauty of "literary democracy". Some scholars have defined popular culture as residue of cultural studies. The conclusion drawn by Swirski is instructive; that popular fiction has had no appreciable harmful effect either on highbrow literature, on its intellectually refined consumers, or on the society as a whole. What it does is to perform a valuable socio-aesthetic role rather than constitute a cultural menace.

The above position by Swirski corroborates Berber's that though "popular culture often escapes the attention of the outside world, it forms the ingredient of the lifestyle of the urban population". He asserts further that one of its commonest elements is the fact that pop culture:

are products of a dialogue between modern culture and modernity; it results from selective and creative arrangement of specific elements, forms, themes, materials and techniques. Western culture and indigenous forms form a new product that is adapted to new tunes and surrounding audience

Popular culture is a blend of the traditional, the rustic and the primitive that is/has been made popular by technological innovation in print, electronic and digital discs. It is the creative enterprise of the folks but enjoyed and embraced by the elite through technological aids and innovations. Popular culture is so popular by virtue of its graduation from its rural or rustic processes to its popularity through mass media and other advertising digitals. It is the





product that cannot be tapped, accessed or consumed in its rustic setting but lifted and propagated via technological breakthrough to the rest of the world.

Popular culture is driven by its mass appeal and wider or global distribution brought about by its cheapness, availability, affordability, and accessibility. The utilitarian value of popular culture is its entertaining purposes. But beyond entertainment, the ideological or radical touch of popular culture as an art subsumes in the tenets of cultural materialism as propounded by Raymond Williams.

Williams himself gives three different definitions of popular culture which embrace its scope, utility and reference. He defines popular culture as “a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development”. This he relates to the role of philosophers, artists and poets in the formulation of cultural ethos. Williams (2001) also defines popular culture as “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group”. This he captures under creative artistry as a signifying process which popular culture entails and can be utilized for. Culture underlines a people’s way of life in terms of value specificity or uniqueness. These are notable in terms of social practices, cultural events, festivals, value orientation, celebrations among others as may be feasible in certain social settings. These signifying practices according to Williams “are texts obtainable in soap opera, pop music, comics etc.”

As para literature, popular culture has its form and content which encompass both entertainment and moral values or didactic lessons. This is the aspect of ideology which may be radical or liberal which Graeme Turner contends is “the most important conceptual category in cultural studies”. Above all, popular culture is in the categories of popular dance, popular theatre, popular music, popular festivals and a host of others. Even certain myths and narratives qualify as popular culture as already aided by technological innovations, media and advertising. Awon Mass Wedding Festival as Raymond Williams has contended of pop culture in general, is a typical example of popular culture being celebrated annually in Kwara State of Nigeria. It encompasses the narrative, the poetic and the dramatic.

### **AWON MASS WEDDING FESTIVAL: ORIGIN AND PERFORMATIVES**

A festival is an event, usually and ordinarily staged by a local community. It usually centres on and celebrates some unique aspects of that community. Festival is celebratory centering on a theme. For Tomlinson (1991) a festival is usually a cultural fiesta or a feast which is celebrated in honour of gods, goddesses and God. Thus we have music or dance festivals, religious festivals, cultural festivals, etc.

Awon Mass Wedding Festival is a feast in honour of the Awon goddess. Historically, this was a one-breasted goddess which appeared to the people of Shao of the earliest time of the ancient community precisely during the reign of Ohoro Olanibo, the first monarch of the Shao Community. Whatever is regarded as the authentic account of the historical origin of Awon Mass Wedding Festival must have been sourced from oral tradition which obtains in a community like Shao where written tradition was introduced to it via contact with western education. But even then, the historical account of the festival has since been reduced to



writing by individuals as well as government. In his published work, **Shao: My People, their Tradition, Custom and Culture** (1996:92) Oke writes:

In Shao, the institution of marriage is given a pride of place in the culture of the people. Giving out a daughter in marriage in Shao is not the affair of the mother and the father alone; it is the responsibility of the entire community. Marrying off girls in Shao is being practised as it was enjoined by the mysterious woman, AWON, who had visited the town at the early life of the town.

According to the Awon Priest, Chief Oloruntoogun Ojetunde, the festival came into being through the contact between an ancient Chief in Shao, Omo Larele, (Son of Larele), one of the founding fathers of Shao, who was also a hunter. He had discovered a small stream where he was always visiting to drink water during his hunting expeditions. On one of such hunting adventures, he had an encounter with a strange woman who appeared to him mysteriously and claimed the ownership of the stream. Corroborating the story by the Awon Priest, the reigning Ohoro of Shao, Oba Bamidele Alabi Adegbite said the woman, Awon goddess, later appeared to Omo Larele in the larger community where she was received by Ohoro Olanibo and his other Chiefs. Omo Larele is today a principal Chief in the ancient community as Iboo of Shao and third in rank to the monarch. The mysterious woman who gave her name as **Awon** was taken to Ohoro Olanibo by Omo Larele where she was received with pump and pageantry. She was later made to stay with another man for nine (9) days before departing the town. The man she stayed with is now known and addressed as **Alawon, the Awon priest**. (Wole Oke (1996) **Shao: My People, their Tradition, Custom and Culture**).

In her valedictory speech, the woman, Awon instructed Ohoro and his Chiefs, her hosts, to set a day aside to commemorate her visit by giving all marriageable girls out in marriage. She equally told them that the community should expect prosperity so far they took to her instruction. Awon had hardly finished her speech when she fell down and vanished into the air and immediately, water started to gush out and flow from the spot. Water flowed to join the erstwhile stream discovered by Omo Larele to become a big river known and called Awon River till the present day. The very spot where Awon goddess had fallen down and vanished to become a pool of water has since been referred to as *Awonyale (meaning Awon goddess has branched home)*.

### THE PERFORMATIVES

As a cultural festival, Awon Mass Wedding is celebrated in stages as a number of activities are orchestrated to usher in the annual mass wedding fiesta. These events are not just significant; they are interwoven leading to great performances on the part of the custodians. These events are dramatically witnessed usually on important days marking the festival up till the climax and beyond. The events are as follows:

- Fixing of the Day for Awon Festival: It involves the Awon Priest (Alawon), Chiefs Iboo and Ajanki of Shao and other traditional titled chiefs all assembling at the Awon goddess shrine. The fixing of the day is normally done in consultation with Ifa Oracle while they usually pick thirty days (plus or minus) based on market days calculation. This is called “etadinlogbon” or “etalelogbon” (plus or minus 30 days). The fixing of the day event takes place every August or September.
- Gathering of firewood: This is an exercise carried out by family members of the intending bridegrooms. Family members, friends and well-wishers often join hands with the bridegroom in cutting and gathering trees into a big heap. They leave them to dry up before packing them home for cooking activities. Since the festival is



celebrated for about a week, the gathering of firewood in heaps helps reduce the cost of cooking. The exercise is carried out with enthusiasm, ecstasy and solidarity.

- **Ojo Inabi:** It is the day preceding the eve of the wedding, two nights to the wedding day. Two major events take place on Inabi: women from the bridegroom's house are seen carrying two bundles of firewood, two big baskets of yams and a big cock. Those items are parts of gifts from the bridegroom's family for the bride's family. They are meant to prepare delicious meal for the bride before her final departure from her parent's house.

The other event takes place later in the evening usually around 8.00pm. This is the Inabi proper when the bride sets out accompanied by friends and well-wishers as she visits relations and sharing kola nuts, cigarettes, bitter kola, sweets etc. to people. This night is called the night of "Gidi-gidi, bomu bomu". It is an energy-sapping procession as a crowd of energetic young men and women (youths) and teenagers join the procession which is usually riotous including a rigorous race. Even from the songs:

**Solo:** gidi, gidi

**Chorus:** Bomu bomu, B'omu

**Solo:** b'omo olomo doju dele; (should anybody's child fall down)

**Chorus:** Ko si temi nbe (it does not concern me)

This riotous procession like a relay race goes around the town amidst singing and wild joy. The procession ends as participants withdraw in twos, threes as they get tired.

- **Aisun Iyawo (Wedding Eve):** This is the eve proper and it is the last night the bride spends in her parent's house. The main event that takes place is the 'Eka Iyawo' or 'Ekun Iyawo'. The bride files out with a lit lantern in her hand and she is accompanied by her friends and peer group members. She goes round her relations' houses singing or reciting their Oriki (panegyric) and sobbing. The bride chants the praise name, outlining the heroic attributes and accomplishments of her forefathers in honour of her parents. The Eka Iyawo is expected to bring out the richness of Awon Festival in panegyric rendition as family ancestral backgrounds, exploits and heroes and heroines are praised. It is also a day when brides are challenged as spectators get to know how good the brides are in chanting their ancestral praise names.
- **The Wedding Day:** It witnesses many things as many events are staged: there is the display of bridal ware called Igba Iyawo. The bride's earthenware – pots, plates, cooking utensils among others are washed and displayed on mat to dry up outside. The display readily informs passersby that there is a bride in that house.  
**Bridal Procession:** The first activity the brides engage in on this day is the plaiting of hair which must be 'Ojonponti' (Rain does not beat ear). It is the hairdo that is unique to all the brides of the year in Shao community. Then the bride gets dressed which usually is done in a relative's house. The bridal costume is made up of Aso ofi, umbrella, jewelries, bangles/iyun beads for the neck and wrists. The accompanying percussion signifies bridal background as hunter's, Ifa's or profession or exploits. Of this bridal procession are the following excerpts:

After these formalities, the march to the market square begins. At this time, brides are not in a hurry; they march slowly on their way and occasionally halt to sing the praise names of their relatives. This slow march is known as KIKASE IYAWO (counting the brides' steps). At the market square, each bride



carries an umbrella in her right hand and covers her face as tradition demands and starts reciting the Ekun Iyawo to bid farewell to spinsterhood.  
(Kwara State Government Publication on Shao Awonga Festival, (p.8)

With Ekun/Eka Iyawo, the brides bid farewell to their family members and parents. Ekun Iyawo is the praise song or chant usually panegyric which is emotion-laden and tunefully rendered. It is the rendition of chants relating to their parental cognomen or ancestral exploits.

**Bride:** *Bi emo erin, egboun erin, bi eomo osa, ejiyo lobe*  
*Awa lomo oja melo la nna nile oluwojobi*  
*Awa lomo oja meta la nna nile oluwojobi*  
*Ajumo na won a na oja kola*  
*To ba di lale won a na tatare*  
*Tatare su mi loni, kola lo wu emi*  
*Emi lomo oluwojobi*

**Translation:**

*If you don't know me, you hear the voice of elephant*  
*If you don't know me, you taste salt in the soup*  
*Even if you don't know me, you hear my voice; I am the*  
*daughter of Oluwojobi.*

The brides are also expected to kneel down in honour of the Ohoro of Shao, the Monarch and sing his ancestral praise.

**Awon Dance:** usually performed by old women from Iboo and Alawon compound. Before, Awon Dance used to take place two months after the Awon Wedding Festival day. Of this past, Oke writes

It is a traditional dance by every woman in the town to the goddess of Awon. On the day set aside for the Awon dance, no woman must go out of the town to anywhere; every woman is expected to remain at home to 'bake cakes' for Awon (duro ko din akara – duodika). To prevent any woman from flouting this order, a masquerade by the name, Duodika goes to station itself along the road that leads to Ilorin which is the road that is plied daily by majority of the women. (p.94)

Then the dance used to commence in the late afternoon as women assemble at the arena, the frontage of the house of the Awon priest. The dancers would form a circle round a massive rock to dance round amidst drumming and singing. The drummers beat bata and gangan drums to enhance the rhythm.

But Awon dance was rejuvenated during the celebration in 1993 and it has since become part of the event featuring on Awon Day.

The dance was rejuvenated during the 1993 Awon to add colour and glamour to the festival. It involves the aged among the women folk. These never tired culture activists (women) engage in the very energetic and highly galvanizing dance. The very alluring traditional musical instrument is orchestrated by the bata drum. (Kwara State Council for Art and Culture publication, p.11).



Awon dance is performed amidst singing and drumming which are rendered in unique and sonorous rhythms. The songs, mainly ballads by its content readily give information about the town's (Shao) rich cultural background, the festival. Excerpts:

Chorus: Gboun mi, efufu lele gboun lodo Awon lodo  
Gboun mi, efufu lele gboun lodo Awon lodo

meaning (carry my voice, ye wind, carry my voice to the river goddess)

Solo: Mo mo gbele koto de elekoto  
Ibunbu la' tu okun – Elekoto  
Ibunbu la' tu osa – Elekoto  
Taloje tudo laarin – Elekoto  
Keja oja won lomuje – Elekoto  
Kodo out won re sale

(I have come with my swimming tactic; we approach swimming in slide; no one plung into the deep; lest the river drown them, lest fishes bite their breasts)

Solo: Mo mo gbelekoto de

Chorus: Elekoto

Solo: Lele lonfe, Ajoda di taya lefe lonfe  
Omi maa kun, ko i to wa we  
Omi maa kun

(Ajoda turns the swimming gourd; let the river swell, it is not enough for us)

Solo: Iyawo bi mo lekan ko ro mi boju, bo o lo lo, enia ko ba nle

(the bride gives birth once, she doesn't have water to rinse her face; she may go away, you met people in the compound)

The songs chorus river Awon's attributes and invectives on lazy and dirty wives. The dance steps rise to a climax as the women disperse removing their veils. They usually end the dance with the song:

Solo: Bole dija, o dija

Chorus: Ko dija

Solo: Bomo olomo doju dele

Chorus: Ko si temi nbe (2x) meaning let it become a fight; let anybody's child fall flat, it doesn't concern me.

The festivity is also heightened with performances from **hunters** as they chant and display as well as the **acrobats**. There are usually **guest artists** from within and outside, Kwara State. The Festival usually comes to a close with the blessing of the brides by the monarch, Ohoro of Shao. The following day witnesses the Oko Ewu (bridegroom's caricature) celebration by the bridegrooms.

## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of events of the festival, the following findings are hereby put forward.

### *Globalizing the Tourist Potentials of Awon Festival:*

In discussing the globalization of Awon Mass Wedding Festival, it must be emphasized that the festival's tourist potentials are huge, fascinating and multi-dimensional. But the concern





here and now is the exploration and showcasing of these inherent tourist attractions as they are yet to be tapped or fully developed for global audience and consumption.

In this manner, the attention of the stakeholders in tourism industry in Nigeria is hereby first drawn to the untapped, unexplored and underdeveloped tourist endowment of Awon Mass Wedding Festival. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, should as a matter of policy, undertake the showcasing and marketing of the festival. Awon Festival is listed in the calendar of the National Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) as a national cultural fiesta. The Federal Ministry saddled with cultural promotion should provide the enabling law and environment for the entrepreneurial packaging of the festival through a public private partnership arrangement.

*Awon Festival is open to corporate packaging and sponsorship:* Multi-national companies, Tourism and Travel Agencies, Event Managers of national and international standard are favoured to step in and take over the modeling, showcasing and marketing of the unique features of the festival for tourist world over. Such enterprising packaging will rake in steady income for the nation and open up business avenues for all categories of traders, hoteliers among others. Awon Festival is a crowd puller as hundreds of thousands of spectators flock to the ancient town of Shao to behold and partake of the yearly exotic and spectacular traditional bridal display of maidens decked in traditional attire rich in embroidery and dye. The tourist attractions of the festival are not just dynamic and enormous but they are of traditional artistry and entertaining. Its ornamental segments and epoch-making six-day performance enterprises offer different tastes in aesthetics and entertainment.

*Branding and rebranding of the Festival as a major revenue drive for government and the host community:* Bridal costumes which are usually traditional *Aso ofi* of variegated colours and adorning neck beads are symbolic and up for branding by sponsors. There are also umbrella which are hovered over the brides. These are equally symbolic bridal attire for adornment. They could be in company's colours, logo and trade name among others. Opening up Awon Festival for Beauty pageant will drive its global and corporate social outlook. A yearly beauty pageant contest is fashionable for a unique cultural mass wedding as this. An Miss Awon Beauty Contest of international taste and standard will not only serve as promotional enterprise, it will as well help mobilize huge income in several fronts for the nation, individuals and companies.

*Theatrical Adaptation of the historical Background of Awon Festival is germane for diversification of its revenue potentials.* Professional dramatists and movie producers should find the festival a good artistic material for adaptation and rewarding economic venture. From the coming/discovery and encounter with the Awon deity, the one breasted-goddess by the ancient founders of Shao to the primal staging of Awon Mass Wedding Festival are rich cultural materials good for theatrical adaptation for international audience. The products will be soft sell to rake in bountiful harvest in naira and dollar.

*Oral Exploration and uploading of the repertoire of Eka Iyawo (bridal chant) into digital gadgets is artistically diversifying:* Eka Iyawo is quite unique to Awon Festival as an undying traditional bridal practice. These bridal chants are awaiting digital production which should be in mass number marketable by tourist agencies.





*Serene Babamogba and Yelu Hills and River Awon Topography awaiting landscaping and occupation as tourist resort:* These are open to investment in hotels, resorts and accommodation or event centres for local and international tourists during and after celebration. A number of organizations have been showing interest in packaging the festival for tourist attraction. This confirms the statement on [www.ranscampus.org](http://www.ranscampus.org) that Awon Mass Wedding is tourism potential that is yet to be tapped as Shao remains a centre of tourist attraction to the people world over.

*Significance/Impacts of Awon Mass Wedding Festival:* The celebration of Awon Mass Wedding goes beyond commemoration of the visit of the deity, the one-breasted woman which appeared and instructed the people of Shao on the annual staging of the festival. It is a celebration of fertility, procreation and motherhood.

In its publication of 1996, entitled **Shao: A Land of Mass Wedding** the Kwara State Council for Art and Culture portrays Awon Festival as ‘a celebration of womanhood during which all maids in Shao Town are given in mass marriage as instructed by the one-breasted fiery woman whose appearance and departure were all events of mystery’. Also, the Kwara State government official website [www.kwarastate.gov.ng](http://www.kwarastate.gov.ng) in its publication, *Historical Perspective of Shao Awonga Festival* have it that ‘Awon had pledged to always bless the people of Shao with children if her injunctions were followed.

Marriage institution was ordained by God and first between the Edenic Adam and Eve from where humanity has since taken the cue. Awon Festival is a mass marriage which centers on procreation, multiplication, and expansion of the people. Marriage is a legal union between a man and a woman who love each other and who have decided to make their relationship public, official and permanent. Annually between forty and eighty maids are given out in marriage during Awon Mass Wedding celebration. It is indeed a repopulation avenue for humanity

*Legality:* Awon Mass Wedding confers legitimacy on marital status or union of the maids given in mass marriage. It is one of the steps that bride price is usually given to the bride’s parents. The traditional kola nuts and the sum of five thousand naira are given to the bride’s parents during the introduction. All these are fulfilled to confer legality on the union even before the mass celebration. *An identity:* Awon Mass Wedding remains a unique cultural heritage of the people of Shao. It has put the ancient town in the world map of festival thereby propelling it to global limelight as a land of cultural tourism mass wedding festival. Founded before Ilorin, the Kwara State Capital, Shao is an ancient town named after Awon River as Shao Awon.

*A unifying factor:* The festival remains a unifying factor among indigenes of Shao. During the celebration, regardless of religion, clan or sect, sons and daughters of Shao usually come together to participate fully in the unique and culturally defined festival. It is usually worked upon and watched out for during the annual calendar of the people.

In addition to the above is the belief in the efficacy of the spiritual blessing of the Awon goddess. The goddess is a symbol of unity and spirituality for the people of Shao.

The ancient town of Shao is at the Northern fringe of Yoruba ethnic territory of Nigeria. Shao is located on the world map at longitude 4<sup>0</sup> 35E and latitude 8<sup>0</sup> 35N. It is bounded in the East by North Hills, and by Babamogba Hills in the West while in the North and South are rivers



Moro and Awon respectively. The cognomen or praise Chants of the Community give ample information about its vibrant cultural festival, its farm endowment and minerals. The people of Shao are always proud of the town, mainly when they listen to their cognomen:

Shao Awonga, Omo Onibu eja	(Shao people blessed with the deep of
Shao Awon wowe, aribusola	fish, one who laughs, Warrior of Oya Ajoda,
apotubu erin	goddess, Awon of many children, with
Akogun Oya	mansions at Basa and Wede tributaries)
Olomo winkin winkin	
Abile gbangba ni basa	
Abodede pirimu pirimu ni wede	
Shao sodun Awon kodo magbe	(the people of Shao celebrates Awon Shao
sodun Awon kodo mafa	Festival, let the river swell 2x, Shao
	people blessed with the deep of fish, Shao
Awon omo onibueja	Your river full of tilapia with which
Shao Awon gbogbo odo kiki isin	we enjoy okro soup)
ati ikoro	
Shao Awon omo onibu remi remi	
Ati isin ati ikoro	
Lao fi jorunla ni Shao Awonga	

### CONCLUSION

The paper has discussed features of Awon Festival and its suitability for tourist adaptation. Awon Mass Wedding has really metamorphosed into a symbol of cultural identity that amplifies the people's social life. From the rich poetics of the Awon ballad songs and Ekun iyawo to the galaxy of costumes underlining a great fiesta, the festival remains a superlative attraction and taste for both local and international tourists.

### Definition of Terms

- Awon:** a river goddess, one-breasted woman, the fountain of Awon mass wedding.
- Awon yale:** where Awon goddess had fallen to become a pull of water.
- Awon Ojubo:** the main grove/spot where the goddess is beseeched.
- Awon mu:** the spot where Omo Larele discovered during his hunting expedition.
- Alawon:** the Awon priest and custodian of Awon Festival.
- Ekun iyawo:** bridal chants in honour of their parents and ancestors.
- Igba iyawo:** bridalware usually displayed on Awon festival day

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**EVALUATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE IN THE  
FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

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## Abstract

*The 2019 corruption perception index report attest to the fact that corruption is on the increase in Nigeria. With the level of widespread corruption in Nigeria, it needs to be tackled for the country to remain relevant among countries of the world. This work is structured to examine how social media have helped in the fight against corruption. The internet has helped the growth of social media in Nigeria because with Smartphone's and handheld devices, one can easily connect to the social media platform. Technology determinism theory and Agenda-setting theory of communication were used for the study. Library research method was adopted for the study and relevant information about corruption and social media from journals, newspapers and books were analyzed. This study concludes among others that social media are effective in the fight against corruption. It exposes corrupt practices and persons and ensures that persons indicted are prosecuted. The study recommends, among others that government should effectively use social media handles and encourage whistle blowing to help fight corruption in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Evaluation, Social Media, Corruption, Fight, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

The fight against corruption in Nigeria has been a difficult task for the government and citizens of Nigeria. There are many suggestions, publications and methods drafted to fight the hydra-headed monster, but none has achieved a giant stride towards the fight against corruption. Odekunle, (2007) in Moyosore, (2015) is of the view that every effort evolved at addressing the scourge has always been frustrated by the evolution of even more effective and sophisticated methods of corruption. At the virtual conference of Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) on corruption, the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo said the fight against corruption is getting difficult daily and many will be discouraged in standing up against fraud (Adetayo, 2020). Corruption crime is a dishonest attitude carried out by persons and institutions with institutionalized authority to acquire illicit funds and properties for private use. Corruption has destroyed the entire Nigerian society (Uzochukwu, Ekwughu & Ukwueze 2014, p.7) and efforts aimed at reducing fraud in this society have not yielded much result. Corruption thrives in Nigeria and individuals severely affected by it are not willing to speak up or resist the practice of corruption. Bribery denies human beings maximum security, good education, health, roads and many other basic needs that human beings may require in their day to day activities (Ahmad, 2018).

In Nigeria, corruption exists in various forms like ghost workers syndrome, the slow movement of files, inflation of contracts fees, extortion by police officers, port congestion, improper issuance of a license to import goods, looting of public funds by politicians among others (Uzochukwu et al. 2014 p.6). Although, the government of Nigeria claimed that it had channelled enormous financial and human resources towards the fight against corruption, the global rating of Nigeria as regards corruption leaves more questions than answers to the government. In 2019, the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index showed that Nigeria scored 26 out of 100 points falling by one point in 2018 and ranks 146 out of 180 countries (Premiumtimesng.com, 2020). This ranking by Transparency International is the fact that no Nigerian can dispute considering the level of infrastructural decay. However, the level of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by international businesses will be low due to



increasing corruption in Nigeria. In arriving at the parameters for scoring Nigeria low in corruption index, Transparency International listed several factors that include (a) The Nigeria rule of law is selective- the rich and powerful do not play by the rules. (b) Backlash against media and civil society damages Nigeria anti-corruption effort. (c) Institutionalized corruption in political parties and political integrity. (d) Poor understanding of the definition of corruption and how to tackle it. (e) Anti-corruption legal and policy framework is underdeveloped. (f) Inability to implement recommendations on anti-corruption. (g) Corruption in vital sectors such as oil and gas is endemic (Premiumtimesng.com 2020). These listed factors are the reason corruption thrives in Nigeria and an effort to tackle it remains impossible. Moyosore, (2015) in his study, listed six factors that encourage corruption in Nigeria to include: (a) Weak institutions of government and a culture of getting fatty syndrome by public officials. (b) The Lukewarm attitude of the enforcers of the law. (c) Cultural and Institutional factors. (d) Weak reward system and low remuneration for public servants. (d) Bureaucratic bottlenecks in government agencies. (e) Absence of transparent financial institutions.

The emergence of new media (Social Media) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century became a beacon of hope towards the fight against corruption. Communication is at the centre of human development because issues and events that shape the society revolve around communication. Social media are novel communication tool that enhances message distribution to many people with the aid of the internet. To this effect, Nwabueze (2009) cited in Nwabueze (2014, p.165) affirms that the new media make more information available to an average internet user and also have more capacity to contain details of a story than any other medium. Social media has grown over the years, and features which aid social media users have witnessed rapid modifications and improvements to ensure user-friendly platform. Benefits derived from social media are many hence many regard it as a powerful tool to help combat corruption in our society. Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) in Nwabueze (2014, p.170) defines the social media as media that use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. An issue discussed at personal level becomes a public matter when analyzed on social media. Dominick (2013, P.24) defined social media as online communication that use special techniques that involve participation, conversation, sharing, collaboration and linkage. Two social media platforms namely Facebook and Whatsapp are believed to be familiar and widely used in Nigeria. Facebook social media platform allows users who are registered to create profiles, upload videos and pictures about themselves and happenings in their immediate environment, especially as regards corruption. On the other hand, Whatsapp social media platform can share messages with groups and individuals on the platform. These two social media platforms are installed from Google play store or apple store on internet-enabled phone or handheld devices.

In the light of the above, this study seeks to evaluate social media influence in the fight against corruption considering the number of people who are active users in Nigeria that run in millions (Akinpelu, 2020). Countries around the globe have adopted the use of social media in governance, which sees many agencies having their social media handle or names for ease of administration and broader coverage.

The problem; however is to evaluate how the social media have helped in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. The 2019 Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International in 2019 ranked Nigeria 146 out of 180 countries analyzed. This rating is a sad development to





the socio-economic advancement of Nigeria as foreign investors, and highly quoted companies would not want to invest and do business in Nigeria. Corruption has destroyed the entire system of governance in Nigeria (Okolo & Akpokighe, 2014), and this makes it difficult to fight and reduce crime to the barest minimum. Prof. Patrick Lumumba a frontline fighter against corruption in Africa said: “the African Continent has lagged in most facets of human development and its largest country; Nigeria has remained in poverty due to fraudulent activities in public service” (Ogundipe, 2016). Internationally, Nigeria is a laughing stock because no country takes them seriously because of weak institutions caused by corruption.

Social media is fundamental in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. On April 18; 2020, a lady flogged by policemen in Iwo Osun state went viral on social media. Police officers flogged the Lady Tola Azeez for violating lockdown in Iwo, and the video of the assault went viral on the twitter account of Ruggedman which drew the attention of police authorities after the woman retweeted the video, the Police Commissioner in the state announced the arrest of the officers and subjected them to orderly room trial where they were found guilty and dismissed from Nigeria Police Force (Olabiyi, 2020). Social media is doing its part in curbing the increasing terrorism in the Northern part of Nigeria where Bokoharam elements have destroyed the socio-economic activities of that region. April 14<sup>th</sup> 2014, Bokoharam terrorists attacked Government Secondary School Chibok, Borno State and kidnapped 276 school girls. It sparked outrage nationally and globally and led the social media community to launch Hashtag (#BringBackourGirls) to draw the attention of the government and international community. The #BringBackourGirls group was championed by Dr Oby Ezekwesili with other eminent Nigerians to seek the release of the girls. Driving philosophy of the group is ‘a diverse group of citizens advocating for speedy and effective search and rescue of all our abducted girls and a rapid containment and quelling of insurgency in Nigeria’ (bringbackourgirls.ng). The group brought Nigeria to the limelight, which made the International community to provide material and human resources to help fight terrorism. The #BringBackourGirls campaign led to the establishment of a Safe School Initiative and a 20 million dollar fund championed by Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown aimed at protecting schools in the troubled region (Ogunlesi, 2014).

This is an indication that social media have the capacity to change certain ills in our country when properly deployed and benefits derived from its use are numerous.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This work is hinged on Technological Determinism and Agenda-setting theories of communication. Marshal McLuhan propounded Technological Determinism theory in 1964. The position of the argument is that technology has altered the way the media audience reacts to messages or communication from an electronic medium. This theory explains the role of technology in shaping cultural orientation, values and events in the larger society. The proponents of technological determinism argue that society is influenced and shaped by technological development (Hauer, 2017). Social media is driven by the internet across the countries of the world, and it is a valuable tool that will revolutionize the globe. Similarly, McQuail (2005, p.104) cited in (Nwabueze, 2014 p.56) states the basic tenets of technological determinism theory: (i) communication theory is fundamental to society (ii) each technology has a bias to particular communication forms (iii) the sequence of invention



and application of communication technology influences social change (iv) communication revolutions lead to social revolutions.

Agenda setting theory of communication was propounded by Maxwell Mac Combs and Donald Shaw in 1968. This theory of communication views the media (social media inclusive) as having the capacity to set agenda for the media audience on what to think by continually repeating news and events thereby placing importance on such stories. When users of social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, among others share stories, pictures and videos about corruption on a day to day format, importance are placed on such stories. The position of social media users about crime is as a result of what the platform has mirrored to them. Daily upload of stories and videos about corruption sets agenda for the public because social media stories that are topical go viral. The mass media move issues from press agenda to public programme. (Nwabueze, 2014 p.44).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: HYDRA HEADED MONSTER**

In 1999 Nigeria returned to democracy after years of military draconian rulership, there was hope that myriads of the problem confronting Nigeria especially corruption be reduced thereby launched Nigeria as the fastest growing economy in Africa. Twenty years after Nigeria adopted a democratic system of governance, fraud is on the increase destroying the fabrics of the entire country and reducing our international standing among Nations of the world. Akanbi, (2003) in Iyanda, (2012) listed the levels of corruption: (a) Street level of corruption which describes corruption in administration as day experiences of the citizens in their interactions with officials. (b) Business corruption that occurs among low to medium-sized business with connivance with public sector officials. (c) High level of corruption which involves vast sums of money in high power centres in finance, public service and administration. Democracy that ought to have been progress to Nigeria turned out to fuel the fire of corruption which made Okunola, et al (2019) to say that with the advent of democratic rule in 1999, the link between fraud and democratic governance had become stiff. These include electoral malpractice, lack of intra-party democracy, grand corruption, impunity and reckless over-ambition of political elites among others. This is an indication that the return of democracy to Nigeria has done little or nothing to curb corruption. Ubi & Eko (2012) highlight that 'according to Ribadu, Nigeria's previous leaders stole about 64 trillion (about US\$507 Billion) from public coffers. This, when benchmarked against the 2008 budget of #2.456 trillion nairas and 2011 budget of #4.972 trillion nairas, this translate to 26 years and 12 years budget respectively.

Various looting by past governments (Military & Democratic Governments) informed the decision by Obasanjo's government to establish Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences (ICPC). Concurring to this, Moyosore (2015) avers that the unpalatable situation of corruption in Nigeria made the former President Obasanjo establish EFCC and ICPC. In Nigeria, corruption has led to wrong people occupying political offices, and tremendous amount of money has been appropriated into private pockets, leaving mounting internal and external debts (Anthony & Pre-Ebi, 2017). In Nigeria presently, enormous billions are leaving government treasury unaccounted for. Salawu, (2007) in Moyosore (2015) said that Thisday Newspaper reported that the level of leakages in Nigeria has attracted an annual rate of \$25.76 billion loss to



fraud-related crimes in the last five years and that on daily basis too; the country is losing about \$70,575,342 to corruption and other related crimes.

No nation can progress in education, health, the economy with this level of stealing of our shared heritage by few people in government. This level of stealing is the reason all sectors of the Nigerian economy are in a state of collapse. Different segments of the Nigerian economy are on their knees because of corruption. The education sector is profoundly affected by fraud, and 'Transparency International said that 66 per cent of the money Nigerian government allocates to education is stolen by corrupt officials' (Adegboyega, 2019). Across the globe, countries are ensuring that education remains the pivotal engine that drives other sectors by allocating vast sums of money to stay competitive and provide solutions to societal problems. Corruption in the education sector of Nigeria has contributed to the decline of universities ranking globally, no university make the list of first to one thousand best universities. Katharina, (2004) in Nwankwo & Nweke (2016) opines that corruption thrives in the education sector due to the following factors: (a) inadequate legal framework to prevent and fight fraud. (b) Responsibilities, decision making structures and procedures at Federal, State and Local levels are complex. (c) Absence of independent supervision, (d) Inadequate documentation, (e) Non-disclosure of information to students and limited understanding of procedures and decisions. (F) Inadequate expertise. The idea of global ranking of universities has become a veritable means by which we assess the performance of various universities across the continent (Olaopa, 2016).

The health sector in Nigeria is in a sorry state, from poorly funded hospitals; to poorly paid health personnel to reduced supply of drugs at an affordable rate the list is endless. Husmann (2011) in Elekwachi, (2019) insists that corruption in the industry has manifested in ineffectiveness, reduced quality services, poor hospital maintenance. This has increased medical tourism in Nigeria as people, government officials among, others, travel to seek better medical care lacking in Nigeria. A Nation without a healthy and tasty medical facility cannot flourish. Nigeria's overall health system performance was ranked 187<sup>th</sup> position among the 191 member states of the World Health Organization in 2000 (Efe, 2013). In 2019, WHO highlighted that Nigeria health system is deficient in areas like poor funding, brain drain, inadequate infrastructure, disease outbreak management among others (Muanya & Onyenucheya, 2019). Such ranking from a reputable organization like the World Health Organization (WHO) can trigger anger, hopelessness and frustration in the common man, who cannot afford medical treatment outside the shores of Nigeria. Rotimi (2015) in his work about corruption in health sector notes that 'effectively US\$2.2 million had been misused by Nigerian officials and has to be refunded by the Nigerian government, shameful as this is the lack of conscience of officials who have misappropriated funds meant to save lives'.

The aviation sector of the Nigerian economy was the pride of African Airways, but has been destroyed by corruption (Ibekwe, 2018; Oghojafor & Alaneme, 2014). Nigerian Airways, founded in 1958 was a bride for many travellers across the world and Nigeria in particular because the quality of service was top notch. After years of operation, Nigerian Airways became a shadow of its self. In 2003 when the airline ceased operations, revelations about the activities were mind-blowing. To this, (Ibekwe, 2018) wrote that former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2002 set up the Justice Obiora Nwazota Judicial Commission to probe the operations of Nigerian Airways. The commission revealed the looting and misappropriation of the company's resources to the tune of 60 billion naira.



Crude oil became the significant earning of Nigeria at the International Market where Nigeria has received billions of naira since the discovery. Major International Oil companies have their operational base in Niger Delta region of the country. Yet the area is suffering from environmental degradation and poor standard of living caused by corruption. Moyosore (2015) opines that different forms of corruption have gulped most of the national earnings, particularly from the oil sector since independence.

The level of infrastructural decay across different sectors of the economy is deeply caused by corruption. From roads, electricity, water supply, among others poorly built and the ones appropriately done are not maintained. The infrastructure of any country is directly connected with the quality of life (Anthony & Pre-Ebi, 2017).

### **THE ADVENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NIGERIA**

In 2001, the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo licensed the operations of telecommunication industry in Nigeria which was a springboard for social media in Nigeria. The gap in communication from a person to another irrespective of the location was closed. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which drive the social media in Nigeria, witnessed a big boom as many institutions, government agencies, banks among others relied on ICT for their day to day activities. Agreeing to this (Nwabueze, 2014, p.3) said the advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as computers, digital broadcasting, satellite and cable television, the Internet and World Wide Web (www) has contributed immensely in ensuring the sophistication of the communication process and also bridging the gap between the sender and the receiver. The internet has grown in Nigeria and it has helped to strengthen the various social media platforms in Nigeria like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp, among others. Events and happenings around the globe can be accessed by handheld devices, computers, and sophisticated phones reinforcing the earlier prediction of Marshal McLuhan's concept of a global village.

Social media have become popular among Nigerians (Adults, Youths and Teenagers) and registration for membership is free with phones, computers and handheld devices that can access the internet. A Nigerian has at least an account in any of these social networking sites (Alade, 2017). With the level of social media users; information sharing especially as it concerns Nigerians is expected to be high.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram among others have seen Nigeria as a fertile ground to boom and expand their business and Nigeria is a country rich in human and material resources with a huge population. In 2019, there were 98.39 million active users compared to 2018 when the figure was 94 million active users of the internet (Udodiong, 2019). Going with the figure, internet usage and penetration is high; hence social media use in Nigeria is increasing. Nigeria already has one of the continent's highest Smartphone penetration rates and that number will get even higher as Smartphone subscription is expected to be on the increase Kazeem, (2016).

However, there have been growing concerns about the negative impact of social media in our society due to its unique features that is different from traditional media like newspaper, radio and television. Biswas, Ingle & Roy (2014) listed the negative impact of social media to include: it cannot be entirely controlled, social media is prone to hacking, responses from social media sites can lead to a backlash, negative sentiments can influence electioneering,





and there are misrepresentations of facts in social media. Hyacinth & Barigbon (2014) believes that misinformation or rumours can quickly spread on social media and may allow criminals to keep track of police activity. Chinedu Okeke & Obi (2016) gave the negative aspect of social media as : disseminating unfiltered/unverified information, hate messages and rumours, increased piracy, immoral conduct and lurid sex photo, the anonymity of sources, images and sounds digitally manipulated, addictive nature of social media and bullying and digital offensive dialogues. The Social media industry is an industry with weak regulations, and these make users flood the social media with contents not minding the implication it could cause. Youths are exposed to social vices, and many addicted to it and abandon other important aspects of their lives (Olowe, 2018). In July, 2012 a post-graduate student of Nassarawa State University was murdered by friends she met on Facebook which sparked condemnations across Nigeria. Cynthia died after she and her once virtual friends needed to see flesh and blood, following some periods of chatting on Facebook and her death was not only condemned by the generality of Nigerian populace but had government contemplating slamming legislation that would check the excesses of internet users (Hyacinth & Barigbon, 2014). Most users of the Social media indulge in harmful vices, and this is not good for Nigeria because there are numerous benefits to be derived from the Internet and social media.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION**

The critical role social media play in Nigeria has led to awareness, engagement and reaching out to the global community on issues that have destroyed Nigeria and project us to the world in a bad light. From HASHTAG like #EndSARS and various campaigns against corruption and other ills going on in Nigeria, it has brought the attention of government and the world. In the words of (Asika, 2016), social media allows this vast melting pot of Nigerians to express themselves in many ways from memes, to blogs, videos to social media posts from public commentators to private citizens, everybody has a voice, but however, of course many still need help to shape that voice and to learn how best to bring it to their audience.

Social media platforms in Nigeria like Facebook and Whatsapp have witnessed institutions, groups and associations owing a webpage on these platforms and members of the various platforms utilize these platforms to share stories, report events and most importantly expose the corruption that has damaged the Nigerian society. In 2017, a group of Nigerians took to their social media platforms. It started a campaign of #ENDSARS to tell Nigerians and the world that a department of Nigeria Police charged with the protection of lives and properties are indulging in extrajudicial killings and harassing the citizens they ought to protect. The protest carried out online and in some states in Nigeria drew the attention of the Federal Government and Nigeria. The then Acting President, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo called for an immediate overhaul of SARS and Nigerians rejoiced because their voices have been heard and something was going to be done (Bwala, 2019). This indicates that social media effects change in Nigerian society by beaming its searchlight on institution and government authorities.

Communication and media scholars have referred to social media as the fifth estate of the realm because it reaches millions of users globally with the help of Internet. In the words of (Nwabueze 2014, p.176), “ the fifth estate of the realm is a concept used to recognize the emerging socio-political significance of the social media in the modern world as powerful tools of communication, sensitization, awareness creation, contributing immensely in shaping



the nature of governance in any society”. In Nigeria, the level of poverty, unemployment and lack of social amenities are caused by years of corruption leaving the people with no option than to survive amid, nothing thereby resulting to social unrest and social activism. Social activism is the use of various social media platforms to organize protests, rallies to enforce change in the society. With the new trend of organizing protest online with Hashtags (#) symbols as the registration logo, people in their hundreds sometimes thousands identify with social activism. In line with this, (Nwabueze 2014, p.178) views social media activism as the use of social media to mobilize people for a social course.

In 2012, Nigeria witnessed a massive social protest organized by labour unions and civil societies that brought the country to a halt. The rally saw the emergence of ‘#OccupyNigeria’ were drawn from social media platforms like Facebook, twitter, blogs and the protest was characterized by strikes and rallies (Hari, 2014). The protesters were angry that the Federal Government led by Dr Goodluck Jonathan announced the increase in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) from #65 to #141 based on the removal of fuel subsidy. Social media platforms played a significant role in organizing and expanding awareness among the general public and perhaps stimulating and facilitating discussions on issues beyond fuel subsidy removal to include broader issues of corruption and accountability in the governance of the country (Hari, 2014). The Government of President Dr Goodluck Jonathan was forced to drop removing fuel subsidy as protests were increasing hence the need to maintain law and order.

The fact that our education sector in Nigeria is bedridden with corruption leaves no one in doubt because our government failed to address issues facing the industry. However, social media has done a lot in exposing the rot in our universities by posts, pictures and videos where users upload and share. The issue of sex for mark in many universities in Nigeria projects our citadel of learning as shameful and unfortunate. In 2018, a recorded audio conversation between a senior lecturer in the Department of Accounting at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Professor Richard Akindele negotiating sex for marks with one Monica Osetoba Osagie an MSc student in Business Administration went viral on the traditional and social media (Usman, 2018). When social media platforms helped to circulate the case of Monica, it forced the authorities of OAU to set up a panel to look into the allegation, and institutions like Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and some NGO’s came to Monica’s rescue. Justice Onyetenu sentenced Prof. Akindele to 24 months imprisonment for asking Monica sexual gratification to pass her (Hanafi, 2020). One cannot dispute the fact that social media is a powerful tool if properly used.

## **CONCLUSION**

The fact that social media are tools that help in the fight against corruption is not in doubt. Through the conceptual and empirical review from journals, newspapers and books, the study concludes that if social media is deployed rightly in the fight against corruption, it will awaken authorities to their responsibility. The internet is also helping much the growth of social media greatly as features of different social media platforms are built around it. This study harps on the need for Nigerians to adopt social media to expose corrupt practices and persons.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government agencies like EFCC & ICPC should adopt strategies for people to report corrupt practices through social media.
- Agencies of Government should be mandated to have at least one active social media handle where people report corrupt practices.
- Nigerians should be bold enough to report corrupt practices through their social media platforms.

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## A CONFLUENCE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND AUDIENCE SELECTIVITY ON HAUSA VIDEO FILM PREFERENCES AMONG THE YOUTH OF *KAWO* AND *UNGUWAN DOSA* AREAS OF KADUNA METROPOLIS

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### Abstract

*This paper studies the preferences of the content and genres of Hausa video films through a quantitative survey of young people selected from Kawo and Unguwan Dosa areas of Kaduna metropolis using quota, simple random and convenience sampling techniques. Semi-structured questionnaires were self-administered to a sample of 200 but only 189 were valid. The findings reveal that despite the incessant criticism of the Hausa film industry over its dependence on romantic genres, it was the most preferred among the respondents. Other factors such as the song and dance numbers were also a major attraction for viewership among the youth alongside love for popular actors and their dressing followed by the appeal of advertised film trailers. This paper concludes that the audience members are not as passive as assumed and that the market domination of films with romantic content is both to satisfy audience demand and also make profit. It is observed that over-exposure to certain genres/contents during socialization may have contributed to youth perception and preference. The paper recommends that film producers should strategically utilize the most preferred genres and actors to address important social challenges and also promote positive aspects of the indigenous Hausa culture.*

**Key words:** Hausa video film, Preference, Confluence, Political Economy, Audience, Selectivity

### INTRODUCTION

The ongoing Information and Communication Technology revolution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has led to the emergence of so many sophisticated gadgets that are taking the world by storm, continuously redefining the mass media and creating unavoidable overlaps of media and audience. The result is a never before seen information and entertainment bombardment, including a dependency on the media for most needs.

Within a single generation, homes have become media-rich, with multiple televisions, radios, games machines, computers, music systems and telephones, these typically shifting from household possessions to personal possessions, accompanying us wherever we go. In our



everyday engagement with friends and family, with the community, the political system, the nation and beyond, we draw upon, and we increasingly rely upon, a never-ending flood of images, ideas and information about worlds distant in space or time and about the world close to home. (Livingstone, 2005: P1)

Some mass media historians (Drotner, 1992; Cohen, 1972; Pearson, 1983) all cited in Livingstone (2005) point out that each time a new medium emerges in a society, the same set of concerns and criticisms also emerge over its operations, content and audience. Social voices go into what Cohen (1972) describes as 'Moral Panic' where scholars, the clergy, opinion leaders and social groups all rise to decry violence, nudity, exploitation, media reinforcement and cultivation of unattractive attitudes. According to Drotner (1992), the society goes through a 'historical amnesia' engaging in the usual 'media blame game' each time a new medium emerges forgetting that same concerns accompanied the media that preceded the latest one and it never stopped it from being incorporated into social life (Livingstone, 2005).

The concept of the audience has always been passionately discoursed and debated from many different perspectives. In the early years of media research, the media audience were assumed to be almost passive and then eventually scholars arrived at the acknowledgement of the 'active audience' and their power of choice over what media content to access or react to. The first group of audience researchers are the reception scholars who are concerned with meaning making of media content, the behaviour of the audience towards media messages and audience selectivity. The second group are critical scholars who are somewhat intrigued at the audience's inability to recognise propaganda and their willingness to be used as pawns in a struggle for market domination by media organisations. The third group are the effect scholars that are concerned with audience cultivation and other effects of media messages on the individual and also the society (Gillespie, 2005; Livingstone, 2005).

The Selectivity Theory of Mass Communication confers a lot of power on the audience who possess the choice to select which media genre and content they choose to expose themselves to. The theory buttresses the concept of the active audience that is capable of influencing or deciding what type of content, at which times and on which channels the mass media transmits to them (Baran and Davis, 2011, Cohen, 1972; Hall, 1980). Many other researchers however found out that because people typically encountered like-minded perspectives, the media mainly reinforced attitudes rather than changing them (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015; Stroud, 2017).

On the other hand, most Political economy scholars, specifically those from media economics and media consumption (Adorno, 1991; Clark, 1998; Chomsky, 2002; Hesmondalgh, 2010) argue that media industries push certain genres and themes while purposively neglecting others. They further argue that the aim behind this is to sell an ideology and make profit but the audience swallows what they are fed line, hook and sinker.

This paper has the objective to find out the content preferences of the Hausa video film audience and the implication of these preferences on the production genres and contents of Hausa video films through the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the preferred film genres among the youth of *Ungwan Dosa* and *Kawo*, Kaduna?



- RQ2. What are the motivating factors for consumption of Hausa video films among the youth of *Unguwan Dosa* and *Kawo*, Kaduna?
- RQ3. What is the preferred aspect of Hausa video film content among the youth of *Anguwan Dosa* and *Kawo*, Kaduna?
- RQ4. What are the implications of these preferences on the content of the Hausa video film industry?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The content of the Hausa video film industry

The emergence of the Hausa video film industry (Popularly referred to as *Kannywood*) in the early 90s roused the dismay of cultural scholars and society at large towards the contents and genres of the industry's productions. The indigenous Hausa youth that grew up in the 70s and 80s exposed to Hindi cinema laid the foundations of the Hausa language video film industry based on their individual ideals (Ali, 2003; Jibril, 2003; Maikaba, 2003). Over the three decades of *Kannywood's* existence, the industry has produced thousands of video films in most popular global film genres such as romantic comedies, romantic drama, horror, mystery, historical and action (Adamu, 2006).

Irrespective of genre, most or all of these films are characterised by the dominant theme of love and its struggles, revolving around forced marriage, rich boy meets poor girl or vice versa, love triangle etc. Such themes do occur in indigenous Hausa society, though albeit rarely because the reality in Hausa society is very far from the realities that have given rise to the love theme in Hindi Indian society (Adamu, 2005; Jibril, 2003; Maikaba, 2003). Indian society is known to have a culture that is repellent to romantic relationships before marriage and marriage based on love while favouring arranged marriages based on family ties and a favourable horoscope reading. The Hausa girl or boy is to a large extent allowed a choice of spouse and love is encouraged. This is evident in such cultural conducts that precede marriage such as *Zance/Tadi* (visit a suitor pays to a girl he likes), *Toshi* (monetary or other gifts regularly given to a girl after *Zance*), *Kayan na gani ina so* (gifts a suitor sends to a girl's family to show he likes their daughter and wants to take things to the next level) and *Tambaya* (official asking for a girl's hand in marriage). Decades into the industry's emergence, producers seem to widen their horizons to capture other forms of pre-and post-marital conflicts and challenges that are rooted in the typical Hausa social system such as child marriage and polygamy. However, the major themes of most Hausa film productions continue to revolve around romance and shallow domestic issues while other major social factors bedeviling Hausa society such as girl child education, *Almajiranci* and other cultural beliefs and practices holding the society back are neglected.

Another popular feature in Action Hausa films that is also typically disconnected from the Hausa culture is the depiction of the surreal Alpha male actor, capable of fighting dozens of adversaries hands down which is also an adaptation of actors in Bollywood productions. The strong man with a muscular body and suave moves is a common feature of American action films too, all typically inspired by the Chinese Kung Fu. A third popular film genre is the *Chamama*, which is comedy characterised by a lot of tomfoolery and mostly set in villages or





lower class settlements. It is also a domestication of the foolish character that Hausa society refers to as the *Chali chali* who is a common appearance in most Bollywood films as a comic relief. A fourth genre are the historical or epics that the industry produces in a bid to silence the cultural adulteration criticism and showcase the ancient Hausa cultural and political system. The fifth are the industry's attempts at horror films revolving around witchcraft, spirits and mystery. Despite the turmoil and drawbacks experienced by the Hausa film industry, it has trudged on and even thriving in its appeal to a sizeable audience capable of sustaining its existence (Adamu, 2006; Maikaba, 2006).

### **Media Consumption: Political Economy or Audience Selectivity**

Political economy focuses on the relationship between the economic structure, the dynamics of media industries and the ideological content of the media. The approach centres on market determination as a major influence on content (Chomsky, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2010). The relevance of political economy theory has been increased by several recent trends in the mass media; more powers being concentrated in fewer hands and the growing global information economy.

Political economy theorists investigate the means of production by looking at economic institutions expecting to find that these institutions shape media to suit their needs and purposes. The approach also looks at how power influences or biases the forms of mass culture produced and distributed through the media and how economic constraints influence or bias the forms of mass culture produced and distributed (Clark, 1998; Baran & Davis, 2011). Political economists also examine the dominance of certain genres in media content and whether audience taste alone explains these choices or if there are other less obvious reasons. Some studies (Golding & Murdock, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Baran & Davis, 2011) have ascertained over time beyond contest that regulations and economics are determinants of media content.

The only issue of contest among political economy scholars is the extent and level of this influence, varying with the media sector, the content and the environment the content is produced or consumed. Despite the extent of influence of regulation and economics on media content, culture industries have withstood the test of time and even progressively developed based on increased audience patronage. The consistent customer consumption of what critical political economists perceive as standardised, bland content produced using the same formula has intrigued them considerably (Clark, 1998; Baran & Davis, 2011). According to Murdock and Golding, critical political economy argues that: "the process of ideological reproduction cannot be fully understood without an analysis of the economic concept within which it takes place, including the pressures and determinations where the concept exists" (Murdock and Golding, 1977, p.19).

Some media scholars (Furniss, 2003; Golding & Murdock, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2010) have also observed that the financing, among other "power factors", determine mode of operations in a media industry, which in turn determines the final media product. The consumers of the end product are one of the major control factors that determine content. Political Economy scholars such as Horkheimer and Adorno (1969) as cited in Laughey (2007) do not challenge the power of the audience to make a choice but argue that the availability of options within which the audience can make that choice is already constrained by the culture industries.



Adorno (1991) further argues that during consumption the masses become characterised by the commodities which they use and exchange among themselves.

All the arguments above assume audience members to be an almost passive brainwashed group because they only have the right to choose within the confines of an already predetermined number of media content. The audience members are set up to believe they have the power to make a choice and therefore willingly use personal resources to choose among what is offered them instead of getting what they will have wanted. Chomsky (2002) in a bid to make sense of this intrigue argues that the audience of media content is like a 'bewildered herd' that cannot figure out propaganda imposed on it. The main defining feature of the culture industry for Adorno (1991) is "standardisation which refers not only to the culture industry products but its consumers too" (p.124). To Adorno, audiences have long since perceived and accepted the world as it is constructed for them by the culture industry and the content of the culture industry is purely mechanical reproduction and distribution for monetary gains (Laughey, 2007).

The postulations of the theory of Audience Selectivity, however, projects audience members as a group that have the power to choose what media content it exposes itself to. The concept of audience selectivity stems from the works of Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) to trace audience exposure to the campaign messages of the United States 1940 presidential elections. Research in the area thrived for a while but became uncommon in the 70s and 80s. By the mid 80s up to the new millennium, research in the area got reactivated due to increase in media types and content. "Of recent the explosion of media choices (cable, Internet) has led to provocative theses about the possibility that the contemporary media environment may provide ideal conditions for selective exposure" (Stroud, 2017: p537).

Selectivity means the tendency to select that which interests the human mind. Pearson (1983) defines selection as "the process of neglecting some stimuli in the environment to focus on other stimuli" (1983: p.44). The basic processes of selectivity are first **selective exposure** and this is when a person exposes him/herself to information that reinforces rather than contradicts his/her beliefs or opinions. According to Pearson, under selective exposure there is selective attention, which means that we focus on specific cues and ignore others even when we expose ourselves to certain information (Fiske and Shelley, 1991; Pearson, 1983, Baran and Davis, 2011). Selective exposure is followed by **selective perception** which is the tendency to see and believe only what you want to see, hear and believe. The third stage in the selectivity process is **selective retention** which is the tendency to remember only what one deems important, i.e. what one correlates to his/her existing beliefs and values (Baran and Davis, 2011). Shroud (2017) proffers five reasons why selectivity takes place: cognitive dissonance, the seeking of supportive information, processing like-minded information requires less cognitive effort than processing uncongenial information, moods and emotions affect information search and because people believe that like-minded information is more credible and of higher quality.

This brief review looks at the two sides of media content determination argument: Political Economy and Audience Selectivity. At one juncture the power of the culture industry in socialization, limiting choices and influencing perception is glaring and on the other side is the audience that feels powerful in its ability to choose within the options which the industry presents to them. This need for media consumption is more pronounced than ever in this



highly audio-visual and mediated twenty-first century society where the communication need competes with basic human needs such as food, sleep and sex. All of these needs continuously overlap over another without clear cut boundaries of where one ends and the other begins.

This paper assumes there must be a confluence where market forces meet with audience choice regarding the content and structure of Hausa video films which is the motivation for this study.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative survey of young people selected from *Kawo* and *Unguwan Dosa* areas of Kaduna metropolis using the quota, simple random and convenience sampling techniques. The two areas together have a dense population of indigenous Hausa people of all social groups and from all parts of Northern Nigeria second only to *Rigasa* area of Kaduna Metropolis. There is a more than two kilometre U-shaped dual road (College Road, Kudan road and Sabon Birni Road) with streets on either sides from Unguwan Dosa to Kawo or vice versa leading to the major Ahmadu Bello way, Kaduna. This study was able to identify a total of 57 streets from beginning to end and used simple random sampling to select 20 streets. Semi-structured questionnaires were then self-administered to a sample of 200 young people between the ages of 15 and 30, 10 respondents in each sampled street. The study ended up with 189 valid questionnaires because 7 of them were incoherently completed while 4 got missing. Tables and simple percentages are used to present the data below.

## THE RESULTS

- RQ1. What are the preferred film genres among the youth of *Unguwan Dosa* and *Kawo*, Kaduna?

Table 1: Preferred Hausa video film genres among respondents

HAUSA VIDEO FILM GENRES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
Comedies	64	33.9	33.9
Romantic drama	81	42.9	76.8
Historical ( <i>Sarauta</i> )	17	8.9	85.7
Horror	8	4.2	89.9
Action	13	6.9	96.8
More than 1 option	6	3.2	100.0
Total	189	100.0	100.0

The most preferred film genre among the respondents is Romantic drama which was chosen by 42.9% closely followed by comedy at 33.9%. The Hausa comedy has become a very popular genre of recent, though mostly preferred by the elderly and less educated. Only 8.9% of respondents went for historical films while 11.1% preferred action and horror films. Over the years scholars have criticised the Hausa video film industry for its over concentration on boy meets girl storylines revolving around romantic and domestic conflicts instead of focusing on the many other realities and challenges of northern Nigeria. The finding in Table 1 indicates that the dominance of romantic themes in Hausa video film production is probably related to audience choice which may explain the demand for such films. Hausa video films are produced with the intent to recoup investment; therefore producers will only make films



on themes the audience prefer. Although critical political economists are intrigued with consistent customer consumption of bland content produced using the same formula (Baran & Davis, 2011), the findings of Table 1 indicates that this standardised content may actually be due to audience demand. However, cultural scholars such as Adorno argue that “during consumption the masses become characterised by the commodities which they use and exchange among themselves” (Laughey, 2007, p.124). A second and very persuasive argument is that media industries push certain genres and themes while purposively neglecting others with the aim to sell an ideology and make profit and the viewers swallow what they are fed line, hook and sinker.

- RQ2. What are the motivating factors for consumption of Hausa video films among the youth of *Ungwan Dosa* and *Kawo*, Kaduna?

Table 2: Motivation for consumption of Hausa video films among Respondents

MOTIVATION(S)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
Good trailers	33	17.5	17.5
The released film tracks	52	27.5	45
The actors	49	25.9	70.9
The Producer	16	8.5	79.4
The Director	18	9.5	88.9
The Poster	21	11.1	100
Total	189	100.0	

Film trailers attract 17.5% of respondents and film songs released before the actual release of the films influence up to 27.5% of the respondents to purchase films. This data explains why film songs are released sometimes up to six months before the official release of a film. This trend was most notable in the films *Rariya* and *Mariya*. The main songs *Rariya* and *Mariya* trended in every audio and video shop, intercity transport stations and radio stations. The videos of the songs were also released, sold and freely shared. As a result, reports on the social media pages of the producers showed that both films got remarkable cinema attendance for straight two weeks at Film House Cinema, Kano. The same reports are an indication that the enhanced cinema viewing increased the producers’ chances of investment recoupment because other producers also adopted the same strategy. It is not surprising that as much as 25.9% of the respondents watch Hausa video films because of the actors. Some of them went as far as writing/mentioning names of specific actors; notable Ali Nuhu, Adam A. Zango, Sadiq Sani Sadiq and Umar M. Shariff. This data may indicate reasons why producers prefer certain actors more than others to cast in their films. The four actors mentioned above are the most popular, the most highly paid and also the ones most frequently cast, appearing in at least a film monthly (Mohammed, 2016). This data indicates that many of the audience of Hausa films watch based on convenience, affiliation as well as ease of understanding that comes with the familiar language of the medium. Only 8.5% patronise Hausa video films based on the production company, 9.5% based on the director



and 11.1% stated that the promotion posters are a motivation for patronage of Hausa video films.

- RQ3. What is the preferred aspect of Hausa video film content among the youth of *Ungwan Dosa* and *Kawo*, Kaduna?

Table 3: Preferred aspect of Hausa video film content among respondents

PREFERRED ASPECT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	COMMULATIVE PERCENT
Educative content	9	4.8	4.8
Comic relief	21	11.1	15.9
Song and dance	52	27.5	43.4
The love themes	49	25.9	69.3
The suspense	6	3.2	72.5
The fights	14	7.4	79.9
Costumes of the actors	26	13.8	93.7
2 or more options	12	6.3	100
Total	189	100.0	

The song and dance sequences proved to be the major reason why the respondents (27.5%) patronize Hausa video films while 25.9% choose the love themes. This data is consistent with that of Table 1 where up to 42.9% of the respondents selected romantic drama. Young people are at the age of courtship, romantic affiliations and just discovering their inner desires. The mass media is a mirror of life and audience members associate with media content that echoes their own realities and hidden desires. It is therefore not surprising that it is the most preferred genre to this sample of young people. According to 13.8% of the respondents, the costumes of the actors are what they prefer most and what attracts them to Hausa video films. The next popular option was comic relief (11.1%) emphasizing the view of media scholars (Murdock & Golding, 2010) that the mass media serves to douse tension accumulated by the masses from a hard day's work. Only 4.8% of the respondents watch Hausa video films because they consider them to contain certain lessons about life. Pioneer Hausa film actress Fati Mohammed in a personality interview (*Taurarin mu na Kannywood*) on AREWA24 (7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015) cited an instance where a man called her on her mobile phone to enquire which film he can purchase for his wives so that it can influence them to live peacefully. This shows that some of the audience do look up to these films to learn about everyday life (Mohammed, 2016).

- RQ4. What are the implications of these preferences on the content of the Hausa video film industry?

The Nigerian film industry, including Kannywood (The Hausa video film industry with major roots in Kano), is purely a commercial enterprise that has been left in the hands of independent producers who are mainly traders and marketers with a sole aim of commercial gain (Zajc, 2009; Furniss, 2003). The effect of this is that many of the present filmmakers are only able to produce very predictable films with poorly scripted contents around domestic issues, witchcraft, rituals, flamboyant city living and depiction of negative western values without reasons or lessons for the society ( Adeleke, 2003; Onuzulike,2007).





The literature review looked at many arguments (Chomsky, 2002; Golding and Murdock, 2000; Hardy, 2010; Hesmondalgh, 2010) which assume the audience to be an almost passive brainwashed group because it only has the right to choose within the confines of an already select number of media content. These political economy scholars argue that the audience is set up to believe it has the power to make a choice and use personal resources to choose among what is offered to it instead of getting what it needs. The major thrust of the argument is the belief that the audience is actually fed what it has been programmed to want, without understanding it is not what it needs.

However, the findings of this study indicate that audience taste might be a factor in Hausa video film production because the audience preferences were conversant with the type of content making its way out of the Hausa video industry. This is an indication that the supply of such romantic genres and dominant storylines of love may be a reaction to audience demand. The culture industry therefore has to cater to this demand because media production may be an art with a bit of social responsibility, but it is also an organised economic pursuit with the primary goal of sustenance and profit making. Content creators are therefore obliged to lean towards audience preferences if they are to recoup their investments. Contemporary production trends bear witness to this power of the audience. When certain content gets acceptance and makes sales, many similar storylines, genres and sequels crop up from producers competing for a share of the same market. This shows that the final determinant of a media content is from how much money it generates which is dependent on audience acceptance i.e how committed the audience are to pledging personal funds in exchange for a cultural product. On the global film market, some films with beautiful storylines have been flops in the box office and failed to get recognised in the award community which is also almost entirely reliant on market intrigues and audience choice.

## CONCLUSION

Hence we arrive at what this paper refers to as the 'confluence' i.e a meeting point of the culture industry and the audience, of political economy and audience selectivity. It is proven over time and beyond contest that regulations, economics and audience choice are all determinants of media content.

The first juncture looked at content production from the perspective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century audience with access to so many media types and forms including the choice to tune in or tune out media messages where and when ever. These preferences among young people who are the main audience of the Hausa film industry may have contributed to the sustenance of the dominant shallow storylines of love triangle and domestic issues. These young people, already having an array of choices from a borderless world, have high expectations and could choose to alienate any media that chooses to impose its preferences on them. In this audio-visual 21<sup>st</sup> century, the audience is king and the power of audience choice to select preferred options has never been this strong.

The second juncture is to assume the audience is conditioned to think it has a choice, when the reality is having a choice within limited options. History is able to establish that the Hausa video industry was set up by the experiments of young people who grew up viewing Hindi and Chinese films and therefore built their own industry by localising the foreign media they grew up knowing (Adamu, 2003; Jibril, 2003; Adamu, 2006; Mohammed, 2016). Taking these established arguments as a pedestal, this paper can also argue that Hausa video





film may have already conditioned young people of what film content to prefer just as the filmmakers themselves are influenced by their love of Hindi cinema. Political economy scholars (Adorno, 1991; Chomsky, 2002; Hesmondalgh, 2010) reiterate that media industries push certain genres and themes while purposively neglecting others with the aim to sell an ideology and make profit. They further argue that the audience believe and adopt this ideology. To apply this argument to the contents of the Hausa video film industry is to identify that commercial interest may be an underlying factor in the persistence of these storylines and that the audience are only made to believe they have the power of choice on a very limited and predetermined indigenous visual world.

This study therefore concludes that the preferences of Hausa video film content among the youth of *Ungwan Dosa* and *Kawo* areas of Kaduna is influenced partly by audience selectivity and partly by political economy of the industry. It is a very borderless and dicey confluence with each juncture flowing unto the other one and the meeting point difficult to separate. This confluence may partly be a result of youth exposure to global content and partly indigenous media industries competing with the media trends of a borderless world where many cultures, many media and many contents flowing freely have become one large difficult-to-define waterfall of popular culture.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The mass media remains a major agent of socialisation and this is pronounced more than ever in today's information controlled world. An indigenous media is an opportunity for the society to address its open and salient challenges and serve as an orientation platform for young people. The Hausa video film content may be a supply to audience demand but as a big and organised media sector it should possess the social responsibility to understand that young people deserve more, that media is an agent of socialisation and should therefore address social challenges. This paper likens the Hausa video film industry to a parent that gives the child the power to always choose junk instead of feeding the child with nutritious food. A responsible parent should know how to create the much needed balance between enjoyment and requirement. This paper therefore recommends that on that point where political economy and audience selectivity meets, social responsibility should become the third juncture on the confluence of Hausa video film production.

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## **HEALTH MESSAGES AND COMPLIANCE BY UNDERGRADUATE CONSUMERS OF ROADSIDE FOOD AROUND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*The overall purpose of this study was to ascertain the level that undergraduate students in universities around Anambra State comply with health messages on the dangers of patronizing roadside food outlets. The study was guided by four research questions which include the following: To what extent are university undergraduate students in Anambra State exposed to messages on health implications of patronizing roadside food outlets? To what extent are the undergraduate students knowledgeable on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets? To what extent do these students comply with messages of*



*health implication of eating at roadside food outlets? What demographic factors affect the undergraduate students' compliance with the health messages on the implications of eating at roadside food outlets? Anchored on the Health belief Model, the study adopted the survey research method. Findings suggest that: undergraduate students in universities around Anambra State were exposed to health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets. The research further reveals that majority of the undergraduate students were knowledgeable on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets. Surprisingly, irrespective of the undergraduate students' exposure and knowledge of the dangers of eating at roadside food outlets, it was discovered that they did not comply with health messages on the dangers of eating at roadside food outlets. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that such demographic factors like: age and class level of the undergraduate students' had influence on their compliance with dangers of patronizing roadside food outlet, gender however did not. The researchers therefore recommended that communication experts get fully involved in the development of health-behaviour change messages. They should look from within and identify factors that would negatively affect strategic health media messages intended to bring about sustainable health behavior change for a better living.*

**Keywords:** Compliance, Exposure, Knowledge, Health Messages, Roadside food outlets

## INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that over 3 million of acute cases of food poisoning and 20, 000 deaths occur annually as a result of exposure, poor and careless handling of food items prepared for public consumption (WHO, 2010, Malangu, 2015). Recent studies have also demonstrated that over 200, 000 people die annually from food borne pathogens (Fashae, Ognisola & Haastrup 2013; Adebukola & Opeyemi, 2015; Murad, Baydoun & Dagher, 2017; WHO 2020). This statistics no doubt presents a worrisome situation and therefore increasingly calls for an investigation. On the other hand, research has shown that when people become aware of certain health issues through exposure to health messages that emphasize such issues and as much as possible comply with the messages, a more healthy living is promoted. This study therefore takes a look at the level that undergraduate students, who are consumers of roadside food around university campuses in Anambra State, comply with health messages on the dangers of eating roadside food.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

A very common and regular sight in many Nigerian universities is the heavy presence of what is usually referred to as “*mama-put-joints* in the Nigerian local parlance. These joints or eateries are usually built in scruffy and make-shift stalls around these universities (Adum, Ekwenchi, Orjiakor & Nwosu, 2019). A close look at these food stalls reveal a number of facts – they are usually scattered around the environment, looking shabby and dirty and besieged by hungry universities students who request for assorted types of food. Sadly, a large number of these eateries, research have shown, are implicated as having little or no decent handling of food items they serve ((Adum, Ekwenchi, Orjiakor & Nwosu, 2019). They most times, carry out their businesses in an unhygienic environment. The implication of the foregoing is that undergraduate students who patronize these food joints are frequently exposed to outbreak of food borne diseases – and as it were, endangered to serious health risks.

The above is certainly a serious problem. On the other hand, research (Heldman, Schindelar, & Weaver 2013; Farmula, 2014) has also demonstrated that in Nigeria today, a number of



health message campaigns are sent out through different media channels to different target audience. Obviously, the essence of these health messages, which include: emphasis on healthy eating habits, avoidance of junk food, proper handling of food items for public consumption among others, is particularly to educate consumers on the importance of being careful of what they eat in order to avoid health risks associated with such eating habits (Nwabueze & Nwakor, 2015; Adedoyin & Oyewusi, 2015). Yet, irrespective of these health campaign messages undergraduate students of universities are seen to heavily patronize road side food vendors. The questions that thus come to mind in the face of this challenge are: do these university undergraduate students really have access to health campaign messages that harp on implication of eating at roadside food outlets? If they do, to what extent do they actually understand the contents of the messages and accordingly, comply with them? Or are there variables that affect their compliance with these messages? These are the core problems that this research work sought to investigate.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this study is to investigate the undergraduates' compliance with health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets around university campuses in Anambra State. In more precise terms, the study pursued the following specific objectives:

- To discover the extent that university undergraduate students in Anambra State are exposed to messages on health implication of patronizing roadside food outlets
- To investigate the extent that these undergraduate students are knowledgeable on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets.
- To discover the medium that undergraduate students in Anambra State prefer most in assessing health messages.
- To identify the extent that these undergraduate students comply with the messages of health implications of eating at roadside food outlets.
  
- To discover demographic factors that affect the undergraduates' compliance with the health messages on the implications of eating at roadside food outlets.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following are the research questions of the study:

- To what extent are university undergraduate students in Anambra State exposed to messages on health implications of patronizing roadside food outlets?
- To what extent are the undergraduate students knowledgeable on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets?
- What medium do undergraduate students in Anambra State prefer most in assessing health messages?
- To what extent do these students comply with messages of health implication of eating at roadside food outlets?
- What demographic factors affect the undergraduate students' compliance with the health messages on the implications of eating at roadside food outlets?





## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Health Communication: Quick Conceptual and Historical Overview

Diseases remain one of the very daunting challenges affecting humanity today. It is indisputably a growing threat. From time to time, just like the world is witnessing the Corona virus pandemic, diseases that threaten the life and existence of humans emerge. Stake holders therefore understand that diseases cannot be wished away. For this reason, strategies are carefully mapped out to confront them. Health communication is one of the strategies often employed to combat diseases, whether at the epidemic or pandemic level (Okoro, Nwachukwu and Ajeoro, 2015). This area of study has emerged as a distinct and specialized discipline in recognition of the indispensability in not only fighting diseases, but communicating the implication of some bad health practices to the public. Although people have always communicated about health in the past, the field of health communication is a relatively new area (Qui, Rutherford, Chu, Mao and Hu, 2016, p.123).

The interest in health communication particularly began in the 1970s. Julie (2018) notes that: “In 1972, health communication was used to mitigate smallpox epidemic in Boston (USA)” That year, Cotton Matter, a political leader made use of pamphlets and speeches to promote inoculation of small pox.” Furthermore, in the beginning of the 19th century The Women’s Temperance Union led a movement against alcohol abuse, using extensive health communication strategy as a major tool to communicate their message to the masses. These efforts marked the early use of health communication in America as a field of scientific research (Julie, 2018). Health communication is also fairly new in the third world countries like Nigeria, where it has been utilized severally in carrying out strategic health developmental efforts (Okoro, Nwachukwu & Ajaero, 2015, p.63).

Health communication is defined by Center for Disease and Control as: “The study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individuals and community’s decisions that enhance health” (CDC, 2011). Friemuth, Cole and Kirby (2000, p.120) define health communication as “the study and use of methods to inform and influence individual community decisions that enhance health, such methods are used to create and increase awareness, educate the public about a disease, its causes and treatment; change individual behavior to prevent or control a disease, advocate for policy changes in favour of disease prevention and control and create social norms that favour healthy living.” Viewed from the foregoing, it becomes clear why health communication theories, according to Friemuth, Linnan and Porter (2000, p.122), “make use of the four key elements of communication process: audience, message, source and channel” The ultimate aim being to reach intended audiences with all inclusive interventions and messages that will ultimately protect public health outcomes. Furthermore, communication is a vital component of health care delivery. Current research on health communication clearly illustrates the powerful influences of communication on health care. Today, mass media health campaigns can raise awareness of an issue, enhance knowledge and beliefs and also reinforce existing attitudes (Okpoko, 2013, p.124)

The outcomes of health communication Okpoko (2013) notes, “can include increasing audience knowledge and awareness of health issues, influencing behaviours and attitudes towards health issue, demonstrating healthy practices, showing benefits of behavior changes



of public health issues or policies, increasing demand or support of health services and arguing myths and misconceptions related to health.” Interestingly, health communication is a hybrid field that derives from communication studies, marketing, journalism and public relations and also overlaps with health education and health promotions (Glik, 2005, p.8). Scholars in the field are often trained in disciplines such as: sociology, psychology, public health or medicine and then focus in their field on either health or communication (Maibach, 2008).

### **The State of Local Eateries and Roadside Food in Nigeria**

The rate at which fast food shops and what is usually referred to as road side food outlets is growing in Nigeria today is alarming (Majara, 2010, p.10). Although literature has clearly shown that these fast-food shops have continued to boost the economy of different regions of the country (2004), they have been identified to pose health challenges sometimes, to people that patronize it (Bamidele, Adebimpe, Oladele & Adeoye, 2004, p.124). Westernization, urbanization and the need to struggle for survival on daily bases have remained one particular factor that has made Nigerians to abandon the culture of cooking at home, while besieging roadside food vendors and local eateries in order to satisfy their need for hunger (Bamidele, Adebimpe, Oladele & Adeoye, 2004, p.127). However, it is instructive to note that the health safety of customers that patronize roadside food outlets is of great importance. This in other words, behooves the handlers of roadside food to prepare their food in an extremely hygienic manner. But today, a large number of roadside food outlets have been implicated as being careless in their handling and preparation of food items for consumption (Adum et.al 2019).

A number of factors, ranging from ignorance (Walker, Pritchard & Forsythe, 2003), uncaring and poor attitude towards personal hygiene, lack of basic hygiene infrastructure and sanitary facilities such as: water, soap and toilets, lack of food storage and preservative facilities all contribute to poor attitude toward food hygiene practices among roadside food handlers in Nigeria (Okojie, Wagbatsoma, & Ighorege 2005).

The situation is not different in Nigeria universities. A study carried out among Nigerian food handlers in some Nigerian universities revealed poor level of food hygiene practice among roadside food vendors who are patronized by Nigerian undergraduate students – the handlers of these food shops were identified to have low level of personal hygiene (Okojie, Wagbatsoma, & Ighorege 2005).

Regrettably today, the agency of government whose responsibility it is to regulate food sale and marketing, the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) acts centrally and as such, has failed to effectively curtail the excesses witnessed in the regional, state and local council levels. Extant literature has also shown that before now, food regulatory agencies in Nigeria have failed to focus on the local and some community’s food handlers, irrespective of the fact that some of them have been implicated as carriers of infectious disease (Adum et.al. 2019). The above scenario is the picture of local eateries and roadside food in Nigeria – the picture painted here is also reflective of what is witnessed in university campuses around the country, especially as it concerns roadside food vendors.

### **Health Message Campaigns and Consumers Compliance**

In spite of the high level advancement in healthcare services, challenges of food borne diseases have remained a worrying issue (Adum et al. 2019). This challenge has led to the



emergence of health communication as a vital tool for achieving public health objectives of the 21st century (Bernhardt, 2004, p109). In periods of health risks, the media through their campaigns have always served as an outlet for intervening in modifying health behaviours. They have done this by not only creating awareness but mobilizing the public for prevention of health hazards (Salawu, 2016, p.22). Literature dominantly recognize the role of the media as the society's watchdog and sensitizer, with the capability to enlighten heterogeneous audience about certain conditions that could predispose one to disease (Okorie, Oyesomi & Olusola 2014). The media employs single or multiple media and conventional strategies that use television, radio and print media, and recently, the new media, such as internet websites in reaching their diverse audience with health messages (Okorie, Oyesomi & Olusola 2014). Interestingly, these media campaign exercises are prominent because of their ability to reach out to vast and diverse audiences cost effectively (Salawu & Okorie, 2016, p.24).

### **Exposure, Awareness, Knowledge and Compliance to Health Messages:**

The term exposure means the process of seeing, hearing or reading a message. The message can be political, educational, financial or health messages (Nwosu, 2019). Studies have shown that exposure to certain media messages do not only increase awareness of the audience toward such messages, but also increases the depth of knowledge and understanding about the issue under focus. Again, being exposed to certain media messages may change attitudes, social norms and behaviours that lead to positive public health outcomes (Gustav, Patterson, Sandberg, Kabakvenger & Agardh, 2014). In other words, increased media exposure to such health behaviours like patronizing roadside food outlets would apparently reduce health risks that is associated with such patronage.

Okunna and Omenugha (2012, p.247) argues that “a mass media message which an individual has not been exposed to, either directly or indirectly, can hardly be expected to have any effect on the person” Therefore, it becomes instructive to note that when an individual is exposed to a health message, such individual is bound to become aware of the cues emphasized by that health message (Gustav, Patterson, Sandberg, Kabakvenger & Agardh, 2014).

Valkenburg, Peter and Walther (2016), agree with the above position when they note that “researchers have always examined an audience after a media exposure for changes in cognition, belief system, and attitude, as well as emotional, psychological and behavioural effects” Such studies have often revealed the effect that media exposure leaves on the audience after. In addition, Adum et.al (2019) citing Maibach and Maccoby (1989), note that “the media have always played a very vital role as primary health change agent through educating, supporting, helping as program promoter and supplement” The above roles are particularly achieved when the target audience are exposed to media messages. The above therefore, underscores the importance of “exposure” in fostering health messages that can help change behavior”.

Awareness on the other hand is another important factor that enhances health promotion. It is a necessary step for persuasion to occur (Don, 2002, p. 189). Awareness is the state of being conscious of something. More specifically, it is the ability to directly know and perceive, to feel, or be cognizant of events (Don, 2002, p.186). Awareness is a state where a subject is conscious of some information and when that information is available to bring to bear in the direction of a wide range of behavioural actions (Chalmers 1997, p.122).



The concept of awareness is often synonymous to consciousness. The ability to generate awareness among large numbers of people is considered one of the strengths of the mass media (Don, 2002, p.127). Basically for audience awareness to occur the audience must be exposed to information, they must attend to such information and also remember it (Flay & Sobel, 1983, cited in Don, 2002). Therefore, media campaigns that fail to raise awareness generally do not achieve the necessary preconditions like messages being aired or distributed so that the target audience is exposed adequately, or messages constructed in a manner to capture attention.

Knowledge transmission to large numbers of individuals is another strong point of the mass media. Knowledge expansion is an important outcome to the extent that it leads to desirable attitudes; it is a necessary condition for subsequent health behaviors. Communication persuasion models posit that attitude change is contingent on knowledge gain (Peart 2013). Knowledge, however, is not a single domain. There are a variety of cognitive and affective components to knowledge (Peart 2013), and different types of learning may differentially effect subsequent change. Furthermore, the type of information presented, and the situation in which information is presented can influence what people learn and how they apply it. Knowledge can influence the attitudes and behaviors of people that are highly involved with a health issue but may fail to affect people with low issue involvement (Peart, 2013).

In fact, level of knowledge (recall, comprehension, analysis, and synthesis), audience information needs and audience involvement are clearly important to the knowledge definition process. Considerations of media channels and message formats within channels e.g. special programs on television, doctors' columns or ads in newspapers) are particularly important for knowledge gain. From the foregoing, it is clear that exposure, awareness and knowledge are important variables that help in fostering health behaviour change – this is so because when one is exposed to media contents that educate one on the importance of certain health practices, it consequently increases the awareness of that person toward being more knowledgeable about such health practices. There is strong research evidence that exposure, awareness and knowledge lead to behaviour change, which is the main focus of every health intervention programme (Ngigi, & Busolo, 2018; Yaya, Uthman, Amouzou, Bishwajit, 2018).

Similarly, studies have also shown that exposure and knowledge correlates significantly with compliance to health messages which particularly aims at encouraging adaptive preventive health behaviours (Gordon, 2002; Yaya, Uthman, Amouzou, Bishwajit, 2018). This explains the reason health advocates spend much time and effort optimizing message design, presentation and distribution to share knowledge effectively with the target audience. However, many cases exist in which exposure and knowledge do not result in adoption of healthful behaviours, as well as compliance to health messages. In other words, when exposure to health messages, awareness and knowledge of the target audience fails to translate to logical behavioural outcomes, it becomes difficult and frustrating. However, a number of factors have been identified to influence preventive health behavior adoption or compliance to precautionary health messages (Gordon, 2002). We are going to look at these factors below:

### **Factors that Affect Compliance to Health Messages**



The major purpose of every health message is to effect change in behaviour; this change can be from a harmful health practice to a precautionary and safe health practice. When viewed from the prism of the present study, the above submission would mean that when an effective health message campaign is directed to a group of people who patronize roadside food outlets that are considered to operate under poor sanitary environment, it is mainly to make such group of people aware and knowledgeable regarding the implication of exposing themselves to such health risk and consequently having their behavior changed towards such practice. However, studies have shown that most times, a number of health messages and campaigns fail completely to achieve their main purpose (Gordon, 2002). Gordon outlines some factors that have been identified as causes for the failure of health messages as: “perception of risks; perception of self; environmental conditions (physical and social) and perception of cost and benefit”

Commenting further on militating factors to effective health messages passage, Gordon (2002) notes:

Perception of risk is an established factor associated with preventive health behavior. Here when risk perception is low, people are usually unenthusiastic to change preexisting behavioural patterns. In perception of self, a number of personal characteristics have been identified as factors influencing compliance to health messages. More so, environmental factors, both physical and social in which individuals operate affect the likelihood of adopting health behaviours. Availability of health services, costs, and transportation needs, for example, have long been recognized as barriers to adoption of beneficial health behaviours. Such considerations are particularly pivotal in rural locations or low-income areas. Availability of health services, costs, and transportation needs, for example, have long been recognized as barriers to adoption of beneficial health behaviours. Such considerations are particularly pivotal in rural locations or low-income areas. Another factor that affects the likelihood of complying with health messages that helps people adopt a healthy living is that of the perceived cost and benefit. Here, if one expects the benefits to exceed costs, then one is more likely to adopt recommended.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the Health belief model (HBM). The model was developed in the 1960s by social psychologists to help explain and predict certain health behaviours by focusing on the attitude and beliefs of individuals. As an aspect of change theories, the model stipulates that an individual’s health behavior is guided by the following:

- Perceived susceptibility – one’s opinion of chances of getting a condition.
- Perceived severity – one’s opinion of how serious a condition and its sequence are.
- Perceived benefits - one’s opinion of the efficacy of the advised action to reduce risk or seriousness of impact.
- Perceived barriers – one’s opinion of the twist and psychological cost of the advised action.
- Demographic, socio-psychological and structural variables that affect individual’s perception and thus indirectly influence health related behavior.
- Cues to action – events, either bodily (e.g. health symptom) or environment e.g. (media messages) that motivate people to take action.
- Self efficacy – confidence in one’s ability to take action (Mboho & Batta 2008, p.18).





The theory maintains that people's health behavior are a product of what they perceive and think about the threat to themselves, the benefits to be obtained if a suggested action is adopted, the cost of action, the impact of external forces such as age, status, education, family etc, other motivating factors and self confidence.

The theory also notes two important facts that are relevant to health communication – the first is that a highly credible message can stretch the hearer's latitude of acceptance and the second is that people who are dogmatic of every issue have had their minds made up or have chronically wide latitude rejection (Mboho & Batta, 2008, p.18). The import of this theory for health communication is that it is very important to study the audience's knowledge, attitude and perception of health issues before designing messages. Therefore, in relation to this study, this paper hypothesizes that the extent an individual who is exposed to the dangers of eating in roadside food outlets complies with health messages that focus on the implications of patronizing poor sanitary roadside food outlets will largely depend on the competence of the health campaigners. In other words, when health messages are properly disseminated with the right cues, there is the tendency that the target audience (students who patronize roadside food outlets) will be motivated to take healthful actions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology adopted in this study was the survey design. Babbie (2010, p.85) describes the survey design as “an excellent method for measurement of attitude and opinion of people within a large population.” This design therefore adopted entails asking the respondents about their opinion on the subject matter.

## **POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The population of study comprise of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (NAU) Chukwuemeka Odumegwu University Igbariam (COOU) and Paul University Awka (PU), all in Anambra State The researchers decided to use this population given that the three universities, which cover both the federal, state and private institutions of the population have undergraduates who heavily patronize roadside food outlets in the different schools. The population of these universities put together is about 48,600 students. This is according to the records obtained from the Registry Department of each of the universities.

## **SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

The sample size of the study is 400. This is in line with Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size. Therefore 400 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the randomly selected students, and 381 were successfully retrieved and analysed. The multi stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents across faculties, departments and levels of study for the purpose of instrument administration. In other to achieve the above sampling, the researcher used the multi stage sapling procedure to select the three universities (NAU, COOU and PU) studied at the first stage. At the second stage, two faculties were randomly selected from each of the three universities. The procedure yielded for NAU: faculties of Social Sciences and Arts, for OOU: faculties of Law and Management and for PU: faculties of Social Sciences and Management. At the third stage, the researchers also randomly selected two departments from each of the faculties. This procedure yielded Mass Communication and Psychology, English Language and Music departments from the faculties of Social Sciences and Arts NAU, Criminal Law and Civil Law, Accountancy and Banking and Finance from COOU, and philosophy and Sociology, Marketing and





Accountancy from PU. Using the proportionate sampling allocation technique, 296 sampling size was allocated to NAU, 100 sampling size was allocated to COOU and 4 sampling size allocated to PU, bringing the total sampling size to 400.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

In presenting and analyzing the data gathered for this study, the researchers made use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in obtaining frequencies and percentages. Statistical tables were also employed in presenting the data. This method became important in order to interpret the relationships between different variables.

**Demographic Variables**

The data analysed in the demographic section of the questionnaire indicates that a greater percentage of the respondents were males (257) 65.5%, while females were 124 representing (32.5%) of the respondents. Also, the respondents were categorised under three age brackets. The data shows that 19.9% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 16-20 years, 43.40% of them were in the age bracket of 21 -25 years, while 37.0% were in the age bracket of 26 and above. The data in table 1 suggests that that the students in the age bracket of 21-25 years constitute the highest population sampled. With regards to their level of study, 24 respondents representing (6.3%) are in their 100 level, 284 of them representing (74.5%) are in their 200 level, 36 (9.4) are in their 300 level, 12 (3.1%) are in their 400 level while 25 (6.6%) are in their 500 level.

**Research Question 1: To what extent are university undergraduate students in Anambra State exposed to messages on health implications of patronizing roadside food outlets?**

Table 1: Undergraduates’ Exposure to Health Messages on Patronizing Roadside Food Outlets

	Access to advertised messages	Encounter to Health messages	Encounter on health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food
<b>Yes</b>	76.6%	93.7%	65.7%
	N=292	N=357	N=257
<b>No</b>	23.4%	6.3%	34.3%
	N=89	N=24	N=124
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>(N=381)</b>	<b>(381)</b>	<b>(381)</b>



Table 1 above shows that 76.6% of the respondents have access to advertised messages on different media platforms, while only 23.4% of them indicated that they have not heard such access. Again, 97.3% of the respondents indicated that they have in one way or the other encountered health messages on different media platforms, while 6.3% of them noted that they have not. Furthermore, 65.7% of the respondents said that they have encountered health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food vendors while only 34.3% said that they have not. The deduction here based on the above data is that undergraduate students of the selected universities in Anambra state were exposed to health messages on patronizing roadside food outlets.

**Research Question 2: To what extent are the undergraduate students knowledgeable on the implication of eating at roadside food outlets?**

Table 2: Undergraduate students’ knowledge on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets

	Knowledge of dangers associated with patronizing roadside food	Knowledge of contacting food poison from roadside food	Knowledge of poor sanitary environment of roadside food outlets	Knowledge of hospitalization that results from consumption of roadside food	Knowledge of deaths that results from consumption of roadside food
<b>Yes</b>	61.2% N=233	75.5% N=284	70.3% N=268	33.9% N=129	19.9% N=76
<b>No</b>	38.8% N=148	24.5% N=97	29.7% N=113	66.1% N=252	80.1% N=305
<b>Total</b>	<b>N=381</b>	<b>N=381</b>	<b>N=381</b>	<b>N=381</b>	<b>N=381</b>

Data in table 2 shows the respondents’ view on the extent that undergraduate students in universities around Anambra State are knowledgeable on the implication of roadside food consumption. From the table, 233 respondents which represent 61.2% agree that they are knowledgeable of the dangers associated with roadside food patronage, while 148 of them representing 38.8% of the respondents said that they are not. 75.5% of the respondents attested that they know that one can contaminate food poisoning from roadside food outlets, while only 24.5% of them said that they don’t. Again, 70.3% of the respondents said that they know about the poor sanitary condition of roadside food outlets, while 29.7% said they don’t. Only 33.9% of the respondents indicated that they know that a large number of people get hospitalized yearly for being infected for patronizing roadside food outlets, while 66.1% of them said that they don’t. Similarly, only 19.9% of the respondents showed that they have knowledge about the level of deaths that occur annually from food poisoning, while 80.1% of them did not know about this. The foregoing data therefore suggests that majority of the respondents are knowledgeable on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets.

**Research Question 3: What medium do undergraduate students in Anambra State prefer most in assessing health messages?**

Most preferred medium for assessing health messages on dangers of patronizing roadside food outlets	Percentage.	Number
Newspaper	3.8%	N =10
Radio	17.1%	N= 45
Television	13.3%	N= 35
Outdoor adverts (fliers, handouts etc)	11.4%	N= 30
Social media	32.2%	N= 200
Interpersonal medium	13.3%	N= 35
Others	8.9%	N= 26
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>N= 381</b>

Data in table 3 shows that 10 respondents representing a 3.8% preferred newspaper to any other medium in assessing health messages. 45 of them representing 17.1% preferred radio, 35 of the respondents representing 13.3% said they preferred television to any other medium, 11.4% of the respondents had preference for outdoor adverts, 200 of the respondents representing 32.2% said that they preferred the social media to any other medium, about 13.3% of them had preference for interpersonal medium and 8.9% of them fell into the category of “others”. From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that the social media had the highest preference as a medium that the undergraduate students used most in assessing health messages on the dangers of patronizing roadside food outlets. This is followed by radio, then radio and interpersonal medium. The category for others was the least preferred medium that the students used in assessing health messages.

**Research Question 4: To what extent do students comply with messages of health implication of eating at roadside food outlets?**

Table 4: Undergraduate students’ compliance with messages of health implication of eating roadside food outlets?

Agree with media campaign messages that encourage avoidance of roadside food		
Response	Percentage	Number
Yes	23.4%	N= 89
No	76.6%	N= 292
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>N= 381</b>



<b>Reason you disagree</b>		
The food is tasty	54.6%	N= 208
Can't buy food from big restaurants	26.2%	N= 100
Government should provide alternative	6.3%	N= 24
Have not died since I have been taking roadside food	12.9%	N = 49
Others		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>N= 381</b>

<b>Compliance with Messages that discourage the patronage of roadside food outlets</b>		
Yes	16.8%	N= 64
No	83.2%	N= 372
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>N= 381</b>

Data in table 4 shows that 89 respondents, representing 23.4% indicated that they agree with media campaign messages that encourage avoidance of eating at roadside food, while 76.6% of them disagreed. On the reason for disagreement on the messages of compliance 54.6 % of the respondents said that roadside food is tasty, 26.6% said that they can't afford to pay for food in bigger restaurants, 6.3% of them said that the government should provide alternative, while 12.9% were of the view that they have not died from eating in roadside food outlets. Furthermore, while only 16.8% of the respondents complied with messages of health implication on eating at roadside food outlet, only 83.2% of them did not comply. It is based on the data supplied here that the researcher infer that undergraduate students around universities in Anambra State did not comply with the health messages on the dangers of eating at roadside food outlets.

**Research Question 5: What demographic factors affect the undergraduates' compliance with the messages of health implications of patronizing roadside food outlets?**

Table: 5 Cross Tabulation of Respondents' Gender and compliance with Health messages on implication of patronizing roadside food outlets.

Compliance with health messages on roadside food consumption	Respondents' Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	25.3% N=65	19.4% N=24	23.4% N=89
No	74.7% N=192	80.6% N=100	76.6% N = 292



<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>N=257</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>N=124</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>N = 381</b>
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$X^2 = 381.200$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .199$

Table 5 above shows that 25.3% of male respondents complied with health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food, while 74.7% of them did not comply. On the other hand, only 19.4% of the respondents who are females complied with health messages, while 80.6% of them did not comply. From the data here, it is clear that male respondents complied more with health messages on the implications of patronizing roadside food outlets than their female counterparts. However, it is obvious that the relationship between the respondent's gender and their compliance with health messages on the implications of patronizing roadside food is not statistically significant at (0.999) level. This data consequently tends to suggest that gender as a demographic factor did not affect the respondent's compliance with health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets.

**Table 6: Cross Tabulation of Respondents' Age and compliance with Health messages on implication of patronizing roadside food outlets.**

Compliance with health messages on patronizing roadside food outlets	Respondents' Age			Total
	16-20	21-26	26 and above	
Yes	0.0% N=0	39.0% N=64	17.7% N=25	23.4% N=89
No	100% N=76	61.0% N=100	82.3% N=116	76.6% N=292
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>N=76</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>N=164</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>N=141</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>N=381</b>

$X^2 = 48.139$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p < .0.000$

Table 6 shows that 0.0% of the respondents who fell between the ages of 16-20 years did not comply with health messages on the dangers of patronizing roadside food outlets. However, 39.0% of them within the age brackets of 21-26 years complied with the health messages, while 61.1% of them did not. Furthermore, 17.7% of the respondents who were between 26 years and above complied with the health messages, while 82.3% of them did not. Going by the outcome of the data in table 5, there seems to be higher compliance with respondents within the age bracket of 21-26 years. This relationship is found to be statistically significant at 0.000 level. From the foregoing therefore, it is evident that the undergraduate students appear to have complied more with the health messages on implication of patronizing roadside food as they advanced in age. For this reason, it could be stated that age of the undergraduate students influenced compliance with health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets.

**Table: 7 Cross Tabulation of Respondents' Level compliance with Health messages on implication of patronizing roadside food outlets.**

Compliance with the implication of health messages on patronizing roadside food outlets	Respondents' Level					Total
	100 level	200 level	300 level	400 level	500 level	
Yes	50.0% N=12	22.5% N=64	0.0% N=0	0.0% N=0	52.0% N=13	23.4% N=89





No	50.0%	77.5%	100%	100%	48.0%	76.6%
	N=12	N=220	N=36	N=12	N=12	N=293
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>N=24</b>	<b>N=284</b>	<b>N=36</b>	<b>N=12</b>	<b>N=25</b>	<b>N381</b>

$X^2 = 35.707$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p < 0.000$

Table 7 shows that among the different class levels of undergraduate students, 50.0% complied with the health messages on implication of patronizing roadside food outlets, while another 50.0% of the same level did not. About 22.5% of respondents in 200 level complied with the messages, while 77.5% of the same class did not. No respondent complied with the health messages in 300 and 400 levels, while 52.2% of them in 500 level complied with the messages. It is therefore clear from the present data that students in 100 level, 200 level and 500 level complied with the health messages as against the ones in 300 and 400 levels who did not. The relationship between the respondents' level and their compliance with health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets here is found to be statistically significant at (0.000) level. As a result of this, while it could be stated that the class level of the undergraduate students is found to influence compliance with health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets, the distribution does not follow a regular pattern that would have precisely revealed the exact ranking of each level in terms of the extent it influence the compliance.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Generally the findings of this study suggest that the undergraduate students in around Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam and Paul University Awka were exposed to health messages on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets. This position is in line with Chowdhury, Zaman and Bari (2014) who argue that “consumer knowledge influences food safety behaviour and that this knowledge is usually successfully passed on to the audience through their exposure to health messages on different media platforms like the radio, newspaper, social media, fliers and television”

In addition, the researchers also discovered that majority of the undergraduate students were knowledgeable on the implication of patronizing roadside food outlets. Ma, Chen, Yan, Wu and Zhang (2019) also made similar observation in their study “that the media have continued to emphasise on the dangers of eating from roadside vendors and that this health messages have helped in exposing, and therefore increasing the knowledge of people on the dangers of eating at roadside food outlets”

Again from the findings of the study, it was evident that the undergraduate students preferred the social media as a platform for assessing health media messages than other forms of media platforms. This finding to a large extent lends credence to the emerging trend of the social media becoming increasingly important as a preferred medium for assessing media messages; this is especially among young people (Uzuegbunam, 2019)

Surprisingly, irrespective of the undergraduate students' exposure and knowledge of the dangers of patronizing roadside food outlets, it was discovered that they did not comply with the health messages. Gordon (2002) had similar finding where he reported that, “there were factors that affected the respondent's compliance to health messages even after their exposure



to health messages – factors like: environmental problem, cost benefit and self perception.” As a result of this, one could extrapolate that similar factors would have come to play here.

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that such demographic factors like age and class level influenced the undergraduate student’s compliance to dangers of patronizing roadside food outlet. However, gender did not. Based on the above findings one could extrapolate that such demographic factors like age and level of studies became influencing factors to the undergraduates’ compliance to the health message on implications of patronizing roadside food outlets because it is natural that as individual grow in age and level of education, they develop a better maturity and experience toward their attitude to health matters (Emily & Woolf, 2014; Tilicia, Gamble & Mouton, 2019).

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The result of this study shows that through different media platforms, different health messages might be exposed to a target audience. This audience most times, becomes not only aware but knowledgeable about the health message focused on. However, the target audience of such messages might fail to comply with the content of such messages and as such fail to have his or behavior changed. What this signifies is that sometimes, health media messages on either television, radio, outdoor adverts or even interpersonal mediums sometimes, might not ultimately achieve the aim it intends to achieve – that is, change behavior; this somewhat portends danger and therefore requires that communication experts get fully involved in development of health-behaviour-change messages. They should look from within and identify factors that would negatively affect strategic health media messages intended to bring about sustainable health behavior change for a better living. The framing of these messages should not be left for ordinary radio/TV advertisers or social media blog owners but health communication professionals who understand the intricacies and dynamics of coming up with effective health messages that will precipitate behavior change.

Furthermore, such strategies like health message framing, the type of media channel employed to disseminate health messages and strategic plans to reach the target audience to comply with health messages should be top priority for health message planers. This is so because when these variables are not put into the right perspective, there is the possibility that health messages might not be complied with, even when the audience are exposed to it.

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## **CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE AMBIVALENT POTENTIALS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN COVID 19 PANDEMIC CAMPAIGNS**

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## Abstract

*The fear created by the Coronavirus as seen in the world today and the manner social media is churning out all manner of information (misinformation, disinformation, memes, innuendos, half - truths, lies etc.) about its cure and prevention is creating a situation of uncertainty. The situation becomes more disturbing since none of the claims in social media platforms regarding the therapies and recipes (solutions) for the cure or prevention of COVID-19 has been approved or certified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) or the Centre for Disease Control (CDC). It seems, however, that only the prevalence of social media can suffice for the provision of adequate, regular and up - to - date information on the pandemic. This can also explain the reason for leveraging social media platforms to enhance fast and wide diffusion of knowledge about Coronavirus all over the world. By its nature, social media allows for information to be readily shared – a role it has seemingly played in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic - and unlike traditional news outlets there is no filter, no fact - checking and often a lot of bias. It becomes imperative therefore to assess the ambivalent potentials which social media display in the face of COVID-19 pandemic vis-à-vis the impacts they have on the consumers of the information. The paper adopted the library research approach in which relevant conceptual literatures and empirical studies were analysed with the aim to ascertain whether social media display ambivalence in the campaign against the spread of COVID-19. The paper found, among others that the ambivalent potentials of social media use in the campaign against COVID-19 was glaring. It recommends, among others that consumers of social media products in this period should listen more to and, or check for updates by governments and other authorised agencies such as WHO and CDC rather than relying on unwholesome information from social media platforms.*

**Keywords:** Critical assessment, Ambivalent potentials, Social media use, COVID-19 pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

People did not have the same sources of communication we now have in the 21st century to quickly share news and information during the 1918 flu pandemic, which the CDC estimates



infected a third of the world's population. During that period, a public health report on Minneapolis's response to the 1918 flu shows that critical information regarding the virus were shared via postal workers, Boy Scouts, and teachers (Kushner, 2020). Today, however, in the face of COVID-19 pandemic social media platforms seem to provide that critical information without physical contacts.

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - the harbinger of social media in the 21st century had enabled a new way of creating and disseminating information giving credence to the submission of Nwabueze and Ezebuenyi (2012); Ezebuenyi (2014); Igboeli, Ezebuenyi & Onuigbo (2015); Ezebuenyi, Anagba & Okika (2018), who held that technology has revolutionised almost all the activities of humans. Today, not only are we learning the latest news updates, but also, using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. to provide personal and business updates. For businesses, this means leveraging social media to disseminate information on products and services as well as link sellers and buyers together, support employees and customers better than before. For the government, it means doing its best to share up-to-date information.

In this period of COVID-19 pandemic, social media have become a good means for individuals and communities to stay connected even while physically separated (Kushner, 2020). Also, the ambivalent potentials of social media observed in this period as witnessed by the manner of information (misinformation, memes, jokes, distractions etc.) circulated on social media platforms have created a situation fraught with uncertainty. The Coronavirus, which was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) had affected the usage of social media by the world's general population among others; celebrities, world leaders, professionals (WHO, 2020). Social networking services have shared information, and created humour and distraction from the pandemic via Internet memes (Okwodu, 2020). These social network dynamics and their problematic role in spreading information of ambivalent potentials have partially made the campaign against COVID-19 pandemic a frivolity or hoax.

There has been a sharp increase in the use of social media during the pandemic, mainly due to social distancing measures encouraged by many governments. With the 'stay at home' order by various governments to their citizens, many people have turned to social media not only to access information on the pandemic but also, to maintain their relationships and to access entertainment to pass the time (Gowan, 2020). Moreover, social distancing has forced lifestyle changes for many people, which can put a strain on their psyche. Many online counselling services that use social media have surfaced and continue to rise in popularity, purportedly connecting health workers or COVID-19 solutions with those who need them (Gowan, 2020).

The function of social media in the context of leveraging their ubiquitous characteristics to mount an impulsion in the campaign against COVID-19 pandemic necessitated an unwholesome freaky assemblage of information about therapies and, or supposedly useful recipes to either cure Coronavirus or get immunity against its attack. This has become the practice with various social media platforms churning out information (ambiguous claims) about therapies or recipes purportedly having solutions to Coronavirus all over the world. Among the ambiguous claims are; "the hot garlic, ginger and turmeric therapy", "the scent leaf, lemon and gin therapy", "the blanket and warm water therapy", "staying under an



intense hot sun therapy”, “the Madagascar therapy”, “the “pizza, ‘utazi’ and ‘uda’ therapy” etc., which different social media platforms post online as solutions to the Coronavirus.

The above posts are just a few out of the many claims being circulated in social media about the cure or solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic albeit unconfirmed/unapproved/uncertified by appropriate authorities. The fact that social media platforms, can in addition to disseminating breaking news and dishing out crucial information on world events, also circulate misinformation, memes, jokes, distractions and unwholesome information on critical situations such as COVID-19 pandemic is a proof of their ambivalent potentials. It also raises the source credibility question.

The problem therefore is that with the expected spread of this unwholesome information via social media platforms, people may be tempted to apply these recipes and end up harming their lives. Agreed that social media have enhanced to a great extent the diffusion of information on the propensity of COVID-19 pandemic containment, their use in spreading falsehood or misinformation that could be detrimental to human lives have also pervaded the society and has portrayed social media platforms as “a coin with two sides.” The lives of the people should remain paramount in any circumstance. Pecuniary issues or puniness should not be allowed to interfere with any information relating to peoples’ health and lives. Thus, this study seeks to establish the fact that social media platforms have displayed ambivalent potentials in their bid to proffer solutions to Coronavirus through library research approach and as well suggests best means possible to cushion its impact on the consumers of social media products in the face of COVID-19 pandemic.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF THE ORIGIN OF CORONA VIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)**

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China and spread around the world. Genomic analysis revealed that SARS-CoV-2 is phylogenetically related to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-like (SARS-like) bat viruses, therefore bats could be the possible primary reservoir (Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir&Siddique, 2020). The common source of origin and transfer to humans is not known, however the rapid human to human transmission was confirmed widely. According to Shereen et al. (2020), there is no clinically approved antiviral medication or vaccine available to be used against COVID-19. However, a few broad-spectrum antiviral medications evaluated against COVID-19 in clinical trials, resulted in clinical recovery.

Approaching the end of 2019, Wuhan an emerging business hub of China experienced an outbreak of a novel Coronavirus that killed more than eighteen hundred and infected over seventy thousand individuals within the first fifty days of the epidemic. This virus was reported to be a member of the B group of Coronaviruses. According to Cui, Li & Shi (2019) the novel virus was called COVID-19 by the Chinese researchers. The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) named the virus as SARS-CoV-2 and the disease as COVID-19 (Cui, Li & Shi, 2019). In history, SRAS-CoV in 2003 infected 8,098 individuals with a mortality rate of 9%, across 26 countries in the world. On the other hand, the novel Coronavirus in 2019 infected 120,000 individuals with a mortality rate of 2.9%, across 109 countries. It shows that the transmission rate of SARS-CoV-2 is higher than SRAS-CoV and the reason could be genetic recombination event at S protein in the RBD region of SARS-CoV-2 might have enhanced its transmission ability (Lai, Shih, Ko, Tang&Hsueh,2019).



Towards the end of 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) was informed by the Chinese Government about several cases of pneumonia with unfamiliar aetiology. The outbreak was initiated from the human seafood market in Wuhan city of China and rapidly infected more than 50 peoples. The live animals such as bats, frogs, snakes, birds, marmots and rabbits were frequently sold at the human seafood market (Wang, Horby, Hayden & Gao, 2020). On 12 January 2020, the National Health Commission of China released further details about the epidemic, suggested viral pneumonia (Wang, Horby, Hayden & Gao, 2020). From the sequence-based analysis of isolates from the patients, the virus became known as a novel Coronavirus.

Moreover, the genetic sequence was provided for the diagnosis of viral infection. Initially, the patients infected with Wuhan Coronavirus induced pneumonia in China were said to have visited the seafood market where live animals were sold or may have used infected animals or birds as a source of food. However, further investigations revealed that some individuals contracted the infection even with no record of visiting the seafood market. These observations indicated a human-to-human spreading capability of this virus and then reported in more than 100 countries in the world. The human-to-human spreading of the virus occurs due to close contact with an infected person, exposed to coughing, sneezing, respiratory droplets or aerosols. These aerosols can penetrate the human body (lungs) via inhalation through the nose or mouth (Phan, Nguyen, Luong, Nguyen, Nguyen & Le, 2020; Riou & Althaus, 2020).

### **CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Many scholars, journalists and individuals have adopted different interpretations and concepts of what social media is. To define “social media” for our current purposes, we synthesize definitions presented in the literature and identify the following commonalities among current social media services:

- \*Social media services are (currently) Web 2.0 Internet-based applications,
- \*User-generated content is the lifeblood of social media,
- \*Individuals and groups create user-specific patterns for a site or app designed and maintained by a social media service,
- \*Social media services facilitate the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals and, or groups.

Social Media refers to online communication channels wherein users create and share content and interact with each other in many different ways (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These social media channels provide easily accessible and easily usable platforms and enable users to communicate with each other freely (Miller et al., 2016). With these, people can now share their opinions on everything to a large number of people much more quickly (Obar & Wildman, 2015). It is common knowledge that social media is continuously updating itself. However, there are certain basic concepts which continue to be the same, and one should be aware of them to understand this world well.

### **COVID 19 AND AMBIVALENT POTENTIALS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USES SPREADING INFORMATION**

Social media have been used by news outlets, organisations, and the general public to spread both valid information and misinformation about the pandemic (Llewellyn, 2020). The Centre for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organisation (WHO), medical journals, and



health care organisations have been updating and spreading knowledge across numerous platforms with partnerships with Facebook, Google Scholar and Twitter. Others such as an attending emergency medicine physician in the New York hospital system have been using their social media accounts to report firsthand accounts of working to combat COVID-19 (Kiefer, 2020). It was reported on 8 April, that COVID-19 conversations around disease states had increased 1,000% around healthcare professionals and 2,500% among consumers based on a social listening study from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 19<sup>th</sup> March (Zarocostas, 2020)

According to Syner (2020), doctors are also joining groups on social media to spread knowledge about treating the disease with one group, the PMG COVID-19 Subgroup on Facebook reporting to some 30,000 members worldwide by the end of March. Another group, Physician Moms Group, which started five years before the pandemic had so many people wanting to join the 70,000 strong group on Facebook. The groups have allowed medical professionals to collaborate, gather information, and help direct supplies to hospitals that need them (Berg, 2020)

Smith, & Fay Cortez, 2020) observed medical professionals have also used social media to educate the general population about the impact of working in PPE for upwards of twelve-hour changes, utilising a trend that showcased their faces after their shifts, and their masks removed. Many of the individuals who participated had bruises, indents, redness and even band-aids covering blisters formed by the costumes sitting tight on their faces for hours.

### **SPREADING MISINFORMATION**

A review from MIT Technology according to Law (2020) referred to Coronavirus pandemic as "the first true social-media 'infodemic'". Also, a report from the National Geographic has stated that there is an increased level of "fake animal news" on social media during the pandemic (Hao, 2020). Past studies have shown how people have stopped getting their information from browsers, and other search methods in favour of relying on social media. Political bots are a popular way of spreading misinformation and propaganda, as well as manipulating the opinions of people. In the views of Donovan (2020), cases of propaganda and misinformation can vary by country. He further stated that misinformation could be dispersed strategically, but it can sometimes be spread by accident. Misinformation has the potential to make the pandemic more dangerous than it already is (Allen, Ryan, Gray, McInerney & Waters, 2014; Berg, 2020).

Social media platforms have also contributed to the spread of misinformation. In Wuhan China panic has led to the spread of misinformation and even the disease itself. The report has it that misinformation has spread in the form of statements that fireworks will kill the virus in the air, as well as vinegar and indigo woad root curing the infection. According to Wernau (2020), this misinformation was spread through the messaging app WeChat.

In a sharp comparison, James R. Bailey, professor of leadership at the George Washington University School of Business posits: "It used to be that we consulted our local and national news sources, who had verifiable evidence for their reporting, but today, have an open platform that allows amateur journalists and opinionators to express themselves through half-truths, innuendo, rumour, and hearsay."

In a similar vein, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford held "roughly one-third of social media users across the United States of America, as well as





Argentina, Germany, South Korea, Spain and United Kingdom, published seeing false or misinformation about Coronavirus.” The study held this is a problem with the media in general: “A majority of respondents in every country say that the news media have helped them understand the crisis and explain what they can do.

In words of Naim Kapucu, PhD., Pegasus Professor and Director, School of Public Administration at the University of Central Florida “The spread of misinformation is not new.” According to Kapucu, “Misinformation, harmful content, and privacy issues have been major challenges for social media platforms.” He went ahead to say that “Trusting content is especially critical as more people are using social media for news and updates.” The digital platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, and Twitter need serious considerations to address misinformation about COVID-19.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The concept ‘technological determinism theory’ also known as the medium theory explains the setting of this study. The theory which was propounded by Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian communication scholar in 1962, observes new media technologies in communication would soon determine social changes, turning the world into a global village. He believes socio-political, economic and cultural changes are inevitably based on development and diffusion of technology. McLuhan argued technology undoubtedly causes specific changes on how people think, how society is structured and the form of culture created. This theory portends that given the emergence of Internet and its adoption and relevance in mobilizing people for socio-cultural, economic and political activities, there’s bound to be an impact on the way people behave, interact and communicate. The basic assumption of the theory also states that technology shapes how individual communicate, relate and interact in the society. It assumes media technology play a dominant role in the assignment of meaning in the society as well as shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how society operates as we move from one technological age to another.

According to McLuhan “...communication technology plays such a critical role in the emergence of new social orders and new forms of culture”. Explaining the centrality of the theory to this study, Baran and Davis (2012, p.274) in their discourse of the medium theory said that McLuhan proclaimed that the medium is the message. In other words, new forms of media transform our experience of ourselves and our society, and this influence is ultimately more important than the content that is transmitted. In its specific messages, technology determines experience. Baran and Davis (2012) asked pertinent questions, which is believed to resonate with the core of the discourse in this paper. They queried: What has been your experience with the Internet in general, and social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter in particular? Have these sites changed the social world for better or worse?

The preceding questions make the basic assumption of the theory and its adoption as anchorage in this study relevant and applicable to the impact of social media on their users, vis-à-vis the ambivalent potentials displayed in the face of COVID-19 pandemic campaign. These technological innovations have changed the landscape of not only the creation of messages but also the way such messages are transmitted quickly all over the world without recourse to fact-checking and source credibility.





## DISCUSSION

To determine whether the ambivalent nature of social media thrived in the face of COVID-19 pandemic, there is need to look at how individuals, businesses, and government agencies have passed messages and interacted with others on social media during the period under study. The aim is to throw up primary roles that social media platforms have played during the Coronavirus outbreak:

Firstly, as a source of information (and misinformation), there has not been more real-time data available at our fingertips in the face of a worldwide event. Such data can help keep us safe, providing us with a better understanding of what is happening and how it might impact our loved ones and us. Besides, social media can also spread falsehoods, including miracle preventative measures, false claims about therapies and recipes etc. This submission supports an earlier observation by Okwodu (2020), who stated that social networking services have shared information, and created humour and distraction from the pandemic via Internet memes. These social network dynamics and their problematic role in spreading information of ambivalent potentials have partially made the campaign against COVID-19 pandemic a frivolity or hoax.

At a time when many people are grappling with as much information as they can get their hands on, the public is especially susceptible to false and sometimes hazardous claims, which are passed on to others. Supporting the above observation, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford stated “roughly one-third of social media users across the United States of America, as well as Argentina, Germany, South Korea, Spain and United Kingdom, published seeing false or misinformation about Coronavirus.” The study held this is a problem with the media in general: “A majority of respondents in every country say that the news media have helped them understand the crisis and explain what they can do. However, about one in three also say they feel the news media have exaggerated the pandemic.” Those exaggerations are amplified on social media.

Similarly, while Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Microsoft, Reddit, Twitter and YouTube issued a joint statement and pledged to work together to combat misinformation it continues to spread as fast as the actual Coronavirus. Even before the pandemic, the social media platforms had been under pressure to address the spread of false news and misinformation, still now the situation seems to be getting worse, not better. The very nature of social media allows for information to be readily shared – and unlike traditional news outlets, there is no filter, no fact - checking and often a lot of bias. Reinforcing the above, James R. Bailey, professor of leadership at the George Washington University School of Business posits: It used to be that we consulted our local and national news sources, who had verifiable evidence for their reporting, but today, have an open platform that allows amateur journalists and opinionators to express themselves through half-truths, innuendo, rumour, and hearsay. The above observation can be a reason to infer that social media platforms provide access, and opportunity to spread misinformation and rumours quickly.

In the words of Naim Kapucu, PhD., Pegasus Professor and Director, School of Public Administration at the University of Central Florida “The spread of misinformation is not new.” According to Kapucu, “Misinformation, harmful content, and privacy issues have been



major challenges for social media platforms.” He went ahead to say that “Trusting content is especially critical as more people are using social media for news and updates.” The digital platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, and Twitter need serious considerations to address misinformation about COVID-19.

The best rule for making sure information is accurate is to check sources and make sure that those sources are indeed trustworthy, and the information was relayed accurately. Just because someone claims to have learned something from a reliable source does not mean he is sending that information correctly.

Secondly, influence on public response to the outbreak shows that billions of people are free to publicly share their opinions on COVID-19 across various social media platforms. Within this pandemic period, individuals, organizations, and businesses have been using social media to spread awareness of COVID-19, in addition to the public actions that were taken. The most distinct ways social media have influenced the public since the virus reached epidemic and pandemic levels includes trending information on social distancing and home quarantine.

It was just in the event of the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic that many of us started hearing of “social distancing,” which refers to staying at least 6 feet away from others to help prevent the spread of infection. Now, social media users, from friends and family to celebrities and governments, are regularly calling for social distancing. Stay at home as much as possible. Listen to the experts, ignore the morons. The ambivalent potentials of social media has become so commonplace that there is always a forewarning in various social media platforms urging users to sieve the information they receive to stem the tendencies of acting on an unwholesome idea in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

No platform is perfect. But where there has been misinformation and fear on social media, there has also been an abundance of vital, lifesaving information, connection with others, and global unity. As with other misinformation that is spread on social media, there is often no filter to determine if the information is accurate. In the face of COVID-19 pandemic, people have shown their support and empathy on social media. It is human nature to search for guidance, information and direction during times of crisis. However, during those times, and this pandemic, it is vitally important to consider the validity of a source and seek out the advice of experts. Explore the correctness of the information and look for the ‘experts in the field’ such as, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the State Health Department.

The critical task at hand should be providing accurate information regularly at every platform, including social media, as frequently as possible otherwise, the effort in sharing information will be spent on stopping or controlling the misinformation. When the misinformation is out on social media, stopping it is not easy. It is very critical during emergencies and crises that the public hears from leaders at every level of government the same, consistent message regularly. Free speech, libertarian, and corporate lobbyists continue to press for those who see benefits from misinformation online, making legislative changes to prevent the flow of misinformation online challenging to achieve.

Social media can be an excellent vehicle to reach the masses through the sharing of information. With so many who “benefit” from the creation and dissemination of



misinformation, it's no wonder that it's hard to stop the flow. Mark Twain and Winston Churchill, both epigrammatic geniuses, observed that "lies travel halfway across the world before the truth has its shoes on," In fact, lies and truth are hard to distinguish these days of COVID-19 pandemic. The above statement is true because despite numerous pieces of misinformation, falsehood unapproved/uncertified recipes that various social media platforms throw at users in the face of COVID-19 pandemic, there seems to be high acceptance level of these information on social media. The above submission can be attributed to the ambivalent potentials of social media uses in the face of COVID-19 pandemic, which also underscores the use of technological determinism theory in anchoring this study. The basic assumption of the theory is that technology shapes how individuals communicate, relate and interact in the society. In relation to the present study, the ambivalence displayed by social media platforms in creating and transmitting information on the prevalence and containment of the cascading Coronavirus in the world today reinforces the relevance of the technological determinism theory.

It is therefore the position of this paper that consumers of social media products during COVID-19 pandemic should listen more to and, or check for updates by country and other authorised agencies such as WHO and CDC rather than relying on unwholesome information from social media platforms. Finding trusted sources of information regarding COVID-19 is significant. Social media companies must find a way to combat misinformation on Coronavirus.

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## **NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined the coverage of domestic violence against women in select Nigerian dailies. Among the national dailies under review are Daily Sun, Vanguard and Guardian newspapers. The researcher used the content analysis research method in reviewing the manifest contents of the three papers from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to June 2020. The study period covered a total of 100 days which translates to 300 publications of the three newspapers under investigation. The specific objectives of the study are to ascertain whether the newspapers give prominence to domestic violence; find the dominant source of interventions for victims of domestic violence against women; observe whether the newspapers gave adequate publications to the rising domestic violence against women and find out if the newspapers actually follow-up domestic violence cases within the lockdown in their publications. The social responsibility and Agenda-setting theories served as the theoretical framework for the study. Findings revealed that the newspapers neither gave prominence nor adequate coverage to domestic violence against women within the lockdown period. It was also found that the newspapers hardly follow-up their stories on domestic violence within the period. The researcher concluded that the select newspapers did not do well in their coverage of domestic violence in the period under investigation by publishing only 115 news items on such crimes within the period. The study recommended among others that the media should as a respect to their social responsibility functions expose the people to the harmful effects of domestic violence against women in the country.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, Newspapers, Corona virus, Women

### **INTRODUCTION**

Women form a greater percentage of the population of human population around the globe and as well play significant and varying roles both at home and at their places of work (Sambe, 2015). Unfortunately, this set of people face the highest level of unimaginable inhuman treatment globally, tearfully from their much-needed spouses who are expected to provide for them and protect them from all kinds of harm. On the contrary, their husbands unleash harm on them at every slightest provocation. Violence generally, is a threat to the globe with women and children as the most vulnerable and its outcome highly devastating. Domestic violence against women is a global infestation that transcends boundaries and occurs in all cultures and societies around the world (Albana, 2017).





Culturally, some societies have long historical records of male domination, in which women were mostly taught how to obey their husbands; accept their submissive roles and subscribe to be under their first male children when their husband dies. This is a reflection of the strong patriarchal traditions dominant among the majority of human societies. These traditions and cultures at varying degrees provide the templates for the relegation of the women to the background. This makes domestic violence very common and a global issue of concern. It is widespread; often considered socially acceptable among some cultures and globally underreported. Significantly, the most worrisome situation of universal interest is that women hardly report or disclose physical, sexual and or any other forms of violence especially when committed against them by an intimate partner (Sutherland, McCormack, Pirkis, Easta, and Vaughan 2015). Surveys undertaken in 2012 and 2013 indicated that around 30% of women had experienced some form of physical, sexual or emotional domestic violence during their lifetime (IAGCI, 2016). Although there seems to be a change in attitude among some societies, recent reports demonstrated a surge in the rate of domestic violence around the globe owing to this lockdown (Wikipedia, 2020; UN, 2020; Lennard, 2020; Townsend, 2020). For instance, the call to helpline in Tunisia increased by fivefold in the first days of the lockdown (Graham-Harrison, Glufrida, and Ford, 2020). In Uk, the first week of the lockdown witnessed an increase in the number of calls to the helpline by 25% with 150% increase in the number of visits to the website (Fraser, 2020). In Cyprus and Singapore, helpline calls increased by 30% (NDVH, 2020) within the first week of lockdown, 40% in Australia and 67% in Argentina (UN women, 2020).

Globally, domestic violence is one of the most pervasive violations of fundamental human rights which affect women of all ages, race, creed and economic backgrounds (Sutherland, McCormack, Pirkis, Easta, and Vaughan, (2015). It is harm that goes beyond the physical realm and transcends into perpetual emotional feeling leading to torture, severe pains and depressions.

According to WHO (2013) cited in Galvão, (2015), there is a shred of strong evidence establishing links between women's exposure to violence and direct health outcomes. Reports from the review revealed that domestic violence against women could be as dangerous as leading to mental health problems, subscription to substance use, and the desire to commit suicide and harm oneself and unleash fatal and non-fatal injuries on one. Drawing from the above research reports, it can be seen that the effects of domestic violence are enormous and all-encompassing ranging from the individual victims to the entire society where such lifestyles are harboured. Considering the impact of domestic violence, Sutherland, *et al.* (2015) argues that domestic violence influences the health, welfare and development of individuals and families, the communities in which they live and the entire society as a whole. Generally, domestic violence or violence of any kind is overwhelmingly committed against women by men. Such violence includes direct and indirect threats of physical assault, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, social isolation and any related and similar behaviours that result or can force women to live in perpetual fear (Cripps & Davis, 2012; WHO, 2013; Sutherland, *et al.* (2015).

Drawing from the facts provided above on the influence of domestic violence against women to the victims, the families and the larger societies, it is imperative that the mass media must make some moves in exposing the causes of domestic violence and with a view to provide precautionary measures to restrict the surge. Efforts should be geared towards unraveling the



underlying causes and at the same time providing primary preventive measures owing to the negative impacts of the menace on the society to restrict the rise in domestic violence. For instance, in Australia and overseas, public policies addressing violence against women are increasingly focused on primary prevention strategies targeted at preventing violence before it occurs (VicHealth, 2007). In the context of addressing violence against women, the target of primary prevention should be to reduce the incidences leading to its occurrence by targeting factors that give rise to or create conditions in which violence against women sets in (Quadara & Wall, 2012). Against this background, this study will look at the newspaper coverage of domestic violence against women with particular reference to the causes and measures of controlling the menace in the country.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Although domestic violence had existed long before 2020, it reportedly escalated within this period of lockdown (Wikipedia, 2020; UN, 2020; Lennard, 2020; Townsend, 2020). Perhaps, domestic violence may not be totally absent in any society with the majority of its population, leaving below the poverty line. The state of chronic poverty in Nigeria made it evident that a good number of anti-social acts, such as crimes and violence must be prevalent in the nation within this lockdown because many people were stock in one place with little resources to fend for the family. This fact and several others, such as frequent demand for sex by idle men and high level of incompatibility among spouses forced the domestic violence curve to rise within the lockdown period. In keeping with their social responsibility roles to the less privileged and oppressed as the voice of the voiceless, the press is expected to pick up these unhealthy acts against women; challenge those cultural and social norms that condone, tolerate or excuse violence against women elsewhere in the globe. Drawing from this context, the news and information media are considered as dominant forces that can play significant roles in shaping the discourse on matters of international concern like domestic violence against women.

Unfortunately, how newspapers covered the acts of domestic violence within this *Corona virus* lockdown period cannot be ascertained without an empirical study of this nature. The attention of the media is needed by the less privileged and oppressed for in the end, the domestic violence victims and survivors shall remember not the voice of their killer-spouses or domestic violence supporting cultures and traditions, but the silence of their friends (the media). Against this backdrop, this study examined newspaper coverage of the domestic violence against women in their various lockdown environments within the virus ravaging period.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The central objective of this study is to examine the newspaper coverage of domestic violence against women in Nigeria during the global Corona-virus lockdown period. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Ascertain if the newspapers gave prominence coverage to domestic violence within the lockdown period.
- Determine the dominant source of interventions for victims of domestic violence against women within the lockdown period.
- Observe whether the newspapers gave adequate publications to the rising domestic violence against women within lockdown period.



- Find out if the newspapers actually follow up domestic violence cases within the lockdown period through the frequency of their publications.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE MASS MEDIA: A PREVENTIVE APPROACH**

Domestic violence has no generally accepted interpretation because it has different dimensions and perspectives. For the sake of this study, the UN (1993) definition which sees domestic violence as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life, was adopted.

From the above definition by the United Nations, it is clear even though men can equally suffer domestic violence (Domestic Violence Death Review Team, 2015), this study is more concerned with media coverage of violence against women within the lockdown period in Nigeria. The reason for the high rate of domestic violence in the country is most rooted in the fact that rules are just made in Nigeria only to be violated. Generally, Nigeria has laws guiding against domestic violence, but these laws don't count in the real-time when the need arises (Vanguard News, 2016). What did the law on domestic violence say? How had those who violated the rules been handled in respect to these laws? These are among the duties expected of the media to carry out for the repositioning of the society. Reporting the sections of the laws violated and the consequences of violence against any woman may in the media go a long way in deterring others from taking similar actions against their spouses in the society.

In discussing domestic violence, the mass media are placed on the side of responsibility to deliver the needed views to ensure that the lives and health of the women are set free from domestic violence of any kind. This is because of the media power to shape and manipulate the public opinions and discussions in matters that affect the larger society. This was captured more clearly in Carll (2003) when he argues that the mass media features are seen as the most vibrant priority area in primary prevention of domestic violence because it has the potential influence to guide and shape public understanding of violence against women.

In several studies on the influence of mass media contents on people's perception of issues, efforts have passionately concentrated on the source of the materials; its gatekeepers and the audience. With this, little is known about the structures of the materials in the media and what the structure got to do with the acceptance or rejection of information. It is the structure of the materials that can explain how and why readers of materials are influenced by what they see, read or hear in the media (Sutherland *et al.* 2015). Considering the why and how of media influence on its audience belief system, Eastal, Holland, & Judd, (2015) vehemently argued that unquestionably, the way information is structured can increase public understanding of violence against women and, more importantly, challenge its place in society.

### **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE**

Rollè, Abbà, Fazzino, Marino and Brustia (2014) examined the media represented domestic violence in two (2) none politically aligned Italian-newspapers in the years 2002/12. The study which used the content analysis research method found that there is a preference to generally explain the phenomenon of domestic violence rather than discuss the problem to



the society. This finding creates a room for a study of this nature to investigate the media contents in line with providing the extent to which the media showcased the primary causes of domestic violence against women. This will help in tackling the menace if adequately x-rayed.

Owusu-Addo, Owusu-Addo, Antoh, Sarpong, Obeng-Okrah and Annan (2018) adopted media framing in their study on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). The survey which sees the women and girls as critical public of the mass media was interested in the public health-related issues that domestic violence can cause in society. The study which focuses on media framing of the problems demonstrated that how the news media cover public health issues is critical for designing effective health promotion interventions. Moreover, this study points to the fact that studies on domestic violence are scarce in low-and middle-income countries of the world. The study adopted the Qualitative content analysis research method in providing the analysis of how Ghanaian media represented Violence against Women and Girls in Ghana with a total of 48 news articles on the study. The findings indicate that media framing of VAWG was episodic in nature. It shows that the victims are primarily the ones that carry the blames from the news articles reviewed. In framing VAWG as an individual incident and women as helpless victims, the media fail to shape society's perception of VAWG as a social and public health issue. The study, therefore, concluded that for the media in Ghana to contribute to the prevention of VAWG, there is the need for news coverage to focus on the social construction of the issue, and also raise awareness about support services available to victims. This study opened a gap for the current one when it argues that there was shortage of literature in studies on media and domestic violence in low income and middle income earning countries. Nigeria is one of the middle if not among the low-income earning countries where domestic violence is rampant.

Daniel, Aniekeme and Nnamdie (2019) examined Uyo Residents' Perception of Selected Newspaper Coverage of Gender-based violence in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research method investigating the perception of newspaper coverage of domestic violence among 400 respondents. The findings reveal that majority of the respondents (51.3%) thought that Daily Sun and Vanguard newspapers do not cover Gender-based violence issues frequently. The researchers recommend that there is need to strategize ways that will facilitate the prominence of Gender-Based Violence stories in the newspapers (like putting GBV stories on the centre spread or front pages) where all genders are well covered and given prominence to aid readers in understanding the issues of GBV. This study is related to the current one, given that it discusses media coverage but differ in the research method. As the previous research is looking at the perception of the audience, the current one is concerned with the efforts of the media in performing their social responsibility and agenda-setting function with a view to eradicate evils in the society. This study looked at the frequency and prominence of coverage. At the same time, the current one is concerned with the causes and possible information provided by the media to stop domestic violence against women.

In another study, Yusuf, Arulogun, Oladepo, and Olowokeere (2011) study examined gender-based violence with emphasis on physical violence among men and women in an intimate relationship. The study adopted the survey research method in reviewing a total of 989 respondents sampled through multi-stage cluster sampling procedure conducted around the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. The researchers found that more females experienced



physical violence than males. The study recommended that strategies should be put in place, and all major stakeholders should help to curb this menace. The mass media are among the stakeholders in this recommendation. That makes this current study very apt in considering the efforts of the media in finding out the causes of violence and condemning the same for the evil to cease in society.

In a different study, Talabi (2016) examined the dominant frames adopted by the print media in reporting abuses against homemakers. The study adopted the manifest content analysis research method with stories, features articles, opinion articles, editorials and cartoon/graphics as the units of analysis in this study. The findings showed that newspaper actively reported homemakers' abuse incidence, but the tone of editorial bias in most abuse stories portrayed in the newspapers was not given. The study recommends that the newspaper should do more than just creating awareness about homemakers' abuses by mere reportage, but a mediatory and change-stimulating coverage of homemakers' abuse should be done. This recommendation is a wake-up call to this current one which looks at how the media placed their report on the causes of domestic violence and expose all customs, cultures and norms that provide an excuse for committing violence against women.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

On the previous scholarly views which have stressed the importance and indispensability of theories in social science research, this study was anchored on two theories, namely- The Social Responsibility and Agenda-Setting theories of mass communication.

### **Social Responsibility Theory**

The social responsibility theory places the media on the obligation of doing the needful in getting the evils in society and exposing them to see if society can do away with it. By the provision of social responsibility theory, the press has the duty to engage in coverage of issues causing domestic violence in the society since it has been classified as a global issue against the life and rights of women. It makes the media responsible for being the voice of the voiceless. The social responsibility theory of the press states that though the media should have the freedom to carry out their duties, such duties should have a level of obligations and responsibilities (Nwabueze 2012). McQuail (2005) writes that while it is necessary for the press to be free, the public also have the right to a free press and the right of the people takes precedence. Justifying the responsibility of the media; the theory holds that the press has a right to criticize negative actions in society. Drawing from this position of the argument, it is the duty of the media to identify the causes of domestic violence against women for the societal liberation of domestic violence. This means that the media should identify all customs, cultures and values that guarantee and or provide a template for excuses for committing domestic violence against women, condemn them and bring them to ridicule before the public. Relating this theory to the study, the newspapers are socially responsible to the public; they have the obligation to objectively inform the public the cases of domestic violence and its leading causes with a view to provide an end to it uniquely within the lockdown period. As the voice of the voiceless, media has the duty to wage war against all kinds of domestic violence against women. It is the view of the researcher that identify the causes of domestic violence, exposing those cultures and customs that encourage them and ridiculing them through media interpretation can go a long way in reducing the rate at which it occurs in the society.





### **Agenda-Setting theory**

Despite being a theory in progress, the proponents of the agenda-setting theory of mass communication maintain that through effective and repeated reporting of an issue in the focal points of the news media, the people will get to know about the activity and possibly act in line with the media directives on such development. This theory makes the mass media critical opinion controller and directors of public views and discourse on prevailing issues around the world. The import of this is that if the increasing rate of domestic violence gets frequent reports in the news media, soon, it will command the attention of the media audience. In doing so, the media reports could force the audience to device means of restricting domestic violence. This is because of the dangers it portends to the individual victims, the family and the society at large which the media expose to the public. This is because, the mass media can produce a change of the cognitive structures, and the perception that the public has about what is happening around them (La Rocca, (2017). The media's ability in doing this according to Agudoso and Ikegbunam (2020) rests in their strength of not only bringing events closer to the people but in drawing their attention to their preferred events which otherwise would have been far away from them. Through bringing these events close to the people, media can then, provide a frame of interpretation to enable their users read and understand what is happening.

Relating this theory to the current study, media interpretation of domestic violence must provide the direction of opinion and action against it. If the media offer a contrary analysis of the cultures in some societies that aide the commitment of domestic violence against women in the negative light, such analyses must impact on the people and possibly change the rate at which domestic violence thrives in the society.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Considering the nature of the study, Content Analysis was used as the study method to help the researcher in achieving the research objectives. The population of the study comprises of all publications of *Daily Sun*, *Vanguard* and *Guardian* newspapers from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to June, 2020. These months covered a total of 100 days in the lockdown period. It means that 100 publications of the three newspapers under investigations were covered within the period since all the three papers are daily publications. This amounts to 300 editions in all. The three newspapers were selected based on accessibility and wide circulation in the country. The manifest contents of the selected papers for the period of study were explored from every single publication of the hard copies. In contrast, the researcher reviews the online versions of the publications using such keywords as *couple violence*, *domestic violence*, *family violence*, *husband violence* and *wife violence*.

Given that 300 editions of the three newspapers were manageable, a census study of all the editions of the newspapers was conducted. The researcher's adoption of census study was informed based by Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo, and Okphanachi, (2012) assertion that census is attractive for small and manageable populations. On this note, all the editions of the newspapers under investigation published within the period of the lockdown were examined and their contents concerning domestic violence were all analyzed.

### **Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis for this study is the placement of stories, frequency of the publications, source of interventions and follow-ups. The content categories are front page, inside page,





inside page center spreads and back page stories for placement. The domestic violence interventions from the government, NGOs, Human rights and ministry of women affairs are categorized for interventions sources. The study also looked at the frequency of publications using the numbers of stories published within the months under investigation. Stories that are published in the front page are categorized as front page like-wise those published at the back page, inside page and inside page center spreads. Contents that showcase the actions of the government in curbing and rescuing domestic violence victims are classified as government intervention. In contrast, contents that reveal the activities of NGOs, Human rights and ministry of women affairs on their efforts to curtail, help out or rescue victims of domestic violence are classified in like manners. Further, the researcher categorizes contents on the activities into follow-up and not follow-ups. Stories that are reported and followed in subsequent reports are classified as followed-up stories and those that are flashed once without any further review were seen as not followed-up.

**The instrument of data collection**

*The Coding Sheet*, however, was used as an instrument to generate data on the manifest contents of the reports in the selected newspapers on domestic violence against women during the lockdown. The coding guide also was used to provide a guide on the units of analysis and contents categories that the researcher is interested in.

**Inter-coder reliability:** To ensure that the instrument is reliable, the researcher adopted the Holsti’s inter-coder reliability formula. The inter-coder reliability is accepted as the correlation coefficient is up to .72.

Inter-coder reliability was assessed using Holsti’s inter-coder reliability formula. The Holsti’s inter-coder reliability test was calculated thus:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2(M)}{N1+N2}$$

Therefore Inter-coder reliability

$$R = \frac{2(12)}{18+15} = \frac{24}{33} = 0.72$$

**Method of data presentation**

Data from the investigation were presented in tables and simple percentages given the fact that the study is concerned with the examination of the manifest contents of newspapers on domestic violence against women during this global lockdown.

Table 1: *Placement of stories on domestic violence against within the lockdown period*

Variables	Daily	Vanguard	Guardian	Frequency	Percentage
	sun				
Front page stories	4	7	3	14	12.1
Inside page stories	21	20	25	66	57.3
Inside page center spread	9	10	7	19	22.6
Back page stories	2	4	3	9	7.8
Total	36	41	38	115	100

Source: researcher’s content analysis 2020

This table shows the kind of attention given to domestic violence by the newspapers under investigation. The number of stories published in the back page, front page and inside page



center spread collectively is 42.7% of the total stories while the ones published inside the page stories account for 57.3%. This means that the media in Nigeria pay less attention to domestic violence against women during the lockdown period.

Table 2: *Media portrayal of sources of interventions for victims of domestic violence*

Variables	Daily sun	Vanguard	Guardian	Frequency	%
Government intervention	7	8	5	20	17.3
NGO intervention	12	14	11	37	32.1
Human rights	10	14	11	35	30.4
Ministry of women affairs	7	5	11	23	20
Total	36	41	38	115	100

Source: Researcher's contents analysis, 2020

From the data available, the most dominant source of intervention on domestic violence against women is the non-Governmental Organizations' efforts in the control of domestic violence against women. This was followed by the human rights efforts in this direction. This implies that the government gets less information on domestic violence to act on perhaps because of the prevailing cultures in various lands and climes that prohibit women from exposing some of the dastardly acts against them by their husbands.

Table 3: *Frequency of coverage of domestic violence cases within the lockdown through the frequency of their publications*

Variables	Daily sun	Vanguard	Guardian	Frequency	Percentage
March	4	3	4	11	20.8
April	11	16	13	40	48.6
May	13	8	9	30	22.6
June	8	14	12	34	7.8
Total	36	41	38	115	100

Source: Researcher's contents analysis, 2020

From the data in this table, it can be seen that the newspapers under investigation did not report domestic violence frequently within the period of lockdown. There are total of 100 days and more within the period, yet the total number of stories published in the newspaper was 115. This implies that as domestic violence against women increases, the media reports on the incidences decreases. A normal news report that can serve as a better reflection of domestic violence against women within the period would have had an increasing number of items as the lockdown lasts.

Table 4: *Whether Newspapers follow-up stories on domestic violence during the lockdown*

Variables	Daily sun	Vanguard	Guardian	Frequency	Percentage
Stories followed up	5(13.9)	11(26.8)	7(18.4)	23	20
Stories not followed up	31(86.1)	30(73.8)	31(81.6)	92	80
Total	36	41	38	115	100

Source: Researcher's content analysis, 2020

This table revealed the negligence of the media to domestic violence in Nigeria. Of the three 115 publications observed and analyzed in this study, only 20% were followed up by the



media. The remaining 80% were fresh news stories some of which were published in passing by the press. The reason for this result may form the bases of another research.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

With 12.1% and 7.8% publications on the focal points of the newspapers, this study found that the news papers in Nigeria do not give prominent to coverage of domestic violence in Nigeria. The focal points of the newspapers according Nwabueze, (2011) provides the news stories the ample opportunities to be read by almost all the people that came across the newspapers. This finding goes contrary to the agenda setting theory of mass communication which in the words of Miller (2002), posits that the media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues by positioning them in focal points. In keeping with the agenda-setting functions of the mass media, publishing domestic violence against women in the front and back pages of the newspapers using critical interpretative frames will impact on the audience perception of the crime. Until the domestic violence against women is reported in the media in a language that will jettison the act and all its supporting cultures or agencies, the society will forever remain with the crime. Drawing from the views held in Nwabueze and Oduah (2013), all forms of domestic violence can best be fought if ridiculed in the media for the public to see. This study has shown that the media fail short of the responsibility placed on them by the social responsibility theory. It is their responsibility to ascribe meaning to events through interpretations of issues surrounding such activities for the public to see (Okugo, Onwukwe, Ihechu & Okereke, 2015)

The second research question which sought to identify major source of intervention in cases of domestic violence in Nigeria, the investigation revealed that the NGOs are the major intervening bodies with 32.1% of the total contents observed and analyzed. This finding shows the level of concern given to domestic violence by NGOs. The finding also reveals low level of government attention to domestic violence and related offences in the country as the main reason for persistence of such offences and acts among the people. It however, shows the position of domestic violence on the scale of fundamental human rights.

The data from the third research question seeking to verify whether the media did well by issuing frequent report of domestic violence against women, the researcher found that the media failed to report more on domestic violence within the period under study despite the increase of such acts and crimes within the period. This finding corroborates earlier finding by earlier media scholars that domestic violence is usually under-reported (Daniel, Aniekeme and Nnamdie, 2019). It is a fall out of the media on the social responsibility theory which sees the press as the voice of the voiceless in the society (Ekeli, 2008, p. 338; Agudosy, Ikegbunam and Obiakor, 2018). By virtue of the level of vulnerability, the women and girl children are susceptible to different kinds of dangers especially during war, natural hazards like hurricane, earthquake, and global pandemic like this.

The fourth research question investigated if the newspapers followed their reports up as events unfolds. The data from table four demonstrated that the while 20% of the news stories published on domestic violence were followed up, 80% were not followed up. This finding is in tandem with the views of proponents of vulture-reporting-hypothesis. It was the views of the proponents that the media are usually interested in breaking the news with little or no attention to details after the jinx are broken. Lack of follow-up against domestic violence against women contributes to the reason why victims hardly get justice. This finding agrees



with that of Uguwanyi, (2018) who concluded that once follow-up were not staged, there will be absolute lack of thematic analysis of events which creates windows for the perpetrators of crimes to go scot free. Lack of follow-up on domestic violence against women translates to violations of expectations of the public. This study lends credence to Raji (2019) who argues that once the media expose the unhealthy behaviours of people in their publications, their audience may, with time learn to take the right attitudinal change to suit the required behavior expected of them. With these kinds of coverage, attitudinal change for the better is not forthcoming anytime soon.

## CONCLUSION

Drawing from the data, it is concluded that the media failed to give adequate and prominent coverage to domestic violence in Nigeria within the lockdown period. The study concludes that as domestic violence is on the increase, media reports on it in Nigeria are decreasing. The necessary media services to the people is generally lacking in their reports on domestic violence. This is because of the media negligence of the need to follow-up their stories. For lack of follow-ups, the thematic details of domestic violence against women were in short supply. This simply means that change of attitude can hardly be obtained so as to reduce the level of domestic violence in the country. Generally, the media violated the expectation of the public who believed them to be the voice of the voiceless.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the data discussed above, the researcher recommended that:

- The mass media should as a respect to their social responsibility functions expose the people to the harmful effects of domestic violence against women in the country. This can best be done through publishing issues and activities of victims and perpetrators in the focal points of their newspapers.
- The government should as a matter of responsibility pay attention to domestic violence response especially within this lockdown period.
- The media should encourage adequate coverage of domestic violence against women to suit their social responsibility to the vulnerable group. It is through adequate publication that the media can get it right in setting-agenda on the ills of domestic violence against women in Nigeria.
- The mass media should as a matter of necessity follow-up their stories on domestic violence against women. Following up will help them to provide thematic analysis that can help the people to adopt the change of attitude to reduce violence against women.

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## **TREATS TO JOURNALISM PROFESSION: NEGOTIATIONS FOR EFFICIENCY AND SAFE PRACTICE**

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### **Abstract**

*Despite a plethora of threats such as funding, violence, ownership etc., challenging Journalism profession; amateurs who engage in the practice, seem to continually pose more threats. Amateurs arguably exacerbate the spread of fake and misleading information, disinformation, misinterpretation of issues, improper delivery of information etc., despite the existence of some environmental threats which tend to be hampering efficiency. The aim of this work is to crusade for efficiency and safe practice of journalism in the face of these threats. This paper further seeks to redefine a journalist; the basic qualities required of practicing journalists; the distinctions between professional journalists and amateurs; other environmental constraints confronting practicing journalists; ways the safety of journalists could be observed, and what*



*roles the relevant bodies and individual journalists are to play in the process. This is in view of the possible impact of media contents on the general public. This paper therefore advocates for efficiency and safe practice of journalism profession devoid of litigations, conflicts, hate messages, ethical or language issues as well as the provision of good work environment for practicing Journalists to boost their productivity. We conclude that existence of amateurs and other environmental constraints should not downplay or discredit the prestige of the profession as a highly disciplined one*

**Keywords:** Journalists, Safe practice, Amateurs, Safety, Threats

## INTRODUCTION

Journalism is a disciplined and heavily contested field, with many perspectives. Scholars have documented the recent developments in the field of journalism and its widening scope with prominent strands of thinking, not only around objectivity, professionalism and truth-seeking, but encompassing also gatekeeping, agenda-setting, source relations along with ethics, convergence, and reception (Barbie, 2008; Franklin, Hamer, Hanna, Kinsey & Richardson, 2005). Incidentally, some environmental factors, the Internet era and the influx of social media seem to threaten the practice of journalism. Amateurs, who are armed with knowledge of mobile and digital facilities, often present news and articles online for public consumption notwithstanding a number of other environmental threats which hinder professional journalists from efficiency. New technologies seem to be increasing the threats as anybody with internet access and digital gadgets, can create and share all sorts of messages to others whereas the environmental conditions of the professionals need improvement.

With affordances of mobile technologies and the Internet, argument about possible displacement of old media became widely contested among scholars. Since the first empirical attempts to explore the potential impact of new media on old press in the 1940s, there have been two main approaches to the issue: one is centred on the medium and its attributes in support of a displacement and replacement (absolute displacement) argument (Nguyen & Western, 2006). The other is focused on users' needs and often results in proposing a complementary effect of the new on the old (Lee & Leung 2004). The first approach has a link with the unprecedented emergence of the Internet as powerful news and information medium, which led to speculations about the death of old media in the face of new communication technologies with keyword phrases 'death of print', 'death of television' 'death of radio', etc. These speculations have received intense attention in both academic and industrial research (Bromley & Bowles 1995; O'Toole 2000; Kayany&Yelsma 2000; Lee & Leung 2004; Dutta-Bergman, 2004).

Majority of these previous studies are based on the medium-centred perspective, which assumes that different media serve the same functions for users so that new media will eventually drive old media out of existence (McCombs 1972). Nguyen and Western (2006) suggest that online news and information usage at different usage levels is positively related with the use of traditional news and information sources, especially those that are more information-intensive. They suggest therefore, an apparent complementary effect of networked sources on traditional ones: despite the apparent 'power' of the Internet in communication and information capacity and quality, receivers of online news and information at different levels still use traditional sources substantially.



In Nigeria, Dunu, Ugbo and Ezepue (2015) studied the media consumption pattern among elites in South-East Nigeria under the framework of the Uses and Gratifications approach, to determine if any similarities as observed in developed countries of the world will prevail in Nigeria. They found that respondents still widely use the traditional media for gratifying their various needs as opposed to the findings in other parts of the globe that suggest a seeming displacement and replacement effect of the traditional media by the new media. Besides these scores of debates and in spite of the various aspects of media convergence occasioned by the Internet and mobile technologies, the central focus of this paper is to reestablish who a journalist is; what stands a practising journalist out among a host of others who package stories for public consumption. As Fernández (2010) submits, Journalism is based on the search of the truth to spread it and transmit it to others and that, whatever the means are chosen, it will remain in force.

### **WHO IS A JOURNALIST?**

This burning question had raised concerns in recent times. It is often noticed that some persons who have access to online digital facilities and believe they can write, engage in Journalism Profession. Some may not bother to possess the fundamental training and skills that should improve the quality of their job. It is crucial to note that there are necessary foundational requirements and trainings that should improve the output of a professional journalist and also peculiar guidelines such a journalist should observe for more seamless practice. These skills among others include; knowledge of the various media dynamism; uniqueness of the individual media organizations and their house styles; how to safely practice journalism with good morals; without infringement on the fundamental rights of others, without threat to the public and to the culture etc. However, Goldstein (1984 p.175) attempts to draw consensus from the sociologists with a list of professional attributes. He identifies four essential qualities:

- (1) A body of esoteric knowledge mastery of which is the indispensable qualification for practice of the profession;
- (2) Monopoly – that is, recognition of the exclusive competence of the Job in the domain to which its body of knowledge denotes;
- (3) Autonomy, or control including who can legitimately do that work and how the work is done; and
- (4) A service ideal – that is a commitment or ethical imperative to place the welfare of the public or the individual client above the self-interest of the practitioner.

Professional Journalists should therefore demonstrate an appreciable competence level, always reporting on facts, not advertising or ideological propaganda.

Meanwhile, Scholars had attempted defining who a journalist is. Some definitions have been contested owing to the complexity and widespread Internet use as well as the art of self-publishing among both professional journalists and amateurs. For instance, Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, (1976) had described journalists as those whose responsibilities lie in news and information gathering, information processing, and editing, or those who supervise and manage media operations. Journalists are also news-media personnel with editorial responsibility who prepare or transmit information to audience of media organisations (Hanitzsch, & Hoxha, 2016). Nisbert (2012) had added that journalists are public intellectuals



who view the world deductively, immerse themselves in research and offer necessary analysis.

Similarly, Donsbach, (2010) suggests that journalists are professional and detached traders of information (mediators), who pursue subjective goals (communicator) for the sake of public good. He further suggests a redefinition of journalists based on their fields of competence; subject, process, skills and values. Above all the critical role being played by these professionals should not be downplayed. Across all these definitions, we hereby present a definition of a journalist as a good writer, a reporter and editor or a correspondence for a media organization who is trained, very knowledgeable and possess the basic requirements for the job. He or She should be able to produce in-depth, thorough, elaborate, comprehensive, discriminate and very lucid reports of any specific area or field of coverage. In other words, journalism is a profession which requires some level of expertise in writing and speech as well as decency, dignity and high sense of responsibility.

## **THE QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES OF A JOURNALIST**

### **The Qualifications**

We now suggest some essential attributes of a journalist as follows:

- A journalist should possess a university degree or diploma in Mass Communication, Journalism or related disciplines
- He or she should be accredited or registered with the professional association as the case may be, in the country of practice.
- He or she must be a good writer, analyst, interviewer, reviewer, speaker, and highly disciplined.
- He or she must be a versatile reader.

## **THE QUALITIES OF A JOURNALIST**

### **Writing**

One of the necessary skills required of a practising journalist is effective writing. He or she should know how to play with words and should be able to produce an error-free, grammatically correct and concise article with factual information.

### **Research and Knowledge**

Journalists should always engage in research, conduct interviews and always get regularly updated on contemporary issues. The journalist should be versatile in knowledge which is a product of research. Being versatile will enable the journalist report problems objectively and with needed facts and information.

### **Investigation**

A Professional Journalist should have the ability to investigate facts and obtain needed evidence with which to present issues. He or she should remain vigilant and possess strong analytical skills to assess any troubling or controversial situation. The Journalist should be able to examine a situation critically and present same with sound judgment.

### **Communication**

A Professional Journalist should be able to maintain good contact with people, especially the sources of information and then use both the verbal and non-verbal communication cues effectively. This skill will enable the Journalist to excel in the profession by breaking the barrier of communication



### **Self-confidence, Persistence and Discipline**

A journalist should demonstrate self-confidence, always take up responsibilities and should meet up with the deadline. He should be eager to explore new areas and accept constructive criticisms. Indeed, journalism is a highly disciplined profession which requires persistence to satisfy the needs of the audience. This includes all such activities including the hunt for stories, gathering same, editing and processing of the stories in a systematic manner, devoid of legal and ethical problems.

### **DISTINGUISHING A PROFESSIONAL JOURNALIST FROM AMATEURS**

The Professional Journalist should be distinct from amateurs in two dominant ways:

- I The Writing of a Professional Journalist**
- ii The Ethical behaviour of a Professional Journalist**

#### **The Writing of a Professional Journalist**

A Professional journalist should demonstrate a mastery of the various journalistic writings and how to gather, process and present accurate reports objectively to the audience. The Professional Journalist should also use the appropriate language, tenses and expressions devoid of grammatical, syntactical and factual errors, omissions or biases. The journalist should also be an expert in any chosen field of Practice. For instance, a Print Journalist should master the intricacies of Print Journalism while a Broadcast Journalist should also have adequate mastery of Broadcast Journalism. Accordingly, Okunna, Omenugha and Ebeze (2002) have explained that broadcast messages are written usually in a conversational style, the informal manner in which a person ordinarily speaks, and, that simple words are used even to the point of oversimplification. They also maintain that print media is the most exciting in terms of word usage where a writer's register of words, utilisation of sentences, clauses and phrase, the deployment of rhythm, and the power of persuasion are most prominent and exciting. According to them, while writing for broadcasting should be done in a layperson's language, which means using familiar words, print media enjoy the latitude and elasticity of verbal usage that tends to bother on poetic exuberance.

Despite the uniqueness and differences between broadcast journalism and print journalism, a practising Journalist should understand the peculiarities of all the various journalistic writings. For instance, writers of news stories do not inject their subjective views. The stories are written in the present tense or in the present continuous tense to emphasise newness, otherwise it is no longer 'news'. Editorials and feature articles are usually embellished with the writer's opinions, arguments and could contain analysis of past events but news stories are usually straightforward reports.

Besides, news stories contain some vital ingredients. They include a clear headline, the lead; often containing the basic 5Ws and H (Who, What, Where, When, Why and How), byline etc. News stories should also include the criteria for newsworthiness (timeliness, proximity, prominence, unusualness or oddity, human interest) etc. On the other hand, 'feature' refers to that form of journalistic writing which is distinct from a news story by going beyond the mere statement of the facts of an event to provide the background, course of development and the implications of the occurrence of an issue to similar activities and process in society; A feature is also written in an exciting and creative manner with information drawn from people involved, eye-witnesses, experts on the subject, and those affected by the issue (Okoro&Agbo, 2003). It is instructive also to note that all the journalistic writings have their unique peculiarities and should be presented as such to the readers to avoid misconception





and biases. Also, Mallette (1996) as cited in Okoro and Agbo (2003), recommended some specific checkpoints for good writing as follows:

- Use of active voice
- Relying heavily on definite nouns and verbs
- Using simple and short words
- Avoiding fad words, buzz words, cliché, and clutter especially in the Lead

Besides, Okunna, Omenugha and Ebeze (2002, p.253) had maintained that to write and communicate effectively; the writer has to:

- Understand the theory and practice of effective communication fully.
- Bear the target audience continually in mind and place himself or her in their shoes.
- Avoid semantic noise which refers to any distortion of the encoded message arising from the meaning of the words or symbols used in putting the news together that could result from poor word choice, wrong use of words, and flamboyant and ambiguous expressions.
- Be familiar with and respect common elements of style such as accuracy, precision, clarity, originality, vividness, simplicity, coherence, brevity, and good figures of speech and idioms.
- Have a good command of the appropriate vocabulary for the topic being addressed.
- Possess a good knowledge of sentence forms, patterns and common errors in sentence construction and paragraphing.

Unfortunately, most amateurs who engage in Journalism profession seem not to observe this uniqueness. It therefore, becomes imperative to understand that reports should be presented in an orderly manner and achieve the expected aim for its creation. A good story is like a good highway; it provides a smooth ride to the destination (Mallette, 1996 as cited in Okoro&Agbo, 2003).

### **The ethical behaviour of a professional journalist**

Ethics, which is related to journalism profession, refers to a set of principles of conduct governing an individual or group (Bowles & Borden, 2004). In this instance, the individual or group are professional journalists who serve the public. Neher and Sandin (2007) further provided several elements of ethics as follows:

- ❖ First, ethics is targeted at providing people with a system so that the decisions or judgment/s one make can be justified to others and oneself clearly and objectively;
- ❖ Second, ethics is concerned with decisions about actions that can be determined to be right or wrong according to the principles of this method;
- ❖ Third, the decisions are about activities in which the actors appear to have a choice; they could have done otherwise;



- ❖ And fourth, the decisions are seen as intentional: the persons seemed to know what they were doing and intended to do what they did

Therefore, Ethics is a branch of philosophy which is universal, concerns the conduct or intended decisions of people or approaches to an issue. With the context of Journalism, ethics is defined as a branch of philosophy that assists journalists decide what is right to do by giving them standards by which they can judge actions to be right or wrong, good or bad, responsible or irresponsible (Merril&Lowensten, 1979). Okunna (1995) has explained that the purpose of ethics in mass communication is to assist journalists in being more moral professionals and in stipulating rules, guidelines, norms and principles that will guide the journalist in making moral decisions, and that these rules and guidance as well as the standards, values and policies usually appear in the form of codes, which are prepared and adopted by the journalists themselves. Even the New NPO (Nigerian Press Organisation) code of ethics, which was formally ratified and adopted in 1998, is a more comprehensive document than the old one and comprises 14 subject heads which answers a wide variety of ethical questions on journalism practice. Among these subjects are; truth; accuracy and fairness; privacy; privilege/non-disclosure; decency; plagiarism; and so on. Besides, Okunna (1995) also insists that codes of ethics at all levels of adoption contain certain principles that are cherished as ethical ideals in the field of journalism in practically all regions of the world. In addition to this, practising journalists should demonstrate adequate knowledge of the applicable laws in the field of journalism. Oyakhilomen (2009) succinctly provides some definitions of law as follows:

A set of rules governing human activities;

A rule of action recommended or given by some superior which some inferior are bound to obey;

A general body of rules of conduct, which expresses the will of the ruling class as are established by legislation and such customs and rules of community life as are sanctioned by the government. It also entails the application whereby the body of regulations is secured by the coercive force of the state for the protection, consolation and development of the social relations and the public order, beneficial and desirable for the ruling class.

These Laws include; the privacy law, the copyright law, the defamation law, the obscene and indecent prohibition laws etc. It is indisputable that knowledge of media law and ethics will guide the Journalist to safely perform his or duties within the acceptable legal and ethical standards. It is on this basis that this text presupposes that practising journalists should remain conversant with both the legal and ethical expectations of them. It is obvious that some professional journalists engage in blogging which they perform in a professional way; this work contends that in spite of other environmental threats, journalism profession should be accorded the needed regard. Activities of amateurs should also not be perceived to have downgraded the integrity of the job as many professionals still measure up to appreciable levels.

## **CHALLENGES CONFRONTING PRACTISING JOURNALISTS**



### **Threats by Amateurs**

There appears to be increased threats by amateurs who engage in journalism practice. These amateurs could lack journalism background and training but present information for public consumption. Sometimes, they are armed with web publishing tools, digital technologies and mobile devices. Part of the worries is that the mainstream media, where most trained and professional Journalists are attached, is not the only news and information source for public consumption. In fact, there are many alternative and rapidly evolving information sources especially blogs, portals and social media where amateurs publish and share information. Bowman and Willis (2003) had emphasized that the venerable Journalism profession finds itself where its hegemony as gatekeeper of news and information is threatened not only by new technologies and competitors but, also by the audience it serves. These make the amateurs potent in information creation and dissemination. With regard to these, Newman (2009) established that social media and user-generated content change the nature of breaking news and contributes to the compression of the "news cycle", thereby releasing pressure on editors over what and when to report. Therefore, with the increasing Internet and other information technologies, amateurs are enabled to share information to receivers who could become vulnerable to both disinformation, misinformation etc. Consequently, Vanderwagen (2014) had also confirmed a shift in ways journalists source and share information as a result of the challenges posed by the new media. The new media are basically where amateurs operate. This way, normative principles of fairness and accuracy required by professional journalists get endangered by excessive information from less credible sources pushed out by amateurs.

### **Violence**

Torture, beating, death and expulsion from duty have remained peculiar challenges being confronted by practising journalists who are perceived to have dissenting opinions. Stories surrounding these incidents abound in recent times among practitioners. Amidst these conflicting situations, practising journalists are encouraged to fundamentally uphold ethics and discharge their duties much responsibly.

### **Funding and Ownership**

The nature of ownership of any media organisation determines to a great extent whether the organisation is dynamic, vigorous, responsive, and responsible or an emasculated, timid, spineless, ineffectual or irresponsible press (Okoro&Agbo, 2003). As an effect of ownership, most media organisations conform to peculiar housestyles and editorial policies. Apart from the nature of ownership, inadequate funding of the industry constitutes a fundamental challenge to media professionals which affects their practice. In Nigeria, three main categories of media ownership exist, which include: Government Ownership, Private Ownership and Mixed Ownership. In an instance of corrupt government, Journalists who work for the government could deliberately dish out unbelievable falsehoods without recourse to conscience and chant praises for government programmes that fail to address the problems of the people at the grassroots.

### **Institutional Bureaucracy**

Media professionals, especially during elections, get encumbered by public demands for the dissemination of political information, especially campaigns which are sometimes full of propaganda and ridicule of opponents. The demand by both the government and non-



governmental institutions on these media organisations to set agenda and disseminate information appears enormous. This can affect the credibility of the organisation. Apart from agenda setting, it is obvious that the media also confer status and legitimacy on political leaders and issues. Okunna and Omenugha (2012) had also explained that the media could enhance or uplift the status of a political candidate in the following ways.

- the media can give more massive headlines to the favoured candidate;
- the press can feature more lead stories on the candidate;
- the press can print more prominent quotations from the candidates' speech;
- photographs and other prominence-enhancing strategies can accompany stories on the candidate;
- the press can publish more remarks praising the candidate

## **WAYS TO SURMOUNT SOME OF THE THREATS IN JOURNALISM PROFESSION**

### **Training Programmes**

Practising Journalists should be regularly updated on dynamic changes in the industry and be very conversant with use of online digital facilities. This can be achieved through training programs in the form of conferences, seminars, workshops and other forms of on-the-job trainings on various aspects of the profession. In recent times, traditional or mainstream media have online versions of their dailies or broadcasts which require some technical knowledge for efficiency. Some media organisations also create social media 'pages' where users can follow and get updates on news and information. Given these changes, practising Journalists should always be trained on the dynamics of digital technologies to be able to maintain and embrace the online atmosphere.

### **Modern Digital Gadgets**

Procurement for these Journalists, very functional and modern digital gadgets will inevitably boost their quality of service. Some digital cameras, microphones, consule, vision mixers etc. produce more quality output and are amenable to non-linear editing and enhanced content, unlike some old-fashioned devices. It is therefore critical for practising Journalists to possess the essential and updated facilities.

### **Safe Practice**

Safety is vital for both practising journalists and their institutions. There should also be an appreciable level of expertise and work environment upon which the Journalists may operate. Any intending practitioner should measure up to an acceptable level and be examined by relevant bodies before being allowed to operate. To a reasonable extent, avoidance of defamatory or provocative language by professionals, which is part of the mastery of journalism, is recommended. Also, provision or acquisition of essential facilities by the practising journalists is also imperative.

Besides, these journalists and their sources are sometimes victims of attacks. Criminal organizations, authorities, activists, and citizens often attack journalists and media outlets which results in severe consequences. In the worst case, journalists and sources get killed and essential news stories silenced.



Brennan (2018) then introduced the three-dimensional concept of new safety which suggests a blend of safety and news, the interrelated actors involved in sustaining security for journalism and the information processing, as well as actions that could enable security in infrastructures. The three sub-dimensions of the concept are; 1) Safety and infrastructures, 2) Safety in practice and 3) Safety and its consequences.

It can be understood that the first dimension emphasises how news media and their actors develop and use the necessary infrastructures (platforms, systems and tools etc), to improve safety issues applicable to the protection of self, story, journalists' role, as well as their sources.

The second dimension revolves around the knowledge of Journalists about safety and how they should engage in research to improve their knowledge level about safety in journalism practice.

The third dimension highlights the different kinds of effects that emanate as a result of threats to the safety of journalists, how such constitute societal problems and how they could be managed.

## **IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS OF PRACTISING JOURNALISTS**

### **Remuneration**

There is a need for an upward review of the salaries being paid to Journalists in both the private and government-owned organisations, and also be motivated especially those who demonstrate commitment and loyalty towards their job. These Journalists should always be rewarded to encourage proficiency and service delivery among them

They should also not be relieved of their duties arbitrarily often without terminal benefits or entitlements. They should be protected and encouraged to always stand on the truth.

### **Special Allowances**

This text recommends that practisingjournalists receive work-related allowances, especially for hazards. There should be special considerations for investigative journalists who risk their lives. Similarly, those who report on rural communities with poor access roads and other hindrances are also to receive these allowances. These provisions can give practising journalists a sense of belonging.

### **Role of Government Institutions**

- The government institutions should protect Journalists at all times and should demonstrate absolute regard and support for them.
- The government institutions could set up an independent body that could protect the rights of practicing Journalists.

### **Role of Individual Journalists**

- Journalists should desist from false or fake news reports.



- Journalists should demonstrate good moral.
- Journalists should demonstrate the responsibility of verifying, proofreading and editing the contents they wish to push out for public consumption.
- Journalists should always update themselves on the changing dynamics of the profession.
- Journalists should desist from hate messages, propaganda and provocative contents aimed to defame or ridicule the character of people.
- Journalists should present reports devoid of sensationalism, mockery, satire, or exaggeration.
- Journalists should avoid reports that can attract legal problems but should practice their profession in the best acceptable and honourable way.

### **Role of Relevant Bodies**

- Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and other affiliated international, local and regional bodies should set boundaries for safe practice of Journalism and ensure that journalists comply with the directives.

### **CONCLUSION**

This text concludes that aspiring journalism practitioners should endeavour to equip themselves with the fundamental requirements needed for safe and more efficient practice. Besides, existence of amateurs and other environmental challenges should not downplay or discredit the journalism profession and its integrity. There is the certainty that most practising journalists are proficient and religiously observe the fundamental requirements of the profession. This work further concludes that Journalism profession requires some appreciable level of expertise even in the face of the threats. Therefore, the foundational requirements, morals and integrity of the profession remain essential for efficiency, and journalists should practice safely and responsibly.

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## **IMPACT OF NIGERIA SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON THEIR FOLLOWERS IN ONLINE COMMUNITY**

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**Abstract**



*The main aim of this research was to investigate the Nigerian influencers and their influence on their followers in an online community – Twitter. The study adopted a mixed method comprising of online social media followers and a content analysis of influencers’ posts across three themes of interest: marketing, political and advocacy. The specific objectives of the study were to: (i) determine whether influencers with high personality attributes exert more significant influence on their followers than those with low personality traits; (ii) determine whether influencers with high personality traits and social characteristics have more significant reliability and thus exert greater influence on their followers than those with lower personality traits, social attributes and lower credibility; (iii) examine if there is a significant relationship between influencers’ communication ability and the impact they have on their followers; and (iv) examine the difference between the level of impact that political influencers have on their followers than marketing influencers. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 significance. The findings of the study were that: (i) the frequently used communication strategy employed by the influencers is informative (6, 42.9%) to influence their followers; (ii) personality attributes of all categories of influencers had a significant effect on the extent of influence their online activities exert on their followers; and there was no significant difference between the level of impact political influencers had on their followers compared to what marketing influencers had on theirs. The study therefore recommended that media literacy among youths should be enhanced to increase their capacity for following influencers reasonably.*

**Keywords:** Influencers; Twitter; Marketing; Personality attribute; Social attribute

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recently, with the events revolving around the internet and social media since its invention, it has become the wonder of the communication world. A lot of activities and phenomena take place through them. One of such wonders is online opinion leadership (influencers). They are the people who are very powerful because they exert a lot of influence on people. Nevertheless, they are individuals who have been found to exhibit specific characteristics or traits that mobilize or influence their followers. While the media play an essential role in developing and shaping public opinion, today, just anyone can assume this role on social media. The social media has lost its gatekeeping nature because it is easily manipulated by ordinary citizens who actively engage in the dual function of processing and disseminating information.

The concept of opinion leadership i.e. influencers or influentials was first introduced by Elihu Katz, and since then, it has been revisited in a cornucopia of studies across many academic disciplines (Katz, 1955). Weimann (1994) dismissed the term “opinion leader” because it suggests that the person has to have special leadership skills and abilities often associated with a formal leadership position. He preferred to address them as “influential”.

In Nigeria, opinion leaders in online community, now known as influencers, have been able to penetrate the visible areas such as political, advocacy (Bring Back Our Girls campaign) and voting pattern or behaviour (#votefight, #electionnotwar). The phenomenon of social media influencers has become so prevalent in Nigeria online community that there are now more than thousands of self-acclaimed and established online influencers with millions of followers on the Nigerian online community (Bello, 2018). This phenomenon of social media influencer has become very significant given the names of internet users in Nigeria today, which, according to Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC) report, the numbers of internet users was released as marginally 98.3million (Nigeria Communications Commission



[NCC], 2018). Opinion leaders in various ways have emerged as influential members of online communities and have been ascertained to be a source of advice for other consumers. Nowadays, social media have become tools of greater influence wherein consumers actively garner information and make choices based on them (Casaló, Cisneros, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2009; Thakur, Agriawan, & Summey, 2016).

One of the new media tool is the twitter which is the sole social media platform that is of interest in this study. A baseline review of the activities of the social media influencers in Nigeria, especially on Twitter, indicated that the influencers do not show any form of disparity as they all mix everything. This means that the influencers in Nigeria online community somewhat perform political, advocacy and even marketing roles interchangeably. However, there is a need to desegregate the Nigeria social media influencers to identify their categories and also to determine the extent of the influence each type exert on their followers. Taking all this into account, in spite of all the studies conducted to understand the influencers, particularly in many Western countries' online communities, little or nothing is known about the emerging influence of the influencers in Nigeria online community.

Many previous studies on the use of social media among Nigerians had rather concentrated their efforts at describing social media, social media use by various political actors, explaining social media adaption rates or investigating the content created within the platforms (Akinlade, 2015; Chiemela, Ovute&Obochi, 2015; Nnanyelugo & Nwafor, 2013 cited in Ekwueme and Folarin 2017; Olasinde, 2014; Tokunbo& Felix, 2013; Anyanwu, Ossai-Onah&Iroeze, 2013). Few or no studies have systematically tried to develop a theoretical understanding of social media use that could explain the extent to which social media influencers in Nigeria online community change the political and social behaviour of their followers.

This research extends previous researches on opinion leadership on Twitter and it is specifically tailored to three objectives.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Two-Step Flow Theory**

Given that the opinion leadership emanated from the Two-Step Flow theory, the theory states that the mass media messages are now mediated by specific individuals who are known as the opinion leaders now commonly referred to as influencers. Two-Step Flow theory is an effect theory which was founded by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet, (1944). Two-step flow theory posits that mass media do not directly influence individuals. Instead, mass media is filtered via a two-step process through influential community members with specialized interests who then control the individual (Anaeto, Onabajo&Osifeso, 2008).

Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) cited in Kononova and Akbar (2015) established that political decision-making depends on interpersonal communication more than on mass media. Importantly, the concept of the Two-Step Flow theory suggests that the flow of information disseminated by mass media goes through two stages to reach recipients. First, from the mass media to certain people known as opinion leaders and, second, from these opinion leaders now known as influencers to the general populace. In relation to this study, it is understood that these social media influencers have a mastery of the mass media communicated messages so they can demonstrate high intelligence on it in order to achieve any goal intended.



Therefore, this study intends to extend the traditional opinion leadership framework to political activism on social media. Traditionally, opinion leaders have both greater access to information and more platforms for disseminating information.

### Source Credibility Theory

This theory was introduced by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly in 1953. Source Credibility theory proposes that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. Using this theory to explain the forming of the influence of social media influentials on their community of followers as well, Self (2007, p. 435) described 'Source Credibility' as "the believability of a communicator as perceived by the recipient of the message".

So, influencers are going to be analysed to understand if they are seen as credible and reliable for information and how these factors provide satisfaction to their followers. The theory in itself proposes that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source of a message presents itself as credible. Here, it would be determined if the personality traits and characteristics of these influencers would pose a great foundation or basis for the believability of the influencers by the opinion followers (those being influenced).

### Formulation of hypothesis

To locate influencers, for example, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955, p.147) employed the questions such as "Have you recently been asked your advice about...?" and "Compared with other women belonging to your circle of friends, are you more or less likely to be asked your advice on...?" Subsequent research often criticized that these questions were not sufficient to measure the concept (e.g., Katz, 1957). Therefore, more complex scales evolved, and completely different methods emerged as well. From a social science perspective, Weimann and colleagues (2007) distinguished six traditional methods of measuring opinion leadership: (1) according to a person's formal position or (2) their reputation, (3) by observing the communication patterns in a community, (4) through self-designation by responding to items in an opinion leadership scale, (5) sociometric by analyzing the social network structure of a group, and (6) by asking key informants. In researches that had been conducted, four basic techniques have been successfully tested: socio-metric methods, interviews with key informants, observations, and self-designating techniques (Jacoby, 1974; Rogers and Cartano, 1962; Weimann, 1994) cited in (Langner, Hennigs & Wiedmann, (2013). Of these methods, self-identification techniques are the most popular method as they can easily be administered in surveys cited in (Langner, Hennigs & Wiedmann, (2013).

In political communication, several efforts have been used in identifying and measuring the disposition of opinion leadership and have centred on the scale of 'personality strength' (Noelle-Neumann, 1985; Weimann, 1991; Weimann & Brosius, 1994; Shah & Scheufele, 2006). Personality strength is a trait of these individuals that cannot be disposed of because it is the heart or core of influencers' behaviour; it is a reflection of their confidence in leadership roles, their talent for forming others' opinions, and their self-perceived influence on social and political outcomes. Weimann (1991) successfully validated the scale by finding that those higher in 'personality strength' held central network positions and engaged in more communication activity. This validation leads to the first hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub> Influencers with high personality attributes exert greater influence on their followers than those with low personality attributes.





Using the same Weimann's scale, Shah and Scheufele (2006) corroborated that opinion leadership is primarily explained by dispositional characteristics such as self-assuredness and innovativeness. When it comes to public affairs, those who are more knowledgeable are likely to be highly motivated to take part in the talks, and therefore, to expect a psychological reward for such actions. Political knowledge and commitment are to be predictors of opinion leadership in the issue sphere of politics; just as personal involvement and product familiarity are for the sphere of consumption (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Political knowledge and involvement alone may not be enough for assuming opinion leadership unless the individuals are equipped with competence in disseminating and influencing others using a medium of choice. Based on the review of the literature, the following hypotheses were generated:

H<sub>2</sub> Influencers with high personality traits and social attributes have greater credibility and thus exert greater influence on their followers than those with lower personality traits, social characteristics and lower credibility.

H<sub>3</sub> There is no significant relationship between influencers' communication ability and the level of impact they have on their followers.

Interestingly, opinion leader can assume the role of a follower at the same time (Jung & Kim, 2016). This is one of the dynamics that makes influencers so successful: that they can be consumers themselves. Individuals can easily be influenced by opinion givers/seekers that follow mass media closely, either by personally trying products/services or comparing social media messages to their own value systems, and conveying these messages or endorsements to others in their community. With this, the study intends to investigate the level of impact of the influencers' political or marketing messages on their followers. Based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was generated:

H<sub>4</sub> There is no significant difference between the level of impact that political influencers have on their followers and the level of impact marketing influencers (mavens) have on their followers

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data to test these hypotheses was collected from twitter accounts of the influencers after a baseline study had been conducted on the activities of the influencers and the intensity of their tweets. This study adopted mixed methods consisting of survey method with an online questionnaire as the instrument of collecting data as well as content analysis was adopted in the study. A total of seven social media influencers whose contents focus on the themes of Politics, Advocacy and Marketing were purposefully involved in this study. Respondents included individuals who were the followers of these influencers and who intended to participate in the survey after the link to the survey had been shared by the influencers. The population of the study as it was identified on the 5th of March, 2019 showed that about 611,400 individuals were the followers of the seven identified influencers on Twitter. Therefore, for the sake of statistical convenience as it concerns the management of complex primary data and large population like this study, the researcher used the Israel model (1992) to statistically determine the sample size statistically. Based on the 95% confidence level and the Israel (1992), population size table for the population greater than 100,000 as in this case is 400 constituted online followers mainly youths within the ages 18-35 of the influencers on Twitter. So, for the content analysis, posts were selected from and analysed from the timeline of each of the seven selected influencers using the constructed week method of two weeks





from each of the influencers across three months. The tweets from each of the influencers' timeline were selected purposively based on the comments of the followers under them with scrutiny of such thread of tweets containing elements of communication strategies. This study adopted a non-probability sampling procedure of quota, simple random sampling as well as snowball sampling methods.

The researcher adopted these procedures because the questionnaire was administered online through the identified influencers. Seven social media influencers were systematically identified across the three categories of influencers owing to their popularity and the political undertone of their online activity. So, the number of followers selected from each of the identified influencers depended on the total number of followers each of them had. Again, the selection of the respondents from the followers of each identified influencers was determined by the numbers of influencers in each category. The following are the selected influencers; Dr. PamPam (@thepamilerin), The AjeButter of Lagos (@Theajebutter103), EbukaAkara (@ebuka\_akara), Falilat (@Falilatt\_), DADDY THE BAALE (@kingtanda), WHAYASAY (@iamwillsteel), #hashtagMFR (@hashtagMFR). So, each of the identified influencers was asked to post on their timeline or wall the links to the questionnaire so that their followers could specifically fill it.

This study, therefore, used a two-week constructed sampling of all tweets posted on the timeline of the Twitter influencers between March and May, 2019. The tweets selected cut across various activities of the influencers; marketing, political and advocacy. Tweets were randomly selected from the timeline of the influencers and were selected each day of the week twice (i.e. Two (2) Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays) within the time frame selected for the study which then resulted in a 14-day collection of tweets. The constructed week sampling technique was employed to draw tweets for the study to understand the communication strategies used by the influencers. A total of 14 tweets were systematically selected over three months. Two weeks were selected from the three months' study period. From the two weeks, two posts per day for the 14 days of the two weeks were systematically selected for communication ability analysis covering the three categories of influencers. Items on the personal characteristics of the influencers were included such as innovativeness, expertise, self-confidence, manoeuvring, dogmatism, assertiveness. Social attributes of the influencers, also such as a social tie, gregariousness, strategic social location were included. Social media posts of the influencers ranging from its frequency, types, politeness, purpose; the language was not left out.

For the content analysis, based on Dodd & Collins, (2017) study, they identified some message strategy used online in communicating: informative, facilitative, persuasive and cooperative approach. Tweets of the influencers that possess the informative strategy present unbiased facts using neutral language and allow audience members to draw their conclusions. A facilitative approach allows people to act in ways they are already predisposed to by making resources, such as money, available. A persuasive approach appeals to emotion and may involve language that expresses a particular point of view. These messages include a call to action. Also, the cooperative strategy showed tweets that suggested the "we" language, but it is designed to bring people together in enlightened self-interest. In the quantitative arm of this study which focused on the followers, a semi-structured self-administered online survey was deployed using Google Forms®. The survey was designed in three templates for each of the themes of the study and the links to these themes were shared with the respective social



media influencers earlier identified. Data were collected for the content analysis of the tweets by using the constructed coding schedule that consisted of specific variables and their categories relating to communication strategies. The coding schedule is attached as

For the qualitative arm of the study, a content analysis, which involved the use of a coding schedule to analyse the tweets of the influencers across selected measures/concepts was employed. The themes being looked out for were listed and coded accordingly.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**H1: Influencers with high personality attributes exert greater influence on their followers than those with low personality attributes.**

Table 4.1: Comparison between Personality Attributes of Influencers and Extent of Influence on their followers

Personality Attributes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-test	P
<b>Political (137)</b>					
High	83	37.29	7.22	4.01 (df = 135)	<0.001
Low	54	31.91	7.97		
<b>Advocacy (N=115)</b>					
High	58	55.40	6.25	3.32 (df = 95.09)	0.001
Low	57	50.32	9.75		
<b>Marketing (N=140)</b>					
High	86	6.58	2.57	3.07 (df = 138)	0.003
Low	54	5.28	2.23		

The result of the t-test presented in the table 4.1 showed that personality attributes of influencers have a significant effect on the extent of influence their online activities exert on their followers. Influencers with high personality attributes exert a larger extent of influence on followers compared to those with lower personality attributes as shown in the table 4.1.

The mean extent of influence score was higher for influencers with higher personality traits compared to those with lower personality traits in all the research themes, as a result of which it was statistically significant in all groups (p value <0.005). For instance, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean level of influence on followers for political influencers with high personality attributes compared to those with lower personality attributes (t = 4.01, df = 135). A similar observation was made to advocacy (t= 3.32, df = 95.09).

Thus, higher strength of personality attribute significantly contributes higher level of influence on followers compared to a lower strength of personality attribute.



**H<sub>2</sub> Influencers with high personality traits and social attributes have greater credibility and thus exert greater influence on their followers than those with lower personality traits, social attributes and lower credibility.**

Table 4.2: Relationship between Influencers’ Personality Traits and Social Attributes and Extent of Influence on their followers

		Extent of Influence		Total	X <sup>2</sup>	P-value
		Little	Great			
Political (N=137)	High	49 (74.2%)	17 (25.8%)	66	8.89	0.003
	Low	66 (93.0%)	5 (7.0%)	71		
Advocacy (N=115)	High	5 (27.8%)	13 (72.2%)	18	11.06	0.001
	Low	67 (69.1%)	30 (30.9)	97		
Strength of Personality traits & Social Attributes (N=140)	High	84 (84.8%)	15 (15.2%)	99	4.63	0.031
	Low	40 (97.6%)	1 (2.4%)	41		

In table 4.2 above, forty-nine (74.2%) of the influencers who had high personality and social attributes had little extent of influence on their followers compared to 17 (25.8%) who had a great level of influence on their followers ( $X^2= 8.89$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). This suggests that a higher personality traits and social attributes of the political influencers do not necessarily in turn result into greater level of influence. Though, the strength of the two parameters (personality traits and social attributes) separately may have a positive relationship on extent of influence as established by the results of the interactive effect of the personality traits and social attributes of the influencers. The result showed that the social attributes of the influencers does not predict the level of influence.

A similar observation was made among the marketing respondents where 84 (84.8%) of the influencers who had high strength of personality traits and social attributes ( $X^2= 4.63$ ,  $p$  value = 0.031). However, the results obtained from the advocacy respondents showed that a high strength of personality traits and social attributes results in higher extent of influence on respondent. This means there is a significant relationship between the combined factors and the level of influence of advocacy influencers on their followers ( $X^2= 11.06$ ,  $p$  value = 0.001).

So, in general, fewer respondents were classified to have great level of influence exerted on them (especially for political and marketing respondents) unlike in the advocacy theme. However, this does negate the fact that there was an observed relationship between influencers’ personality traits and social attributes and extent of influence on their followers ( $p$  value < 0.05 across all themes).

**H<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between influencers’ communication ability and the level of impact they have on their followers**



Table 4.3: Relationship between Influencers' Communication Ability and the Level of Impact on their followers

	Parameters of Influence		Total	X <sup>2</sup>	P-Value
	Likes & Retweets	Comments & Hashtags			
Informative & Facilitative	3 (33.3%)	6 (66.7%)	9	2.8	0.942
Persuasive & Cooperative	4 (80.0%)	1 (20.0%)	5		
Total	7	7	14		

As shown in table 4.3, the content analysis result carried out on the influencer's tweet was used to test this hypothesis. Communication ability was measured using the informativeness, facilitativeness, persuasiveness and cooperativeness. On the other hand, the level of impact on followers was measured using likes, retweets, comments and hashtags generated by such tweets. Only 3 (33.3%) of the informative and facilitative tweets resulted in the followers liking or retweeting while 6 (66.7%) resulted in the followers further commenting or putting up an hashtag for the tweet. Four (80.0%) of the persuasive tweet led to likes and retweets, while only one resulted in followers commenting or putting up an hashtag on Twitter. So, no statistically significant relationship was observed between communication ability and level of impact (p value >0.05) as seen in the Table 4.3.

**H4 There is no significant difference between the level of impact that political influencers have on their followers and the level of impact marketing influencers (mavens) have on their followers**

Table 4.4: Comparison between the Level of Impact of Political Influencers and Marketing Influencers (mavens) on their Followers

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	P
Level of Influence of Marketing Influencer	137	46.91	11.518	10.44	<0.001
Level of Influence of Political Influencer	140	34.42	8.136	Df( 275)	

In table 4.4, the t-test result showed that there is a significant difference between the level of impact political influencers had on their followers compared to that which marketing influencers had on theirs (t-test value = 10.44, p = <0.001). The marketing influencers had a higher influence value (Mean = 46.91 ± 11.518) compared to the political influencers (Mean = 34.42 ± 8.136). This means that the marketing influencers who put up posts on fashion or other attractive things exert more influence on their followers than political influencers who post tweets on political matters.

**CONCLUSION**

This study sought to examine if the social media influencers have an impact on their followers in online community using solely Twitter for the purpose of this research. This



analysis was informed on the current literature on impact of influencers on Instagram and YouTube on their followers as conducted by Nandagiri & Philip, (2018). However, for this study, Twitter was specifically chosen. With the help of mixed methods, it was concluded that the work of an influencer is positive and that they do have an impact on the followers.

Through the findings, on communication strategies of the influencers, it was discovered that the informativeness of the posts, facilitative nature it consists of and the persuasiveness strategies all form how the followers would receive the message being passed across to attract their followers. Cooperativeness was found to be lacking and was rated low in the posts of the influencers. Thus, social media influencers can better impact their followers by posting informative posts, persuading them and facilitating them through their posts.

Also, it was discovered that the extent of influence a marketing influencer will have on his followers is as a result of the reviews of brand or products he posts and not through recommendations. The results showed social media influencers exert a relatively acceptable level of influence on the opinions and decisions of their followers. Across the research themes, liking an influencers' post on a helpful political issue was observed as a major opinion behaviour indicator which indicates the extent of influence such post have on the individual. The fact that an influencers post created awareness on major social issues by creating a movement with the use of hashtag on the issue was observed as the major extent of influence measure among the advocacy group.

In other words, the proportion of respondents who had high strength of personality and also great extent of influence on their followers was low compared to those who had high strength of personality but little extent of influence. A possible explanation is because there were more respondents who were considered to have little extent of influence exerted upon them across all the themes (e.g. there were 115 in the little extent of influence category compared to only 22 in the high level of influence category).

And finally, study found that both the social attributes and personality traits of political influencers contribute significantly to the level of influence they exert on their followers. Thus, it is concluded that online influencers have positive impact on their followers. Importantly, many respondents were reluctant to answer the questionnaires because of the subject matter and the particular platform (Twitter) that was used. Some of the respondents refused to click on the link as a result of unavailability of internet connection and not wanting to exhaust their monthly data subscription. In relation to this, using only one platform as the basis for this study cannot allow a valid and reliable generalization about other social media platforms that were not involved in this study.

The phenomenon of social media influencer is just fast rising in the society. Few researches have been carried out on its benefits and importance to the society at large. It is on this note that it is recommended that this phenomenon be given much consideration as a skill can be developed into becoming an influencer. This study offers recommendations that social media influencers can better impact their followers by putting up informative, persuasive and facilitative posts. This means that the social media influencers across all categories should be conscious of their message strategy or writing skills so they can exert a greater influence. Influencers should post impactful messages that could have greater impact for the continuity of exerting influence on their followers. Also the government should take note of the



activities of the social media influencers especially the political and advocacy influencers because they pose a great skill in mobilizing their followers into doing certain things they do not even wish to do. Thus, awareness on a new policy about to be implemented can be released to the social media influencers. The personality traits and social attributes of the influencers that were supported by the findings should be enhanced by influencers in order to boost their capacity for winning more followers. Foremost, this study might be the first study regarding impact of social media influencers on their followers' marketing knowledge, political adaptability and advocacy knowledge, influencer types and influencers' personal traits across three specific themes.

The results can be served as a start point for future research for whoever aims to go deeper and more detailed in the same themes or has interest in the impact of an influencer marketing on other important social issues. Yet the previous studies have not pointed out the difference in the activities that lead to an impact on followers. Other studies should be carried out on other demography since the young adults are not the only ones exposed to the influencers. Such further studies should aim at confirming the extent to which social media influencers translate their online followership to offline political/social decisions/behaviours and influence.

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## **CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMMES AS PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOL: A STUDY OF EBONYI BROADCASTING CORPORATION (EBBC), ABAKALIKI**

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### **Abstract**

*The current affairs programmes of broadcast stations are considered as effective public relations tool. They bridge the gap between the government and the governed. They also attract goodwill and patronage for the station. This study focused on how effective current affairs programmes are used in Ebonyi Broadcasting Corporation (EBBC) to foist good image on the station. The survey method was used to get analyzable response from the station's audience. The study examined the potentials of current affairs as a broadcast programme and how it can be used as a tool of public relations. It specifically sought to determine if current affairs programmes have any effect on the relationship between the audience and any particular broadcast organization; identify the problems that affect the production of current affairs programmes as a public relations tool, and proffer solutions to ineffective current affairs programmes production. It further found out that good current affairs programmes affect station-audience relationship. This is not only because good current affairs programmes induce respect for, interest in and familiarity with the station, but they, more importantly, raise the popularity of the station. Thus these are invaluable resources which every organization craves for as they are also at the root of every good public relations campaign. The study, moreover, discovered that educated adults, mostly civil servants and business men and women listen to EBBC current affairs programmes regularly to know the activities in government (their chief employer and policy maker) and in the society at large. The study however found out that lack of requisite skills, lack of programme materials and lack of touch with station's environment and needs, and inadequate training of staff are chief among the problems affecting current affair programmes. It therefore recommended among others that broadcast establishments should be professional in their conduct to sustain and retain audience. These they can do by employing professionals in the field as well as carrying out regular training of staff to keep pace with the ever changing trend of audience appeal.*



**Keywords:** Public Relations, Current Affairs, Broadcasting, EBBC, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Social complexities and sophistication regularly hunt the contemporary societies. The need for organizations and even governments to have good corporate image continues to be desirous. Organizations are no longer contented with carrying out their businesses just for profit maximization. They wish to be perceived as being socially responsible. Consequently, public relations departments have been created in many organizations for positive image-making and to create conducive environment for business.

The essence of public relations practice is rightly captured by Osuji (1999,p.4) when he defined Public Relations as:

... the process of creating a favourable public opinion for organizations, institutions, individuals, commodities or for intangible things such as names so that relevant members of the public who have something to do with these tangible or intangible things may perceive them in good way

The above conceptualization rather seems to be an elaboration of the one given by Public Relations Society of America (P.R.S.A). In 1988, the PRSA postulated that public relations help an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other.

Public Relations is a broad-based practice. It is not optional in practice. It is neither seasonal, momentary nor a matter of chance activity. It is “a planned cyclic and interactive process, which involves actions, inactions and reactions from either the organization or the publics and their effects” (Nworgu, 2002 p.1). The practice of public relation assumes more importance considering the amount of time, money and effort that individuals and organizations spend in modern times to maintain relationships. This, perhaps, is why achieving mutuality of interest and gaining the support and cooperation of others through perception has been elevated an integral part of the day-to-day business of every organization (Okafor, 2002).

In broadcast organizations, current affairs programmes can be used as a public relations tool. Effective current affairs programmes can be utilized to create good relationship between organizations and their publics or between broadcast stations and their audiences, in a manner as to engender goodwill. Current affairs are broadcast programmes which involve a presentation of comments, opinions and analysis of current topical events and issues of public importance (NBC, 1996). Current affairs programme is one of the crucial responsibilities used by broadcast organizations to fulfill their information role to the society.

Current affairs programmes can help broadcast organizations reach their target audiences with timely information that can add tonic to their lives. The programmes can offer a platform for regular interactive session between an organization and its publics. Instead of waiting for a periodic press conferences or facility visits for an organization to communicate its policies and activities to its publics, a well planned daily current affairs programme can bridge the information gap, providing a timely social intercourse that helps to strengthen relationships and build reputation over time. This, of course, is the thrust of modern public relations.



Ebonyi Broadcasting Corporation (EBBC) 98.10 MHZ Frequency Modulation was established in 1997; following the creation of Ebonyi State along with five other States in Nigeria on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1996. Earlier, the pioneer Military Administrator of Ebonyi State, Navy Captain Walter Feghabo had applied for both radio and television licenses to NBC on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997. So, from inception, EBBC has been a government owned station. Dunu (2002, p.134) believes that:

As the bedrock and mainstay of broadcasting, programming involves a long term calculated, planned policy, expressed in predetermined executable action, which if appropriately implemented and executed as individual programme operations, wins maximum success for the stations.

She concludes that if, alternatively, programming is done haphazardly, it will lead to loss of audience and the simultaneous loss in revenue generation. The losses can cause the death of the station.

It, therefore, becomes imperative to take a critical look at current affairs programmes, as a singular factor that can make or mar a broadcast organization. It is in an attempt to unravel the mysteries behind effective current affairs programmes and how they can be used as a public relations tool that has necessitated this study. It is believed that a well planned and structured research can help broadcast establishments to appreciate how important their current affairs programmes are, as a public relations tool.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Some broadcast organizations seem to have lost prominence and their audience. They make little or no positive change in the society. Consequently, they neither attract patronage nor support. Advertisements and goodwill are scarce. Apart from government subvention, such broadcast organizations find it difficult to operate in the society. It becomes necessary to ascertain how broadcast stations can use their current affairs programmes to generate the goodwill that can guarantee their survival and profitability.

All the males and females who listen to the radio in Nigeria form the theoretical population of this study. It is this group that the study aims at generalizing its result to see how it appreciates current affairs programmes as a public relations tool used by broadcast stations. However, there is no single Nigerian radio station that can reach every male and female in Nigeria at the same time. The best achievable contact is the one made through programme networking by the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). The researchers, therefore, chose a practicable option – using a population that contains males and females, similar to what obtains in the Nigerian population. Thus, the listeners of EBBC in Abakaliki were purposively chosen as a case study in this study.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study generally examines the potentials of current affairs as a broadcast programme and how it can be used as a tool of public relations.

Specifically, this paper sought to:

- Determine if current affairs programmes have any effect on the relationship between the audience and any particular broadcast organization.
- Identify the problems that affect the production of current affairs programmes as a public relations tool.
- Proffer solutions to ineffective current affairs programmes production.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Producing Current Affairs Programmes (Need for Education and Training)**

Current affairs programmes are considered the means through which broadcast media provide an open market place of ideas for the citizenry. They, thus, guarantee the actualization of the “self righting process” - the bedrock of liberal democracy advocated by John Milton (1608—1674).

In their pioneering work on television and radio broadcasting, Chester, Garison and Willis (1978 p.60) had rightly explained that:

current affairs programmes in a variety of forms provide information and understanding about the real world in which we live, they report information and news about activities as different as agricultural marketing and major league baseball contests, they present direct coverage of important events; they provide a public platform for speeches, press conferences and discussions of public issues; they dramatize through documentary techniques historical, events and current social and political problems; they provide a pulpit for religious services; they broadcast practical information for use in home making, shopping, family health and childbearing.

There is no doubt that it requires high talents to accomplish the task of producing current affairs programmes. Udejah (2004 p.398), agrees that “training and retraining of staff are imperative not only for the growth of broadcast stations, but also for sharpening the professional input of the media organization”. He outlines such qualities as integrity, balance, fairness, objectivity and authenticity as the necessities for broadcasters in the discharge of their duties.

It has, however, been observed that some persons who go about as current affairs programmers in broadcast stations have either not received education in the field or are not adequately trained and equipped for the challenges of the job. Oso (2000) had noted this unfortunate situation in Nigeria and cautioned that it should not surprise us because journalism in Nigeria started more or less as a craft with the practitioners being trained on the job. A good number of pioneer journalists were printers and some others who failed in other endeavours.

Besides, it should be noted that current affairs programmes, most clearly, demonstrate the use of broadcasting to serve public interest. This becomes more evident given that no broadcasting system, however well intentioned, can survive without public acceptance (Chester *et al*, 1978).

It then presupposes that audience satisfaction should form the broadest base upon which every programme should be anchored. In essence, the knowledge of the component audience demography and psychography and their political and socio-economic realities, should constitute part of the intellectual foundation of the current affairs programmer, if audience satisfaction is to be properly addressed.

Unfortunately, audience appeal is a very unpredictable, ever changing phenomenon in social psychology. Chester *et al*, (1978 p.51) agree with this view and add that “programming deals with indefinable and intangible aspects of audience appeal”. To this end, therefore, it requires extraordinary intellectual rigour and wisdom to grapple with the vagaries of producing current affairs programmes. In the words of the trio:





the best programming executives possess on uncanny ability to evaluate the indefinable and intangible aspects of audience appeal, a thorough knowledge of programme sources and show business in general, an acquaintance with programme cost that will enable them evaluate the risk involved in any programme venture and a high degree of boldness and courage (Chester *et al*, 1978 p.51).

This brings us to the question of what kind of education and training should current affairs programmers be exposed to. Is it a technical education that will acquaint them with the use of communication gadgets, or the one that will make them wizards in the use of language? Writing in this vein, Nduka (1998) notes that the educational system of any society is a more or less elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about, in the persons submitted to it, certain skills and attitude that are judged to be useful and desirable in the society. He argues that the end result of education is the production of an educated person who is expected to have mastered certain skills, to be cultured, and above all, to possess a trained mind.

In the context of this discourse, one can state that producing current affairs programmes needs cultured and educated minds. Such culture and education, as Oso (2000) puts it, must be that designed to take into consideration the socio-political make up of the country. This will enable programmers come up with current affairs that will directly address the problems in the Nigerian socio-political milieu.

There is also the need for a paradigm shift. This should include the principle of skepticism in current affairs programming. Skepticism, in this context entails a general intellectual outlook, – which does not deny assent but withholds it until justification is given. This virtue becomes important considering the fact that broadcast system of Nigeria tends to encourage downward communication more than it does the upward (Udejah, 2004). The adoption of skeptical stance in programming will dismantle the elitist structure of broadcasting in Nigeria. It will also free the broadcast media from the supremacist and racist prejudices of the *nouveauriches*. And out of the fountain of neutrality and freedom, public acceptance, goodwill patronage flow.

Indeed, if we agree with MacBride *et al*, (1981 p.230) that “the quality of any system is largely governed by the calibre of those who operate it”, and if we want to churn out effective current affairs programmes, those that can meet the appeals of the station’s audience and win their acceptance, then, comprehensive education and training should be vigorously pursued. This education programme must go beyond teaching techniques and skills to exploring intellectual and academic issues. This element should form an integral part of the new paradigm, to replace the old on-the-job training system, which has ended up training more craftsmen than cultured and educated minds (Oso, 2000 p.35). We need not reiterate that this new education calls for new tools, new understanding and new orientation on the part of media owners. By this way, broadcast establishments can be rest assured of resourceful current affairs programmers whose performance will win patronage and goodwill for their station.

### **TOWARDS EFFECTIVE BROADCAST CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING**

The problem of ineffective current affairs programming seems to arise basically from lack of knowledge about the specified audience, the potentials of broadcast media, communication theory and the objectives of broadcasting in the first instance. These basic deficiencies tend to limit the power of broadcasting to educate, inform and entertain the audience.



The audience should not be regarded as people who will be fed with anything the media choose. The media have many audiences some of which are outlined below.

**Audiences are Targeted:** Audience is targeted by advertising managers of broadcast stations. There is an audience for radio programme such as soap opera. There is an audience for magazine on world soccer. All these audiences have slightly different characteristics, which is measured by the usual markers of age, gender, etc. Audience with such characteristics can be targeted by producing materials, which appeals to them. This raises an interesting question as to whether the audience is found or made. Does a programmer have an audience in mind before putting up material to suit it? Or is the material put on, which then finds an audience? Obviously, after many years, both producers of radio and journalists have a fair idea of what their audience is like and what they want. But still, it brings one to another point as indicated below.

**Audience may be constructed:** This idea points to the fact that it is possible to find an audience for a media product and built it up. For instance, some electronic media like AIT, Channels TV, etc surfaced and built their audience. So did our indigenous film industries. Audiences are crucial factors in modeling the communication process in the media.

**Audiences are active:** With the high level of literacy in the society, audiences have become more and more active and sophisticated. This means that audiences actively select what they want to listen to or watch.

The broadcast media are associated with four major human attribute. They include “immediacy, spontaneity, topicality and versatility” (Obasi, 2004 p.3). Every successful current affairs programme demands that these characteristics be clearly known and mastered so that they can be capitalized upon during production. The broad objectives of broadcasting include education, information and entertainment. The agenda for educational broadcasting includes technical communication (skill acquisition), general cognitive communication (knowledge) and normative communication (accepted standard of behaviour) (Obasi, 2004 p.4).

We transmit various kinds of technical communication to enable the public orientate themselves to their environment. Knowledge in various areas of human endeavour is transmitted through general cognitive communication, while information designed to uphold various social norms and to define proper behaviour in various roles and situation is transmitted through normative communication.

Anyone planning a current affairs programme must therefore, take cognizance of these agenda. It will be a waste of time producing a programme, which does not reflect these important communication agenda. There is, therefore, the need to effectively plan programme production and presentation.

In her treatise on programming, Dunu (2002) remarks that programming as a feature of broadcasting has basic factors, which include research, planning, materials, execution and evaluation. These factors combine in a synergistic manner to produce an effective current affairs programme. And programming occurs in three phases. Namely:



- Programme selection (Research): Research as the first stage is conducted to gather facts that will go into the programme. Kogar (1999 p.42) affirms that a writer of documentary, for instance, “cannot escape research responsibility for he must immerse himself sufficiently in the subject to develop a point of view and determine what he wants to know”.
- Programme Scheduling: This has to do with the organization and packaging of pre-selected programme materials into a coherent programme service for a broadcast period. Appropriate timing and placement of programme types at designated duration has been identified as essential factor which can alleviate the problem of a station’s image and achieve acceptability.
- Programme evaluation: This involves the assessment of a particular programme’s effort. Each programme is evaluated based on the extent to which its content reflect current social trends and meets the needs of the audience.

The truth is that without good planning, research, materials, execution, and evaluation, effective current affairs programmes will continue to elude many broadcast organizations. Effective current affairs programming goes further to include skillful selection and management of programme materials that must appeal to and satisfy audience need for information and entertainment. It involves consistent placement that will always suit audience time and activity. The satisfaction of the audience is the secret for effective current affairs programming.

### **Importance of Current Affairs Programmes to the Audience**

*...by giving voice and visibility to all – including and especially the poor, the marginalized and members of minorities – the media can help remedy the inequalities, the corruption, the ethnic tensions and human rights abuses that form the root causes of so many conflicts.*

- Kofi Anan, former UN Secretary General.

The above statement by the erstwhile United Nation’s Chief Scribe aptly describes the value of current affairs programmes to the audience. It gives voice to the voiceless through vox pops, phone-in programmes, etc.

Another point of excellence of current affairs to the audience is in the area of providing one major media function — interpretation — to the illiterate rural dwellers. This section of humanity, on account of their illiteracy, may not be able to read newspapers, where such interpretative stories are normally contained. Where they can, they are plagued either by lack of rural community newspapers or are so downtrodden and poverty-stricken that they cannot afford the copy price of a newspaper. Dominic (1996 p.38) agrees that “the mass media (nay broadcasting) do not supply just facts and data. They also provide information on the ultimate meaning and significance of those events”. Talk programmes, documentaries produced in local languages serve this purpose.

Akin to the above, current affairs has the potential to raise the political consciousness of the populace. A live coverage of political news conference keeps the citizens alert on the political activities in the country. It also educates them on their rights as provided in the constitution. Indeed, broadcasting (nay current affairs) and politics in Nigeria have been likened to Siamese twins. Any surgical operation aimed at separation that is not carefully carried out could lead to death of either, if not, both (Udejah, 2004).



Broadcast current affairs programmes also provide a forum for open discussion of current issues of public importance. Regarding this essential role, Nwosu (1993 p.31) affirms that:

...with the growth and demands of society in the political and socio-economic sectors, with the complexities and individual differences becoming sharper and more controversial, with various factors affecting the day-to-day life of citizens, it became necessary to discuss, to criticize and to air one's view. This concept of free debate ... often occurs in the media (in current affairs)

The audience equally needs timely and continuous flow of current information in their daily lives. The analysis of the information is no less important. Neither is hearing the news makers in actuality inefficiency in job performance. "There will always be a need for news from reliable and knowledgeable sources" MacBride *et al* (1981 p.200). Current affairs programmes provide the audience with these services as tonic to refresh their lives.

### **IMPORTANCE OF CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES TO THE GOVERNMENT**

Broadcast current affairs programmes, no doubt, are essential to the dissemination of information on government policies and activities. It also affords government the opportunity of a feedback from the populace. Onabanjo (2000 p.51) rightly observes that:

Policies are formulated on continuous bases that have a bearing on the hopes and aspirations of the citizenry. These policies have to be properly examined, scrutinized and debated on as a means of feeding back the policy makers on the viability or otherwise of such policies

The above statement underscores the necessity of an open discussion forum to which government policies can be subjected for acid test for their viability or otherwise. Current affairs, by its nature, represent this discussion forum.

It has also been observed that broadcast current affairs programmes affects government decision-making process and policies. This is because, current affairs has, as its thrust, the aggregation, sharpening and expression of the opinions and reactions of the audience towards the always-newsworthy actions of government.

Writing on "the effects of mass media (nay current affairs) on government," Ebeze (2002 p.284), drawing heavily from Nwosu (1993), listed the following:

- Defining and Redefining Government Policies and Laws: This precisely means understanding government policies, giving them contemporary interpretation, relating them also to the culture and developmental expectations of the society, to what government has stated as its goal and objectives and finally assessing and clarifying them for better understanding by the masses.
- Creating change or shift: The mass media's objective is to create change for the better. That change or shift could be radical or gradual. In its entertainment, cultural, educative and information functions, the objective is to introduce new ideas or to extol old ones, which are then consumed by the target audience. Thus, the mass media (current affairs) affect the government through these novel ideas, persuade it to consider them and probably adapt them.



- **Entrenching or Retrenching Government:** This is now commonplace in Nigerian polity. The power of the media, its persuasiveness and pervasiveness has bestowed upon it that rare power to influence. Think of Gowon's regime. It surely was a victim of mass media criticisms. What of Shagari era? No doubt, it fell in the face of mass media assault. There are a host of other examples, in spite of chequered history of press freedom in Nigeria.
- **Building a More Aware Leadership:** The media have taken on the task of acting as forum for discourse and debate where knowledge, information and intelligence are transferred to their audience. The leaders in government, while listening to electronic media, are made aware of the educational, political social on-goings within their sphere of influence. Through such criticisms of its failures and successes, the government adjusts' where it deems fit.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Public Relations is essentially a sub-field of mass communication. As such, it benefits from the wealth of the theoretical approaches to the study of mass communication. Therefore, it is common to see such theories of mass communication as uses and gratification, agenda setting, framing, etc, being applied to provide theoretical underpinnings for public relations practice. However, because, building relationships is at the root of public relations practice, theories of relationships have also assumed significance to the understanding of public relations both as a profession and field of study. One relationship theory that guided this work is **system theory**.

**System Theory:** This theory is generally regarded as science of wholeness. The theory looks at organizations as systems which have interacting elements that are open to, and interact with their environment. Organizations are assumed to be made up of interrelated parts that adapt and adjust to changes in the socio-political and economic environment in which they operate. System theory was proposed by the biologist, Ludwid von Bertalanffy in 1940's and later formalized by Ross Ashby (1964).

Rather than acting as isolated distinct and independent entity, system theory would have us believe that organizations are part of greater environment made up of many parts, which depend on each other for survival. The theory emphasizes the interdependence of organizations with their environments, both internal and external to the organization. According to the theory, there must be a communication structure which the leaders of the organization must create to guide the parts of the organization to achieve organizational goals.

System theory is relevant to this study for obvious reasons. The postulations of this theory offer explanations to suggest that the broadcast organizations in Nigeria and their audience (their environment) are interdependent. The broadcast outfits depend on the audience for listenership, viewership and patronage in order to survive. The audience depends on the broadcast stations for information, education and entertainment. Hence, this study tried to examine current affairs programmes as the communication structure and how effectively they have been employed by broadcast organizations to create good relationship with audience for survival and prosperity.

**Uses and Gratification Theory:** This paper is also modeled in line with uses and gratification theory of mass communication. This theory assumes that individuals play an





active role in the process of communication and are goal-oriented in their media behavior. The theory represents one of the major theories in the minimalist media effect paradigm, which aptly describes the nature of audience media preference in this contemporary time. Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler were among the foremost researchers to conceptualise this theory in their work published in 1974. The theory focuses on how audience members use media sources to satisfy their needs and desires. Such needs or desires include cognitive and affective needs, involving personal and entertainment needs (Dominick, 1996).

Uses and Gratification perspective lends itself fully to this work, as its tenets express the same paradigm with the thrust of this study, namely: that audience preference of a particular current affairs programme is quite purposeful and deliberate, not random. Rather than assuming that media messages will have direct uniform effects on those who consume them, uses and gratification theory would have us believe that audience members make deliberate intentional decisions about the media and message they expose themselves to and what frequency based on personal needs and desires. The audience of broadcast current affairs programmes cannot be understood in its traditionally holistic nature as a mass audience whose behaviour or reaction to media messages can be taken for granted or naively predicted. They are now active and “express judgment by tuning in and out of programmes” (Chester *et al*, 1978 p.103). Hence, this study strives to find out what motivates audience to listen to or watch a particular broadcast current affairs programme.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed survey research design. The population of the study was 32,909 residents of Abakaliki capital city. This was the projected population figure by the National Population Commission cited in National Bureau of Statistics Report 2019. The residents of Abakaliki metropolis were purposively chosen because they are the nearest audience to be reached by the programmes of EBBC due to their location in Abakaliki where the station is also located. The sample size for the study was 300. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p.103) “... 50 = very poor, 100 = poor, 200 = fair, 300 = good, 500 = very good and 1000 = excellent.”

A multi-stage sampling technique was used, as this is a multivariate study. This technique involved the researchers getting to the respondents through different stages of sampling. In the first stage, the area of study was divided into six (6) zones, following the geopolitical zones of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The zones were: Isieke, Azugwu, Presco, Sam-Egwu Way, Afikpo Road and Onueke. In the second stage, the stratified sampling technique was used to ensure adequate representation of every member of the population. The population figure obtained for each zone from the National Population Commission’s office in Abakaliki, enabled the selection of the sample from the zones in a stratified manner. The detail is as shown below:

SN	Zone	Population	Sample
1	Isieke	5,110	50
2	Azugwu	5,500	50
3	Presco	6,020	50
4	Sam-Egwu Way	5,905	50
5	Afikpo Road	5,112	50
6	Onueke	5,202	50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32,909</b>	<b>300</b>

Source: NPC official records in Abakaliki, 2019.





Finally, the research instrument was administered to the respondents in the zones using the simple random sampling technique.

Questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was face-validated by two experts in the field of Mass Communication, who tested its content for clarity, variability and accuracy. The experts ensured that the responses, generated through the questionnaire, were original and impossible to trace with external criteria like behavioural realities and official records. To ensure reliability, test-re-test approach was used. Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were used in the test-re-test reliability study which gave a coefficient of 0.8. Data generated were presented using simple frequency distribution tables and percentages. Graphs and charts were used where necessary to enhance clarity.

**FINDINGS**

Table 1: *Nature of Relationship between Current Affairs Programme Production and Audience*

Question	Responses	Respondents	Percentage
How does a good current affairs programme affect your relationship with the station?	Familiarity with the programme	78	26%
	Interest in the programme	63	21%
	Popularity of the station	102	34%
	Respect for the station	57	19%
Total		300	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2: *Nature of Problems of Effective Current Affairs Programming*

Question	Responses	Respondents	Percentage
What can be responsible for poor quality current affairs programming?	Inadequate training	102	34%
	Incompetence	78	26%
	Lack of programme material	51	17%
	Lack of touch with the station's audience	69	23%
Total		300	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 3: *Solutions to Problems of Effective Current Affairs Programming*

Question	Responses	Respondents	Percentage
What is the solution to ineffective current affairs programming?	Correct observed problems	84	28%
	Train programme producers appropriately	162	54%
	Remove programmers	54	18%
Total		300	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019



### Summary of Findings

The following are the summary of findings made in this study:

- Much importance is attached to current affairs programmes by the Nigerian broadcast audience.
- More Nigerian educated adult civil servants and businessmen/women listen to current affairs programmes than any other classes of people.
- Quality of production and regular audience participation are the major factors that attract Nigerian audience to current affairs programmes.
- There is a relationship between an audience and broadcast stations.
- Such relationship can attract goodwill and patronage to the broadcast organization.
- The effectiveness of current affairs programmes affects such relationship positively by raising the popularity of the station among other benefits.
- At present, there is predominantly an ineffective current affairs programming in most Nigerian broadcast establishments.
- Inadequate training is the major cause of poor quality current affairs programming in Nigeria.
- Such poor quality current affairs programming can be improved by training programme producers appropriately.
- Current affairs is a public relations tool.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It is discovered that the educated adults listen to EBBC current affairs programmes regularly. The research also shows that majority of the listeners are civil servants and businessmen and women who probably wish to know the activities in government (their chief employer and policy maker) and in the society at large. This implies that EBBC current affairs programmes have a specialized audience. And as observed by Dominick (1996, p.479), specialized audience is “typified by fragmented special interest audience groups. Media content is designed to appeal to distinct and particular audience segment.”

The study also discovers that there is a significant relationship between audience groups and EBBC. The relationship is tied, among other factors, mainly on the quality of current affairs programmes production and regular audience participation. An active and pluralistic audience of this nature is found in democratic societies like the one existing in Nigeria currently. The media in this kind of society are also viewed as adding to the series of sources of power which are said to prevent disproportionate degree of power from being concentrated in the hands of any one section of the population or organ of government (Akpan, 2004). Against this backdrop, this finding reinforces the postulations of the uses and gratification theory, affirming that audience groups expose themselves deliberately and selectively to broadcast current affairs with the intention to satisfy their needs.

Good current affairs programmes are identified by the findings as affecting station-audience relationship. This is because they are part of the audience expectation from broadcast establishments. The findings also show that good current affairs programmes not only induce respect for, interest in and familiarity with the station, but they more importantly raise the popularity of the station. These are invaluable resources which every organization craves for. They are also the aim of every good public relations campaign. After all, public relations has been identified as nothing other than the planned effort to influence opinion through good



character and responsible performance, based upon mutually satisfactory two-way communication (Cutlip & Centre, 1978). Therefore, this finding provides empirical evidence in support that current affairs is public relations tool.

We also tried to examine the nature of the problems militating against effective use of current affairs to foist good image for broadcast stations. While indicting a number of factors, including lack of requisite skills, lack of programme materials and lack of touch with station's environment and needs, the findings specifically identify inadequate training of staff as chief among the problems. This finding is consistent with the position of Okafor (2002) who decried this unfortunate situation and cautioned that "without the right people ... vital management process can become inefficient", (p.58).

Interestingly, the findings reveal that appropriate training of programme producers will be the magic wand that will end the scourge of poor current affairs programming in broadcast organizations. Training of staff becomes more critical as contemporary thinking about public relations has elevated it as a responsibility of all the employees, ranging from the gate man to highest officer. Those employed by an organization are the organization [itself] because, the public judges the organization with the people associated with it. This presupposes that the engagement of trained employees will help broadcast establishments grapple with their image problems.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is discovered that current affairs has a specialized audience in Nigeria. This specialized audience (educated civil servants and businessmen/women) constitute the substantial segment of the society. As such, they are likely to be the fountain from where patronage flows to the station.

The relationship existing between a broadcast establishment and its audience is capable of attracting patronage in the form of advertisements and goodwill. This will, in the long run, uplift the image of the station.

However, poor current affairs programming, as the study shows, hampers the achievement of healthy relationship between broadcast stations and their audiences in Nigeria. This is because, as discovered in this study, effective current affairs, while analyzing the topical issues of public importance, works to raise the popularity and good image of the station. The achievement of popularity and good image between organizations and their various publics through good performance is the main thrust of modern public relations.

According to the research findings, training and re-training of programme producers is a significant way to sustain quality in production and popularity. It also builds acceptance, goodwill and patronage to the station. Current affairs, in this way, is an effective public relations tool.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Broadcast establishments should realize that maintaining good image is not only a function of singing one's praises. Communication should be matched with responsible performance for public interest. Little wonder to some, public relations is "doing good and getting credit for it". Others prefer to call it "good performance publicly appreciated and communicated".



- Current affairs programmes production should be given the right attention it deserves, especially in a democratic society like Nigeria where the mass media are expected to function effectively to serve society. They constitute an important broadcast package that gives the audience the opportunity of participation in broadcast messages.
- Broadcast organizations should ensure that they employ graduates of mass communication or journalism. These trained personnel will bring professional touch into programme production. Training and retraining of staff periodically should be embarked upon, to keep pace with the ever changing trend of audience appeal.
- Producers of current affairs programmes should ensure constant touch with their stations' environment. This will enable their produced programmes to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the audience. It will also make the discussed issues resourceful and relevant to the audience. It will make the current affairs more effective as a public relations tool.

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## **SOCIO-CULTURAL VARIABLES AND MEDIA COVERAGE OF GIRL CHILD MARRIAGES**

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### **Abstract**

*Girl-child marriages have been an ongoing practice in many traditional and modern societies. It is a common practice which exists in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. Presently, girl child marriages predominate in developing countries, most of which have not accepted or domesticated the Child Rights Acts which aims to legalize the protection of children from different kinds of abuses. The media are*





*expected to play roles of advocacy by setting agenda on such issues as child marriages by providing adequate coverage through news reports, editorials, interviews, features and other kinds of contents. This paper is a systematic critical analysis which relied on secondary data to examine issues explored. The study is underpinned by the muted group and spiral of silence theories. While the latter examined communication patterns and social representation of non-dominant cultural groups like women and other minorities, the spiral of silence theory posits that the mass media work simultaneously with majority public opinion to silence minority beliefs or cultural issues. Literature revealed that the media do not significantly report social problems of child abuse and violence. Reportage of other sections of societies occupies more prominent media space. However, as part of roles of the media, they are to sensitize and create awareness of issues related to rights and protection of children.*

**Keywords:** Socio-Cultural, Media Coverage, Girl Child, Marriages

## INTRODUCTION

The girl child in the history of mankind has always been at the receiving end of social injustices perpetrated. These are manifested in different forms, including forced labour, sexual violence, rape, slavery, child prostitution, inadequate or lack of education, and forced early marriage. Elaborating on this, Thomas-Odia (2018) observed that there are about “100 million Nigerians who are currently living below poverty level. They account for over 61 percent of our population represented by the countless numbers of women who are unemployed, have no access to healthcare, and the girl child who is denied basic education.” By implication therefore, most social ills are borne by women, who include girl children.

A look at issues of insecurity also reveal that the girl child is most vulnerable than other groups in the Country. For example, from April 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 about 270 young college girls were abducted by the terrorist group Boko Haram, in Chibok, and till now, a large number of them cannot be accounted for. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, around 80% of refugees are women and children. Mass rape has been extensively documented in recent civil conflicts and has been used systematically as an instrument of torture or ethnic domination. A common denominator is that it is girls and women who are victims of such violence. And in some cases, they are bound socially and culturally by traditions and beliefs to acquiesce or submit to what is demanded for by their parents, guardians or abductors, as may be the case. This was emphasized by Igube (2004) when she observes that, “women live in a world determined by culture and tradition which restricts them to the home. Women are thus disadvantaged, vulnerable with respect to taking advantage of economic opportunities.” She further pointed out that ‘early marriages and obnoxious widowhood rites keep girls out of school, contribute to female vulnerability and poverty.’ According to Nworgu & Shebbs (2016), “the girl child is regarded as a liability to the family in some places and at other times maltreated, denied access to education, denied proper health attention, subjected to ‘slavery’ in the guise of home training and above all forced into marriage against her will.”

A UNICEF Africa advocacy advertisement stated that 125 million girls are married before 18 in Africa. This statement reveals the extent to which the culture of girl child marriage has been accepted across the continent, and steeped in traditions, cultures and religions which define the different nations, ethnic groups and peoples of Africa. Demographically, girl child marriages occur mainly in poorer geographies of society, especially in rural communities where standards of living is low. This is because girls are seen as options which can be traded



off to richer men to ease their families' financial difficulties, and this is accepted by communities and societies they live in. As Okoye (2016) observes, "girls stand the risk of being given out as house helps, being given out in early marriage, being abused both physically and otherwise, and often at the risk of premature death".

While socio-economic factors determine parents/guardians acceptance or submission to society's allowance for girl child marriages, religious and traditional factors also play significant roles. Besides, members of middle-upper class of societies, engage in girl child marriages. For instance, Ahmed Sani Yerima, a former governor of Zamfara state who also served as a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was alleged to have married a 13 year old Egyptian girl. Ironically, this took place, after the Child Rights Act was signed into law in the Country in 2003. According to him, "I do not work with such laws that run counter to my religion. For clarity, I do not have to obey the Child Rights Act so long as it contravenes my religious belief...". Another story that trended recently on social media was that of a Sudanese child bride, Noura Hussein (16 years at the time of marriage) who killed her husband on May 3 2017, as a result of rape and violence against her. The legal age for marriage in Sudan is 10 years, and there are no statutory laws which protect women from rape, as it is not considered a crime. These instances reveal dominance of religious precepts and beliefs over statutes which a nation's Constitution provides for. These are institutional influences through which long held attitudes and beliefs can be modified, and changed for new thinking and ideas.

The media are those channels through which newsworthy information are transmitted to a widely spread heterogeneous audience members who have the means to receive and interpret the contents. There is also the Internet which has further broadened the availability of channels through which individuals and groups can reach each other, and on which virtual communities are built. Through the Internet, social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and others have been created and popularized. Popularity, availability and interactive abilities of social media have further made them veritable means through which campaigns are carried out, amplified and sent across millions of individuals who exist virtually on cyber sphere. Bearing in mind the functions, roles and availability of different media types, it is presumed that they will engage in public interest campaigns against practices like, girl child marriages.

The media are expected to play significant roles of advocacy by setting agenda on the issue through news reports, editorials, interviews and features meant to generate discourse that will impact through implementation of legislations, policies and regulations put in place to stop such practices. As Lasswell (1945) observes in Okiyi (2016), "societies require communication in order to learn what is going on around them, to enable different parts of the society to keep in touch with each other and coordinate their activities and to pass on their cultural heritage from one generation to another." It is the function of the media to sensitize the public of the need to change the practice of child marriage which has deleterious consequences on society.

### **CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE OF KEY TERMS**

Various terms are considered key throughout this paper. These include the following:

#### ***Cultural impediments***



In every society there are norms, values, ideas, thinking and mores which more or less define what that society is all about. These values are also used as forms of identification by others for the generality of the other people. According to Ihechu, Okugo, Amah & Afulike (2017), “culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts”. It deals with the essence of existence within a particular milieu of the human being in a given society. Citing Schreck (2000), Ihechu, *et al* noted that culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society cultural practices against women.

To Famade (2016), culture is defined as, “a way of life of a group of people, the behaviours, beliefs, values and symbols they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.” To change attitudes formed as a result of such cultures, education and new information, especially through the media, can bring about such transformation. As Ihechu, *et al* (2017) further observed, “culture of patriarchy has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian and African societies. Male dominance and cultural arrogation of ‘powers’, ‘rights,’ and ‘privileges’ in matters affecting both males and females, are the order of the day.” It is accepted as Nigerian culture and tradition or customs. Finally Nwaolikpe (2018) observes, “Child marriage is a product of cultures that devalues women and girls and discriminates against them.”

An impediment is a hindrance or an obstruction which stops one from doing what otherwise he or she would have done. It is also related to the lack of progress. By implication when societal issues are not given the attention expected, it draws back, reduces progress and retrogresses rather than move towards the achievement of a goal, a cause and other factors pertinent to development in society. Cultural impediments therefore are those values, practices and attitudes which ensure that pursuit of ideals which shall enhance development in a society are hindered. For instance, whereby institutions of society such as the media are not used to foster growth as a consequence of cultures, the latter (cultures) become impediments.

### ***Girl child marriage***

Concept of the girl child marriage or early girl child marriage is topical, and a well-known travesty in different societies. It is a practice that has existed with man and as a result of traditional and cultural variables, is not given much attention or prominence, except in such situations when a notable figure like Senator Ahmed Sani Yerima is involved or some other spectacular consequence arising from such a union.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) considers all individuals who are below the age of 18 as children, and the generic title, ‘children’ is used for them. The girl child is defined as a young woman. Etymologically, it is a female human from birth, to adolescent to adulthood, when she becomes a full-grown woman. According to CDC, 9 – 11 years, is a period of middle childhood ages, a period when the child tries to wear more complex looks, make friendships and share emotional attachments. Nwaolikpe (2018) says that, “child marriage as a global issue involves the giving out to marriage a child who is not mentally, psychologically, emotionally or physically prepared for a marital life to an older man who most times has children same age as the girl bride.”



There are some sociological reasons which are drivers of early child marriage these include poverty, poor educational attainment, and strong social and religious factors. These factors determine what happens to the girl child, and her place in the rungs of society. UNICEF rates child marriages highest in sub-Saharan Africa across the Globe; around 4 in 10 girls marry before age 18. West and Central Africa have the highest percentage (42%) of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 15 and after age 15, but before age 18. Child marriage in Nigeria is centred on religious and cultural norms. Citing Fayokun, Nwaolikpe (2018) observes that, “it is believed that early marriage for a girl child maximizes her childbearing potentials.”

Offshoots of girl child marriage are enormous and have debilitating effects on society at large. Okafor (2016) citing UNFA (2012) observes that early and forced marriage remains a key issue and important factor limiting young women’s engagement in both education and economic activities. According to Nworgu and Shebbs (2016), “the girl child is regarded as a liability to the family in some places and at other times maltreated, denied access to education, denied proper health attention, subjected to slavery in the name of home training and above all forced into marriage against her wish, mostly, at early age of life.”

To Ihechu, *et al* (2017), “the moment a girl child is born in Nigeria, she starts to encounter discrimination. People who come to felicitate often greet the birth of a girl with less glee than that of a boy. Some people even respond to questions on the sex of a new baby girl by saying she is another ‘*asewo*’ (prostitute), especially if the mother had given birth too many female children in the past.” The manifest expression of discrimination against the girl child in society therefore includes considerations given to her as an inferior being who can be traded off like chattel, or married off against her will to provide financial gain or some form of friendship, alliance or support for her immediate family.

#### **Mass media and gender issues**

According to Asadu (2007) in Goodluck and Ojo (2014) the mass media refer to all avenues through which information can be passed from one person to numerous scattered and heterogeneous audiences. They are also vehicles through which messages, information, ideas, knowledge and culture are transferred from one person to the other. Continuing, Nwachukwu and Okiyi (2014) observe that, “mass media forms and others have significant impact on the society as channels of message conveyance to the modern society at large in a variety of ways. The mass media play pivotal roles as they bring issues to the public sphere, which impacts society, affect public opinion and define how audience members see or respond to topical issues that happen around them, and invariably affect them.

They are channels which over time keeps changing and defining societies till the present. Through the media injustice and man’s inhumanity to man are exposed, and offenders punished. Such are public interest roles which the media play when they serve as watchdogs of society, and ensure orderliness in the society for the common good. The media are expected to significantly play roles which examine place and proper representation of women in society through contents of their presentation and messages passed across. As McQuail (2010) observed, “the question of gender touches almost every aspect of the media-culture relationship” (p. 121). A notable observation is in the selection and production of news which is male dominated, and which covers less female subjects or news.



Mass media channels have impacted society in several ways. According to Obasi (2003), “as agents of socialization they have induced and will induce a great deal of positive behavioural and attitudinal change among the people of Nigeria. Through information, they increase the people’s awareness; and by their educational role, they fight backward practices and beliefs and help the people to appreciate and adopt new ways.” Stressing this, Ibraheem (2014) observes that, “the mass media are responsible for the circulation of particular ideas and images, and insofar as these shape thoughts and actions, the mass media are thought to wield discursive or ideological powers” (p. 413). Citing Schlesinger (1978), he notes that what really influences the content is the performance of the journalist as an impartial umpire ... journalists define reality in terms of what they perceive legitimate or acceptable interests in the society.

As Uzochukwu, Morah and Okafor (2015) observe, “media coverage of the abuse and neglect of children perform an important and significant role in placing issues such as child abuse on the public and political agenda” (p. 284). Citing Lindsey (1994), they further observed that media has a central role in mediating information and forming public opinion. The media casts an eye on events that few of us directly experience and render remote happenings observable and meaningful (p. 285). Mass media channels and journalists therefore determine how discourses of national interests are shaped, and through them attitudes and behaviour can get changed through information provided.

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

Theories on which the work is underpinned are: *muted group* and *spiral of silence theories*. A major proponent of the muted group theory is Cheri Kramavae (1974). It is a feminist and cross-cultural theory which explains communication patterns and social representation of non-dominant cultural groups like women and other minorities. It recognizes that customs, norms and values tend to favour men more than women. As Asemah, Nwamuo and Nkam-Uwaoma (2017) observe, “every custom, norm, value, etc. in all societies, tend to be to the advantage of the men and to the disadvantage of the women and other subordinate groups” (p. 253). Mutedness occurs as a result of lack of power, and people with little power do not often voice their perceptions, and when they do, they are muffled and invisible. Most media organizations are dominated by men, and this affects the ways in which women’s issues are reported, or framed in the first place. This further confirms Igube’s (2004) assertion that, “the print media in Nigeria has not been women friendly. Women issues rarely if ever, get front line coverage in the national dailies. The Nigerian media tend to be hostile to women and their issues.” (p. 179). According to proponents of the theory, manmade language aids in defining, depreciating and excluding women, thereby making them a ‘muted’ group. Asemah, *et al* (2017) asserts that, “men are the gatekeepers of communication and this is because men attend to and treat as significant only what men say.” (p. 255) In relation to this, Igube (2004) observes that, “the Nigerian media characterizes women as sex objects, passive, frivolous people.” The muted group theory is considered appropriate for this work as issues of girl child marriage are not given prominence as a result of the media being male dominated.

The *spiral of silence theory* was propounded by Noelle Neumann in 1984. It posits that the mass media work simultaneously with the majority public opinion to silence minority beliefs or cultural issues. Fears of isolation make those with minority views to examine the beliefs of others. Those who fear to be socially isolated are likely to conform to what they perceive to be the majority view.





According to Asemah, *et al*, (2017), “the theory says that ... the media create opinions and that ideas, occurrences and persons exist in public awareness partially, only if they are lent sufficient publicity by the mass media, and only in the shapes the media ascribe to them” (p. 89). By implication, as media are male dominated, the fear of holding opinions which negate the belief system or cultures which are popular with such media will push such persons and their views into spirals of silence, and from which they may not be heard. As such reports of girl child marriages may not be heard, given that such views go against those of majority of the people. People are unwilling to express their opinions if they fall within the minority purview. The more marginalized one is, the less likely he will speak out, and will spiral into a fully marginalized position.

The implication of the *spiral of silence* theory is pertinent here as it reflects on a group which is considered subordinate (females) and are pushed to silence as a result of the dominance of male positive media types which is seen in media organizations, structures and in news contents. Appropriateness of the *spiral of silence* of theory is on principles guiding relationship between social problems like girl child marriage to impact of culture and religion, and a male dominated media system in lack of prominence it requires.

## **OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS**

Human rights are as old as society itself as they derive their existence from the need of humans to live, develop and achieve their destinies in life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which constitutes the most comprehensive and central document on human rights was adopted on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Children’s rights are part of human rights and are embedded in the Human Rights Declaration. Nwodu & Ezeoke (2013) summed up ratifications and adoption of the rights of the child by the United Nations at its General Assembly of 20 November 1989, to include but not limited to: freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religious association, privacy, access to appropriate information, parental responsibility; protection from abuses and neglect of child without a family, adoption, education, social security, standard living, protection from child labour, sexual exploitation and drug abuse, protection from sales, trafficking and abduction, and protection from torture and deprivation of liberty.

Indeed, children’s rights span a wide range and cover a lot of issues. A cursory look reveals that they are interrelated; however the right to protection from sexual exploitation is our focus. And by listing it, the UN gave it international recognition which calls for the protection of children from sexual abuse which early marriage encourages, as the girl child is forced to engage in sex without consent, an activity which is also illegal, since the practice is outlawed.

Attempts to safeguard rights of the child were described succinctly by Oyero (2009) when he observed that it began with the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, followed by the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the declaration of 1979 as the International Year of the Child by the United Nations. There is also the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was adopted and ratified on November 20, 1989. Relevant articles of the Convention include the following;

### **Article 34**





States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or unlawful sexual practices;
- c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

### **Article 35**

States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

### **Article 36**

States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

Articles 34 – 36 above provide for the protection of rights of children against sexual abuse and misuse of children, abduction and sale of children which some cultures carry out when they forcefully marry girl children out, and the need to stop the exploitation of children. By implications Governments and individuals need to seek for promotion and protection of child rights. Article 13 of the Convention enshrined children's right to freedom of expression, while Article 17 called on the mass media to disseminate information and materials of social and cultural benefits to the child. The Organization of African Unity, OAU adopted a charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. This charter was enacted taking into consideration the situation of the African Child which is at critical social, economic, cultural and developmental circumstances.

Drawing nearer home, the Children's Rights Act (2003) was enacted as a legal documentation, and protection of children's rights and responsibilities in Nigeria. This law incorporates the rights of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the African Charter on Human Rights into the national law; which are to provide responsibilities for government agencies associated with the law, and to integrate children focused legislations into one comprehensive law. Again, it acts as legislation against human trafficking as it forbids children from being separated from their parents against their will except where it is in the best interests of the child. Several states in Nigeria have adopted the Child Rights Act, and by their assent, such states believe that its' reenactment and passage will bring respite to the Nigerian child from parents, guardians and other erring relatives.

The issue of forced marriage, especially by abduction is treated under Section 272 of the Penal Code; abduction is akin to kidnapping whereby the victim is lured away by deception or trick. The offence is punishable by 10 years imprisonment under Section 273 Penal Code. And under Section 361 of the Criminal Code, any person who with intent to marry or carnally know or cause her to be married or be carnally known by any means, detain her against her will is guilty of felony, and is liable to 7 years imprisonment. Further, any person who unlawfully takes an unmarried girl under 16 years out of her parents' custody or against her guardians will is guilty of a misdemeanor and is liable for 2 years imprisonment. This addresses the issue of forced marriages and abduction of women as sex slaves. Also,



defilement of a girl under the age of 13 years attracts life imprisonment; while an attempt to have carnal knowledge of such a girl attracts 14 years imprisonment. A girl above 13, but under 16 or knowing a girl who is an idiot or an imbecile or attempts to have unlawful carnal knowledge of her, will be guilty of felony, and liable to imprisonment for 2 years.

These are some penalties created to serve as deterrence to sexual offences against women and girl children. Despite these legislations, different kinds of child abuse happen daily in Nigeria. Among these are girl child marriages which take place between children from tender ages of 8 to 14 to older men. These illegal marital contracts are forbidden by legislations enacted by national and states assemblies in the country. Some of the reasons adduced for its continuation are cultural inhibitions and religious dictates, while the media do not provide adequate coverage of such incidents.

### **Hindrances to reporting on girl child marriage in Nigeria**

#### ***Underreporting of girl child issues by the media***

This relates to issues of male dominance and influence of religion by the media that leads to underreporting of girl child marriages. The danger with this constraint is the multiplier effect it has not only on the media, journalists but also on likely target consumers of the news who could be interested in it. As Nwaolikpe (2018) observes in her study that there has not been enough focus on child marriage in Nigeria, and when covered, some of the news stories did not explain in details implications and consequences of child marriages to the Nigerian girl.

Despite statistics, the mass media have not really covered the issue of child marriage adequately despite its significance in the country and region. Further, Ihechu, *et al* (2017) in their study on media coverage and framing of cultural practices that target women, observe that there is, “insignificant coverage of cultural practices that denigrate women,” while the framing pattern exhibits a non-condemnatory stance. They further pointed out that some major factors responsible for these include: low awareness and knowledge among journalists/reporters, culture of patriarchy, and lack of sponsorship.

Nwodu and Ezeoke (2013) confirmed the findings above on dominant women and children rights issues which include protection rights of women and children with disabilities, abuse and violence against women, and harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital cutting, and exploitation of women and children received 19.3% media attention. And in their three-month study of broadcast media (FRCN and AIT) coverage of issues of early child marriage received only 10% coverage within the period. They concluded that constraints to media coverage of such issues include low awareness and knowledge among journalists with 84%. Besides these, some studies revealed apathy by journalists on women and children issues. And when they do cover such, framing, story direction and the style of coverage de-emphasizes their importance, and affect consumers of such news.

Recent cases of gender-based violence, killing and rape of young girls and women have been reported nationally, including the sensational case of Uwaila Vera Omozuwa who was attacked and raped in a church, but died a few days after in Benin, the capital town of Edo state. Another college student Barakat Bello was raped and killed during a robbery attack in her home in Ibadan. These cases received wide coverage from popular national and private TV stations. However social media were used effectively by individuals and international NGOs like Amnesty International to complement, amplify and relay the news across virtual



communities. Through these information sharing activities, gender-violence and sexual offences against women and children have remained topical in national consciousness. In an online CNN report, President Buhari reiterated his government's commitment to fighting gender-based violence. According to him, "I am particularly upset at recent incidents of rape, especially of very young girls. The police are pursuing these cases to bringing perpetrators of these heinous crimes to swift justice." It can be deduced that complementing conventional and online media coverage of gender-based violence and rape provide the impetus needed to give adequate reportage to such crimes.

### ***Cultural influences***

Societal and cultural factors such as media ownership structure, cultures, religion and male domination of the media account for the under-reporting of girl child marriage as a crime. These factors are interdependent and intertwined. Media are institutional organs which exist and are influenced by society, and in their own ways, influence and determine how society is perceived. As such, these factors, especially, religion and culture override how certain issues, may be reported or even perceived. Like Okoye (2016) observes, "even where the Constitution and national laws uphold gender equality, religion and cultural gender ideologies dominate in practice and have been used to express the notion that there can be no equality, as men and women are different from creation."

These two dominant values of religion and culture wield influences on other aspects of society, which explains why pertinent issues may not receive the attention they deserve. Consequently, the media are influenced to underreport, frame or position some news items in ways that conform with societal expectations. According to Nwodu and Ezeoke (2013), "as both social institutions and business concerns, the mass media constitute an indispensable arm of human society; in this context, what the media choose to emphasize or ignore, affect how people perceive or understand the issues" (p. 45). As such when the media ignore certain issues, there is the likelihood of the isolation of categories of people affected by the issue, and relevant members of the public who can influence and control such circumstances. To Okiyi, (2016), "without proper information, most people would be unaware, uninformed and would certainly be disinterested in the issue which is being propagated by the government or Agency" (p. 57).

Uzochukwu, *et al* (2015), citing the Asian Summit on Child Rights and the Media (1996), and the Oslo Workshop (1996) observe that, "part of the Summit's resolutions is that media content aimed at children should be of high quality, made specifically for children, should not exploit them but support their mental, social, moral and spiritual developments" (p. 280). The implication is that for the media to carry out their roles on issues which impact children, they should be as professional and ethical as can be, without undue influence. Uzochukwu, *et al* further provided guidelines which were suggested by journalists at the first International Consultative Conference on Journalism and Child Rights held at Recife, Brazil in 1998, and they state that:

All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards, should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism. Media organizations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and allforms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate. Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children, should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation



of children. Journalists and media organizations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs

Using these guidelines therefore, media houses and journalists are expected to uphold the rights of children as determined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other charters that deal with similar rights. As Oyero (2009) pointed out, "the challenge to media professionals at all levels and in all media is to raise awareness in the media professions about the rights of children and how they can be protected and promoted by good professional practices or harmed through inappropriate policies or actions." The onus therefore lies with media houses and journalists to carry out such moral crusades with zeal, diligence, objectivity and fair-mindedness while covering children issues.

Different scholars (Nwaolikpe, 2018; Nwodu & Ezeoke, 2013; Okoye, 2010, Uzochukwu, *et al*, 2015 & Oyero, 2009) revealed that the media do not report social problems of child abuse and violence which go against dictates of various conventions except, where such are scandals or sensational news items on child abuse; they do not dominate the media. The media do not adequately cover stories of children, their lives, their rights and protection against abuse, labour, mortality, neglect, trafficking, and prostitution and so on nor do they reveal information about sources of information, concerning these. On the other hand, Molism (2016) observes that media coverage of girl child has gone high. According to her, media coverage has shifted from focusing on the issue, to a narrative that looks at solution. However, this perspective may have arisen taking into cognizance that she wrote from a western point of view where gender issues are given prominent attention which is at variance with what obtains in Nigeria and other developing countries.

### ***Gendered dimension of the mass media***

One of the major hindrances to effective reportage of girl child marriages is the existence of media landscape that is still very much male dominated in Nigeria. This is achieved through ownership, management structure and newsroom gender composition. One of the highlights of the 12 Platforms for Change from the 1995 Beijing Conference is found in number 6 which states that, 'men dominate the mass media and through it propagate the negative stereotypes of women'. According to Igube (2004), "the print media in Nigeria has not been women friendly. Women issues rarely, if ever get front line coverage in the national dailies, the Nigerian media tends to be hostile to women and their issues" (p. 179). This was further confirmed by Ihechu, *et al* (2017) when they posit that cultural practices against women in Nigeria is an offshoot of the patriarchy that existed in pre-colonial Nigeria, where women occupied inferior positions in socially constructed scheme of things. The culture of patriarchy has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian and African societies. Such is acceptable within Nigerian cultures, traditions and customs and as a result there is a tendency to de-prioritize issues such as cultural practices against women. From the above, we can deduce that male dominance is a major factor which can hinder prominent coverage of girl child marriages.

### ***Religious Influences***

Religion is a significant cultural factor that impacts heavily on how issues of girl child marriage are reported by the media. Most religions support categorization of females in secondary positions, and as a consequence they are subjugated and suppressed in different aspects of life. Religion is a belief in a supernatural Being who created all things, and to whom much devotion and worship is bestowed. It is also a sub-set of our cultural beliefs, as it



determines our values, norms, and ways of life, beliefs and morality. As a result, religious dictates which may go against societal values, are rather obeyed than laws of the land. According to Igube (2004), “under Islamic injunction, the woman is viewed as weak, incapable of decision making” (p. 27).

This maxim is also true of Christianity which holds that the woman should submit to the man and respect him. Sins committed in some cases have sterner penalties for women than for men, especially sexual ones, divorcement. These have consequences for news reportage. Islam does not condemn marriage of girls, it may not be seen as a crime nor seem to hold much news value from a reporter who agrees with such religious views. According to Nwaolikpe (2018), child marriage in Nigeria is centred on religious and cultural norms. Citing Fayokun, she observes that it is believed that early marriage for a girl child maximizes her child bearing potentials. And as Ihechu, *et al* (2017) observe, “early marriage is practiced in different parts of Nigeria but more in the Northern parts of Nigeria (mostly among the Muslims). According to Bot and Kwaja (2015), Senator Yerima was accused of marrying an under aged Egyptian girl but the case was dropped because the Nigerian Constitution under Article 61, Second Schedule, the Nigerian Government cannot legislate on “marriages” under Islamic law (paraphrased). By implication, media coverage of issues related to girl child marriage may not give editorial consideration as a result of influence and perception of target consumers of the news media.

### ***Commercial and Political Interests above moral crusades***

Finally, there are altruistic reasons which may also have cultural offshoots, in the long run why news of early girl child marriages do not get the due attention they ought to, especially considering that they are criminal activities. However, media owners and editorial personnel also quantify news as to their worthiness, and influence on the potential receiver. According to Nwodu and Ezeoke (2013) the media is seen, “as both social institutions and business concerns, the mass media constitute an indispensable arm of human society. In this context, what the media choose to emphasize or ignore affect how people perceive or understand the issues.” By implication, what society gets to know, are seen through the perception of the media and these are defined by factors which include interests of owners, advertisers, political and economic forces. These determine what is reported, given prominence and what is not. In Nigeria, political issues receive more attention than other important issues such as education, environment, oil and gas and so on. The media are selective over what news items to allow, and due to this, they emphasize political and economic issues rather than others like girl child marriage or related issues. Further, sponsorship of media content and advertising also de-prioritize social issues like early girl child marriages. Prominent spaces in newspapers/magazines and prime time on radio/TV are used for more popular themes and for commercial purposes for the profitability of stations and newspaper houses. And through sponsorship, objectivity is affected.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper examined socio-cultural impediments which hinder reporting of girl child marriages in developing countries. World over; there is recognition of the problem of girl child marriage, which is enacted in conventions and charters, internationally and nationally. However this social malaise does not receive the prominence it deserves due to socio-cultural influences. It was discovered that principles guiding *muted group* and *spiral of silence* theories are applicable to this study as women and girl child fell into marginalized groups





with no voice of their own, especially in male-dominated political structures, and in most newsrooms. Issues that relate to females may not receive the significant coverage they deserve because of different underlying variables that will impact such news items. Further, the dominant majority who are concerned with news creation and transmission are men who determine editorial decisions, and through such, they influence themes that set agenda for the audience. Invariably, dissenting voices or coverage will not receive as much attention as popular views expressed, and over time will join the dominant voices to express related opinions.

Issues of girl child marriage are not only common to Nigeria, but prevail in most developing countries without strong legal and political structures. In India, Pakistan, Sudan, South Africa, Ghana, Bangladesh, Niger, Latin American nations and a host of other countries, girl child marriages predominate as a result of religious and socio-cultural practices. According to a UNICEF 2019 report, about 12 million girls are married before they turn 18, and in the developing world, one in nine girls is married before they turn 15. Thus, more needs to be done to overcome the challenge of girl child marriage, rape and gender-based violence against women, which often takes other structural dimensions that needs to be studied.

To reduce or stop girl child marriages among other crimes committed against women, legislations enacted have to be made workable. That is, such Acts of parliament should be enabled to work against perpetrators of such violence. Concerned ministries including the ministry of Justice, Information, Education, Youth and Development, Women Affairs, Police Affairs and others should collaborate to produce a national roadmap or framework that will work to achieve goals of ensuring punishment of perpetrators, and carrying out campaigns against girl child marriages and other related actions. Roles of NGOs and the media cannot be overemphasized in such campaigns, with the intention to expose perpetrators and raise consciousness of Nigerians on ills of girl child marriage and effects on the society as a whole.

We can conclude with observations of the National Council of Women Society, NCWS (2014) in Ihechu, *et al* (2017) that:

The task of liberating the Nigerian woman and indeed the African woman from obnoxious, barbaric and outdated cultural practices is a collective one. It is an action that requires all and sundry and most importantly the media ... we need the media to tell our stories, our experiences and ordeals... that way, the society can feel our plight and that mark a big step towards ending ill-treatments against women in the name of culture

It is encouraging that there are frameworks to fight girl child marriage, however cultural and attitudinal changes are needed through constant education and adequate media coverage to achieve desired results.

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## RETHINKING A CULTURAL POLICY FOR NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*Nigeria is in pressing need of a cultural policy that could promote cultural values. The challenge of cultural erosion has affected the capacity of the country to ensure the security and welfare of the people for the sustainable development of the country. This article, therefore, examines the cultural dimensions of the country's national security problem. In addition to deploying qualitative research methodology, the researchers adopt a theoretical exploration of secondary sources for the article. The paper x-rays some related literature that unveil many security challenges that have to do with conflicts in the way of life of the people, such as, the Muslim extremists of Marwa, Maitatsine, El-zakzaki and their liberal counterparts in Kano, Maiduguri, Zaria, Gombe, Yola and so on, at various times. Countless instances of ethno-religious conflicts have occurred between Christians and Muslims in Bauchi, Kano, Kafanchan, Zango-Kataf, Kaduna, and Nasarawa among other parts of Nigeria. There have been sectarian conflicts in Nasarawa, Benue, some parts of South-East, South-West and South-South of Nigeria. More recently, there has emerged some difficult insecurity problems characterised by political violence, Boko Haram terrorists, banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, Fulani herdsmen attacks, militancy and so on. In addition to the above-mentioned plethora of insecurity, there are on daily occurrence instances of corruption and crimes such as suicide attacks, armed-robbery, oil theft, rape and so on. The article attempted a theoretical matrix of 'culture of security' and 'security of culture'. The paper therefore recommends a cultural policy could promote cultural education, values, sensitivity, and unity, as well as commitment through participatory communication by nationalist individuals and their involvement in the nation-building efforts, necessary to avert imminent crisis in the country.*

**Keywords:** Culture, National Security, Culture of Security, & Security of Culture

## INTRODUCTION

Culture and national security are so intrinsically linked that contemplating national security architecture without comprehensively factoring in culture can be justifiably accepted as the greatest bane of security design. Culture implicates national security because both are engaged in the transformation of human society for its well-being. Cultural policy as a tool of social engineering is very vital for the survival of the nation. National security is, in a critical sense, shaped by culture. A vital clarification of the material, institutional, and philosophical aspects of culture can help provide a more systematic analysis of the dynamic elements of culture(s) vis-à-vis national security (Abah, 2007). This cultural analysis situates the internal and external dimensions to national security. No country can achieve total safety at all times, and coping with perceived threats to national security can be actualized through the adaptation of the elements of culture to ensure survival of the nation (Oladiran & Adedevoh, 2007, p.1). According to Okwori (2013, p.1), "Culture is necessary in order to give purpose and credibility to one's own existence. Rob people of their culture and you rob them of their reason of being".

Virtually every nation designs strategies to ensure its stability. Such approaches are usually enshrined in a National Security programme. Cultural policy as an instrument of social engineering demands a notion of culture as a strategic instrument (Oladiran & Adedevoh, 2007, p.1). Tukur (1999, p.4) describes this social engineering process as the deliberate political effort to channel behaviour in the direction that will maximise national objectives. The vital linkage between culture and security at any level is better projected by statements



related to the nexus between culture and development. According to Okwori (2013, p.2), “the real problem of Africa comes from the inability of those in authority to make the right choice and firm commitment to cultural matters because they underestimate the value of culture in development”. Extrapolating from the above statement, the capacity of a nation to survive has to do with her cultural values prevailing at any point in time.

One of the fundamental objectives and directive principles which underpin the policy of the Nigerian government towards its people is “security and welfare of the people”. It is, therefore, the primary purpose of Government as provided for, in Chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999. Given the nationwide import of this duty, driving social security initiatives has been one of the constitutional responsibilities of the Federal Government. However, this responsibility suffers minimal attention, as the government of Nigeria sometimes prefers to paint a picture of a global problem rather than doing the needful. One of the significant challenges that have confronted Nigeria since independence is a rising state of insecurity which has, in most cases been attributed to foreign cultures and sources.

Most of the conflicts are ethno-religious. For instance, violent clashes have occurred between Muslim extremists of Marwa, Maitatsine, El-zakzaki and their liberal counterparts in Kano, Maiduguri, Zaria, Gombe, Yola etc. at various times. Numerous instances of ethno-religious conflicts have occurred between Christians and Muslim in Bauchi, Kano, Kafanchan, Zango-Kataf, Kaduna, and Nasarawa among other parts of Nigeria (Gyong, 2017, p.1). There have been sectarian conflicts in Nasarawa, Benue, some parts of South-East, South-West and South-South of Nigeria. More recently, there have emerged severe insecurity challenges characterised by political violence, Boko Haram, banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, Fulani herdsmen attacks, militancy, communal clashes and so on (Agena, 2018, p.1).

In addition to the above mentioned plethora of insecurity, there are on daily occurrence instances of corruption and crimes such as, suicide attacks, armed-robbery, oil theft, rape and so on. Most of the security challenges have become sophisticated owing to the influence of foreign cultures. These security challenges have had enormous consequences on the developmental needs of Nigeria. These include mainly the loss of countless lives and properties, arrested and retarded development in various facets of the life of the nation. Nigerian government in recent times pointed accusing fingers on foreigners as the brain behind most of the security challenges in Nigeria. It is therefore imperative of the government to rethink its culture and social security arrangements rather than attributing the security challenges to foreigners (Agena, 2018, p.1).

Part of the reasons why culture is crucial to security intervention or any development effort is because the relationship between culture and development is also double-edged invoking a complex of senses. ‘The complex of senses indicates a complex argument about the relations between general human development and a particular way of life, and between both and the works and practices of art and intelligence. Within this complex argument there are fundamentally opposed as well as effectively overlapping positions; there are also, understandably, many unresolved questions and confused answers’ (Idebe, 2018, p.3). The problems of development are attitude and behaviour related. Attitude and behaviour are processes of cultural seasoning. Yet it is through the same culture that active development is enabled. Culture, therefore, is both the problem and solution in development planning and



engaging in development requires engagement with both the problem and solution aspects of culture (Okwori, 2013, p.2).

### **CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF CULTURE AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

To properly situate the direction of this article, it is imperative to explore the critical concept of culture and how it is vital in national security. To understand culture, we need to understand nature, the world as created and given by God, that we have no control of but to exist within, either by manipulation, domestication or recreation. Once we begin to utilize nature, our human response to the way and manner of utilization then means culture (Okwori, 2013). Culture and national security are interrelated. They sometimes display conflicting variations, which may arise from inconsistencies which we notice in our set of beliefs. Sometimes the challenge to our beliefs may come from outside (Oladiran & Adedavoh, 2007, p. 1).

Studies by Anthropologists and other related disciplines found that culture has an immense impact on human beings in any society because it helps man to adapt to his society and hence to increase the chances of survival. There is an avalanche of definitions of culture as there are diverse cultures across the globe, although these definitions tend to be similar. Castro-Gomez (2002, p.26) holds that 'culture constitutes a sphere of moral, religious, political, philosophical and technological values that permit man to "humanise" himself, i.e. escape the tyranny of the state of nature'. According to Uroh (1996, p.11), it is evident that 'culture is a product of a people's experience. It is the knowledge of doing things which people have acquired in their attempts to solve some socio-historical problems'.

Also, according to Tylor (1996) as cited in Oladiran & Adedavoh, (2007, p.95), "culture is 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'". Other scholars in their attempt at defining culture have reduced culture to mental phenomena, to ideas or the like in the minds of men. Nicolaides (2018) defines culture as a mental map that guides us in our relations with our surroundings and with other people. Hatch sees culture as 'the way of life of a people'. However, having assessed the various definitions offered by scholars on culture, we can say that 'culture is the totality of the way of life evolved of a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economical, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation.

Cardinal in the appraisal of culture is social control, which helps to ensure conformity to societal norms for an ordered society. Mohammed & Ihidero (2018) posit that virtually every culture embodies three separate but related spheres, namely, universal, alternative and specialties. Uchendu (1988) as cited in Kwaje (2014) explains the idea of cultural universals, alternatives and specialties in the following way: cultural universals refer to those elements of a culture open to all and shared by every culture bearer. To be competent in a culture implies sharing in its cultural universals. Cultural alternatives are various institutions provided by a culture to meet a given cultural demand; and cultural specialties are institutions for specialised training and knowledge whose membership may be voluntary or ascribed. The analysis of the role of culture as the very texture of social contract theories and viable human organisations is related to the thematic issues of national security affecting both the persons and the community at large (Gbadegesin, 2010, p.162). This view tends to suggest that the protection and development of a nation-state are culturally contextual.





It is, however, important to note that no nation can achieve total security. According to Goulet (1987), a society may be presumed secure if there is a high probability of the occurrence of its preferred national values. Tukur (1999, p.19) defines values as the highest ethical standards and criteria through which individuals, groups and societies order their goals, determine their choice and judge their conduct as these pertain to fundamental aspects of life, be they in the sphere of personal or public affairs. The capacity to make judgments in interaction with the challenges of the human environment and society helps to formulate and institutionalise essential policies on culture.

There is a wide realisation that the critical area for the solution of a social and national problem is that of culture; since culture has the ultimate values which motivate human and civic action in historical perspective. This position is supported further by the fact that, in securing the various compartments of culture, such as language, customs, norms, art, science, metaphysical belief, there is concomitant security of the human social systems, which in turn creates a sort of individual and community alliance. Hence, the distinctive analysis of culture is historically necessary for any form of security and development. And given the fact that culture and security follow specific autonomous, as well as functionally dependent, dynamic trends regarding social and individual well-being; it is pertinent to analyse their two-tier operational functionalism either as 'culture of security' or as 'security of culture'.

#### **ATTEMPTING A THEORETICAL MATRIX: CULTURE OF SECURITY AND THE SECURITY OF CULTURE**

Culture and security are dynamic social realities which involve continuity and change (Gbadegesin, 2010, p.173). Lifestyle and security cannot be treated outside of cultural values. Ackermann (1981, pp.447 & 450) posits that cultural values are 'ways of ordering and evaluating objects, experiences and behaviours manifesting themselves in all situations of choice. Cultural values are viewed as a determining factor in the choice and impact of technology; on the other hand, technology is perceived as potentially transforming cultural values'. From the above, Ackermann (1981, p.451) draws the vital conclusion that 'it is important to realize that cultural values and beliefs have a historically acquired force that is to some extent independent of the current social structure. As a result, they will be embodied in the projects of individuals and groups, contribute to the ordering of their priorities, and affect their strategies to achieve whatever goals they have set themselves'.

On the relationship between culture and security, Oladiran & Adedavoh (2007, p.98), maintains that "if through culture man slowly liberates himself from the chains imposed by nature, then cultural forms acquire ever increasing degrees of perfection to the extent that they permit the unfolding of spirit, that is, the exercise of human freedom". In our effort for national and human security in Africa at large, we can agree with Epskamp & Boeren (1992) that "we on this African continent can enrich our knowledge and cultural heritage through our cooperative efforts and the pooling of our scientific and technical resources". The goals of culture and security, which we have set before us, require a world order and peace charter derived from the diverse cultures.

The scholarly approaches to culture attempt to distill a distinction between culture and security, either as a 'culture of security' or as a 'security of culture'. While 'culture of security' refers to the social and contractual orientation that ensures a people's well-being



with a community, the 'security of culture' signifies all modalities by which a people's worldview and way of life are ensured. For Castro-Gomez (2002, p.26), the culture of security means all constitutive spheres of moral, religious, political, philosophical and technological values that permit man to 'humanise' himself. For Uroh (1996, p.11), the culture of security in the context of our analysis is a product of a people's experience to enhance their well-being. This means that knowledge about the culture of security depends on the ways people have adopted or acquired it in their attempts to solve socio-historical problems.

In attempting a conceptual framework for this work, a three-tier analysis of culture of security is relevant. The three aspects are ideas, aesthetic forms and values. According to Odhiambo (1999) as cited in Agena (2018, p.7)

*the culture of security in a society consists of three distinct elements; ideas give rise to habits and beliefs, aesthetic forms reflect the artistic expression of a culture in its visual arts, the values are formed by the interaction between ideas and aesthetics norms of conduct" with a bid to enhancing human well being*

It is therefore, pertinent to evaluate how the culture of security is acquired and socialized by human beings in their society. These different aspects of culture can be challenged by internal and external forces. According to Frantz (1998) the culture of security is an essential element of the history of a people, because it allows us to know how to resolve the nature and extent of the imbalances and conflicts (economic, political and social), which characterize the evolution of a society. A culture of security allows us to know the dynamic synthesis, which have been developed and established by social conscience to resolve these conflicts at each stage of its evolution, in the search for survival and progress. The culture of security means the protective mechanism, which obtains in the land, a community enterprise, a body of laws and morals along with their metaphysical foundations that guide and ensure peace and order within the community. In this context, the culture of security refers to one of numerous distinct systems in which social theory and action are interrelated. It therefore means that the culture of security, as a social system, is dependent on the operation of human personality and positioning. That is, the culture of security is a system abstracted from both protective actions and theories on social existential affairs.

In other words, the culture of security is a system of values, meanings or significance and symbols regarding the structure of social life (Gary, 1997). Accordingly, the culture of security can thus be said to provide the perspective necessary to rethink the meaning of life, and the projection of such purposes from the prevailing circumstances of the present. Given this situation, the culture of security gives us the impetus to leap over obstacles that hamper human and social development and chart new pathways for prospects.

Furthermore, the proper clarification of the beneficial purpose of the culture of human and social security gives a clue as to how to bridge the gap between our means and our ends, and how to appropriate these means and ends for man's technological development and the transformation of the individual and the state in society. Oladiran & Adedavoh (2007, p.95) points out that:

there are general principles or ethos governing the security of culture, especially the ones by which culture survives or operates. In this context, the security of culture can be sustained in either a materialised or



objectified, as well as an idealised or spiritualised, way. The 'object or material culture' of a people can be those items of culture that can be sustained by empirical verification and justification. This aspect of 'security of culture' is tangible and in fact can be seen, described, and sometimes even touched. Under its tangibility, the characteristics of culture are discernibly protected. Security of the material culture thus comprises material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects, as contained in our cultural policy and practice

The material security of culture has to do with artifacts in the broadest form (namely: tools, clothing, food, medicine, housing, etc., and institutional monuments such as the political, social, legal and economic structures erected to help achieve material and spiritual objectives). Indeed, the sociological culture of security measures can be adequately and better substantiated by the nature of an object or material culture, that is how the society produces its means of existence and the way the individual members and groups within the society relate to each other and organize themselves within the society, as well as the general code and ideas that bind people together' (Kweme, 1997). Another perspective on the security of culture is that it can be idealised. This idealisation operates at the level of inner dispositions to reality or a metaphysical projection of such a reality. Although this is where the spirit of the people depicts the subjective aspect of culture, nevertheless it depicts the transcendental reality of the African people aptly. Gbadegesin (2010, pp.172-174) states that:

For some social and political theorists security of idealised culture consists mainly of diverse ideas as initiators of action, as if ideas have an independent ontological reality moving in the brains of human beings. This means that the Africans guard jealously the process of their inner subjective dispositions. This is necessitated by the fact that the operation of an idea in the mind influences the external world and stratifies it in a definite and particular referential correspondence and behavioural dispositions

Against the backdrop of communicating the spiritualised and objectified typologies of culture, the main global method of the security of culture can be seen as a complex linguistic phenomenon, being constitutive of numerous elements of which the picture of the language of the culture is one. Because of the countless constituent aspects of a culture, there is a hybrid of cultural overlap, which makes room for cultural interdependence. Consequently, it is also possible for people trying to preserve them to share many aspects of a culture, without a shared language. This is possible if there is lively participation in the activities, goals, aspirations, and the fate of a broader cultural community (Kweme, 1997, p.44). The term security of culture is, therefore, referred to the totality of Africa's basic protective orientation in life (Dzobo, 1992, p.123). Security of culture in this perspective is an open-ended resource of social meanings upon which members of a community draw to mediate the contingencies of their everyday lives. As such, the phrase denotes the preservation of the material and spiritual resources of a community's material and moral worlds.

### **THE NEXUS BETWEEN CULTURE AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

Culture as the totality of the way of life of a people has enormous security influence on the nation, because, national security is the concern for the survival, peace and progress of individuals, groups and the society as a cultural whole. Hence, national security is a concept that cannot be easily understood without its application to social and cultural phenomena. Owolabi, (1998) corroborates this statement when he maintains that Security is a concept devoid of operational meaning in the absence of some identification of threats. In all discussions of security from the personal to the international, there is an implicit or explicit determination of risk.



Owolabi (1998, p.160) states that the threat to cultural perceptions forms the core of the understanding of national security. Particular risk to cultural perceptions of national security can be x-rayed by the weakening of states and communities, their erosion and in some cases even their implosion as well as their incapacity to ensure public order and to fulfill other functions. Amilcar (1998, p.2) observes that, objectively, security is an absence of threat to acquired values such as territorial sovereignty and independence, socio-economic interests and political traditions. Objectively, it is the absence of fear that such values will be infringed. The threat to the existence and survival of a nation comes in two broad spheres; the internal and external threats. An external threat is an attempt originating from outside the country either to destroy land or to force on it a line of action contrary to its interests. External threats usually result from conflict between a nation and another nation or even an international organisation. Internal threats are those unfavourable conditions which may result in conflict that threatens public order. These conditions may be due to social, political, economic, ideological, or ethnic reasons. Internal threats also come about due to influence from outside a country, especially by organisations or groups which promote values antithetical to integration or cohesion in a country. The internalization of such values may result in actions inimical to national security. For any nation to survive it must be appropriately positioned to combat any forms of the above mentioned threats.

On the other hand a nation is considered secured and un-threatened if there is a high occurrence of its preferred values even though no country has absolute security at all times (Kwaje, 2014). However, within the context of impending threats, a nation must put in place adequate measures to limit the possible adverse effects. Coping with perceived threats to a nation's security is actualized through the adaptation of the elements of culture to ensure survival. Such features may be specialised institutions, for example, the military, police, etc., education, cultural institutions, the media, and so on.

### **SOME SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROBLEMS CONCERNING SECURITY IN NIGERIA**

One of the most critical dimensions of the security problem faced by the country today is socio-cultural. Culture represents the fountain spring of all policies employed by the government of a nation, be they political, social, economic, or educational (Agena, 2018, p.5). Okwori (2013, p.2) posits that "most of the strategies for development of society hinge on the understanding of the culture of the people". In the case of Nigeria, there has been widespread adoption of Euro-American models for managing the country. Unfortunately, this has not worked very well because the indigenous cultural foundations of the ethnic nations which constitute Nigeria have not been taken into consideration. Our leaders have imbibed the way the colonialists administered Nigeria in the pre-independence era as a national political culture.

The motive for colonisation was the exploitation of resources. The political culture used to hold the nation together was coercion. This explains the reason why some societies have imbibed forceful means of managing their security, which is not working today. The police and the military were set-up to repress protests by the people which threatened the stability of the colonial order. It is this culture that has been acquired in the post-independence era which has brought about the exploitative nature of the political class and a failure of social cohesion due to ethnicity, religious intolerance, the militarisation of politics, economic deprivation and so on (Nicolaidis, 2018).



According to Heywood (2002), the political dimension of the problem is next in importance to the cultural aspect. The evolution of a new culture dominated by western modes brought about a perverted orientation of the strategy by which a multi-cultural independent Nigeria could be governed. The method used by the colonialists to rule the country was adopted by the nationalists who found themselves at the helm of affairs. Things, however, fell apart due to the exploitation of the resources of the nation, leading to a lack of economic security on the part of the people and a breakdown of law and order.

The economic dimension is the third essential dimension of the security problem. The exploitation of the resources of the nation has brought about a breakdown in social service delivery, and entrenched poverty in the land leading to social and ethnic stratification (Davidson, 1991). It has further worsened the security situation, which often manifests itself in disobedience to law and large-scale conflict claiming many lives and properties. An economic poverty perspective can be perceived in the activities of some multi-national industries which engage in exploitative conduct, often resulting in violent national insecurity (Amilcar, 1998). For example, after the discovery of crude oil, many multi-national companies came in to assist in the development of the oil sector. The exploration of oil led to the degradation of the environment which the host communities relied on for their livelihood.

Also, the necessary infrastructure and amenities such as hospitals, roads, schools, were not provided in many of these communities. How then do people survive when their means of existence have been threatened and there are no contingency plans to remedy the situation? One result has been widespread violence which has claimed many lives, including expatriates and security operatives. Since the various ethnic groups in the area unite against the multi-national companies, these companies often employ the strategy of divide-and-rule. It involves the supply of weapons to ethnic groups to fight each other in the quest to position such a group for monetary benefits from these multi-nationals. The wanton destruction of lives and properties in the Niger Delta area has been a significant problem for Nigeria's security forces to control. Another dent to national security is the fact that from the Niger Delta area there has been an influx of light weapons into the wider Nigerian community. What this portends is that such weapons can be used for other criminal activities such as armed robbery, political assassination and so on (Oladiran & Adadevoh, 2007).

Education as means of cultural transmission has been designed in a manner it was bequeathed Nigerians by the colonialists. School has not functioned particularly well as an agent for transfer of the values cherished by the state (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2012). It has failed in the inculcation of viable ethical culture for the tolerance of others. Through a moral education both formally and informally, it becomes possible to see the consequences of involving oneself in any conduct which can destabilise the state. Moral culture is a necessary means of ensuring national security. Questions about national security in Nigeria are more significant due to the emergence and blossoming of a perverted idea of civil protection. It is evident by the proliferation of vigilante groups and ethnic militias that have emerged to fill the gaps and inadequacies in the defence and security functions of the society (Castro-Gomez, 2002).

There is evidence of a negative civilian input in security matters. The unyielding violence in the country has created a fertile substrate for the expansion of such groups. In some areas of the country, the actions of these groups have been institutionalised and legitimised. The so-





called, 'area boys' and 'Almajiri' are recruited for the amplification of ethno-religious conflicts around the country. Small bands of political thugs known as 'Ecomog' are employed as personal security for political office holders, and for political violence. However, the dangerous aspect is that they have received some legitimacy and now form part of the regular entourage of political leaders. There has been a more dangerous trend in the proliferation of ethnic militia and other dubious non-conventional community security and defence outfits, which have been put in place for the service of more extensive political, regional and economic interests (Egwu, 2015). The forms of violence produced by these ethnic militia groups surpass even the other unstable times. These militia groups retain the capability for violence and mayhem that are unrivalled in intensity. They are often capable of contending with the institutionalized violence of the military (Peters, 2010).

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

A critical examination of the various cultural problems which threaten Nigeria's national security reveals that they are related in the cultural dimension. A lack of understanding of the far-reaching consequences of some of these social actions remains one crucial reason why it has been possible to subvert the Nigerian state. As a post-colonial African state and a developing nation for that matter, it is essential to develop a cultural transmission method through formal and informal education that will help create a greater awakening to the fundamental problem of Nigeria, which is an ethical one. There is the need to create a vision of a Nigerian dream in which the different groups have roles to play, despite our differences. There is the need to unite the various groups through the stressing of those areas, within similar cultures as a way of putting an end to the issue of stratification in the society. Very importantly, there is a need for an ethically based leadership. It is, therefore, necessary to enlighten Nigerians about the dangers of exposing ourselves to different cultural ideas, which can destabilise the country. It is necessary because culture provides all sorts of nuances in communication and the amalgamation of the ethics of protective differences and communal solidarity necessary for national security.

There is a need to involve educational institutions in the area of security. The formal educational sector needs to be re-invented by incorporating a curriculum on critical ethical education directed at breaking ethnically bound values, religious barriers and so forth. It is necessary to promote and teach social ethics to raise the moral consciousness of citizens. The use of electronic media will also prove very useful in this effort because a broader population can be covered in this way. It is also pertinent to involve the various Councils for Arts and Culture in the states and at the Federal level. Such cultural administration establishments should be adequately staffed with people trained in applied anthropological research methods. These cultural centres can assist in researching on the kinds of collective conduct in the society which disturb peace and stability.

### **CONCLUSION**

This work has emphasised the significance of a national cultural policy as an instrument of security and social engineering. It is crucial for national survival, insofar as national security is, in a significant sense, a product of culture. The critical clarification and interconnections of the material, institutional, and philosophical aspects of culture paved the way for a more systematic analysis of the dynamic elements of our culture(s) vis-à-vis national security. This cultural analysis situated the internal and external dimensions to national security. The article



has revealed an avalanche of ethno-religious security related challenges in Nigeria. It therefore, recommends cultural education for value reorientation towards a safer society.

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## INVESTIGATION OF SOCIAL ECONOMIC VARIABLES AS DETERMINANTS OF PREFERRED SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

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### Abstract

*This paper sought to investigate the social economic variables as determinants of preferred social networking sites by International Students of Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus. Social Networking Sites (SNS) platforms are gradually replacing the known, traditional means of communication as a result of new improved communication systems. The application of Social Networking Sites in our present generation is inevitable due to its efficiency and capability of connecting the whole globe in a second. These Social Networking Sites have made great contribution towards socio-cultural and economic development thereby re-ordering the world and making it a global village. Two platforms are considered in this research; Facebook and Instagram to know the right prediction based on the demography of users. The research design is survey, while questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. Uses and Gratifications Theory is adopted as theoretical framework. Using SPSS for the analysis, the CHAID method with the help of a tree diagram shows that some of the demographic factors are better predictors of social media platforms when it comes to communication with specific places.*

**Keywords:** Social, Economy, Social Networking sites, Prediction

### INTRODUCTION

The use of social media for interaction among young generation has really been impactful. Social media have altered interpersonal communication; more people now participate in online activities more than ever (Saul, 2016). Arikewuyo and Abdulbaqi (2013) opined that the availability and exposure that comes with this new technology Social Networking Sites (SNS) have great impact directly or indirectly on the social media users.

Bicen and Cavus (2010) assert that preference in the use of (SNSs) involves communicating online using a particular media platform. However, there are different platforms that can be used to achieve specific purposes. A similar understanding was expressed by Korhan &



Ersoy(2016) when they posited that the availability and the functionality of each platform results in selecting the platform that best satisfies the users' need because their motivation and their assessments of the platforms are best known to them.

Re-echoing these views, Kircaburun, Alhabash, Tosuntaş& Griffiths, (2018) say that the uses and gratification of each platform is based on some factors such as: the motives of the user, individual differences; social economic factors, personality and popularity of the social media sites. This implies that a user's choice for a platform can be influenced by many variables, ranging from his economic to social status. This tends to pose a lot of challenges because meeting new friends and making effort to get acquainted with them are said to be associated with problems of using the social media at the users' disposal. (Bicen&Cavus 2010; Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015)

Many researches have been conducted on preference of sites. For example, a study was conducted on *preference by intensity of usage*. Here, four platforms were compared based on students' motivation with online participants spending most time on Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter (Alhabash& Ma, 2017). It was revealed that these participants in spite of their familiarity and proficiency in the use of these four different platforms still encountered difficulties deciding on which sites they can use for their needs and find gratification. It is against this back drop that this study is undertaken to ascertain the predictor that is most likely responsible for the choice of use and preference of SNSs using tree decisions.

In the last two decades (2005-2019), the Pew Research Center has been carrying out demographic surveys on social media users in the United States. Some of their surveys contain important statistics on the demographics of SNS Users especially those on Facebook and Instagram. A 2012 Pew survey on social media demographics uncovered some rich statistics on gender, age and racial distribution of users of two of the SNS in this review (Facebook and Instagram) (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Sixty-seven percent of internet users (comprising women and adults ages 18-29) use Facebook while only 13% (comprising adults ages 18-29, Latinos, women and urban residents) use Instagram.

In 2015, Pew Research Center added some more demographic component on its social media users' demographic component including race, level of education and level of income for Facebook. Facebook still maintained the lead among American adult internet users with 72% of users and Instagram rose to 28% (Duggan, 2015). Young adults ages from 18-29 and Black, Non-Hispanic had the highest number of users among other demographic categories with 55% and 47% Instagram users. Yet predictor is our major concern over the preference of use of social media.

To this effect, Facebook and Instagram are used for this study based on the argument presented by Alhabash and Ma (2017), that there are newer and old social media from which users can choose from, other platforms mentioned which users can choose from are Twitter and Snapchat.

### **BRIEF HISTORY OF FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM**

The history of Facebook is linked to the journey of Mark Zuckerberg, a 23-year-old Harvard University Psychology student experimenting on social networking in computer





programming. It was launched globally in February 2004 as "The Facebook" with an initial subscription covering more than half of the Harvard undergraduate student population in the space of a month (Phillips, 2007; McFadden, 2019). Together with co-founders Chris Hughes, Eduardo Saverin, and Dustin Moskovitz, Zuckerberg extended the subscription to three other US elite university campuses: Yale, Stanford and Columbia (Greiner et al, 2019). The present name (Facebook) was adopted in August 2005 after the purchase of Facebook.com for the sum of \$200,000 (Phillips, 2007). Facebook became opened for global subscription on 26 September 2006 (Barr, 2018). It emerged as the biggest global social network in 2012 with over a billion users (Hall, 2019).

Instagram on the other hand was co-founded in San Francisco by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. It was launched on 6 October 2010 (Instagram, 2019). The history of Instagram began when Systrom embarked on a project to create an app dubbed 'Burbn' designed as a mobile web app to help people to check-in, share pictures and their plans. The project was not successful due to the confusing nature of the app employed entirely by users to share all types of photos (Harrison, 2018). Notwithstanding, Systrom met with two venture capital firms in Silicon Valley (Adressen Horowitz and Baseline Ventures) to discuss his project weeks after the creation of Burbn and was able to raise seed capital to the tune of \$500,000 for his project (Woods, 2013) which was later launched.

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There are different platforms used by various people for communication purposes; it is however, difficult to determine or predict the particular demographic factor responsible for their choice of the platform. This study therefore, explores the various demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, and marital status and seeks to determine the ones that can be used to predict or determine the preference for a platform or SNSs used by international students in Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) when communicating with family members, friends and other international acquaintances while in school in the year 2020.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the selected demographic factor, the research is aimed at finding out the following:

- The most predictor/predictors that determine the choice for the preferred SNS (Facebook/Instagram) when communicating with families and friends among international students in EMU in the 2020 fall academic session.
- The most predictor/predictors used to determine the two social media (Facebook/Instagram) when relating with other international acquaintances during the 2020 winter semester in EMU, North Cyprus.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**RQ.1** Which are the most predictor/predictors that determine the choice for the preferred SNS (Facebook/Instagram) when communicating with families and friends among international students in EMU in the 2020 fall academic session?

**RQ.2** Which are the most predictor/predictors used to determine the two social media (Facebook/ Instagram) when relating with other international acquaintances during the 2020 fall semester in EMU, North Cyprus?



## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The advancement in the use of technology for communication has also made different forms of communication to be used for interactive purposes especially the upgrade and changes that comes with the webs of technology. There are various factors that play vital roles in the choice of media platform while some are Psychosocial; others are influenced by demographic variables (Clark, Algoe & Green, 2018). Physiological factors that influence the choice of SNS include; economic, technology and culture.(Aksoy, Van Riel, Kandampully, Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, &Solnet, 2013).

Psychosocial and physiological factors come into play when students select an SNS. Hughes, Rowe, Batey & Lee (2012), argue that personality and differential relationships correlate with online socializing. This is to say that a person's openness, gender, age, sociability, agreeableness and need for cognition play an important role on the level and extend of information exchange. In general, preference is brought about by recommendation systems where by a network diffusion plays an important role (Rogers 2014).

The precision of a predictable outcome becomes blissful and the choices of a rational option turn out to be probabilistic yet variability of the outcome is a unique challenge students have to overcome. Kaplan & Miller (1987), explain that individuals and groups generally change their preferences after discussion. The precision of a predictable outcome becomes blissful and the choices of a rational option turn out to be probabilistic yet variability of the outcome is a unique challenge students have to overcome. De Dreu, Nijstad, & Van Knippenberg, (2008), suggest that social motivation and epistemic motivation influences the interaction and the decision-making process. However, the outcome of any interaction in a group in normative decisions can never be weighed nor be deterministic in nature thus bring about uncertainty.

Hinsz, (1999) comes to a conclusion that decision outcomes are also based on compromise instead of consensus processes on occurrence of discrete choices, based on preferences. Some platforms have been found to be very addictive in nature; however, the Social Media are used to send posts and peruse posting by other users (Huang & Su 2018).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). It is a theory based on television viewing usage. The Uses and Gratification Theory was and still remains one of the essential theories of communication used especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> era (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). The Theory talks about the users choice in desiring one or more gratifications in a specific media (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973-1974). The Uses and Gratification Theory gives perspectives on users' motivation and choice of a platform to achieve needed gratification (Katz, 1957).

In this age of advancement in technology, more attention have been given to the uses and gratification theory (Dias, 2016). For instance, communication has shifted from the mainstream media to individual form where they are demassified, using a lot of platforms for users gratification; some are direct and instant messages from mobiles while others are applications such as WhatsApp.



The intrusive nature of the media have added to the uses and gratifications by users, aiding the audience to have more choices and preference of platforms. Thus, the media is capable of influencing the users over their selection of a platform through the diverse channels at their disposal (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015).

The social media which encompass SNSs are seen as very vital area in our lives today.(Garcia-domingo, Aranda, & Fuentes, 2017). This is because many scholars have attested to the fact that social media is used by various people for their personal or group gratification as emphasized by Whiting and Williams (2013).

Scholars such as Wei, Lin, Lu, & Chuang(2015); Froget, Baghestan, & Asfaranjan, (2013); Karimi, Khodabandelou, & Ahmad, (2014) have argued that users stick to SNSs because it assist in meeting “users” (students) need for information, need for entertainment, maintaining relationships, meeting new people and sharing information with them as well as keeping connected with them.

According to a research conducted in Mauritius, the social media platforms can be used for eight (8) different motives to predict the application of Facebook as a platform. Using 392 Facebook users in an online survey, the study revealed that the platform was used for meeting people, for entertainment and maintaining relationships with friends. The Facebook help a lot in interaction during social events and it is excellent for sharing the content produced by the media. The Facebook can be used among other things for inquiry, employment, discussion purposes and for information. Thus, these eight factors are found to be positively correlated with Facebook (Froget, Baghestan, & Asfaranjan, 2013).

According to Hunt, Atkin, & Krishnan, (2012) the uses and gratification theory is relevant in both mainstream and social media hence its application to this study.

Gratification always comes with Gratification sought (GS) with the use of the media and the media expectation (ME) gratification which is obtained (GO) as the media serves the user. This is given in the following formula:  $GS + ME + GO$  with reference to the work they conducted to ascertain the gratification obtained when they use the SNSs of their choice (Heravi, Mubarak & Choo, (2018).

Weimann, Gabriel, Nirit, Germaw, Maya Mazor and Ravid (2014), in their submission described media users as no longer audience as the then form of communication permits but are regarded as users because of their involvement which is described as being active. Tools applied permits User Generated Contents of such activities.

And most of the users on SNSs are fulfilling the submissions observed by Ruggiero (2000) that users operate based on the demassification nature, asynchronicity and the interactive nature of the media which is social in nature tied to the assumption of the uses and gratifications that users are at liberty to choose from the media available and having the knowledge that these media compete with each other thus the need to ascertain the right predictor based on demographics of users.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey research method was used to achieve the objectives of the study, from which meaningful conclusion can be drawn from information collected from the respondents (Ponto,



2015). Survey research makes use of different ways as means of collecting data which can be through questionnaire or conducting interview. The research instrument were administered by the researchers/researcher who are involve in conducting the research, thus the items in the questionnaire,are aimed at answering the research objectives. Therefore, the questions must reflect what is obtainable as the objectives, questions are grouped into different segments with the questions that are dependable research instruments (Dillman , Smyth, & Christian , 2014).

The tools employed for this study is a self-in-house questionnaire designed by the authors capable of giving answers to the research at hand, using quantitative research.

The first part of the questionnaire is the demographics, and the second part is the platform preference, hours spend and years of use of each platform are considered.

Respondents are students from the Eastern Mediterranean University, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (EMU, TRNC), irrespective of their age, gender and marital status, students are sampled from all the faculties in EMU, during the Fall semester for the year 2020 to be specific January and February ending. Considering the number of international students in Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), they are 18,205 for the 2019/2020 academic session in fall semester; the population serves as a good world view for the research to be conducted, hence the sample size is taken from the population (About EMU, 2019).

Although there are a lot of studies that opined that if sample size is chosen from 10% of the total population thus this work depend on the submission that in some cases the actual sample size will be very difficult to be considered, hence the aims of the researcher and the type of the statistical manipulation can be chosen to carry out a research (Taherdoost, 2017). On this ground, this work will consider 400 EMU students since it is large enough to serve the purpose of the research and almost all the students are on the two platforms or the other hence, any students stands the chance of being chosen based on chart and graph of (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Given that:  $s = \frac{X^2 NP(1 - P) + d^2(N - 1) + X^2 P(1 - P)}{2}$  (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).Where;  $x^2$ = Chi square value at 5% level of significance (95% confidence level) which is 3.841 and  $N$ = population size and  $P$  is the population proportion which is 50% of the population and  $d$ = is the degree of accuracy or level of precision (5%). Although the number of those to be sampled stood at 375 to 380, 400 serves as the sample size by the researchers hence larger number in quantitative research gives more accurate results than lower figures based on law of large numbers which states that bigger samples are better (Lohmeier , 2012).

Simple random sampling was employed, where everyone stands the chance of being chosen. This is a probability sampling method where each participant is chosen by chance and randomly selected thus, it is termed as an unbiased sampling (Agresti, 2008).

In-house questionnaire was designed by the researcher to collect the data. The questionnaire serves as a means of linking up with the respondents this also help the respondents to be sure that they are guaranteed of their confidentiality, personality and their identity on the process of information gathering (Brace, 2008).

The questionnaire drafted serve as a guide to assist the researcher to carefully answer all the research questions put in place for testing. This serves as a clear guide for understanding the aim and the objectives of the study.



Using the tree decision for the analysis this is because it is good for classification and estimation, data description and estimation, thus it can be applied for data reduction in a dimension fit into the group of non-parametric procedures (Milanović&Stamenković, 2016). Decision tree is structured in a hierarchical manner for the data in groups, referred to as nodes join together by branches of the tree.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Based on the research questions posed for the research, the research tends to answer the best predictor when students communicate with their family members thus; the result is presented as follows:

Four hundred and ten (410) copies of questionnaire were administered, only 400 were retrieved from the participants, based on the questions that are accurately answered and the questionnaire that the information are complete, it is on this basis that the 400 was considered valid for the analysis. Thus the return rate is at 97.6% which signifies that the return rate is good for the analysis.

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Under the demographics of users, some of the variables are merge to make the work more concise and presentable thus they are under the analysis as that can be found on the tables below:

Table 1: *Demographic of Respondents*

	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Female	238	59.5
	Male	162	40.5
Age	18-22	143	35.8
	23-27	147	36.8
	28-32	60	15.0
	33 and above	50	12.5
Educational Background	Undergraduate	243	60.8
	Masters	92	23.0
	Ph.D.	65	16.3
Faculty	Architecture	21	5.3
	Arts and Science	63	15.8
	Business and Economics	64	16.0
	Communication and Media Studies	41	10.3
Marital status	Single	215	53.8
	Married	61	15.3
Which SNS do you prefer	Facebook	115	28.8





using most when communicating?	Instagram	285	71.3
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With regards to the gender of the respondents, ( $n = 238$ ; 59.5%) are females while males are ( $n = 162$ ; 40.5%), respondents were within ages 18-23 ( $n = 143$ ; 35.8%), 24-29 ( $n = 147$ ; 36.8%) and 30-35 ( $n = 60$ ; 15.0%), and 30-35 ( $n = 50$ ; 12.5%). While accessing the educational background of the respondents ( $n = 243$ ; 60.8%) are undergraduate, ( $n = 92$ ; 23.0%) are masters students while ( $n = 65$ ; 16.3%) are Ph.D. students.

The respondents faculty varied Architecture ( $n = 21$ ; 5.3%), ( $n = 63$ ; 15.8%) Arts and Science, ( $n = 64$ ; 16.0%) Business and Economics, ( $n = 41$ ; 10.3%) Communication and Media Studies, ( $n = 8$ ; 2.0%) Dentistry, ( $n = 18$ ; 4.5%) Education, ( $n = 64$ ; 16.0%) Engineering, ( $n = 30$ ; 7.5%) Health Sciences, ( $n = 35$ ; 8.8%) Pharmacy, and ( $n = 20$ ; 5.0%) Tourism and Hospitality Management,

With regards to marital status of the respondents are ( $n = 215$ ; 53.8%) single, ( $n = 114$ ; 28.5%) in a relationship, ( $n = 61$ ; 15.3%) are married, ( $n = 6$ ; 1.5%) are divorced, ( $n = 4$ ; 1.0%) fall in the category of others.

**Table 2: Inquiry about SNS Use**

	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
How long have you been using Facebook	0-11 Months	22	5.5%
	1- 2 years	74	18.5%
	3-4 years	64	16.0%
	5-6 years	88	22.0%
	7 years and above	152	38.0%
How long have you been using Instagram	0 to less than an hour.	16	4.0%
	1 hour- 2hours	111	27.8%
	3-4 hours	120	30.0%
	5-6 hours	98	24.5%
	7 hours and above	55	13.8%
How long do you stay connected on Facebook	0 to less than an hour	55	13.8%
	1 hour- 2hours	208	52.0%
	3-4 hours	86	21.5%
	5-6 hours	30	7.5%
	7 hours and above	21	5.3%
How long do you stay connected on Instagram	0 to 59 minutes	30	7.5%
	1 hour- 2hours	174	43.5%



3-4 hours	124	31.0%
5-6 hours	47	11.8%
7 hours and above	25	6.3%

Among the platforms you use for communication, which one do you prefer to use when communicating with?

Places and people like...

Family and Friends (People back home).	Facebook	210	52.5%
	Instagram	190	47.5%
People in North Cyprus (host community).	Facebook	136	34.0%
	Instagram	264	66.0%
Others (international acquaintances).	Facebook	143	35.8%
	Instagram	257	64.3%

Which strategy do you prefer to use mostly when you want to reduce uncertainty on social networking sites?

I observe and ignore messages on SNSs because it is not important (passive).	102	25.5%
I sometimes ask other people who are my friends on the platform (active).	128	32.0%
I ask the fellow who is directly involved (Interactive).	46	11.5%
Sometimes I become (extremely-active) by checking through my followers' wall	124	31.0%

Respondents were asked how long they have been using Facebook, answers ranged between 0-11 Months ( $n = 22$ ; 5.5%), 1- 2 years ( $n = 74$ ; 18.5%), 3-4 years ( $n = 64$ ; 16.0%), 5-6 years ( $n = 88$ ; 22.0%), and 7 years and above ( $n = 152$ ; 38.0%). While accessing how long respondents have been using Instagram, they say 0 to less than an hour ( $n = 16$ ; 4.0%), 1 hour- 2hours ( $n = 111$ ; 27.8 %), 3-4 hours ( $n = 120$ ; 30.0%), 5-6 hours ( $n = 98$ ; 24.5%), 7 hours and above ( $n = 55$ ; 13.8%).

Also respondents answered how long they stay connected on Facebook, answers ranged between 0 to less than an hour ( $n = 55$ ; 13.8%), 1 hour- 2hours ( $n = 208$ ; 52.0%), 3-4 hours ( $n = 86$ ; 21.5%), 5-6 hours ( $n = 30$ ; 7.5%), and 7 hours and above ( $n = 21$ ; 5.3%). With regards understanding how long respondents stay connected on Instagram 0 to 59 minutes say ( $n = 30$ ; 7.5%), 1 hour- 2hours representing ( $n = 174$ ; 43.5%), 3-4 hours representing ( $n = 124$ ;



31.0%), 5-6 hours representing ( $n = 47$ ; 11.8%), and 7 hours and above representing ( $n = 25$ ; 6.3%).

Among the platforms used for communication, respondents were asked which one they prefer to use when communicating with while interacting with people. While communicating with family and Friends (People back home) those who use Facebook are ( $n = 210$ ; 52.5%) while those who use Instagram are ( $n = 190$ ; 47.5%). While communicating with people in North Cyprus (host community) those who use Facebook are ( $n = 136$ ; 34.0%) while those who use Instagram are ( $n = 264$ ; 66.0%). Those who communicate with other categories of people like (international acquaintances) and use Facebook are ( $n = 143$ ; 35.8%), while those who use Instagram are ( $n = 257$ ; 64.3%).

**TABLE 3**

**Tree Table**

Node	Facebook		Instagram		Total		Predicted Category	Parent Node	Primary Independent Variable				
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent			Variable	Sig. <sup>a</sup>	Chi-Square	df	Split Values
0	250	55.7%	199	44.3%	449	100.0%	Facebook						
1	128	71.1%	52	28.9%	180	40.1%	Facebook	0	Education level	.000	28.994	1	Masters; Ph.D
2	122	45.4%	147	54.6%	269	59.9%	Instagram	0	Education level	.000	28.994	1	Undergraduate
3	79	80.6%	19	19.4%	98	21.8%	Facebook	1	Gender	.002	9.453	1	Male
4	49	59.8%	33	40.2%	82	18.3%	Facebook	1	Gender	.002	9.453	1	Female
5	81	50.9%	78	49.1%	159	35.4%	Facebook	2	Gender	.027	4.903	1	Male
6	41	37.3%	69	62.7%	110	24.5%	Instagram	2	Gender	.027	4.903	1	Female

Growing Method: CHAID

Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with Families?

a. Bonferroni adjusted

Risk	
Estimate	Std. Error
.381	.023
Growing Method: CHAID	
Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with Families?	

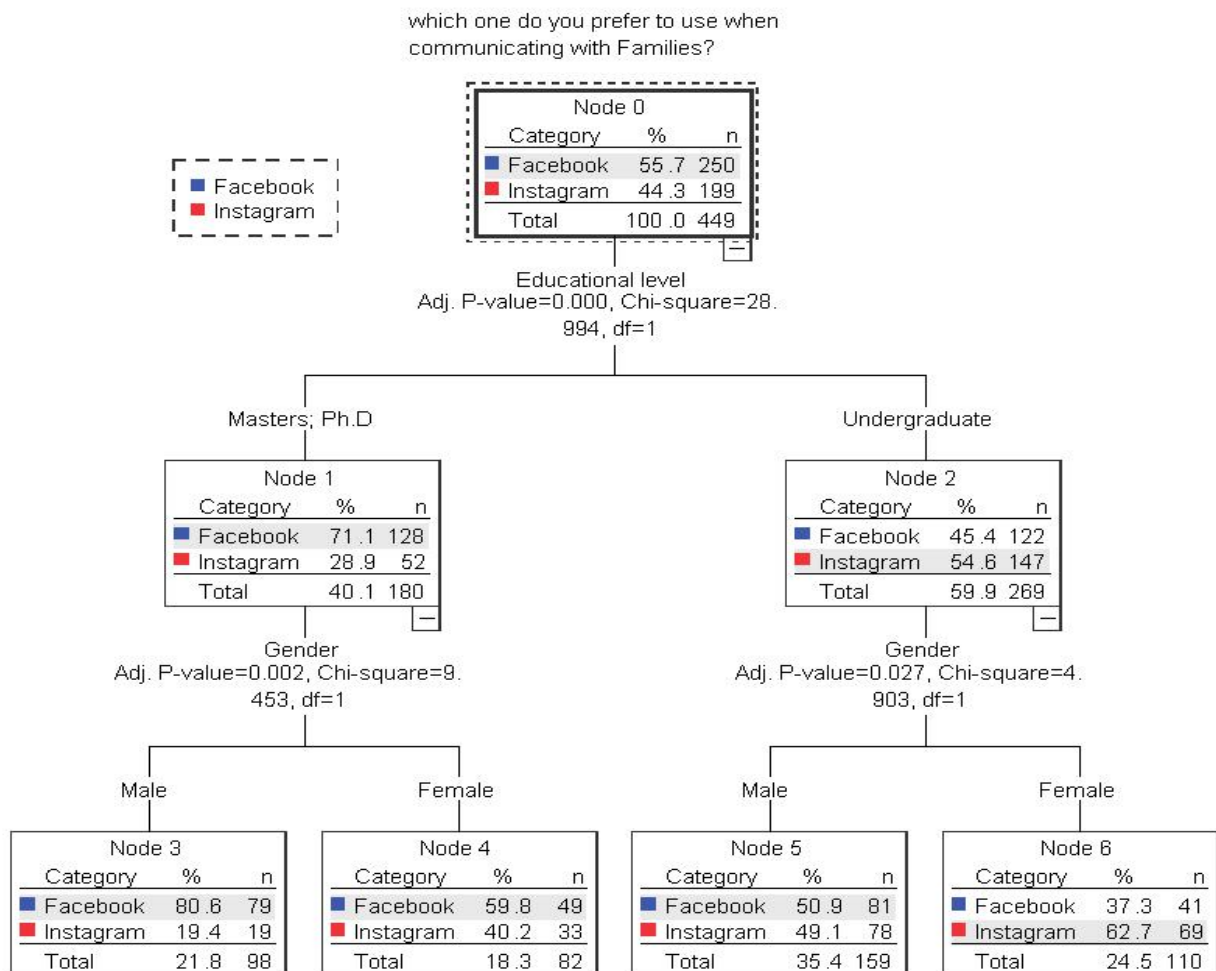


**Classification**

Observed	Predicted		
	Facebook	Instagram	Percent Correct
Facebook	209	41	83.6%
Instagram	130	69	34.7%
Overall Percentage	75.5%	24.5%	61.9%

Growing Method: CHAID

Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with Families?



**Tree decision depicting the predictors when communicating with families (Educational factor and Gender are good predictors)**



Figure 1: Decision Tree for Social Media Preference to communicating with Family Members

Using the CHAID method, the tree diagram shows that educational level is the best predictor of the most preferred social media platform to communicate with families.

The tree shows that Educational level and Gender are best predictors of social media preference in communicating with families ( $p < 0.05$ ). The model shows that among Postgraduates students (Masters and PhD), 71.10% of them prefer to use Facebook more in staying in touch with families while only 28.90% preferred to use Instagram and this difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, among undergraduate students, the undergraduate node revealed that 54.60% preferred to use Instagram while 45.40% preferred the usage of Facebook. The model shows that undergraduate students generally prefer to use Instagram platform to stay in touch with family members and this is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The next best predictor in the model is gender.

In the postgraduate student’s category, the model revealed that both female (80.60%) and male (59.80%) postgraduate students have preference for Facebook usage than Instagram in communicating with their families with a statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ )

**Research Question.2**

Research question two the best predictor when communicating with their international acquaintances results revealed as thus:

The model summary table indicates the independent variables used in the model and their significance. The table shows that marital status and gender significantly predict which social media platform is preferred in communicating with others (International acquaintances). Five independent variables were specified, but only two were included in the final model namely marital status and gender. The variables for age, educational level, and faculty, did not make a significant contribution to the model, so they were automatically dropped from the final model.

**Tree Table**

Node	Facebook		Instagram		Total		Predicted Category	Parent Node	Primary Independent Variable				
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent			Variable	Sig. <sup>a</sup>	Chi-Square	df	Split Values
0	167	37.2%	282	62.8%	449	100.0%	Instagram						
1	119	32.1%	252	67.9%	371	82.6%	Instagram	0	Marital Status	.000	23.950	1	Single; In a relationship; Divorced; Others
2	48	61.5%	30	38.5%	78	17.4%	Facebook	0	Marital Status	.000	23.950	1	Married
3	81	36.7%	140	63.3%	221	49.2%	Instagram	1	Gender	.022	5.254	1	Male
4	38	25.3%	112	74.7%	150	33.4%	Instagram	1	Gender	.022	5.254	1	Female





Growing Method: CHAID

Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with others? International acquaintances?

a. Bonferroni adjusted

**Risk**

Estimate	Std. Error
.332	.022
Growing Method: CHAID	
Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with others? International acquaintances?	

**Classification**

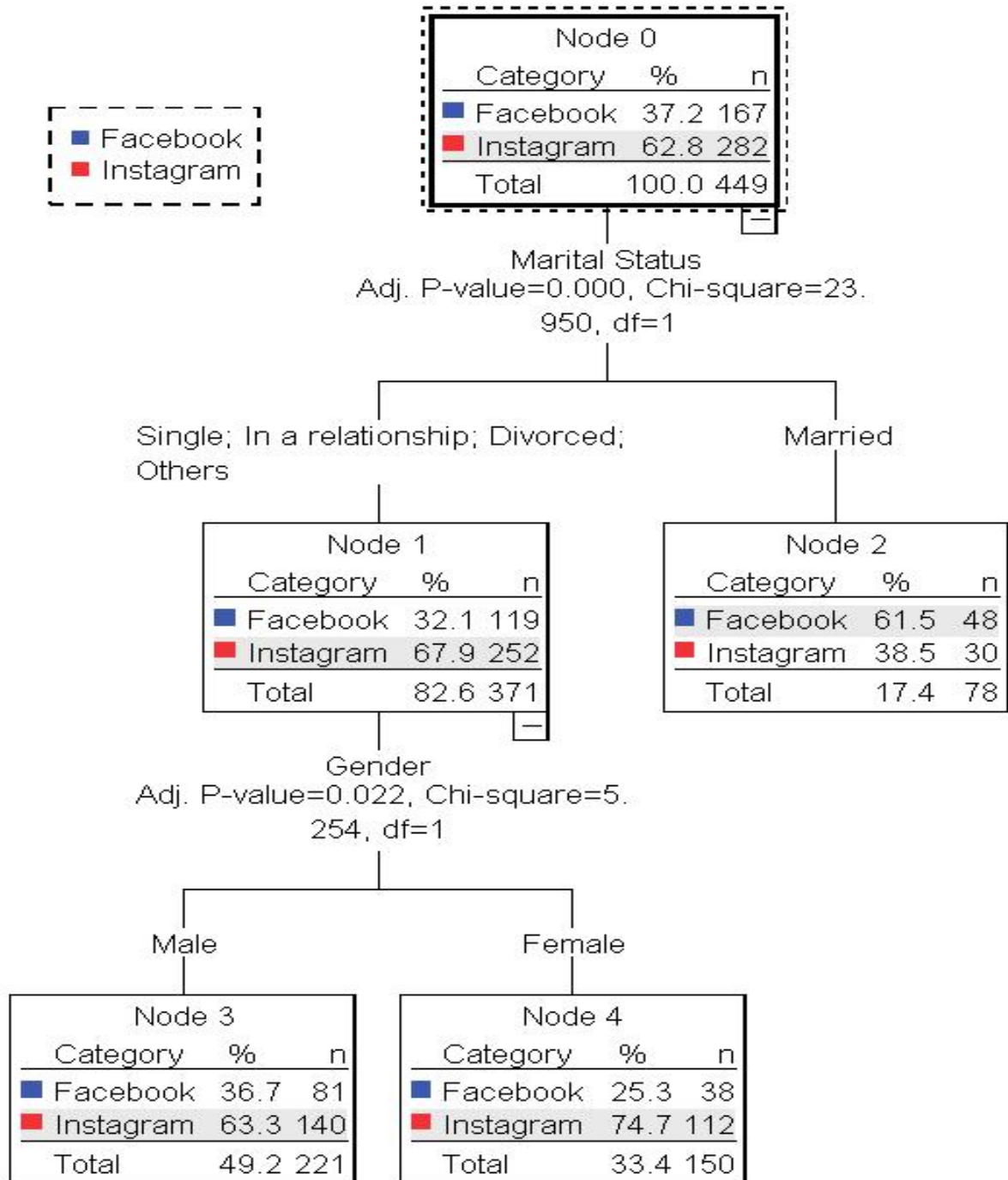
Observed	Predicted		
	Facebook	Instagram	Percent Correct
Facebook	48	119	28.7%
Instagram	30	252	89.4%
Overall Percentage	17.4%	82.6%	66.8%

Growing Method: CHAID

Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with others? International acquaintances?



which one do you prefer to use when communicating with others? International acquaintances?



**Decision Tree for Social Media Preference to communicating with others (International acquaintances)**



Using the CHAID method, the tree diagram shows that marital status and gender were the best predictor of the most preferred social media platform to communicate with international acquaintances.

The tree shows that marital status and gender are best predictors of social media preference in communicating with others ( $p < 0.05$ ). The model shows an immediate two nodes division. The first node comprises the singles, people in a relationship, divorcee and others while the second node comprises the married. Among the singles, people in a relationship, divorcee and others, larger percentage of them (67.90%) have greater preference to use Instagram in communicating with international acquaintances while married individuals (61.50%) preferred to use Facebook in communicating with international acquaintances. Since there are no child nodes below the married category, it is considered a terminal node.

However, a further statistically significant predictor for the singles, people in a relationship, divorcee and others category is the gender variable ( $p < 0.05$ ). In this aforementioned category, the males (63.30%) preferred using Instagram as well as the females (74.70%) in communicating with international acquaintances.

**Risk**

Estimate	Std. Error
.332	.022
Growing Method: CHAID	
Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with others? International acquaintances?	

**Classification**

Observed	Predicted		
	Facebook	Instagram	Percent Correct
Facebook	48	119	28.7%
Instagram	30	252	89.4%
Overall Percentage	17.4%	82.6%	66.8%

Growing Method: CHAID

Dependent Variable: which one do you prefer to use when communicating with others? International acquaintances?

The risk estimate of 0.332 indicates that the category predicted by the model (Facebook or Instagram) is wrong for 33.20% of the cases. So the “risk” of misclassifying a respondent is approximately 33%. The results in the classification table are consistent with the risk estimate.



The classification table shows that the model classifies approximately 67% of the participants correctly.

Base on the result from the analysis, education is the best predictor when two platforms are posed for consideration. In a related research conducted on demographic variables and the use of SNS, when testing belief and attitudes in use, their results revealed that demographic variables are connected with attitude disparity and differences in users' belief (Lennon, Rentfro, & Curran, 2012). Thus the work revealed that education and gender are also predictors to preference of sites when selecting a specific network and communication with ones' family by students.

Although there are other demographic factors that are used for the analysis when communicating with other international acquaintances, marital status serves as the best indicator and also gender, but the strongest is marital. There is correlation between communication skills and adjustment by the married (AhmadiGatab, &Khamen, 2011). The different marital levels posed for the research such as singles, in a relationship, divorce and the married have some disparity in levels they engage in communication with international acquaintances. In addition, gender serves as an indicator that based on the axiom of the uncertainty reduction theory and these two, "marital status and gender" may serve as a signal of whom to disclose ones identity to. Hence, self-disclosure is very essential that you may choose whom to disclose your personal information to. Consequently, people operate at different perspectives based on belief and so forth, thus female may be attracted to female while men may be attracted to men too, buttressing a point on "similarity" and "liking". Thus they are essential with new axioms that are added in the theory which is "communication satisfaction" thus axioms 8 works (Redmond, 2015).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The place of prediction is an essential aspect that needs to be utilized in communication especially the type that has to do with different races, gender, and different marital status. It can be used to determine the level of relationship, but the use of platforms comes with different affordances which make users to select a network of their choice. Many factors could be responsible for such choices hence in future research, there may be need to get the right predictor that will serve as a guide for the work researchers will want to conduct for this will make their work a bit easier.

Future research can concentrate on the reasons why when communicating with families; educational levels play a major role for preference of sites and also the students' gender. In addition the use of gender that predicts preference can be put into cognizance hence other demographic factors that are used will be reworked on in a different location to determine the acceptance of this result. This can be achieved when another method or approaches are adopted, hence the need for longitudinal studies.

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## **AWARENESS AND USE OF WHATSAPP FOR BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES: A STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USERS IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Social media have become a fundamental ingredient in both the social and economic life of contemporary society. Social networking platforms have become an interesting vehicle for the banking sector to manage contact and interaction with their existing and potential customers. This study investigates users' awareness and the use of WhatsApp for banking activities in North-Central Nigeria. Based on a quantitative research approach, the study surveyed 400 respondents who have adopted WhatsApp Banking. The study's significant findings revealed a low level of awareness of this banking method among social media users. Besides, the percentage of users that utilised the platform for banking-related activities corroborated the deficient awareness as discovered in the study. Nevertheless, the audience is sceptical that the country's poor internet infrastructure might not permit the innovation to thrive. Hence, the study recommends that the banks concerned should endeavour to create more awareness about WhatsApp Banking, and there is a need for an urgent improvement in the internet facilities in the country in order to engender seamless technological advancement*

**Keywords:** Social media, WhatsApp, WhatsApp Banking, Perception, Nigeria, Awareness

### **INTRODUCTION**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play critical roles in diverse facets of our daily lives. Today, human life has experienced dramatic changes due to advances in technology. This advancement has made work-life to be easier, faster, and more convenient. With the advent of technology, the world has become more addicted to the usage of such latest advancements. With the expanding internet infrastructures, human beings are getting more chances to be aware of their environment. Advances in internet availability has neutralised the hitherto geographical distance that constitutes a considerable barrier in communication. It is not alarming to know that over 2 billion people use the internet on a daily basis, and they increasingly utilise the World Wide Web daily in the form of chats, messengers, and emails to communicate with others (Khan, Al-balushi, Algaithi, and Al-shihi, 2017). Society is continually evolving easier methods for interaction; hence social media



emerged as an easy linking tool in the internet infrastructure. According to Mutunga (2014), social media is an aggregation of online channels dedicated to community-based input and interaction. Bullas (2014) shows that almost 72% of internet users are now active in social media.

In the last years, we have witnessed a significant growth of online user-generated content (UGC) through the use of a series of tools that have generically been defined as social media. Miranda, Chamorro, Rubio and Morgado (2013) reiterate that social media technologies take on a plethora of forms including collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life). Boyd & Ellison (cited in Udenze, 2018) describe a social network as web-based service that permit individuals to constitute a public or semi-public profile within bounded systems, articulates a list of other users with whom they share connections and view and traverse their list connection and those made by others within the system.

Social networking sites (SNS) have become well-known in today's e-community as they provide a platform for people across the globe to communicate, exchange ideas, share knowledge, interests and send messages to each other regardless of geographic distance (Sawyer 2011, cited in Udenze, 2019b). The first social networking site known as Six degrees was launched in 1995. After then, others came on board- Livejournal, AsianAvenue, BlackPoint, LunarStorm, MiGente, Cyworld, Ryze, Fotolog, Friendster, amongst others (Udenze, 2019). Today, numerous social network sites satisfy the yearning of varying sectors of society.

The focus of the current study is on WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a computer-mediated-communication platform that allows users to send contents like pictures, audio, videos, make voice and video calls, send documents etc. It is a freeware, and cross-platform that is inbuilt with an end-to-end encrypted instant messaging feature for smartphones (Udenze, 2017a). These unique features of the mobile application distinguish it from other social networking sites. A few studies have been conducted on the use of social media in the banking and related industries (Costin, 2015; Ruppert, 2013; Zembik, 2014; Kirakosyan, 2014a; Dawar, Rabb, 2015; Adalarasu and Padmaavathy, 2016; Khan et al. 2017). However, at the moment, the current study argues that there is a dearth of research on, mainly, audience awareness and use of WhatsApp for banking activities in Nigeria, North-Central region, to be precise. It is also germane to state that, globally, WhatsApp is an emerging research domain, and it is grossly under-investigated in Nigeria. Hence, this study fills the apparent vacuum in these areas.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Since the emergence of WhatsApp in 2009, the app has continually metamorphosed from just a messaging platform to encompass a plethora of functions. Today, with WhatsApp, users can read and download documents on WhatsApp; we can send location maps; we can make video calls; we can record voice notes, and very recently, the app enables us to conduct bank transactions. A growing number of organisations and associations are embracing the use of WhatsApp in order to ease communication barriers and to cut costs. They have discovered the seeming potential of WhatsApp in promoting customer relations and increasing product patronage. Currently, some Nigerian banks are offering access to financial services through



WhatsApp. Since this kind of social media banking is new and is still evolving in Nigeria, it is unknown to which extent people are aware of it and utilise it to carry out banking services, particularly in North-Central Nigeria. According to a recent article by Kemp (2019), with 85% of Nigeria's 24 million active social media on WhatsApp, it has become the preferred platform for small and medium scale businesses in Nigeria (Techpoint.africa, 2018). Hence, the researchers were interested in finding out whether Nigerians are aware and also use the platform for banking activities.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study explores audience awareness and use of WhatsApp for banking activities in North-Central Nigeria. More specifically, the following objectives were investigated:

- To ascertain the extent to which the audience are aware of WhatsApp banking.
- To find out the extent to which the audience use WhatsApp banking.
- To understand how the audience perceive WhatsApp banking.
- To determine how the audience assess WhatsApp banking to other forms of internet banking.

### **A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF WHATSAPP**

WhatsApp is a multimedia communication platform established in 2009 by two former employees of Yahoo. WhatsApp reached 1 billion monthly active users in 2016. The app lets users send content like pictures, audio, videos, documents, and voice calls (Udenze, 2019b). Another feature of WhatsApp is its group chat functionality. The group chat feature allows a user to communicate with up to 256 people at once (whatsapp.com, 2017). The group chat platform on WhatsApp affords diverse forms of online communities to emerge; individuals that share similar interests from different backgrounds like the academic, religious, entertainment, management, media, and professional bodies have come to see the importance of the WhatsApp group.

Besides, WhatsApp's broadcast lists enable the simultaneous dissemination of messages to a wider audience. The broadcast feature permits a user to create a broadcast list of 256 contacts and repeatedly send messages to the contacts without having to select the recipients individually anytime the need arises. The app is for android, iOS, and Windows phone platforms (WhatsApp.com). The WhatsApp app is connected to the user's mobile number, but it can also be accessed through any web browser on a personal computer once an account has been created through the app on the user's phone. The service has end-to-end encryption to protect users' privacy (blog.WhatsApp.com), making it suitable for health-related endeavours.

Moreover, Jisha K. and Jebakmar (2014) reiterate that the under-listed characteristics distinguish WhatsApp from other social media platforms:

- **Affordability:** WhatsApp is downloadable and used for a year for free. It demands a subscription fee of 0.99 US dollar per year.
- **Easy chatting:** Chatting on WhatsApp is easy with friends and family. If an individual has the application installed on their phone, and they have your phone number, you are automatically added to their contact list if your number is registered to a WhatsApp account.





- Backs up chat history: WhatsApp allows you to preserve your chat for a selected time.
- Enables the user to monitor when someone is online, and the last time he or she logged in.
- Breaks geographic constraints: You can chat with users of WhatsApp wherever they are in the globe.
- Speed: WhatsApp messages are fast in delivery as far as there is a reliable and robust internet connection.
- Offer group chat facility: WhatsApp allows individuals to create a group and chat with members.
- Easy to operate: WhatsApp does not require a login and logout procedures. The platform works whenever there is an internet connection.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE BANKING SECTOR**

Imagine you are chatting with your colleague on WhatsApp. After sending him a copy of a business proposal both of you discussed earlier in the day, and you discuss the cost of mailing the document overseas, and he requests for your account number to send the money. Instead of using other electronic or internet means, he simply finds your bank as a contact on WhatsApp and proceeds to begin the process of transferring the money. He completes the transaction in less than four minutes without exiting the messaging app. The above description and other financial services are obtainable within WhatsApp Banking.

Techpoint.africa (2018) described WhatsApp Banking as an appendage of Chat Banking already available on Facebook. It further opined that since WhatsApp is the most used messaging platform in Africa, it gives banks a wider reach than Facebook Messenger. Absa Bank first launched WhatsApp banking in July 2018. Currently, some Nigerian banks are offering access to financial services through WhatsApp. These banks are: United Bank for Africa (UBA), First Bank of Nigeria (FBN), Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank), Access Bank and Zenith Bank. In the case of Zenith Bank, it is known as Qwerty Banking. Customers can conduct banking activities on mobile messaging platforms by simply activating the Zenith Bank keyboard interface on the bank's app (Techpoint.africa, 2018).

Miranda, Barriuso and Cortés (2013) argue that the phenomenon of social media originated and started to flourish when the global financial meltdown was in full swing; it is only now that the financial sector has realised that this platform presents an opportunity that they cannot afford to ignore. As banks and financial institutions recover from the crisis and look towards rounded growth, social media is starting to be a part of their overall strategy (Dinesh, 2011). Studies (Hajli, 2014; Chen and Beaudoin, 2016; Bohlin, Shaikh and Hanafizadeh, 2018) have asserted that social media provides the platform to promote businesses, and fosters interaction that allows consumers and businesses to create and develop new and real ways of interacting and have a tremendous prospect for business, including for financial institutions. Also, social media are referred to as a less expensive and readily available avenue for interacting with a large number of people in a short time (Madziwa and Sibanda, 2018).

There are numerous merits for using social media for financial and related activities, some of the essential benefits being: instant feedback from customers over existing and potentials



offering, enhanced brand visibility, and customer service, future customer generations, increased business potential from social referrals and cross-selling opportunities, and enhanced marketing tools for gaining customer retention and advocacy ( Miranda et al., 2013). Adalarasu and Padmaavathy (2016) discovered that banks carry out their business activities through social media to offer their customers a better experience and to be more responsive. Similarly, Yasa and Mucan (2005) proffered that banks need to use social media user-friendly interactive system so as to understand customers' special needs and create more loyal customers. Alotaibi (2013) asserted that there exists a strong effect on the social network dynamics of Twitter in the banking sector. Kirakosyan (2014a) found that social media is a potent tool for acquiring clients in the banking sector, and the management needs to identify avenues in which to make profitable use of social media. Further, Kirakosyan (2014b) claimed that for social media to succeed, the elements of conversation, communication, and interactions are essential, followed by marketing. Further, Njoroge and Koloseni (2015) affirmed that for social networks to positively impact the banking sector, the customer's trusts would be premised on security and privacy of their information through a developed trust.

Khan et al. (2017) corroborated Njoroge and Koloseni's affirmation as they predicated that the customers are not comfortable with using social media as they are scared that their information might be stolen or misused; hence, customers do not perceive social media as an attractive marketing tool. However, Dehghani, Nourani, and Abardeh (2012) claimed that new and small banks use social media to improve their competitiveness in the market and establish links with their clients to achieve customer satisfaction. Costin (2015) averred that social media banking is no longer a concept but is a matter of fact which needs more attention and adjustment as a catalyst to change the customer approach.

### **Domestication Theory**

The current study is underpinned and guided by the domestication theory. The domestication (adoption and use) of new technology is a trending phenomenon in media studies. The theory has its root in a German Ethnologist, Herman Bausinger, but was later fine-tuned by Rogers Silverstone in the early 1990s. Domestication theory is a philosophy in media studies that illustrate the steps by which modernization, especially new technology, is 'tamed' or appropriated by its users (Ayotunde, 2012). This theory explains the process of understanding the sophistication of how ICTs are experienced in everyday life (Ahad and Lim, 2014). Domestication clarifies a methodology of how technology affects society, especially at the household level and how society affects technology. Roger Silverstone's domestication demonstrates how innovators design technologies to be user-friendly and how users communicate their demands to innovators (prezi.com, 2014).

Furthermore, domestication also considers how innovators seduce the public into becoming their consumers. These days, manufacturers of mobile devices and software are always in competition to satisfy consumers' needs. For instance, the smartphones metamorphosed from a bulky, unattractive, with less software to a stylish, portable, and attractive device that accomplishes more within seconds. This indicates the roles of individuals who have taken advantage of this innovation by creating new media platforms (Ayotunde, 2012).

Deirdre (2007) elaborated on the four phases of domestication: Appropriation is the first phase of domestication. In this phase, possession and ownership are central. The acquisition



of technology is the pre-eminent activity. A technology gets apportioned as it is sold and then owned or possessed by an individual. Objectification describes how values, tastes, or styles are communicated via the display of the new technology. It involves both a spatial/structural aspect (where it is placed in the house) and a physical aspect (how it is fitted in the time structure). (Silverstone et al. as cited in Hynes and Richardson, 2009). The incorporation phase emphasizes how the new technology is used, and the physical feature is more central in this stage. Silverstone et al. (1992) suggest that for a technology to be integrated, it has to be gravely used, such as in the performance of a task. Conversion is the final phase of domestication. This phase is concerned with how users speak and articulate their relationship with technology. This involves the bigger audience, discussion about the technology, and how the users use it in a way that the designer of the technology may not be visualized.

Considering the evolution of WhatsApp, arguably, the platform has undergone these phases of domestication, and we can argue that the app is in its conversion stage at the moment. WhatsApp is put to varying uses directly or indirectly in almost every sphere of human endeavour today so long as it concerns communication. For instance, in schools, churches, mosques, corporate organizations, families, informal associations etc. we have experienced the domestication of WhatsApp for different purposes. This theory is germane to this study because it establishes a relationship between the innovation- WhatsApp and how these banks and their customer may have tried to appropriate, objectify, incorporate and even convert the technology into banking services.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The current study employed a quantitative design, precisely, survey. For convenience, the study area was the North-Central geopolitical zone, one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, comprising five states, including Abuja, Nassarawa, Plateau, Benue, Niger, Kogi, and Kwara state. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2007), the study population of the North-Central zone is 20, 266,257, according to official census results. For the purpose of this study, and for convenience, only three states were covered- FCT, Niger, and Nassarawa state. A sample size of 400 was arrived at using Taro Yamane (1967) formula for determining sample size. The sample selection for the survey was made via a multi-stage approach covering state level, senatorial zone level, local government level, and town level.

A structured questionnaire was employed for data collection. The study is limited to four banks that have introduced WhatsApp banking at the time of the study: Access Bank, First Bank, Guarantee Trust Bank (GTB), and United Bank for Africa (UBA). For easy accessibility to the research population, the questionnaire was administered at the premises of these banks through the help of eight research assistants. For ethical purposes and for a study that involves human subjects, the respondents' consents were sought and obtained, and they were assured that their personal information would remain anonymous.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

Out of the 400 questionnaire copies administered in August 2018, 386 copies representing 96.5% were retrieved and 18 copies representing 3.5% were not. Hence, the response rate stood at 96.5%. The high return rate of questionnaires was possible because the authors paid attention to the importance of engaging the sampled population on the purposes of the study. Besides, the respondents were assured of their privacy, and the research assistants patiently waited for them to read and answer the questionnaires before handing them in. However, this



approach was rigorous and time-consuming as it took the researchers and the research assistants longer days to distribute and collect the research instrument.

The respondents' demographic features revealed that 52.07% of them were female, while 47.92% were male. Also, 27.46% of the respondents were between the ages 15 and 30, 61.65% were between 31 and 45, 10.88% were between 46 and above. Furthermore, 15.02% of the respondents had First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) as their highest educational qualification; 23.57% had Senior School Certificate (SSCE), 18.65% had Diploma; 33.67% had Bachelor's degrees or Higher National Diploma (HND), and 9.06% had postgraduate qualifications.

**Table 1: Awareness and Usage of WhatsApp Banking**

Are you aware of WhatsApp banking?	Responses	Do you use WhatsApp banking?	Responses
Yes	15.80% N= 61	Always	5.18% N= 20
No	84.19% N= 325	Sometimes	13.21% N= 51
Total	386 N= 100%	Rarely	3.36% N=41
		Never	78.23% N= 302
		Total	100% N= 386

The data above revealed that a majority of the respondents, 84.19% in the study, are not aware of WhatsApp banking, while 15.80% of the population averred that they are aware of WhatsApp banking. This indicates that WhatsApp banking is not popular at the moment. Also, following the abysmal awareness of WhatsApp banking, its usage corroborated low awareness. About 78.23% stated that they have never used WhatsApp for banking; 3.36% said they rarely use it; 13.21% confirmed that they use it sometimes while 5.18% ticked that they always use it.

**Table 2: Perception of WhatsApp Banking**

Do you think the introduction of WhatsApp banking will further ease banking?	Responses	Do you think the current Internet technology can sustain WhatsApp banking?	Responses	Do you estimate that more people would adopt WhatsApp banking if they are aware?	Responses



Yes	85.23%						
	N= 329	Yes	52.07%	Yes	90.41%		
			N= 201		N=349		
No	14.76%						
	N= 57	No	47.92%	No	9.58%		
			N= 51		N= 58		
	386						
Total	N= 100%	Total	N=386	Total	N=386		
			N= 100%		N= 100%		

The above table highlights the respondents' responses to their perception of WhatsApp. First, the population strongly feels that the introduction of WhatsApp banking will ease banking activities- 85.23% reiterates this perception while 14.76% responded in the contrary. On whether the country's current state of internet infrastructure could sustain WhatsApp banking, 52.07% believe that the current state of internet infrastructure can sustain WhatsApp banking while 47.92% think that the country's internet infrastructure cannot sustain WhatsApp banking. Further, 90.41% believe that more people will adopt WhatsApp banking if they are aware of its existence, and 9.58% believe otherwise.

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**Table 3: Assessment of WhatsApp Banking**

Do you think WhatsApp banking might supersede other forms of internet banking?	Responses	Do you think using WhatsApp banking would have any particular advantage?	Responses	Do you think WhatsApp banking would complement other forms of internet banking?	Responses	Do you think WhatsApp banking would create personal link between the customer and the bank?	Responses
Yes	50.25%	Yes	64.50%	Yes	94.81%	Yes	69.17%
	N= 194		N= 249		N=366		N= 267
No	49.74%	No	35.49%	No	5.18%	No	30.82%
	N= 192		N= 137		N= 20		N= 119





Total	386	Total	386%	Total	386	Total	386
	N= 100%		N= 100%		N= 100%		N= 100%

Firstly, from the table above, 50.25% affirmed that WhatsApp banking is likely to supersede other forms of internet banking. Nearly 49.74% of the respondents maintained that WhatsApp banking is not likely to surpass other forms of internet banking. Secondly, 64.50% of the population asserted that WhatsApp banking would be of advantage to the banking sector, while 35.48% opined that the introduction of WhatsApp banking would not be of any advantage. Lastly, 94.81% confirmed that WhatsApp banking would be complementary to other forms of internet banking; however, 5.18% do not believe that WhatsApp banking will complement other forms of internet banking.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study explores users' awareness and the use of WhatsApp for banking activities in North-Central Nigeria (FCT, Niger, and Nasarawa states). The current study revealed that a considerable number of respondents within the North-Central are not aware of WhatsApp Banking. The findings show that 15.80%, 61 respondents argued that they are aware of the banking method. Nonetheless, 325 respondents representing 84.19% averred that they are not aware of WhatsApp Banking. These statistics explain that WhatsApp Banking is not accessible in the North-Central region. Some of the reason for these findings might be that the banks concerned have not promoted their banking strategy to a reasonable extent or maybe customers are comfortable with other methods of conducting banking activities, for instance, other internet platforms like mobile apps, internet banking or Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD). In terms of the respondents' use of WhatsApp Banking, findings corroborated the users' lack of awareness of the technique. A critical observation of the data reveals the users' responses to the research question. Only 5.18% asserted that they use the method of banking always, 13.21% use it sometimes, and 3.36% rarely use the platform for banking activities. The reasons for these findings may not be unconnected to the reason offered above: reasons why there is poor awareness of WhatsApp Banking.

For the audience's perception and assessment of WhatsApp Banking, the data shows that the audience believes that the banking method will be advantageous and will complement other banking methods. The above findings are in tandem with other studies (Hajli, 2014; Chen and Beaudoin, 2016; Bohlin, Shaikh and Hanafizadeh, 2018) that have found that social media platforms promote businesses and foster interaction between customers and organizations, create and develop new and real ways of connection and have a tremendous prospect for businesses, specifically financial institutions. Scholars have argued that the emergence of social media has made our day to day activities easy and convenient. This is the argument that the current study corroborates. The respondents confirmed that WhatsApp Banking would establish a personal link between the customer and the bank. Yasa and Mucan (2005) have proffered a similar suggestion. According to the authors, banks need to use social media user-friendly and interactive systems to understand customers' unique needs and create more loyal customers.





Furthermore, the study discovered that the current internet infrastructure in the country might not sustain effective WhatsApp Banking. From experience, other internet-enabled banking methods have experienced hitches. For instance, due to poor internet network, a simple transaction that should not take up to three minutes takes a customer close to twenty minutes to conclude. In some cases, say maybe fund transfers, the recipient does not receive the fund, but the sender is debited. This happens most often due to poor internet network. This and other factors might be the reason that prompted the audience to submit that the current internet infrastructure is incapable of sustaining a hitch-free WhatsApp Banking.

Theoretically, the current study corroborated the domestication theory as used in the study. From the findings of the study, it may be safe to say WhatsApp is not fully appropriated for banking activities because of the deficient awareness. In as much as the banks have domesticated WhatsApp for its services, it is incumbent on them to assist the users in appropriating it by engaging in a robust awareness campaign. Overall, the use of domestication theory in the current study raised the thinking of how users of particular media, in this case, WhatsApp have appropriated and converted the app in banking and related financial activities in North-Central Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

The adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in various human endeavours has made these endeavours convenient and hassle-free. Precisely, the use of social media has made communication and other activities cheaper and even more convenient. As seen in this study, the adoption of WhatsApp in banking and financial activities is yet another inclusion of social media in an essential sector of our lives especially at a time when major human activities are being conducted online. The major finding of this study which is a contribution to knowledge in WhatsApp studies is that a considerable number of the respondents do not have access and are not aware of WhatsApp Banking; the majority of the respondents do not use the platform for banking and other financial activities.

Stated differently, the research participants believe that a vast awareness campaign might increase the use of the platform. Hence, the indication is that inadequate publicity from the banks could be responsible for this trend. Being a new innovation, the study established that WhatsApp Banking would add a significant advantage to banking and other related activities. Nevertheless, the respondents are sceptical that the country's current internet infrastructure might not create an enabling ground for the innovation to thrive with minimal or no hitches. Hence, the study recommends that banks should endeavour to create more awareness on WhatsApp Banking, and there is a need for an urgent improvement in internet infrastructure and connectivity in the country.

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## **INFLUENCE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND AUTHORITY FIGURES IN BROADCAST OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC MESSAGES AMONG RURAL DWELLERS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examined the influence of the use of indigenous language and authority figures in the broadcast of COVID-19 messages among rural dwellers in South East Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the failure of rural dwellers to pay attention and understand the COVID-19 pandemic messages which were disseminated in English language, and as such were not complying to the precautionary measures. The research was a descriptive survey. Five objectives guided the study which used the focus group discussion as the medium of data collection. The population was all rural dwellers in the five south-eastern states of Nigeria. The sample was 200 participants randomly selected from the five rural communities near the state capitals (Abakaliki- Nwofe; Awka- Achalla; Enugu- Ugwuaji; Owerri- Nworieubi and Umuahia). The*



*Limited Effects theory formed the theoretical underpinning for the study. Data were analyzed through thematic transcription of the responses of the participants during the focus group discussion. Results obtained show that most rural dwellers do not have access to social media platforms. Also, rural dwellers get their information basically from markets, churches, and towns meetings. It was gathered that use of indigenous language and leaders of thought provided the needed understanding, reach and conviction of the rural dwellers on the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study concludes therefore that the use of indigenous language and authority figures are useful in helping rural dwellers in the South East zone to understand and comply with the COVID-19 pandemic messages and precautionary measures. Sequel to the findings, the study recommends that the ministries of Information should adopt the use of opinion leaders in disseminating such vital information. Also there is need for all communities to translate vital and sensitive information in local dialects to enable easy understanding and compliance especially by rural dwellers.*

**Keywords:** Authority figures; COVID-19; Indigenous language; Social media and Pandemic,

## **INTRODUCTION**

Towards the end of 2019, media all over the world's major news were awash with story of someone at the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan China who was infected with a virus from an animal. Experts suggested that the animal pangolin was the staging post for the virus before it spreads to humans. The high level of uncertainty that surrounds the origin of the COVID-19 virus and the animals/species that passed it on to man, has set scientists working to unravel the mystery as it will help in forestalling future ones. However, the Head of Department of Microbiology at Melbourne's Monash University, Professor Stephen Turner, opines that the virus is most likely to have originated from bats. Professor Edward Holmes of the University of Sydney, in a study in 2018, examined the likely origins of the virus using its genome. He avers that the species that served as intermediate host for the virus has not been identified. However, the Medical Journal, the *Lancet* on the analysis of the first 41 cases of COVID-19, found that 27 of them were directly exposed to the Wuhan market. This finding asserts that the known index case of COVID-19 was not exposed to the market which cast doubt on the existing story (CNN, Aljazeera, NTA).

In January 2020, China had provided huge public health interventions to contain the coronavirus outbreak. But by 18th of March 2020, mainland China outside Hubei province confirmed 13,415 cases of COVID-19 infection with 120 deaths. The rate at which the virus spread to other parts of the world put all nations on their toes as they took measures to contain it (CNN). The WHO declared the COVID-19 a pandemic as it was ravaging nations and their economies and almost bringing life on earth to a halt. By 13th February 2020, the virus had spread to 15 Asian countries with the first case of an African that lives in China who contracted the virus (CNN). The 21-year-old Cameroonian student Kem Senou Pavel Daryl who lives in Chinese city of Jingzhou, according to CNN, said he does not want to take the virus to Africa. He was treated in an isolation center where he showed signs of recovery in two weeks.

By February 27th, a first Nigerian case was confirmed by the Federal Ministry of Health. The press release informed that it was an Italian who works with Agip Saipen in Banana Island, Lagos. He came into Nigeria from Milan with symptoms and tested positive to the virus in





the virology lab of Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) which is part of laboratory network of Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

With the spread of the virus alongside spread of information on the precautions to take and need to report suspected cases, it was apparent from media reports that many Nigerians were not convinced of this negative reality; also, there was urgent need to protect the people. All these prompted the president to issue a lockdown order on the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Lagos and Ogun States while the NCDC, reportedly had to expedite action on contact tracing and provision of facilities that would help to contain and manage the pandemic. With this situation, states of the federation tried to adopt measures that would assist them in containing the pandemic. A veritable tool was found to be advocacy. The traditional media did not seem to be enough and because a lot of fake news had been spread through the social media including misinformation and disinformation, it became critical and necessary to spread the message of this pandemic to get to the masses. With the view expressed by Chen, Fay & Wang (2011) that the rise of social media and online communities enhances access and sharing of information, it is then auspicious to find out the extent to which broadcasts, which are mainly in English language, have been able to convey the message of the deadly COVID-19.

It was observed as reported in some media including ABS and NTA that many Nigerians especially rural dwellers do not care about the COVID-19 pandemic precautionary messages despite the numerous media campaign messages about the deadly pandemic. Could it be that many of them do not understand the COVID-19 messages being circulated across various media platforms; or could it be due to inaccessibility of media platforms especially in the rural areas or could this be due to the regard citizens have on the message medium and deliverers? Sequel to the above questions, in South East states, most communities had to translate the COVID-19 pandemic messages in their indigenous languages (dialects) to enable their people assimilate. Also, there was the need to use authority figures in these localities like the governors, traditional rulers, religious leaders, community heads, women's group leaders, and youths' representatives among others to educate rural dwellers about the pandemic. It is apparent that using these authority figures (who are held in high esteem by the rural dwellers) the people may have a rethink and may probably listen to the message on the premise that it may not be possible for their own sons and daughters to deceive them. It is against this background that the researchers examined how effective use of indigenous language and authority figures will be in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic messages in the South East states.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

With all the recommendations on how to stay free from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not known to these researchers whether the people understand all the messages that are reeled out in the various media in English language. This erroneous belief may be the reason why many of them seem not to take any precautionary/safety measures against the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that this nonchalant attitude may have stemmed from their lack of understanding of English language (which is the principal means of disseminating the COVID-19 pandemic message).

Another possible reason may be the level of confidence reposed in the persons disseminating the COVID-19 messages. Some citizens have lost confidence in the authenticity of some messages in traditional and social media as a result of high rate of falsification or fake news.





As a result, some may not pay attention to the COVID-19 pandemic message believing that it may also be false. These challenges create room for a search of better ways of enlightening citizens especially rural dwellers about COVID-19 pandemic. Now the problem of the study is to examine how effective the use of indigenous languages (dialect) and authority figures will be in helping rural dwellers in the South East understand COVID – 19 pandemic messages.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study seeks to establish the import of language and source in the spread of COVID-19 message. The specific objectives are:

- ascertain the level of access/exposure to media platforms by rural dwellers in the South East zone.
- find out the most popular media accessible to rural dwellers in the South East
- x-ray factors that determine attitude of rural dwellers in the South East to the COVID-19 pandemic messages being circulated
- determine if the use of indigenous languages in dissemination COVID-19 messages helps understanding and compliance by rural dwellers in the South East.
- ascertain the extent to which the use of authority figures in disseminating COVID-19 messages help understanding of and compliance to the message by rural dwellers in the South East.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- To what extent do citizens in South East rural areas have access to social media platforms?
- Which media platform do residents mostly use to obtain information in rural areas in South East?
- What factors influence attitude of residents of South East to the COVID-19 pandemic messages being circulated?
- To what extent does the use of indigenous languages in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic messages help citizens understand the message?
- How does the use of authority figures in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic message help citizens to understand and comply with the message?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Indigenous Language**

As a major component of culture, language may be applied to improve various aspects of a person's life including health and economy. According to Gonzalez, Aaronson, Kellar, Walls & Greenfield (2018), indigenous language fits into the broader umbrella of cultural values and activities. This may be why language revitalization efforts are gaining grounds across the globe in the forms of language immersion, primary education programme and adult language nests (Gunderson 2010).

Thorpe and Galassi (2014) on the project "Rediscovering Indigenous languages" make a case for the use of indigenous languages to enhance community engagement and collaborations. The power of indigenous language to enhance social cohesion cannot be overemphasized, especially in spreading vital information as in the case of COVID-19 which was announced a pandemic and threat to existence on planet earth. Today, the mass media broadcast messages mostly in English language but experts, including NTA have made a case for increased



broadcast content in indigenous language. This may have informed the use of local languages in passing on some information in the media.

While Wilson and Ogri (2014) stress the need for mass media broadcast in indigenous language they have a highlight on the positive implication on National development. Some indigenous languages across the globe are reported to be on the verge of extinction while some have died. According to a recent United Nations record, 7000 indigenous languages are spoken around the world today and 4 out of every 10 of them are in danger of going extinct. (Kayla 2019). Kayla (2019) also reports that following this disclosure, countries of the world have started taking steps to ameliorate the situation while UN experts have called for a series of steps including new laws and international commitments to reverse what they describe as "historic destruction" of indigenous languages.

This fate according to Akinkurolere (2011) befalls Igbo language and other indigenous Nigerian languages today which may have informed their inclusion as compulsory subjects in Nigerian Secondary Education curriculum. Nigeria's National Policy on Education as cited by Akinkurolere (2011) also encourages study of indigenous languages. In section 1 paragraph 8, it states that "the Federal Government beginning from late 1970s shall take official interest in and make policy pronouncements on the teaching of indigenous languages instead of concerning itself solely with English". Also in subsection 19(4), the document avers that "government should encourage the learning of indigenous languages". So far, one wonders the extent this policy has gone in promoting indigenous languages. It is however observed that some social factors like class and status inhibit the study and propagation of Igbo language as some parents prevent their children from speaking the language. However, when government has messages to disseminate to the masses, evidence shows it is better achieved using indigenous language. This is seen in public service messages in government media outfits.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND COVID-19 INFORMATION DISSEMINATION**

The social media phenomenon is changed on the internet which affords the world all kinds of opportunities ranging from reading, watching to commerce. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre (2011) aver that consumers of the Internet adopt social media handles and platforms to create, modify, share and even discuss content. There is documented evidence indicating the extent to which the world depends on social media to seek information and interact with others (Greenwood, 2016). Many workers all over the world apply social media to work which became more common during the COVID-19 pandemic era when the world almost got grounded and most work, education and communication were based on the social media as one of the ways to control the spread of the pandemic. While describing the social media as ubiquitous for social networking and content sharing, Asur and Huberman (2010) forecasted power of the social media to influence sentiment which became evident during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The use of media in the Southeast Nigeria to disseminate information on COVID-19 was however common.

### **COVID-19**

COVID-19 is an acronym formed by the WHO on the 11th day of February 2020 (Wu, 2020) for the novel Coronavirus disease that emerged in Wuhan City, Hubei province of China in December of 2019 which the WHO described as unprecedented and declared it a pandemic. Experts describe the COVID-19 as an infectious disease that is caused by severe/ acute



respiratory syndrome driven by human-to-human transmission. There have been several speculations on the origin of the 2019 Coronavirus. Professor Perlman of University of Iowa contends that linking the origin to animals at the Wuhan market is coincidental though it cannot be ruled out even though he asserts that the possibility seems less likely because the genetic material of the virus had been found in the market environment. However, there is evidence that the so-called wet market where live animals are traded, had been connected to previous outbreaks of Corona viruses particularly SARS (Shereen, 2020) which an immunologist, Dr Michael Baker, upholds in the argument that people who were exposed to the Wuhan market were infected by the virus. By March 2020, COVID-19 has spread to all continents of the globe affecting 196 countries with four hundred thousand confirmed cases and over eighteen thousand deaths.

With the ravaging effects of the COVID-19 in parts of the world, the WHO came up with its research and development blueprint which was activated to accelerate diagnosis, vaccines and therapeutics for the novel Coronavirus (WHO, 2019). So far, there has not been a cure for this pandemic described as the enemy of mankind (Qian & Ren, 2020). The authors suggest that in spite of the safety measures which the people should observe, the international community should develop better cooperation and strong solidarity in the joint efforts to fight against the spread of the pandemic.

### **MANAGING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

In Nigeria, managing the pandemic was a big challenge as it is critical that human behaviour and movement be controlled so as to curb the spread of the virus. Jelili (2020) avers that due to the cosmopolitan nature of Nigeria the country is prone to COVID-19 outbreak if stringent public health measures are not in place, citing the July 2014 case of a Liberian diplomat who entered Nigeria with Ebola virus disease through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport Lagos. However, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the National Reference Laboratory Abuja geared up to face the challenges posed by COVID-19. Jelili (2020) informs that:

The NCDC has developed the Surveillance and Outbreak Response Management System (SORMAS) for case based reporting for epidemic prone diseases in eleven states of the federation. SirAware and Tatafo for event-based surveillance and incident management among NCDC staff members and Mobile Strengthening Epidemic Response System "mSers" for aggregate reporting. The establishment of National Incident Coordination Centre ICC for outbreak preparedness and response activities enables NCDC to gather intelligence reports daily identify impending public health threats and ensure that outbreak responses are well-coordinated and controlled.

With the above initiatives put in place Nigeria seems to be in good position to respond but there is a pressing need to communicate the dangers of the disease to the masses especially at the grassroots where communication may be impeded due to many factors including language and limited effects. With identification of Nigeria's index case of covid-19 on the 28 of January 2020, the Federal Government took the proactive step of closing all airports and shutting down international travels among others and providing quarantine and isolation centres for COVID-19 patients. These efforts trickled down to the States.



In a world of social media which is fraught with all forms of misinformation and disinformation, fraudulent claims and fake news as well as politicization of the pandemic some people were not ready to heed the safety advice that will prevent the spread of the virus. The imminent dangers of poor circulation of information and education on the COVID-19 pandemic made groups, individuals and governments to devise means of delivering the information to the masses in the most efficient ways. The various arms of government and media have been applied to this cause. In the South East (where Igbo language is predominant) public service advertisement and messages were received on both traditional and new media. This confirms the position of the Nature Medicine (2020) that communication, collaboration and cooperation can stop the COVID-19, hence this effort to investigate the significant contribution of indigenous language to spreading and adoption of the COVID-19 message on social media.

### **EMPIRICAL REVIEWS**

Wilson and Ogrri (2014) examined the role of indigenous language broadcasting in national development. These scholars x-rayed a multilingual, pluralistic and multi-ethnic country with upwards of 500 indigenous languages where language should be a tool for National development through promotion of indigenous culture, national Identity, national pride and unity. On the contrary, the choice of English language as an official medium of communication in the mass media and society at large remains an inhibition to growth of indigenous languages. They therefore made a case for ways the mass media can activate national development by highlighting and promoting indigenous language. This study was a content analysis of some programs on the stations under review while interviews were used to gather qualitative data. The research found that media outfits have not harnessed the potential in adopting indigenous languages for national development. The study relates to the current one as both of them focus on the potential of indigenous language to achieve a greater national good through the media. However, while the study under review adopted content analysis and interview, the present study used FGD. Also, the study under review was in Calabar while this study is in South East Nigeria.

The research by Asur and Hubermann (2010) takes a look at the use of social media to strengthen languages with particular focus on endangered Sapmi languages in Europe. The study found that paucity of resources for teaching and promoting the language and the social media created the necessary ground for that. Apps and social media platforms and handles we are assorted to so as to augment but the researchers suggest avenues to strengthen endangered languages using the social media. This study relates to the current one in the sense that both have leaning to indigenous languages and social media. Also, the Sapmi language, though in Europe, is threatened likewise Igbo language which UNICEF noted is going into extinction. While the European scholars focused on learning and strengthening indigenous language using the social media, this work is on effectiveness of the use of indigenous language in spreading the COVID-19 message through social media.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study will be supported by the Limited Effect theory by Paul Lazarsfeld (1940). The theory states that even if there is an effect created by the media on the thoughts and opinions of individuals; this effect is minimal or limited. The theory contends that messages pass from media through opinion leaders' opinion followers or social influences thus give rise to the two-step flow theory.



Opinion leader (June 2008) contends are individuals who are exposed to media content and spread the information and opinion provided by the mass media as far as they transmit them unchanged. However the consequences of direct effects on individuals who are not exposed to the media content give birth to the idea of "indirect effect". This theory has been linked to this study as information broadcast in indigenous language on social media passes through opinion leaders to opinion followers and have the tendency to be exposed to indirect effect.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was a qualitative survey. The population for the study comprised of all residents in the states capitals of the five states that make up the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The sample comprised 200 respondents selected from 5 communities in the 5 states. Forty (40) respondents were selected from each state to give a total of 200 respondents. Data were collected by means of focus group discussion (FGD) scheduled with 5 lead questions. Each of the 5 groups comprised of 6 persons made up of 3 males and 3 females and the discussions were held in the house of the President-General of the community. The researchers as journalists were permitted by law to move about to gather reports on the pandemic and monitor compliance to the lockdown rules in the selected communities. It was during the monitoring exercise that the research team conducted the interviews in form of focus group discussion (FGD). The responses of the discussants were recorded which were later transcribed thematically to answer the research questions.

## **RESULTS**

**Research Question One:** To what extent do citizens in South – East rural areas have access to social media platforms?

The majority of the respondents were of the opinion that their access to social media platforms is poor. Only a few of the respondents (about 10%) have access to WhatsApp. According to one of the respondents, phone calls are limited to some areas due to poor network. Hardly do some residents in the area receive information via social media platforms. Most of the information the citizens receive are from newspapers, churches, news on TV and sometimes radio. In summary there is low access to social media by residents in rural communities in the South East. Some respondents however attest to the fact that some leaders in their communities who have access to social media information relay same to them.

**Research Question Two:** Which media platform do residents mostly use to obtain information in rural areas in Southeast?

The respondents agreed that most of the information they receive are from the church (for parishioners). Others said they hear most news from market, streets and town meetings. One of the respondents lamented that some of them that have TV and radio at home do not enjoy them because there is usually power outage. The situation is made worse because not many people can afford generator as alternative source of power in the villages.

In addition, some other discussants noted that a few of them get news through phones especially when there is network. However, some of the respondents agreed to the fact that poor network and irregular power supply limit the extent to which their phones could be





helpful in accessing information. Based on the analysis, it could be deduced that the most popular source of information among rural dwellers in South East is local information sources like market, church, towns meeting and social gatherings as well as Authority figures or opinion leaders.

**Research Question Three:** What factors influenced attitude of residents of South East to the COVID-19 pandemic messages being circulated?

In response to this question, some respondents noted that there have been series of fake news flying around, so they felt the COVID-19 issues may just be one of such fables. Moreover, some other respondents added that they found it difficult to believe some news relating to how contagious the disease is without remedy; especially when they do not know the person circulating the information. This, of course is traceable to a lot of deceptions that have been witnessed by many citizens in the community. Many people have been duped, killed or maltreated due to compliance to some fake news in circulation. At the end of the day, it was discovered that the sources of such news are not identifiable or authentic. According to one of the discussants, it may be very difficult for some people to believe any news circulating except they are sure of the source and the personality disseminating the news.

Another respondent quickly added that there was an instance where some people have been beaten up for spreading news which was believed to be fake. It was an unfortunate event. As a result, many of us here do not care to listen to most news especially if it has not come from a credible known source like radio or TV; more so, we don't even see light always, the man concluded. It then means that majority of the residents do not bother about COVID-19 news because of fear of being fake and the issue of authenticity of the disseminators.

**Research Question Four:** To what extent does the use of indigenous language and dialects in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic messages help citizens understand the message?

From the discussion held, many discussants testified that all the time the news of COVID-19 pandemic flew around, they never understood anything. The major reason was because many of the rural residents are not conversant with English language which was the principal means of dissemination. The few respondents who said they are privileged to listen to radio and television news complained that they hardly get the gist very well.

To make the matter worse, most of the times, there will be power outage so, one may not even be opportuned to hear the news. One of the respondents noted that it was only when their community heads held meeting and they translated the COVID-19 message in their local dialect that some of them knew what was happening. In the respondent's exact words he said 'we were going about our normal business not minding all the rumor flying around about COVID-19 ... Later the chiefs in our town held a meeting, thereafter our community head instructed our town crier to go round the villages and announce the COVID-19, pandemic messages, its mode of operation, symptoms, mode of spread and preventive measures in our local dialect. Before then, one University don from my village (who is an expert in linguistics) was consulted at Awka to translate the COVID-19 message from English language to our local tongue. It was after the town crier went round that many residents began to understand and appreciate the message. The respondents noted that though many rural dwellers do not have phones that are WhatsApp compliant, their relatives, who have, helped in spreading those messages to them.





Notable among the messages mentioned by respondents are: the one produced by the traditional ruler of Okija and shared to members of the community; the one produced by a prominent Anam indigene in Anam dialect as well as those produced in Orumba and Nnewi dialects, all in Anambra state. Others mentioned are production in Nkanu and Nsukka dialects of Enugu state; the 5- dialect production for radio and television in Ebonyi state; the various productions by Mbaise clan of Imo state and the production voiced by the Governor of Abia state, OkezieIkpeazu in local dialect.

One of the discussants even said that if they had not used our local dialect to spread the news may be people in our village will die too much because nobody cared to listen to news and radio all these while. In essence, the use of indigenous language helped residents to understand the COVID-19 pandemic message very well and to abide by the safety measures.

**Research Question Five:** How does the use of authority figures in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic message help citizens to understand and comply with the message?

Authority figures refer to personalities or entities that the people have respect and regard for. Examples are Pastors, Parish Priests, Reverend Fathers, Traditional rulers, village heads, community leaders etc. These people have voices among their subjects and as such can command great influence.

In responding to this question, some respondents noted that in their communities, there are people that when they talk, others will listen and there are others when they talk, nobody cares. One respondent stated that in their community, their Parish Priest took time (during one Sunday service) to explain to them (in their dialect) how to stay safe in the COVID-19 era. The Priest even gave few minutes for people to ask questions, she added. Another discussant told the group that their traditional ruler summoned everybody to the village square and explained to them why they must stay at home and take other precautionary measures against COVID-19. “The Igwe even told us that he (the Igwe) cannot be deceiving his own people, so he had to explain to us why we must obey the lockdown order, stating that it is for our good”.

Another discussant added that “if not that our Reverend Father said so, me, I would not have listened to these their rumours; but after Father talked that Sunday, my mind was convinced that it is true”. Going by the responses of the discussants, it could be seen that using authority figures like traditional rulers, village heads, Parish Priests, Reverend Fathers etc was very useful and helpful in making the residents understand the COVID-19 pandemic message and to adopt the measures.

A lot of times, most people trust and respect these authority figures especially when they are indigenes. The people believe that their own sons and daughters cannot come to deceive their own people. If they do, they will always come home to face the consequences and possibly, sanctions. It could then be concluded that the use of authority figures in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic messages helped residents to understand, adopt and comply with the COVID-19 pandemic safety rules.

## CONCLUSION

The study was on the influence of the use of indigenous language and authority figures in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic messages among rural dwellers in South East Nigeria.



From the study, it was gathered that rural residents have poor access to social media platforms hence they hardly access news via social media. In the same vein, it was gathered that many rural residents in South East get news majorly from local sources like markets, churches or town meetings. Many residents seem to neglect the COVID-19 pandemic messages in circulation because of distrust about their truthfulness and authenticity of their sources. The study found out that the use of local dialect (indigenous language) was very effective in helping rural residents in South East to understand the COVID-19 pandemic messages. Finally the use of authority figures helped residents to understand, adopt and comply with the COVID-19 pandemic safety and precautionary rules.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the following are recommended:

- There is need to provide electricity and social media platforms for rural dwellers to enable them access news and information faster and better.
- Most rural dwellers lack media platforms for accessing information hence it is instructive for the government to extend communication network, and TV stations in rural areas to help them obtain first hand information.
- There is need for the Ministry of Information to monitor the authenticity of any information or news being disseminated to boost the confidence of the populace.
- The study found that the use of local dialect helped residents to understand the COVID – 19 pandemic message, hence it is imperative that all communities in Nigeria translate the COVID-19 message in their indigenous dialects to help rural dwellers understand, adopt and to comply with the safety rules.
- The government should sustain use of authority figures in the dissemination of important messages to the masses since the masses trust them and have more regard for them.

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## **INFLUENCE OF ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY ON IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN IMO STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*Juvenile access and exposure to online pornography is an alarming and escalating problem worldwide. This study attempts to find out the reasons for Internet pornography use and its influence among in-school adolescents in Imo State. To achieve these objectives, a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods of research was employed. Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion were used to gather data for quantitative and qualitative research methods respectively. While 500 copies of the questionnaire were administered, 493 were retrieved and valid for the study, six different FGD's were constituted. Multi-stage, simple random and systematic sampling techniques were used for the selection of the respondents for the quantitative method because the population of the study cut across the three educational zones of the state and classes, purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants in the Focus Group*



*Discussion (FGD). This technique was used to select members for the study based on their relevance to the study. The study was anchored on Social Learning and Uses and Gratification theories. Results show that in-school adolescents view online pornography to a high extent. Results also show that curiosity and fun were the primary motivations for the use of Internet pornography among in-school adolescents in Imo state. The study also found that Internet pornography corrupts their minds and makes them have wild thoughts that are capable of distracting them from their academics. Based on these results, the researcher recommends that parents should use both technical and physical strategies to monitor what their adolescent children do on the Internet*

**Keywords:** Influence, Motivation, Use, Internet-Based Pornography, In-school Adolescents

## **INTRODUCTION**

Unlike in the past, when pornography was found mostly in conventional forms of magazines, books and films, the Internet has become the central vehicle for the distribution of pornography, thereby, altering the ways individuals use pornography. The rise of Internet pornography is presumably because of its increased anonymity, affordability and accessibility (Carroll, Jason, Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Olson, McNamara and Madsen, 2008; Essays UK, 2018) that it provides. There are concerns about children's use of pornography, and these concerns have a long history that extends back to the Victorian era (Kendrick, 1987). In our current age, popular media discussions of the dangers of Internet pornography for children and adolescents have begun to revolve around public health conceptualizations (Kohut and Štulhofer, 2018).

Motivation has been described as an individual's inferred need, desire, or impulse which initiates, directs and sustains behaviour (Coon, 1997). It can also mean sources of purposive and goal-directed behaviour that serve "to energize and guide action towards desired ends. For one to embark on any activity or task in life, there are benefits that the individual intends to achieve. No one does anything without a purpose; likewise, adolescents must have reasons why they expose themselves to Internet pornography.

The Internet has substantially changed the way society consumes pornographic materials and has become the most popular venue for this original purpose. However, researchers have paid little attention to why people, especially adolescents, use pornographic materials online. Arguing that the use of Internet pornography is a motivated behaviour meant to obtain what one wants to see, this study attempts to identify specific motivations for Internet pornography use. Also, the study examined the influence of Internet-based pornography on in-school adolescents in Imo State, South-East, Nigeria.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

With the penetration of the Internet into Nigeria's cyberspace in 2001, many young people are using the Internet and this has negatively led to the pronounced level of moral decadence among Nigerian youths. Porn crept into our society beginning from playboy magazine (foreign magazine), Hollywood movies through the display of sexual scenes and then the Internet. The primary carriers of porn in Nigeria are the Internet and movies. Today, Nigerian youths seem to be the largest patrons of Internet porn, apart from America. Besides viewing



porn materials, they can be seen on mobile phones which come in pictures and videos (Okafor, Efetobor and Apeh, 2015).

According to the World Internet stats (2020), Nigeria ranks sixth among the top twenty nations out of the 198 countries on earth that are using the Internet. Here, Internet User is an individual, of any age, who can access the Internet at home, via any device type (computer or mobile) and connection.

To better explain the ways people use Internet pornography and further understand pornography's effects on individuals and society, it is crucial to understand what motivations drive people to use Internet pornography and how these motivations work.

There has been little attention given to examining Internet pornography use from the user's perspective (Larena and Hoeber, 2012). Few studies have explicitly attempted to understand in-school adolescents' needs or motivations driving Internet pornography use.

This study is, therefore, an attempt to investigate the potential dimensions of motivation for using Internet pornography from a communications perspective; the primary goal of this study is to identify the motivations for Internet pornography use to understand clearly its influence on individuals and the society at large with particular reference to in-school adolescents in Imo State, South East, Nigeria.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To find out to what extent in-school adolescents view pornography on the Internet.
- To identify reasons for Internet pornography use among in-school adolescents in Imo state.
- To identify influences of exposure to Internet-based pornography on in-school adolescents in Imo State.

### **Research Questions**

- To what extent do in-school adolescents view pornography on the Internet?
- What are the reasons for Internet pornography use among in-school adolescents in Imo state?
- What are the influences that exposure to Internet-based pornography has on in-school adolescents in Imo state?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Internet Pornography and Adolescents**

Internet pornography is any material (either picture or word) that is sexually explicit and accessible over the Internet, primarily via websites, peer-to-peer file sharing, or Usenet newsgroups (Cowie, 2014). More than 100 million public websites host as many as 100 billion individual documents, a significant percentage of which is pornographic (Knutson, 2014).





The relationship between the Internet and pornography is symbiotic. Jonathan (2004) posits that pornography is one of the driving forces behind the expansion of the World Wide Web and on the other hand, the Internet has escalated the problem of pornography by increasing the amount of material available, the efficiency of its distribution and the ease of its accessibility (Wortley and Smallbone, 2012). While pornography had been available over the Internet since the 1980s, it was the availability of widespread public access to the World Wide Web in 1991 that led to an expansion of Internet pornography (Cowie, 2014).

Many scholars have established that adolescents have more access to the Internet. (Assael, 2005; Ballarotto, Volpi, Marzilli and Tambelli, 2018). Today's youth live in a highly sexualized media culture where the lines between pornography and popular entertainment have become increasingly blurred (MediaSmart, n.d). As one young person told the UK Office of the Children's Commissioner, "Basically, porn is everywhere" (Horvath, Miranda, Alys, Llian, Massey, Kristina, Pina, Afroditi, Scally, Mia, Adler and Joanna, 2013; MediaSmart, n.d). Even those youths who don't seek out pornography are exposed to highly sexualized content; in fact, they are more likely to encounter sexual material on TV or in music than through the Internet. Popular culture has, in general, become significantly more sexualized (MediaSmart, n.d).

Research has also shown that the most popular venue for accessing pornography is mobile or personal phones, also known as GSM or mobile devices. This popularity is because it guarantees privacy, more access and higher opportunities to view pornographic materials (Hardy, Steelman, Coyne and Ridge, 2013). One of the reasons many adolescents prefer to connect to the Internet with mobile devices rather than stationary computers is the privacy afforded by mobile devices. Mobile phones allow them to view content that, in many cases, is not monitored by authority figures such as parents and teachers (Vanden, Abeele, Campbell, Eggermont and Roe, 2014).

One of the biggest concerns voiced by parents of young Internet users is the easy access to pornography that the web provides. There are millions of porn sites online, making hardcore sexual images that were once very difficult to obtain now just a click away (MediaSmart, n.d).

There are a vast number of studies related to pornography conducted over the past years. (Essays UK, 2018; Carroll, Jason, Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Olson, McNamara and Madsen, 2008; Romito and Beltramini, 2011; Mayungbo, Sunmola, Morakinyo, Oyinola, Famakinde, Obosi, Opayemi, 2017). Results from these studies reflect that the Internet is the most popular form of accessing porn among adolescents. In the United States alone, 90% of adolescents aged 12 to 18 have Internet access at home, and a vast majority of them have either visited a pornographic website accidentally or intentionally at least once in their adolescent life. Studies revealed as well that since the pornographic websites are free, and the readers/viewers remain undetected or anonymous, adolescents became fond of accessing these websites (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2005; Essays UK, 2018).

The growing number of adolescents accessing porn websites on the Internet purposefully is quite alarming (Essays UK, 2018). Fifteen percent of these adolescents even resort to lying about their age to gain access to these websites (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2005).



Most pornography websites allow users access that is simple and fast with no verification of age required (DeAngelis, 2007; Wolak, Mitchell and Finkelhor, 2007; Mayungbo et al, 2017). This lack of restriction is evident in all forms of physical Internet access, including through computers, mobiles and iPods (Eberstadt and Layden, 2010; Grubbs, Wright, Braden, Wilt & Kraus, 2019).

### **Motivations for Internet Pornography Use**

Searching for sexually explicit material on the Internet is an intentional and purposeful behaviour. Dutta-Bergman (2003) asserts that all Internet activities are above a specific level of cognitive threshold. In other words, online activities are goal-directed and reflect the user's experiential styles (Chen, Houston, Sewell and Schatz, 1998). This indicates that people type keywords such as "sex" or "pornography" into search engines to find what they want to see, or that they log on to specific sexual sites that they believe can meet their particular motivations. There are studies in the communication field on the role of motivation to media use. In particular, the uses and gratification perspective regards the concept of the motivation behind media use as a critical factor that can account for one's media consumption (Rubin, 1983). Media Dependency Theory (MDT) also posits that one's media consumption is not accidental; instead, it is a planned and intended behaviour (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989). It means that individuals are motivated to maintain and enhance themselves via media use. Because information is indispensable for obtaining goals, the media are an essential resource as information channels for individuals' survival or growth (Ball-Rokeach, 1998). It is common for theorists to define motivation in terms of an individual's inferred need, desire, or impulse which initiates, directs and sustains behaviour (Coon, 1997). According to McKenna, Green and Smith (2001, p. 23), motivation can be defined as sources of purposive and goal-directed behaviour that serve "to energize and guide action towards desired ends."

Batty (2004) concludes that the majority of adolescents have already come into contact with pornography on the Internet. The average age of the first exposure to adult videos is 11 years old (Knutson, 2014; Perry, 2019; Fight the New Drug, 2020).

Sexual issues and encounters relating to sexuality are still not openly discussed within the family (Essays UK, 2018). Questions and discussions on sex are still a "taboo" topic for many families in Africa such that their children seek guidance and direction from their friends rather than their parents. This leads these children to improper notions of sex and the incorrect use of their sexuality because they lack proper guidance and knowledge (Essays UK, 2018). Studies also revealed that one-third of the adolescents today have had nasty sexual comments from other people which led them to become curious about sexual matters (Batty, 2004).

Moreover, studies revealed that the reasons why accessing pornography over the Internet were the most popular were anonymity, unlimited access and the less strict requirements of getting into a website (Batty, 2004; Essays UK, 2018).

### **Effects of Internet Pornography on Adolescents**

The long-standing issues on pornography have been present in every generation. They have undeniably caused adverse effects on the way people viewed sexuality and their relationships to the opposite sex. As the spread of different kinds of technologies increased further, especially as the use of computers and the Internet became more prominent in the lives of the



adolescents, the problems and issues on pornography worsened even more (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2005; Essays UK, 2018). The increase in access of young children and the adolescents to the use of the Internet and the viewing of pornographic sites has posed severe threats and harm over the health, psychological and social development of these people (Mesch, 2006; Essays UK, 2018).

Some may argue that watching pornography is part of the healthy sexual exploration and growth of a young person and should be encouraged, but Powell (2015) describes the critical highlights of a TED talk by Gary Wilson, a retired neurologist. The discussion was titled “The Great Porn Experiment.” In the video, Wilson details the devastating effects of long term consumption of pornography on the developing brain including, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), social anxiety and depression. Wilson (2013) opined that pornography also numbs the ability to feel real-life intimacy. The longer a brain is exposed to pornography, the more hyperactive it becomes at the sight of pornography. In other words, the more one views pornography, the more the brain desires it. It is a vicious cycle that ultimately erodes one’s willpower and self-control.

Some scholars have argued that most kids at a tender age do not understand the content of these pornographic materials; hence they cannot be affected by what they do not understand (Orlowski, 2012; Oyedunni, 2016). But other scholars are of the view that if young children can’t understand sex or its role in relationships, the images they see can leave a lasting impression on them. This is due to a concept known as neuroplasticity (Gomez, 2008; Armstrong, Quadara, El-Murr and Latham, 2017).

Neuroplasticity is the process by which a human brain creates new neural networks by continually reorganizing itself. This means that one’s brain is constantly optimizing itself to perform efficiently despite any loss of brain function due to age, injury, etc. (Beck, 2017). One of the known components of neuroplasticity is that as one ages, his brain becomes less plastic and resists change at a higher degree than when he was younger. This is especially true for children: neuroplasticity is at its highest during childhood and adolescent phases, then decreases continually for the remainder of one’s lives. Our children’s brains are shaped by their experiences, and those experiences determine much of their character throughout their lives. So, due to the high neuroplasticity, any values or ideas that are learned from pornography will have a lasting impact on children’s lives if they are not addressed appropriately (Beck, 2017).

Outside of poor moral judgments about pornography, some research has indicated that compulsive pornography viewing can have significant effects in an adolescent’s life (Rossi, 2002).

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study anchors on Social Learning and Uses and Gratification theories. Social Learning Theory (SLT), also known as the Observational Learning theory. The core tenets and basic assumptions of the theory were formulated by Albert Bandura. According to Bandura and the supporters of SLT, people learn new information and behaviours by watching and mimicking. They argue that behaviours are learnt through direct observation and internalization. SLT asserts that behaviours are usually triggered by some antecedents like observation and watching that often lead to imitation of the observed behaviour through the process of retrieval, rehearsal, or training (Ali and Nafiu, 2018).



In this study, the theory is useful in understanding how exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials can affect adolescents. Bandura, 1978 in Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017; Ali and Nafiu, 2018 posits that learning from the new media is largely dependent on a series of mental processes that include attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation. Through the media, adolescents not only learn what is likely to be the outcome of sexual activity, but also consciously engage in it or approve of it and come to see themselves as able to participate in similar activities themselves (Ali and Nafiu, 2018). Although SLT provides an avenue to understand the relationship between observation and learning, it fails to give the motivational forces for imitation. The Uses and Gratification theory addresses this gap (Ali and Nafiu, 2018).

Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) is traced to the 1940s when researchers in the United States became interested in reasons for viewing the media. Studies conclude that different people use the media for different motivations and purposes (Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017; Ali and Nafiu, 2018). Elihu Katz first introduced the UGT and developed by Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. The theory submits that people use the media and its contents to their benefits. This theory is contemporary as it contradicted older views that assumed the audience was a passive group (Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). The UGT approach views the audience as active; meaning that they actively seek out specific media and its content to achieve precise results or gratifications that satisfy their personal needs (Rossi, 2002). It presents the use of media in terms of the satisfactions of social or psychological needs of the individual (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974, cited in Chandler, 1994).

The Uses and Gratification theory provides a framework for explaining audience motivations for media usage (Oguche, 2014). Also, Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) corroborate with Folarin (1998) when they argued that studies of media “uses and gratifications” are ultimately an effort to understand effects. Since the objectives of this study are to find out the motivations for the use of Internet pornography and to identify the various ways in which Internet-based pornography affects in-school adolescents in Imo State among other objectives, the researcher is optimistic that the Uses and Gratification theory will serve as a good foundation for this study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a mixed-method comprising a quantitative and qualitative design. Whereas the quantitative design made use of a survey, the qualitative design used focus group discussions (FGD). The survey and focus group discussion played complementary roles. The rationale is not only to compensate weakness in a method with the strength of the other but also to substantiate statistical findings with the original statement of respondents (Frey, Botan and Kreps, 2000, p. 222). While the survey gives a researcher the opportunity to study people’s opinion on a given issue of public importance, the focus group discussion allows a researcher to study the respondents in a more natural conversational pattern. The strength of FGD lies in allowing the participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provides an insight into how the group thinks about an issue. Furthermore, the researcher intends to use FGD as it can explore the meaning of survey results that cannot be explained statistically, the range of opinions/views and to collect a wide range of local terms.



The study area is Imo state. Imo state was chosen as it is an educationally high-achieving state which has over the years been one of the states that produced the highest number of candidates in Nigeria for external examinations such as JAMB, WAEC and NECO. For instance, Imo state has produced the highest number of candidates in the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for many years (Abah, 2016; Erunke, 2018). The state is therefore assumed to have adolescents who are Internet and ICT savvy. The state has twenty-seven local government areas in three educational zones. The three educational zones are Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe educational zones.

According to the Open Registry of the Ministry of Education, Owerri, the population of students for the 2018/2019 academic year from 260 government-owned secondary schools and 328 government-approved private secondary schools in Imo state stands at 460,742. Out of this number, 500 students were chosen as the sample for the study. The sample size was arrived at in line with the submissions of Comrey and Lee (1992) rating scale of sample size adequacy: 100 = poor, 200 = fair, 300 = good, 500 = very good, 1,000 or more = excellent. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique involving simple random, systematic and convenience sampling techniques respectively. The sampling went through five stages. In the first stage, two local governments were chosen using simple random sampling through the table of random numbers from the three educational zones in the state. In stage two, one public (government-owned) and one government-approved private secondary school were selected from the local government areas selected in stage one using simple random sampling techniques. Here, again the table of random numbers was employed to select secondary schools from the local government areas selected in stage one. In stage three, simple random sampling was used to draw one class from the junior section i.e. JS 1-JS3 of the secondary schools picked in stage two and J.S. 2 was picked. In stage four, simple random sampling was also used to pick one class from the senior section i.e. SS1-SS3 of the secondary schools picked in stage two and SS 3 was picked.

At the last stage, a systematic sampling method was employed to pick students from the official class list of JS 2 and SS 3 of all the selected secondary schools in the three educational zones in the state. Twelve schools were selected; the researcher also selected two classes in these twelve schools. This means that twenty-four classes were used for the study and sixteen samples were studied in each class selected. This allocation is gotten by dividing the sample by the total number of classes selected. That is  $500/24 = 20.8333$  app. 21.

According to the Open Registry of the Ministry of Education, there are at least forty students in four streams of a class totalling one hundred and sixty students in public (government-owned) secondary.

Based on the above facts, the nth student in each of the schools was gotten by dividing the total number of students in a class by the class allocation thus: Nth student of public (government) owned secondary schools:  $160/21 = 7.6 = 8$  (app.)

Hence, one student was selected from the official class list at intervals of 8 beginning from the 1<sup>st</sup> student on the class list. This continued until a total of 21 students were gotten for that class.

The researcher used the convenience sampling procedure to convene six focus group discussion sessions with at least eight to ten discussants per session. A structured





questionnaire and focus group discussion guide were the data collection instruments for the survey and FGD respectively. Quantitative data analysis employed simple percentages as well as mean scores and standard deviation scores. In contrast, a descriptive thematic method was used to analyse the qualitative data for the analyses of the qualitative data.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Out of 500 copies of the questionnaire administered to respondents in Imo State, 493 (98.6%) were returned and found useful for data analysis, thus giving the questionnaire a mortality rate of 7 (1.4%).

Table 1: *Distribution of responses showing socio-demographic data of respondents*

S/N	Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age	11 – 13 years	92	18.7
		14 – 16 years	245	49.7
		17 – 19 years	156	31.6
2.	Gender:	Male	268	54.4
		Female	225	45.6
3.	Present Class:	JSS 1 – 3	235	47.7
		SS 1 – 3	258	52.3
Total			493	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The demographic data of respondents (i.e. in-school adolescents) shows that in-school adolescents between 14-16 years were predominant with 49.7%. They were closely followed by those between 17-19 years with 31.6%. Those 11-13 years made up 18.7 per cent of the respondents. Also, there is a preponderance of male in-school adolescents representing 54.4% when compared to their female counterpart 45.6% of the total respondents. The table on the present class of respondents showed that most of them were in the Senior Secondary classes as the data present 258, representing 52.3% in SS classes and 235, representing 47.7% in JS classes.

**Research Question One: To what extent do in-school adolescents view pornography on the Internet?**

Table 2: *Distribution of responses showing respondents' access to the Internet*

S/N	Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Do you have access to the Internet?	Yes	372	75.5
		No	114	23.1
		Undecided	7	1.4
Total			493	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents have access to the Internet. This implies that they can answer the questions of the study.

Table 3: *Distribution of responses showing respondents exposure to sexually-explicit contents*



S/N	Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Since you have access to the Internet, have you ever come across sexually-explicit contents?	Yes	312	83.9
		No	45	12.1
		I don't know	15	4
Total			372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 3 clearly shows that majority of the respondents have come across sexually-explicit contents on the Internet.

*Table 4: Distribution of responses showing respondents opinion on their first exposure to pornography*

S/N	Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	My first encounter with pornography was	Accidental	296	94.9
		Deliberate	12	3.8
		Undecided	4	1.3
Total			312	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 4 shows that most respondents' first encounter with pornography on the Internet was accidental; they did not deliberately go in search for it.

*Table 5: Distribution of responses showing respondents' frequency of viewership of pornography online*

S/N	Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	How often do you view pornography anytime you go online?	Always	82	26.3
		Occasionally	177	56.7
		Never	53	17
Total			312	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents view pornography on the Internet occasionally (56.7%) while 26.3% of the respondents view it always. The least of all is 17% of the respondents who NEVER view pornography online. The picture, however, suggests that most respondents view pornography be it occasionally or always.

**Research Question Two: What are the reasons for Internet pornography use among in-school adolescents in Imo state?**

*Table 6: Distribution of responses showing reasons for Internet pornography use among respondents*

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	St.D
1.	Adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography to know more about sexuality and sex education	68	178	97	59	91	3.15	1.324
2.	Adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography to satisfy their curiosity on some issues they can't discuss with their parents or teachers	64	228	46	50	85	3.36	1.346



3.	Adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography because they see it as an adventure	33	103	47	151	159	2.39	1.306
4.	Adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography due to peer pressure / influence	23	61	130	188	91	2.47	1.071
5.	Adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography to satisfy their sexual desires	59	82	104	120	128	2.89	1.280
6.	Internet pornography is educative	59	120	104	128	82	2.89	1.280
7.	Internet pornography is entertaining / fun	73	133	94	109	84	3.00	1.330

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The limit of a real number is used as a basis to determine the cut-off point for each level of measurement. Those responses that have mean scores within the range of the limits set for each range of analysis are named by those ranges of measurement. Here is a run-down of the limits set for real numbers that fall within each scale of measurement.

- For “Strongly Agree decision = (5.00 – 4.45) = 5point
- For “Agree decision = (4.44 – 3.45) = 4point
- For “Disagree” decision = (3.44 – 2.45) = 3point
- For “Strongly Disagree” decision = (2.44 – 1.45) = 2point
- For “Undecided” decision = (1.44 – 0.45) = 1point

The result in Table 6 shows a preponderance of decisions tilting towards “Disagree” based on the above benchmark called “Limit of real numbers”.

From the result, all the responses fall within the “Disagree” decision as indicated in the figures under “D” column (i.e. 3.44 – 2.45). Majority of the respondents agree that adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography to know more about sexuality and sex education. A higher number of them also agree that adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography to satisfy their curiosity on some issues they can’t discuss with their parents or teachers. However, a higher number of the respondents were undecided about adolescents exposing themselves to Internet pornography for adventure and to satisfy their sexual desires. Furthermore, a majority of them strongly disagree that adolescents expose themselves to Internet pornography due to peer pressure / influence and Internet pornography is educative. At the same time, a higher number of respondents agree that Internet pornography is entertaining / fun.

The classification of all the responses into the ‘Disagree’ decision (3.44-2.45) is because most of the respondents are undecided in their responses. The reason for this is not far-fetched as these respondents are still very young and or maybe naïve and shy to admit some of these motivations.

**Research Question Three: What are the influences that exposure to Internet-based pornography has on in-school adolescents in Imo state?**

*Table 7: Distribution of responses showing the effects of Internet pornography on the developmental processes of respondents*

S/ N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	St.D
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1.	Adolescents who expose themselves to Internet pornography are more likely to have sex earlier than they should	135	182	58	67	51	3.570	1.299
2.	Adolescents who expose themselves to Internet pornography are more likely to have feelings of dissatisfaction with one's body and sexual anxiety	124	212	52	54	51	3.620	1.258
3.	Exposure to Internet pornography can generate anxiety, confusion, weak social bonds and addictions in adolescents	152	183	60	30	68	3.650	1.340

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Source: Field Survey, 2019

The limit of real number is used as a basis to determine the cut-off point for each scale of measurement. Those responses that have mean scores within the range of the limits set for each scale of measurement are named by those scales of analysis.

The result in Table 7 shows a preponderance of decisions tilting towards “Agree” based on the above benchmark called “Limit of real numbers”.

From the result, all the responses fall within the “Agree” decision as indicated in the figures under “A” column. Hence, respondents agree that adolescents who expose themselves to Internet pornography are more likely to have sex earlier than they should, have feelings of dissatisfaction with their body and experience sexual anxiety. Lastly, exposure to Internet pornography can generate anxiety, confusion, weak social bonds and addictions in adolescents.

The responses that rank highest in the “Agree” decision were: exposure to Internet pornography can generate anxiety, confusion, weak social bonds and addictions in adolescents (mean = 3.650, St. Dev. = 1.340). It was followed by adolescents who expose themselves to Internet pornography are more likely to have feelings of dissatisfaction with one's body and sexual anxiety (Mean = 3.620, St. Dev. = 1.258). The least in the table are adolescents who expose themselves to Internet pornography are more likely to have sex earlier than they should (Mean = 3.570, St. Dev. = 1.299).

### **Results from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

A total of 6 focus group discussion sessions took place in six secondary schools drawn from the three educational zones in Imo State. The focus group discussion addressed the three research questions and played a complementary role in the survey. One public and one private secondary school were selected from the educational zones. The FGD guide had twelve questions.

The strength of FGD lies in allowing the participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provides an insight into how the group thinks about an issue. Furthermore, the researcher used the FGD to explore the meaning of survey findings that cannot be explained statistically, the range of opinions/views and to collect a wide range of local terms.

From the six sessions, the discussants agreed and disagreed but at the end, some resolutions were made. The first research question wanted to find out the extent to which in-school



adolescents view pornography on the Internet. Discussants agreed that they have Internet-enabled gadgets through which they have come across pornographic materials. For most of them, their first encounter was unintentional rather than deliberate. The discussants also revealed that after their first accidental encounter with pornography on the Internet, they deliberately visit pornographic sites. Also, most of the discussants visit these sites once in a while and spend not less than one hour on these sites. Based on these, it is evident that these discussants viewed pornography to a high extent since they deliberately visit pornographic sites frequently visit these sites spending not less than one hour on the sites.

The second research question asked about the reasons for Internet pornography use among in-school adolescents. The discussion with the students saw them enumerating a lot of reasons for Internet pornography use among these in-school adolescents. Among the reasons mentioned, the primary motivation for use of Internet-based pornography is fun followed by adventure and then to satisfy curiosity. These results, however, disagree with a study carried out by Igyuve and Agbele (2018) on undergraduates of Nassarawa State University, Keffi on the gratifications derived from Internet pornography. The study found out that sexual gratifications were the primary gratification derived from exposure to Internet pornography. Other gratifications included stress relief, learning new sexual techniques, mere sexual arousal and strengthening family lives, particularly if viewed with one's partner. The variance in results of the two may be evident in the fact that undergraduates are more matured and have passed through various hurdles of life, unlike in-school adolescents who are still at a very early part of their lives.

The third research question which sought to find out the influences that exposure to Internet-based pornography has on in-school adolescents was highly revealing in the focus group discussion. Discussants were of the view that exposure to Internet pornography affects them in several ways with corrupt minds/wild thoughts taking majority closely followed by distraction from their academics and imitation among other ways.

These were some of the excerpts from the focus group discussion on this research question: "...it makes one absent-minded. While a teacher is teaching, one may be imagining what the teacher will look like when naked instead of paying attention to what the teacher is teaching..."

**(Focus Group Discussion, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019, 1. 15pm)**

"...pornography makes adolescents have wild and negative thoughts all the time. When someone makes a statement, the person will interpret it negatively. The person's mind is already polluted by pornography. For instance, a physics teacher teaching the law of motion says that when the inward force is directly proportional to the force applied and then my friend interpreted it negatively to our surprise..."

**(Focus Group Discussion, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019, 12. 36pm)**

## **CONCLUSION**

The study examined how Internet pornography influences in-school adolescents and what motivates them to use Internet pornography. Based on the result of the study, the researcher concludes that about 80% of respondents who have access to the Internet have come across sexually explicit contents and visit porn sites after the first accidental encounter. Data from the study also show that in-school adolescents in Imo state use the Internet for the desire for





knowledge and fun. At the same time, it affects their developmental processes physically, academically and psychologically. It however, leads to the conclusion that in-school adolescents' access to the Internet enhances their exposure to sexually explicit contents. Also, exposures to such pornographic contents influence the developmental processes of these adolescents despite their motivations for use.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parents should make use of parental control software to monitor what their adolescent children do on the Internet. Companies now market new tools to track where children go online, who they meet there and what they do. Such parental control software includes Net Nanny, Family Time, OurPact, Norton Family Premier, Web Watcher etc. Parents can also block or control on an app-by-app basis, apply Internet filters, monitor calls and texts and keep an eye on contact lists.
- Parents should create time to go through the Internet browser history and photo galleries of their adolescents' phones from time to time and unannounced too.
- Since no filter is 100% effective, parents and teachers should establish an environment of open communication, where the adolescent is encouraged to take the lead in terms of their unpleasant experiences on the Internet. They should endeavour to discuss issues on sex and sexuality from an early age with their children since a majority of respondents submitted that they go to porn sites to satisfy their curiosity in some matters that they cannot discuss with their parents or teachers.
- Parents should discourage the use of mobile phones for their adolescent children. The Internet has potentials, and it is mostly used for homework by adolescents, there should be a desktop or laptop connected to the Internet and situated in a central place where these adolescents can do their assignments, thereby, making it less personalized.

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## **Abstract**

*This study examined youth's exposure and utilization of internet advertisements, in Awka metropolis, Anambra State. It adopted survey research design. The population of study includes all youth in Awka metropolis. An appropriate sample size of 400 was gotten from the population using probability sampling technique. Six research questions were used as primary data instrument. The finding shows that youths in Awka metropolis were exposed to the Internet advertisements, that majority of youths in Awka metropolis accessed internet advertisements mostly via their android/mobile phones. Also, WhatsApp is the social media platform that youths in Awka metropolis expose themselves to internet advertisements most; that social interaction drives Awka' youth to internet advertisements most, and their exposure to the Internet advertisements influenced them to buy and subscribe to advertised products and services. It is concluded that youths in Awka metropolis are not only exposed to Internet advertisements but also utilize them through buying and subscribing to the advertised products and services daily.*

**Keywords:** Awka metropolis, Exposure, Internet, Internet advertisements, Utilization, Youth

## **INTRODUCTION**

Internet is a medium of mass communication. With it, people can effectively communicate with one another, socialise, and transact businesses and services anytime, even from the comfort of their homes. This view is supported by McCarthy (2007), who posits that the world has been entirely permeated by information and communication technologies which now increasingly determine not only how humans communicate with each other but equally how they live their entire life.

Duru (2014, p. 7) defines Internet as a 'computer-based platform that enables the exchange of information among connected users worldwide', adding that its strength lies in its rich multi-media nature and inexhaustibility as well as the flexibility which it offers the user.

Agba (2001) further reiterates that uniqueness of internet is that it brings far greater information empowerment to humans. It could be because the Internet has continued to grow in popularity since its invention owing to availability of numerous technological devices used in accessing it such as desktop computers, laptop computers, mobile phones, palmtops, and



etc. Baran (2010) observes that Internet has become the most influential communicative force globally. His reason could be because the Internet helps people to live and relate effectively with their environments as well as to achieve economic, political, scientific and cultural aspirations.

According to Obiajulu (2008), access to the Internet is an essential variable in measuring social empowerment, enhancing one's active participation and self-assertion in the social milieu. Thus, Duru (2011) contends that sharing of texts, pictures, sounds, videos and graphics are parts of activities performed on the Internet.

This boils down to internet advertising or internet advertisements because they were placed on the Internet by identified persons with the aim of getting people to search and use them. Advertising is one prominent activity often carried out on the web with the primary purpose of attracting consumers (users) to buy products; goods and services. Thus, Nwodu (2017), while stressing that every media technology or content has a unique purpose it serves, describes advertising as a professional practice that involves the production of the commercial messages.

Statista (2018), an online United Kingdom weekly internet users reviewer adds e-mail, banking, communications, transactions, social media networking, news dissemination, watching of video clips and internet televisions, health, listening to internet radio/ audio services, government services, games upload and adding of content as forms of internet advertisements. There is no doubt that these various internet innovations gave rise to many internet or electronic terminologies like electronic mails (email), internet advertising, electronic books (e-Book), electronic journals (e-journals), to mention a few.

Adeleke (2016) further categorizes these internet advertising agents and products they market. The companies that deal on general merchandise or marketers of all kinds of goods and services are Jumia Nigeria, Konga, Dealdey, Yudala, Payports, Veonnet among others. Companies that deal on fashion and wears are Fashpa and Tracklist. The Glooing and others market groceries and food. Mall for Africa and others undertake delivery and logistics. The Dlx, Jijiing and others work for marketplaces. Also private property and property 24 companies are in real estate. Those in furniture are showrooming and furnishing. Sloting deals on electronics; Cheki Nigeria on automobile; while Wukan among others deal on travel. But there are also other internet platforms renowned for news dissemination, sports betting (Bet9ja, Nairabet), entertainment, etc.

Perhaps, this is why Deshwal (2016) posits that the rapid technological development and rise of Internet, new media and communication channels tremendously changed the advertisement business landscape. It has made it possible for people to largely depend on it (Internet) as the ultimate source of advertisements, information and communication. He gave types of online advertising as floating ads, expanding ads, wallpaper ads, trick banner ads, pop-up ads, pop-under ads. Others are, video advertising, advertising on social networks, mobile advertising, e-mail advertising, banner advertising, Google search advertising and a lot more.

McCoy, Galletta, Everard, Polak (2004) detailed some of the effects of these types of internet advertisements when they insisted that pop-up, pop-under, and in-line ads have essential effects on user perception and cognition. It could be why Li (2002, p. 2) posits "online



consumers are goal-oriented and perceive advertisements to be even more intrusive when viewed in other media”.

Among the world retinue of internet users are the youths, whom the United Nations (UN) classify as persons between the ages of 15 and 24; 18 to 35 by the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) (the 1999 Second National Youth Policy Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria, p. 6.). Salako and Tihamiyu (2007) see the young generation (youth) as the most prominent users of these internet advertising and other information.

Okoye (2014, p. 18) supports this position, “The Internet is a relatively young invention and naturally the young who are usually adventurous and enthusiastic are jumping into it. The possible reason is having access to and being trained on the Internet is a gateway to such empowerment given that the Internet is at the heart of communications today”.

Also, Duru (2014) argues that students constitute an important segment of these young internet users and potential users since they are being trained to succeed within an information-based society. Hence, training on Internet is naturally indispensable to their success in this endeavor. Goldsmith and Lafferty (2002), while studying students’ use of internet advertisements noted that consumer (students) response to ads on web sites and their influences on them are impressive.

Chaubey, Sharma and Pant (2013) claim that internet advertisements motivate consumers to patronize goods and services. Also, that most companies and industries prefer to use it for advertising their products rather than use other media platforms like radio, televisions, and newspapers. Their reason is that internet advertising is less expensive in terms of money, time and other resources usually expended on it, wider geographical reach, easy result measurement, more targeted audiences, speed, informative, smooth audience engagement and product branding.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- Find the rate Awka youths exposed themselves to internet advertisements.
- Find out the various devices through which youths in Awka metropolis access internet advertisements.
- Find out the social media platforms through which youths in Awka metropolis expose themselves to Internet advertisements.
- Determine the need gratifications that drive youths in Awka metropolis to expose themselves to internet advertisements.
- Find out the extent to which youths in Awka metropolis utilize internet advertisements.
- Find out if the utilization is as a result of their exposure to the Internet.

### **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**



This study applied Uses and Gratification and Technological Determinism theories. Both theories are to cover any lapses either of them could have while exploring youth's exposure and utilization of internet advertisements.

### **Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)**

Uses and Gratification theory is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media content to satisfy particular needs. Onuegbu (2016) describes it as an audience-centered approach to understanding mass communication. It was propounded in the 1940's, when researchers became interested in why people engaged in various forms of media behaviour, such as radio listening or newspaper reading. These early studies were primarily descriptive, seeking to classify the responses of audience members into meaningful categories.

Uses and Gratification theory was used in this research because researchers, who use the approach theory, assume that audience members are aware of the impact of the media, and can articulate their reasons for consuming various media content. Herzog (1944) identified three types of gratification associated with listening to radio soap operas to include emotional release, wishful thinking, and obtaining advice.

According to McQuail (1983), this theory suggests that audience attitude toward media behaviour is an essential factor in media use, adding that original conception of its approach is based on the research for explaining the great appeal of specific media contents. In the mass communication process, uses and gratifications approach puts the function of linking need gratifications and media choice clearly on the side of audience members. That is, the Uses and Gratification theory is concerned with audience response to media contents such as advertising, news, etc. in the society) and tension free needs (use of the media as a means of escapism and to relief from tension).

However, Levy and Windahl (1984) add that there are many antecedent variables such as media structure, media technology, social circumstances, psychological variables, needs, values, and beliefs that all relate to the particular gratification pattern used by the audience. On his part, Swanson (1987) suggested that researchers should focus on (1) the role of gratification seeking in exposure to mass media, (2) the relationship between satisfaction and the interpretive frames through which audiences understand media content, and (3) the link between pleasure and media content.

### **Technological Determinism Theory (TDT)**

Technological Determinism theory believes that growing technologies shape man's feelings, actions and thoughts. It was propounded by Marshal McLuhan in 1962, who believed that human beings act, learn, feel and think the way they do as a result of the messages they receive through the current technologies as the society moves from one technological age to another. Historically, these technologies started with the print (books, newspapers, magazines, etc.) to the radio, television, and currently, the Internet. That is, the current society believes, feels, learn and act in consonance with what they gather from these modern technological advancements. They were developed by humans, controlled by humans; yet they control humans. Thus Culkin (1967) says that users shape these tools, and they in turn shape the users



Webster (2017) says though there are different accounts of technological determinism, a view often associated with it is the technological imperative which involves rhetoric and underlying assumptions. He opines that technology has a controlling influence that is inevitable and unstoppable. It was further bolstered by Canole (2007,) who claimed that the introduction of new technologies has transformed the society.

Webster (2017) opines that educational technology leaders have an ideological orientation to technical change, and believed that it has an absolute autonomy and in charge in the society. Webster concludes that technological determinist assumptions and the technical imperative such as normative and unintended consequences were alive, well and significant in people's thinking. However, Goguen (2000,) while studying the social aspects of technology and science, said technological determinism is an autonomous force that changes society.

These theories are relevant to this study in that Uses and Gratification plays out in the advertisements while Internet is a major technology that drives all aspect of global business and undertakings.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

Over the years, some researchers all over the world focused on youth exposure and utilization of internet advertisements. This section reviews three works of these researchers and their findings.

Padon, et. al.(2018)investigated Alcohol brand use of youth appealing advertising.The researchers further tested the association between the youth-appeal of marketing content of televised alcohol advertisements and the brand-specific alcohol consumption of both underage youth and adults.

The finding shows that brand CAY scores were (a) positively associated with brand-specific youth consumption after controlling for adult brand consumption; (b) positively associated with a ratio of youth-to adult brand-specific consumption, and; (c) not associated with adult brand consumption. It therefore, concludes that alcohol brands with youth-appealing advertising are consumed more often by youth than adults.

Gupta, et.al. (2017) studied the association between exposure to social media alcohol marketing and youth alcohol use behaviours in India and Australia. The study objective was to discover if young people aged 13 and 25 are exposed to, interact with social networking sites-based alcohol marketing and their level of alcohol consumption (use).

It discovered that India and Australia have different alcohol consumption features due to variations in socio-cultural norms. In India, it found that 35% of youths consume 1/3 of alcoholic drinks every day due to online alcohol advertisements they are exposed, whereas 45% of youths in Australia do the same thing. The teenagers drinking habits increase in both countries as a result of their exposure to alcohol advertisements on Internet.

Bakare, Owusu, and Abdurrahman, (2017) researched on the behaviour response of the Nigerian youths toward mobile advertising: An examination of the influence of values, attitudes and culture. The findings are that the youths are exposed to internet advertisements and also utilize them for their behaviors diverse needs.





The above literature shows that people expose themselves to internet advertisements and utilize them. However, information on Awka resident youths on the subject is not known. Therefore, this work seeks to examine the rate Awka youth expose themselves to and use internet advertisements.

## METHOD

The research design for this study is descriptive research. Akubilo (2003, p. 58) says that a descriptive analysis collects data when the issue involved is related to opinion, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. The researchers chose the questionnaire as the instrument of measurement. It is appropriate for this study because it seeks to study 'Youth exposure and utilization of Internet advertisements' in Awka metropolis.

Awka, the capital of Anambra State, is the area of the study. A sample size of 400 was selected and the researcher's adopted probability sampling. Instrument for data collection was the questionnaire used to answer the research questions. The questionnaire was divided into two, section A and section B. The section A seeks to elicit information regarding the respondents' bio-data, and the B section asked questions bordering on the research questions and objectives.

Thus, these researchers adopted structured or a close-ended questionnaire. It was chosen because it is a data collection tool mostly suited for descriptive surveys like this. This research instrument adopted was validated by three experts in communication.

## RESULTS

The method of data analysis used in this research was frequency tables and simple percentages. A total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire was administered and returned.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Characteristics

Response/category	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	213	53%
Female	187	47%
Total	400	100%
Age		
18-20 years	79	20%
21-25 years	94	23%
26-30 years	99	25%
31-35 years	128	32%
Total	400	100%
Education		
O/L and FSLC	161	40%
OND/NCE	102	26%
HND/BSc	123	31%
MSC/PhD	14	3%
Total	400	100%
Marital Statues		



Single	221	55%
Married	131	26%
Divorced	25	31%
Widow/widower	23	6%
Total	400	100%

Table 1 on the demographic characteristics of the respondents show that 53% (n=213) of them were male while 47% (n=187) were female. Male respondents were more than female respondents because males seemed to have more interest in internet business.

The age characteristics of the respondents indicates that about 20% of them (n= 79) were between the ages of 18 – 20 years. Those whose age bracket ranged from 21-25 years were about 23% (n= 94); the age bracket between 26 -30 years were about 25% (n= 99) while the age bracket between 31- 35 were about 32% (n= 128). The age brackets 31-35 were more in number.

Educational attainment of the respondents shows that majority of them were ordinary level / First school leaving certificate holders and HND/BA/BSC holders (n=161 or 40%, and n=123 or 31% respectively). However, OND/NCE holders account for 31% (n= 123), while MSc and PhD holders were about 3% (n= 14).

Marital status of the respondents shows that 55% (n= 221) of them were single, 33% (n= 131) were married, 6% (n= 15 and n= 23) were divorced and widow/widowers respectively. The singles were the majority because they seem to be more among the youth.

Occupational distribution of the respondents shows that majority of them were students and public servants (n= 163 or 41% and 151 or 37% respectively). However, business men / women accounted for 23% (n= 83) while artisans/technicians constitute 1% (n= 3)

Table 2: Respondents Exposure to Internet

Exposure to Internet	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Once a day	144	36%
About three times a day	73	18%
Once in a week	166	42%
I do not expose myself at all	17	4%
Total	400	100%

Data in table 2 indicate that 144 respondents representing 36% expose themselves to Internet once every day; 73 (18%) respondents are exposed to it about three times every day, 166 (42%) respondents are exposed to internet once every week, while 17 (4%) respondents did not expose themselves to the internet. As a result, 383 respondents who are exposed to internet were used subsequently for the study.

Table 3: Respondents' Exposure to Internet Advertisements

Exposure to internet advertisement	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Once in a day	120	32%
About three times a day	105	27%
Once a week	151	39%



I do not expose myself at all	7	2%
Total	383	100%

In the table 3 above, out of 383 respondents that expose themselves to internet advertisements, 120 representing 31% exposed themselves to internet advertisements every day; 105 (27%) expose themselves to internet advertisements about three times a day. Also, 151 (39%) expose themselves to the internet advertisements once every week; while 7 (2%) did not expose themselves to internet advertisements. People who were expose one in a week were in the majority.

Table 4: *Devices Respondents use in accessing Internet Advertisements*

The device often used in accessing the internet advertisements	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Laptop	83	22%
Android/mobile phone	136	36%
Palmtop	70	19%
Desktop computers	87	23%
Total	376	100%

Table 4 above indicates that out of 376 respondents who exposed themselves to internet advertisements. About 83 respondents representing 22% used laptop computers in accessing advertisements on the internet; 136 (36%) used android/mobile phones. Also 70 (19%) respondents used palmtop; while 87 (23%) used desktop computers to access the internet for advertisements. Respondents who used android/mobile phone to access the advertisement are in the majority.

Table 5: *Types of Internet advertisements respondents were exposed to*

Type of Internet advertisement exposed to	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Audio/Visual	92	24%
Texts	99	26%
Pictures/Images	98	26%
Graphics animations/cartoons	87	24%
Total	376	100%

In the table 5 above, out of 376 respondents that participated in the study, 92 representing 24% were either exposed to audio or video advertisements on Internet; 99 (26%) respondents are expose to texts advertisement on Internet; 98 (26%) respondents were expose to internet pictures and images advertisements; while 87 (24%) respondents were expose to internet graphics and cartoons advertisements. Respondents who were exposed to texts and pictures/images tied together.

Table 6: *Internet Platforms Respondents were exposed to advertisements*

Internet platforms I mostly view Advertisements	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Facebook	66	18%
YouTube	58	15%



Twitter	53	14%
Instagram	29	8%
WhatsApp	102	27%
Websites	31	8%
Blogs	37	10%
Total	376	100%

Data in table 6 above indicate the internet platforms youths in Awka metropolis expose themselves to advertisements most. They are as follow; Facebook had a record of 66 respondents representing 18%, YouTube 58 (15%) respondents, Twitter 53 (14%) respondents, Instagram 29 (8%) respondents, WhatsApp 102 (27%) respondents, Websites 31 (8%) respondents, and blogs 37 (10%) respondents. The respondents used Whatsapp platform more than any other platform.

Table 7: *Reasons Youth in Awka Metropolis access Internet Advertisements*

Reasons to access internet advertisements	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Information	81	22%
Education	98	26%
Entertainment	87	23%
Social interaction	110	29%
Total	376	100%

Data in the table 7 above, reveal that out of 376 respondents (100%) that participated in the study, 81 representing 22% access internet advertisements for information, 98 (26%) respondents access it for education; 87 (23%) respondents for entertainment, and 110 (29%) respondents access it for social interaction. Respondents for social interaction are in the majority.

Table 8: *Youth in Awka Metropolis Utilisation of Internet Advertisements*

Utilization of internet advertisements for	Frequency	Percentages (%)
To know of new products in the markets	91	24%
To know how to use some products	97	26%
To buy some products	96	26%
To share some products or ideas with family and friends	92	24%
Total	376	100%

Data in table 8 above showed 91 (24%) of respondents utilize internet advertisements to ascertain new products in the markets. It helps 97 (26%) of respondents to understand how to use some products; helps 96 (26%) of respondents to buy some products. Also, it helps 92 (24%) of respondents to share some products/marketing ideas with family and friends.

Table 9: *Internet Advertisements Influence and Utilization of Advertised Products*



Internet advertisements and utilization of internet advertised products	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Attracting me to buy or venture into a trade or services	101	27%
Increased my rate of buying or subscribing to products/services	118	31%
Decreased my rate of buying or subscribing to products or services	48	13%
Made me an expert or addict to products or services	109	29%
Total	376	100%

Data in table 9 above indicate how advertised products on the internet influenced the respondents' rate of utilization of advertised products. About 101 (27%) were attracted to buy or venture into a trade or services. Also 118 (31%) respondents had their buying and subscribing to products or services increased. It decrease the rate of buying or subscribing to products or services of 48 (13%) respondents; and it made 109 (29%) respondent experts or addicted to products and services.

## DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study revealed that many respondents exposed themselves to internet advertisements. Thus 120 (30%) exposed themselves to it once in a day; 105 (27%) respondents about three times a day and 151 (39%) respondents once in a week. The outcome is in line with Erinn, Onuiri and Omoniyi (2016) whose descriptive survey research on Attitude of Social Media Users to Internet Advertising shows youth's exposure in the majority. Also Holmberg (2011) in observational and explorative study discovered Children's exposure to online advertising.

On the devices used by the youth to access internet advertising 83 (22%) respondents used laptop, 136 (36%) respondents used android/mobile phone, 70 (19%) respondents used palmtop and 87 (23%) respondents used desktop computers. It indicates that youths in Awka metropolis used android/mobile phones most in accessing the internet advertisements. It corroborates the findings of Edegoh, Anunike and Nwagbara (2015) whose survey research work, Patterns of online media exposure among young people in Anambra State shows that majority of the respondents accessed the web through cell phone/handset.

On the social media platforms the youths were exposed to internet advertisements. The finding indicate that WhatsApp has 102 (27%) respondents; Facebook, 66 (18%) respondents; Youtube, 58 (15%) respondents among others. Findings from the study is that WhatsApp group chats took the lead. It differs from Gupta, Lam, Pettigrew and Tait (2018) whose cross-sectional (online survey) revealed that, association between exposure to social media alcohol marketing and youth alcohol use behaviours in India and Australia uncovered that the internet platforms where youths expose themselves to advertisements mostly are on YouTube. Similarly, in Asa (2013), Children and advertising on social media websites, conducted in the





United Kingdom, 90% of respondents reported exposure to advertisements on Facebook. The reasons for the dissimilarities are locations and time of research. This study was conducted in Nigeria in 2018; the others were done in Australia and United Kingdom in 2018 and 2013 respectively.

Another finding of this study showed that the main gratification that made Awka Youths to expose themselves to the internet advertisements was social interaction. The need for information has 81 (22%) respondents, education has 98 (26%); entertainment has 87 (23%) respondents and social interaction 110 (29%) respondents. It supports Wu and Li (2017) in a study of effects of mass media exposure and social network site involvement on risk perception of and precautionary behaviour toward the Haze issue in China. They discovered that youths exposed themselves to online platforms and advertisements to communicate with other users (social interaction) more than any other need.

Also, another finding of this study in Table 8 is that Awka residents utilize internet advertisements mostly for direction on how to use the product. This finding is in line with Musa (2016) whose survey research, "How Kano State residents utilize Internet advertisements" discovered that the majority use internet advertisements to discover new and existing products in the market; this is followed by those that were taught how to use some products.

Another findings is the internet advertisements influenced youths in Awka metropolis by *attracting them* to buy or venture into trade or services (101 respondents representing 27%); This agrees with the finding of Acharya, Khanal, Singh, Adhikari, and Gautam (2015), who discovered that the more the youths are aware of something, the more they patronise or get involved in it.

## CONCLUSION

The study therefore, concludes that Awka Youths are not only exposed to internet advertisements but also utilized them through buying and subscribing to the products and services advertised.

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## **SOCIAL MEDIA AND FAKE NEWS ON CORONA VIRUS: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

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### **Abstract**

*Social media is the 21st-century media that has given every user an equal opportunity to publish news without passing through any form of gatekeeping, editorial, or professional scrutiny. This means that it has become a natural home for the spread of fake news even on the recent coronavirus with its consequent health implications. The authors deployed available materials and literature to discuss the burning issues surrounding fake news as misleading information on social media, especially how social media has become a natural home for fake news on coronavirus. More so, this paper reviewed the literature on the effects of fake news on coronavirus and then motivations for sharing fake news online as a way to provide a start-off point for an understanding of why social media misinformation on Corona virus has spread. The authors concluded by presenting a gap in literature, in addition to a research agenda for studies on the spread of health-related disinformation in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Fake news, Corona Virus, Social Media, Misinformation

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sharing and commenting on trending news on social networks, without taking time to verify its authenticity, have become habits synonymous with the news engagement patterns of social media users. Originators of misinformation on different social media platforms often do this to drive conversations, alter perceptions, and also draw followership for their ideology. The motivations for peddling misinformation can also be monetary gains, or even to influence expectations about the state of the world like in the case of Pentagon's Military Analysts Program (Barstow, 2008; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015; Foerster, 2017).

Social media is the 21st-century media that enable interactivity from person to many. Its introduction gave equal opportunity for everyone to be a citizen journalist. However, this



affordance comes with its pros and cons in the dissemination of information. Facts and unverified information are transmitted at the same time to millions of social media users.

Due to the proliferation and widespread use of social media platforms, traditional journalism faces a challenge with regard to who reports the scoop. In any case, research has shown that social media has been used to disseminate all sorts of unverified information with unprecedented speed, while the traditional journalist scampers for facts (Gelfert, 2018). As Ireton and Posetti (2018) argue, digital media has lowered the barrier to entering the information market place and that the sharing of articles on social media platforms such as Facebook displaces many of the traditional markers of traditional journalism (including visual markers as professional layout, an official masthead, comprehensive coverage, etc.). Undoubtedly, the recent COVID-19 pandemic seems to have deepened the discourse around health-related fake news, further raising concerns about its implications to public health. Referring to how fake news propagated online has worsened the pandemic, Director-General of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated that the world was not just fighting a pandemic, but also an “infodemic”, the global epidemic of deliberate dissemination of false information or misinformation which could involve various forms of reconfiguration, where existing and often true information is twisted, recontextualised, or reworked, or labelled as true or as being something other than they are, especially online (Mesquita, Oliveira, Seixas & Paes, 2020; Wardle, 2017).

This paper reviews the literature on fake news on Corona virus with particular emphasis on the disinformation that linked Corona virus with 5G network and the assertions that some notable philanthropists have supported the distribution of infected face masks for use in Africa. It also reviews available literature on the effects of fake news on Corona virus, in addition to motivations for engagement with fake news to provide a start-off to an understanding of why misinformation on Corona virus has spread rapidly, and to set a research agenda for related Nigerian studies.

### **CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19): AN OVERVIEW**

Corona virus or COVID-19 is the infectious disease which is caused by the most recently discovered Corona virus originating from Wuhan in China. This virus was reported to the WHO Country office in China on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. However, the outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Subsequently, on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020, the World Health Organization announced a name for the new Corona virus disease (COVID-19). Following the outbreak, the World Health Organization reported that it took to work 24/7 to analyze data, provide advice, coordinate with partners, help countries prepare, increase supplies, and manage expert networks.

According to the World Health Organization reports on COVID-19, most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild or moderate respiratory illness and recover without special treatment. Besides, people who are older, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes and cancer are most likely to develop severe illness. More so, since there is currently no specific vaccines for COVID-19 (though there are on-going clinical trials to evaluate potential therapies for the virus), the organization states that the best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the virus with regard to its symptoms, how it spreads and protective measures. As protection against infection, regular washing of hands, the use of alcohol-based





sanitizers. Furthermore, people have been advised to avoid touching their faces and to practice respiratory etiquette (for example, coughing into a flexed elbow) to prevent transmission through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose whenever an infected person coughs or sneezes (WHO, 2020). Some of these existing reliable information coming from the world's apex health body is what in the views of Wardle (2017) have been twisted, recontextualised, or reworked online.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AS HOME FOR FAKE NEWS ON CORONA VIRUS**

With the social media, local issues can gain global prominence through online campaigns. As online tools, they offer a plethora of global platforms for the dissemination of information and opinion and also facilitate social interactions between individuals and organizations (Botha & Mills, 2012). In the current Corona virus (COVID-19) scenario, social media platforms are disseminating all sorts of information globally. While the World Health Organization (WHO) and several health organizations are regularly posting and updating awareness and guidelines across a plethora of online platforms (WHO, 2020), disinformation on the disease has also been disseminated on these platforms. Sharing of misleading information is not new, and has regrettably accelerated the spread of medical misinformation in today's digital world (Perakslis & Califf, 2019). For the spread of disinformation on Corona virus in particular, most stories on social media have been identified as fake news by the regulatory agencies (BBC, 2020).

Indeed, social media has become a platform for the dissemination of rumours and deliberate misinformation, and many are using social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and YouTube, and to create a state of panic and confusion as false misleading, or false medical advice can travel around the world before anyone has a chance to correct it (Charlton, 2020). Currently, the world is challenged by an unprecedented crisis of public understanding, and such social media platforms as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, are at the center of it.

Interestingly, the dissemination of misinformation on social media can either be intentional or accidental and can spread quickly as anybody can say almost anything to anyone, with billions of individuals online daily. The spread has become heightened with multiple digital sources without editorial rules which can easily be trusted or taken seriously by social media users (Armstrong & Naylor, 2019). These platforms can be used to facilitate as well as multiply Covid-19- related misinformation, and unfortunately, misleading posts have become popular than the ones that disseminate accurate and relevant public health information about diseases (Sharma et al., 2017). The nature of social media makes for easy sharing of information, and unlike traditional news outlets, there is no filter, no fact-checking, and often a lot of bias.

Notably, most fake news on Corona virus have centred on various conspiracy theories, resulting in a plethora of incorrect ways of looking at the situation. There are unfounded views that the virus is a biological weapon, created either by the United States (to destroy China) or China (to destroy American) in other to take over world power from America and initiate a new world order. There are also views that COVID-19 is the likely by-product of Chinese foods, like bat soups among other foods, More so, messages on unverified home remedies like the use of Vitamin C, turmeric, cow urine, etc., to mention a few, have all been disseminated on social media.



However, in today's scenario, social media can also be responsibly and effectively utilized to disseminate regular, consistent and reliable information to achieve clarity and awareness to eliminate confusion and panic. As the fastest way to share news, social media provide access to Covid-19 news, create awareness on the virus and also draw attention to related misinformation coming in from individual states and different parts of the world to everyone who can gain from the information provided. Government officials and public leaders who are dealing with the global health crisis daily have provided accurate, scientific information regularly in combating misinformation and rumour. More so, WHO and other relevant public health organizations have utilized the social media as a platform for prompt dissemination of information about the outbreak to the public to control panic created by the misinformation being circulated in the social media.

Unfortunately, governments or health bodies may not always be able to respond with accurate and timely information due to various reasons. Sometimes, the evidence needed to support statements and arguments, and the standards concerned with how and why people are socially responsible for what they say is ignored. Due to the abundance of information in the digital age, it becomes difficult for people to identify truthful and trustworthy sources from false or misleading ones, and the inability of concerned authorities and experts to handle the situation has made them lose their legitimacy among the public. Therefore, social media users continue to rely on discredited misinformation (Rich & Zaragoza, 2016).

On their part, social media websites are trying to curtail the activities of the originators of misinformation. Tools to effectively prevent the spreading of false news are utilized by the ICT giants, who are skilled in censorship. Initially, social media companies did not pay a lot of attention to checking content published on their platforms. However, over the years, they have designed a set of efficient automated and human-driven processes to edit, promote or filter published content, as these platforms have become primary sources of information for a large number of the user (Yaraghi, 2019). To dispel harmful misconceptions, developers of various social media, like WeChat, are using fact-checking platforms. More so, western social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have also made efforts to ensure the amplification of right and trustable sources. People are now more unlikely to be exposed to unfounded assertions when they search for the word 'Corona virus' on these social media platforms. However, the volume of content on social media could make it impossible to edit every aspect of the content, just like in the traditional media. With no perfect set-up or filtering algorithm, many originators of disinformation now capitalize on the trending Corona virus situation.

The impact of fake news on social media platforms, during an outbreak, can be said to be more profound. Therefore, to control emerging pandemics, there is need for unique health communication and education plans by public health agencies to meet the information needs of the public regarding possible risks and preventive measures, while eliminating dramatization and exaggeration of risk (Strekalova, 2016). Social media can be useful in this regard as it can facilitate the structural, psychological, and resource empowerment processes in communities in ways that can help them achieve shared identification, group participation, and collective control (Leong, Pan, Rackham, & Kaewkitipong, 2015). Generally, combating the spread of misinformation on Corona virus requires research that will help to understand



the origin and the range of misinformation. This will facilitate well-coordinated plans that will help disrupt sources of this information in a way that can reduce its dissemination.

### **OF 5G CORONA VIRUS AND INFECTED FACE MASKS**

Recently, the cause of Corona virus was linked to the fifth- generation of internet (5G) which is the next generation of mobile broadband technology (Oyewale, 2015) that will eventually replace, or at least augment the 4G LTE connection. With 5G, internet users will experience exponentially faster download and upload speeds. The time it takes devices to communicate with wireless networks will also decrease drastically with the use of 5G. Unlike LTE, 5G operates on three different spectrum bands which can dramatically improve efficiency in everyday internet use. It can, for example, support user download speeds of 100Mbps and uploads speeds of 50Mbps and support the connection of 1 million devices per square kilometre in a way that can power the Internet of Things (IoT) (Dahiya, 2017).

Some 5G conspiracy theorists argue that the newly developed network generates radio frequency radiation that can damage DNA and lead to cancer and premature ageing. They also contend that the network can disrupt cell metabolism, and potentially lead to other diseases through the generation of stress proteins, and Corona virus in particular by weakening the immune system. In fact, a notable Nigerian Bishop took to social media in a protest against the installation of 5G network in Nigeria. Though it had not been proven that 5G network is responsible for Corona virus pandemic, originators of fake news disseminated stories online that suggest that 5G network has a direct causal link with Corona virus (Adelakun, 2020).

With the increased panic associated with the pandemic, there were also assertions that some notable philanthropists have supported the distribution of infected face masks for use in African. This news trended in videos, pictures, and audio voice messages on Whatsapp and Facebook. However, it was evident that these messages were in fact fake news.

### **MOTIVATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH FAKE NEWS**

The motivations for fake news production and dissemination have been a focus of research, and emanating literature is reviewed in this paper for an understanding of why individuals would want to engage with fake news on Corona virus as found on social media. Notably, there seems to be an academic consensus that, generally, the main motivations behind fake news production are commercial, political, or ideological (Hirst, 2017). On the one hand, the commercial motivations refer to the creation and dissemination of misinformation to increase the readership of a news website and consequently get more advertising revenues (Allcott & Gentzko, 2016). For instance, in the 2016 US elections, fake news was created by teenagers in a town in Macedonia just for economic incentives. They stated that publishing pro-Trump content helped them generate more advertising revenue (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

On the other hand, the other motivation can be referred to as ideological, based on the manipulation and defamation of individuals to damage their public image. In this case, the objective of the originators of misinformation is to empower the individuals they favour through false information that can change public opinion. One vivid example of this phenomenon was experienced in July 2016 when the website *wtoe5news.com* published an article alleging that Pope Francis supported Donald Trump's presidential



candidacy (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The news was shared on Facebook more than one million times and many people perceived it as true. More so, in a study conducted by Chadwick and Vaccari (2019), labour supporters and those adhering to left-wing ideological beliefs were more likely to share inaccurate news. Similarly, Petersen, Osmundsen and Arcenau (2018) also argue that the motivations behind sharing false rumour online can be partisan – to mobilize against a political opponent – or as a way to challenge the whole political system and mobilize receivers of the disinformation against a particular political setting. Drawing on data from a study conducted in the US and Denmark, Petersen and his colleagues found the latter to be the overriding psychological motivation underpinning the sharing of false news.

More so, some other scholars have found that the social identity of the audience can be a factor that can influence their sharing of information on social media generally. Bigman et al. (2019), for instance, found that race influences how young social media users select exposure to social media news. Black students in their study reported ‘both seeing and posting more content about race on social media’. In addition, findings from their study showed that an orientation towards civic participation or purpose can be a motivation for sharing information on social media. Britons in particular, as shown in their study, stated that they shared information online to express their feelings; inform others, and find out other people’s opinions.

Furthermore, Duffy, Tandoc and Ling (2019) found that individuals shared news online to cope with uncertainty, build relationships, and enhance themselves. Sharing news, according to Duffy et al. (2019), is seen as an effort toward contributing to social cohesion. According to the scholars, users doing so are motivated by the emotional impact the news is seen to have, as well as the relevance it might have for the receiver, and the sender’s intention to provide advice or warning. Therefore, the trend of sharing ‘fake news’, according to Duffy et al. (2019) is regarded as a sign of trust between the sender and recipient. For them, what is shared is more than just news or information; it is also a signifier of trust and mutuality.

The motivation to inform others corroborates the findings of Chakrabarti et al. (2018) who seem to be some of the few researchers that have explored audiences’ interaction with “fake news” in the African context. Their study explores three reasons that can help explain the sharing of “fake news” in Kenya and Nigeria. First, as findings from their study showed, there is the desire to be “in the know” socially, so sharing disinformation becomes a form of social currency. Second, as the findings from their study also showed, there is a sense of civic duty that might lead users of social media to share warnings of an imminent crisis or disaster. For the scholars, even if the information might turn out to be false, the harm caused by not informing others may be perceived as outweighing that of informing them. Third, there is the sense that information is just democratic and therefore needs to be shared (Chakrabarti et al. 2018).

Interestingly, another study on the spread of ‘fake news’ in the African context, (Wasserman & Morales, 2019) established a link between lack of trust in the news media and the sharing of disinformation. It was found in the study that there is a significant relationship between high levels of perceived exposure to misinformation and low levels of media trust. This corresponds with similar findings elsewhere (Chadwick & Vaccari, 2019 in the British



context) that suggest that the widespread sharing of false news may signify a growing cynicism about the accuracy of news in general.

Interestingly also, the consumption of fake news has been attributed to a general distrust and cynicism about the credibility of the news ecosystem as a whole (Wagner & Boczkowski, 2019). According to the authors, the fake news debate echoes against a backdrop of low trust in public institutions. This, according to them, is arguably one of the reasons the term has strongly resonated with many people who have used it to criticize individuals in authority, especially politicians who tell lies.

More so, in the African context, other cultural influences like the long-standing importance of informal sources of information such as gossip, rumour, and satire (Nyamnjoh, 2005) can be said to play a further role in the likelihood of social media users to share fake news. In addition, apart from cultural influences such as the long-standing importance attached to informal sources of information such as gossip, rumour and satire which has aided the spread of fake news, the long history of an untrustworthy news media often owned or captured by the state or social elites, has given rise to strong alternative channels of news and information on which fake news may thrive in the African context (Wasserman & Morales 2019).

#### **EFFECTS OF FAKE NEWS ON CORONA VIRUS**

Research has also focused on the effects of fake news on Corona virus. Unarguably, the effect of fake news on Corona virus lies in the fact that there are social media users who believe it. Unfortunately, there is evidence that 70% of the global population globally believe that the cause of Corona virus disease was the introduction of 5G networks and this means that fake news in a broader term sounds truthful until it is debunked.

Research findings show that misinformation on COVID-19 has promoted misperceptions among people in a way that causes panic and poses serious health issues. The deliberate spread of online health-related misinformation on COVID-19 was, for example, responsible for the methanol poisoning recorded in Iran (an Islamic country with strict restrictions on alcohol consumption) in March 2020, where 2100 Iranians ingested alcohol after exposure to social media messages that suggested they could prevent being infected by the virus by so doing. About 900 of the alcohol-poisoned patients were admitted into the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) out of which 296 died (Soltaninejad, 2020).

Worse still, social media users' vulnerability to false information increases as they increasingly rely on social media as a source of news. A Pew survey showed that 62% of American adults get news from social media sites such as Facebook (Gottfried & Shearer 2017), which played an essential role in the spread of fake news on the Corona virus pandemic.

#### **GAP IN LITERATURE**

Findings from the reviewed literature show that social media has become natural home for fake news on Corona virus and that its spread has negative effects on public health. However, there seems to be a paucity of research on the effects of social media fake news on Corona virus among social media users in Nigeria, in addition to the reasons why they would engage with such news.





More so, generally, there seems to be a paucity of research that deconstructs how social media audience receive fake news since communication is one thing and reception is another. In addition, there seems to be a paucity of findings on how demographic and social factors could influence the spread and motivation for engagement with social media fake news on Corona virus, and by extension, health-related fake news. Therefore, this paper proposes a research agenda for studies on the spread of social media fake news in Nigeria based on these gaps in literature.

## CONCLUSION

Although social media has increased the visibility of citizen journalists (Hermida, 2010), it has also led to the increased visibility and impact of both true and false information (Mendoza, Poblete & Castillo, 2010). In response to health-related crisis, governments and health organizations more often than not make use of social media as opposed to traditional media (Kim & Liu, 2012). Unfortunately, despite the efforts made by these bodies to direct the public towards reliable sources for verified information and updates, health-related misinformation has thrived on social media.

In the new media age of inter-connectedness, misinformation related to the Covid-19 pandemic has spread to millions of people globally, and unfortunately, misinformation seems to spread much faster than operators of social media platforms can contain or control. Though some contents are explaining the actual situation, they are countered by a large number of false information or misinformation that misguides the public who are unaware of the real situation. Worse still, people often find it difficult to differentiate the truth from the misinformation on social media, and being the most common, quickest, and easiest way of accessing information sources, they increasingly rely on it for information (Ruohan & Suh, 2015).

However, social media can also offer the best platforms to disseminate information if users of different social network sites transmit information from credible sources. For the dissemination of false information and fake news to be nipped in the bud, social media users need to refrain from disseminating inaccurate information and endeavour to verify and check the credibility of data to reduce the spread of health-related misinformation.

Based on the reviewed literature and identified gap, we propose a research agenda for studies on the spread of health-related disinformation in Nigeria. Researchers should first determine what Nigerian audience tag as fake news and their consumption patterns in view of the high ascendancy of fake news on COVID-19. They should also explore what motivates them to consume this news. More so, it is necessary to deconstruct how audience in Nigeria receive fake news on COVID-19 and other health issues since communication is one thing and reception is another. In addition, there is a need to explore the demographic and social/cultural factors that influence engagement with fake news on COVID-19 and other health issues.

Furthermore, since available findings on audience engagement with fake news on social media have been mostly derived from quantitative methods like survey, Nigerian studies can benefit from such qualitative methods as participant observation and scroll back method (Robards & Lincoln 2017) for in-depth findings on how social media users engage with fake news on COVID-19 and other related health issues. It is expected that findings from this





study would guide the designing and dissemination of tailored or targeted health information to ensure effectiveness.

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## **A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE USE ON FACEBOOK: A STUDY OF *PREMIUM TIMES* NEWS HEADLINES**

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### **Abstract**

*Attaining national unity and cohesion is a function of deliberate strategic plans of different facets of human endeavour in a nation. The language front has important role to play in fostering national unity and cohesion in any country. The Nigeria and Africa situation is not an exception. The chaos and rivalry that have become an intrinsic experience for us in Nigeria and in fact, Africa is partly a function of careless and unchecked language use in the social media. This paper, therefore, explores the use and misuse of language on social media. The study examines the comments of Facebook users to online news headlines posted on Premium Times Facebook handle. A corpus of a week screenshot samples of these comments are collected out of which nine (9) were purposively selected for the analysis. These nine (9) data are grouped into five (5) texts. The selected data were analysed using Dell Hymes' Ethnography of Speaking complemented by Theo van Leeuwen's Identities and Subjectivity Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The paper uses the SPEAKING acronym as the theoretical insight and discussion was based on the postulations of the*



*CDA model adopted. The study found that the responses from readers are mostly tilting towards their individual affiliations. Also, instances of arguments and rebuttals by readers reflect a situation where the polarity tilts in bidirectional positive in-group - "us" and negative out-group – "them" among the different affiliations the users represent. The study further found that copious use of vulgar expressions pervades the comments of readers. This study therefore concludes that such use of language cannot help Nigeria and Africa in its quest for unity. The study recommends that media literacy be taught in schools in order to entrench civility in the discussions of people on social media.*

**Keywords:** Language use, National Unity, Social Media, Ideologies, Identities

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a unique gift from God. Language covers all aspects of our daily thoughts and endeavours. It is one unique feature that differentiates human beings from other creatures on earth. Several attempts have been made to define and describe language by scholars, Crystal and Davy (1987), describe language as the conventional and systematic use of signs, sounds or written symbols in a society, for communicative purposes and human expression. Good language is that which is suitable and adaptive in a given communicative situation (communicative competence). It is that which assists in achieving a meeting of minds with listeners and does not detract from the thought. Good language is language that serves to unify the speaker, the message and audience. It is language which gets the derived effect with the least friction and difficulty for the user. Chilton and Schaffner (1997), is of the opinion that language is the universal capacity of humans in all societies to communicate, a succinct description which is intriguing and at the same time very much relevant to this quest is given by Adedimeji (2010, p. 3) which says that "language mainly serves to form (or deform), inform, reform and transform man and his society all of which are harmonious with the goal of politics, making the two concepts symbiotic".

Language plays a prominent role in unifying people. Ashcroft (2001) opines that language is a model through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated and the medium through which conceptions of truth order and reality becomes established. Language is a tool for constructing social realities. Halliday (2004) in his classical treatise opines that language plays three functions that are intertwined which are captured as Ideational Meta-function. The author believes that people's material world, world of inner consciousness and their world of symbolisation are constructed and reflected by the use of language. The way language functions in the social media reflect how language has shaped people's social realities, and this has entrenched disunity over time. It is true that the problem of disunity is historical in Nigeria; cautious use of language is potent in curbing the escalation of verbal insults that pervades social media. Van Dijk, (1993, 1998, 2008b) discussed the power of language and the way it results in particular social cognition. He describes social cognition as how the media influence people's thought.

The Facebook platform has witnessed pockets of verbal exchanges over the past decades. Users haul insults at one another at the slightest provocation. Because of the absence of laws which are used to regulate the use of this platform, the misuse of language has become common place on Facebook. This study, therefore, explores the use and abuse of language on the Facebook environment with a view to evaluate the use of and misuse of language by Facebook users and the ideologies that underpin such usages. This study hopes to reveal the extent to which Nigerians have slumped into chauvinistic attitudes which if not nipped at the



bud, a state of anarchy will be inevitable. The reasons the government officials must, as a matter of urgency, enact and implement cyber restriction laws and to introduce media literacy in schools are because Facebook is open to all and sundry.

### **LANGUAGE USE AND MISUSE**

Abuse of language is universally used to describe any communication that denigrates a particular person or a group on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or other characteristic. It can be in the form of speech, gesture, conduct, writing, or display. Dangerous speech on social media in a country like Nigeria can be volatile and lead to conflict. In this case, posts by peddlers of hate and dangerous speeches can be assumed to embody legitimacy and authority. Secondly, social media have a wide and instantaneous reach which makes it easy tool for mobilisation. One of the main purposes of peddling hate speech is to mobilise people and incite communities to carry out violence. It has incessantly proved difficult by regulatory bodies to tame the use of hate speeches on social media probably because some of the sponsors of the hate speech peddlers are politicians who are in government or seeking political relevance or candidates contesting elections. In fact, some broadcast media prefer to broadcast hateful contents because it is profitable and damn the fine that is usually less than the much they make from such broadcast. This has flowed down into the masses who use language as a willing tool to legitimise hegemony.

### **LANGUAGE AND THE MEDIA**

Language use in the media as a tool for communication is deployed in various ways and it is quite distinct from the use of language in other spheres. Crystal and Davy (1969) opine that “everything that happens to be printed in a newspaper or written by a journalist is not going to be linguistically homogenous”. They also claim that there is no reason to expect such “homogeneity” because meaning of newspaper contents does not reside in the contents rather the meaning(s) of media contents reside in the reader’s worldview. The use of language in the media to develop content needs to be carefully selected out of competing forms so as to communicate civil meanings.

According to Taiwo (2004), something to keep in mind when reading newspaper articles is bias. Newspaper contents are guided by specified editorial policies and these policies are birthed by the ideological affiliations the producers represent. However, bias is necessarily political. The bias could be ethnic, economic, environmental and even religious. Many journalists have been accused of being bias for not representing a balanced viewpoint in a report.

In the 21st century, the media possess subtle power to present and represent issues and people in a coded and symbolic way through the use of language, and image mediated communication. According to Ogungbe (2008), there is interplay of politics in the ways people, regions, groups, events, policies and other socio-political issues are represented in the media. He further notes that media representation is ideological, political as well as powerful because it has real effects on people’s lives, rights, thoughts and actions in the society. The media to a large extent shapes peoples’ view of the world around them.

### **ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING**





The ethnography of communication (EOC) which eventually metamorphosed into ethnography of speaking, deals with the analysis of utterances of communication based on the cultural and situational context, beliefs and practices of the interactants in a speech community. This method of language analysis draws insight from the anthropology of ethnography. It explores the varying appurtenances of communication and the varying goals of communicative events. This approach to discourse analysis, looks beyond the formal properties of communication, it delves into investigating other communicative nuances including societal conventions that govern discourse production and use.

Dell Hymes came up with a model of framework for analysing speech event in their contextual speech community. He proposed the SPEAKING model. The model comprises some cogent elements for analysing communicative speech events. The proponent of this discourse analysis approach believes that for a speech event to take place and be taken as a discourse there are key elements that must be present which include: message form, message content, speaker, scene, purpose, addressor, audience, channels, norms of interaction and interpretation, genres, and key. These are elements are further categorised into the SPEAKING acronym.

- **S** stands for *Setting and scene*: This is where the speech event took place. It encapsulates the time and place of the communicative event.
- **P** stands for *Participants* who took part in the discussion. This includes the addresser, addressee and even the eavesdropper.
- **E** stands for *ends*: This has to do with the purpose of the communication. What outcome is expected from the listener(s).
- **A** stands for *act sequence*: In speech situation, there is always a sequence – direction of communication. Every speech even has a sequence and the speech acts that make up the communication.
- **K** stands for *key*: This involves the manner, i.e. how the message is communicated; is it serious or just a joke? Is it sincere or it is a mere banter?
- **I** stands for *instrumentalities*: This is how the message gets to the hearers. It deals with the channel of communication. Messages are communicated via different means. It could be written, verbal, physiognomy, songs, drums, etc. This also involves the operational language used by the discussants.
- **N** stands for *norms of interaction*: Language use is rule govern, so, the norms of interaction involves both the knowledge of the communicative competence and performance competence of the operational language within a speech communication i.e. the knowledge of what is acceptable and the taboos of the speech community.
- **G** stands for *genres*: This involves the form for message which could be formal or informal, casual or non-casual, interview or editorial, cartoons or comic strips, poetic or prosaic, etc.

### CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidimensional theory which focuses on unearthing the power relations and dominance in media discourse – texts and visuals. It focuses on describing, interpreting and explaining language variation, communicative interaction with special attention on issues of social literacy and power (Wodak 2007). According to van Dijk (2004), CDA focuses on how power, hegemonic tendencies, inequality is be uncovered in discourses. Fairclough (1999, pp. 132-3), defines CDA as method of analysing discourse in a



systematic way as to capture the description of the cryptic relationship between the text and society in relation to how “powers” are ideologically enacted.

Discourse has so many definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standards. Since discourse is a normative term, it can be defined in varying ways with each definition elucidating a part of its scope. Within a Critical Discourse Analysis purview, discourse is seen as the use of language resonating from a social practice. Hence, Atkins, (2002, cited in Mirzaee and Hamdi, 2012, p. 184) pinpoints that “paying attention to this concept, language cannot be regarded as neutral, since it is caught up in political, social, racial, economic, religious, and cultural formations”. Fairclough (2013) agrees with other scholar’s view of discourse and further incorporated semiotic elements and printed disquisitions and nonverbal communication as forms of discourse. However, he refers to language as a discourse, which is an intrinsic socio-cultural practice. This strongly suggests that language has impetus to propel action and it is capable of thought and character transformation.

The study adopts Theo van Leeuwen’s (2008) Identities and subjectivity model of Critical Discourse Analysis to unearth the different ideological identities and subjectivities in the selected data.

### THEO VAN LEEUWEN’S IDENTITIES AND SUBJECTIVITY MODEL

Leeuwen’s (2008) avers that the society is influenced by the policies and engagements of the powers that be. He outlines the core ways in which people are represented through discourse. He opines that, “CDA is the impact of power structures on the production and/or reproduction of knowledge and its effect on identity and subjectivity of the members of the community. Indeed, this is language and discourse in relation with production, reproduction, dissemination, and interpretation of knowledge in line with researchers’ arrangement”. Leeuwen’s (2008) model outlines the following:

- 1. Exclusion:** This is the total removal of both the participants and the activities in the contextualisation of the social practice.
  - a. Suppression:** Here, the participants are not mentioned but are referred to so as to provide context for the utterance.
  - b. Backgrounding:** The social actors are not obviously mentioned. They only pop up later in another part of the discourse
- 2. Inclusion:** This occurs when the actors are mentioned as part of the communicative event.
  - a. Activisation and passivisation:** The roles of the social actors are either shown to be in active voice or passive voice. Where this happens, it is copious of an ideological meaning which the author wishes to communicate.
  - b. Genericisation:** This happens when the participants are presented as a class though a complex linguistic arrangement.
  - c. Specification:** This entails giving the full identity of participants so that they can easily be identified.
  - d. Individualisation and Assimilation:** Participants are represented as individuals and other are represented as a member of a group respectively.
  - e. Indetermination:** This occurs when social actors cannot both be identified as individuals or as members of a group.
  - f. Determination:** The actor can be identified in a very clear manner.



**g. Nomination and Categorisation:** Nomination shows the representation of people in terms of their individuality, and peculiar identity, whereas categorisation shows the roles of participants and their relationship with other participants.

**h. Functionalisation and Identification:** While functionalisation deals with the activities that a participant handles, the identification show what the participant is.

**3. Impersonalised Social Actors:** This deals with actors that are not humans. This is therefore achieved though abstraction and objectivation.

**a. Abstraction:** It is a situation where participants are presented by qualities which are given to them.

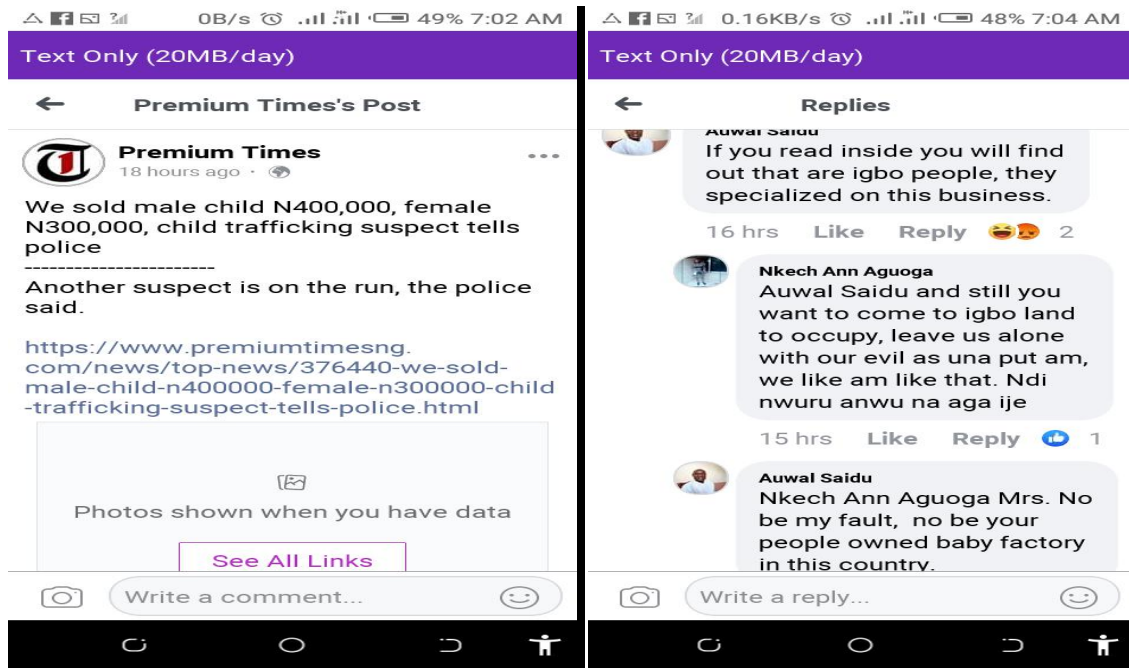
**b. Objectivation:** Here, participants are represented by making reference to objects that have affinities with them.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is a critical discourse analysis of language use and misuse on social media, specifically Facebook. The paper explores the use of language as a tool for engendering national unity and the opposite because when there is no national cohesion, achieving development will be illusory. The data for the study are gotten from the *Premium Times* Facebook handle where news headlines are posted. A total of 50 of these headlines are screen shot and a total of nine are purposively selected for the study. The data selected covered just a week – between 10th and 18th February, 2020. Theoretical insights are gotten from Dell Hymes' Ethnography of Speaking and Theo van Leeuwen's Identities and Subjectivity Model of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse a total of nine readers' comment of Facebook news headlines. The selection is done using purposive sampling technique and the analysis is organised in text-by-text format. The tabular analysis is done using Ethnography of Speaking mnemonics and the discussion is done using Subjectivity and Identities model of Critical Discourse Analysis.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Text 1**



<b>Setting</b>	<i>Premium Times Newspaper on Facebook</i>
<b>Participants</b>	Auwal Saidu and Nkech Ann Aguoga
<b>Ends</b>	The Interactants get at each other because of their ethnic difference. The first user in commenting on the news headline smears the image of the Igbos and another user from the Igbo extraction responded in a bid to show that the Igbos are okay.
<b>Acts Sequence</b>	The headline is a declarative act stating the situation in the country. The headline is followed by an expressive act accusing a section of the country and the comment is rebutted by an expressive act of insult.
<b>Key</b>	The manner of presentation of these comments indicates the enmity between the two divide in the country.
<b>Instruments</b>	Typing was adopted by the users and they communicated in both English and Igbo languages. The second user used a proverb in responding to the first user's comment. This proverb is used to demean the person and ethnic affiliation of the first user.
<b>Norm of Interaction</b>	Facebook provides platform for turn taking in post online. It's a kind of synchronous communication.
<b>Genre</b>	Its Facebook post. Short sentence and casual conversation(casual conversation)

**DISCUSSION**

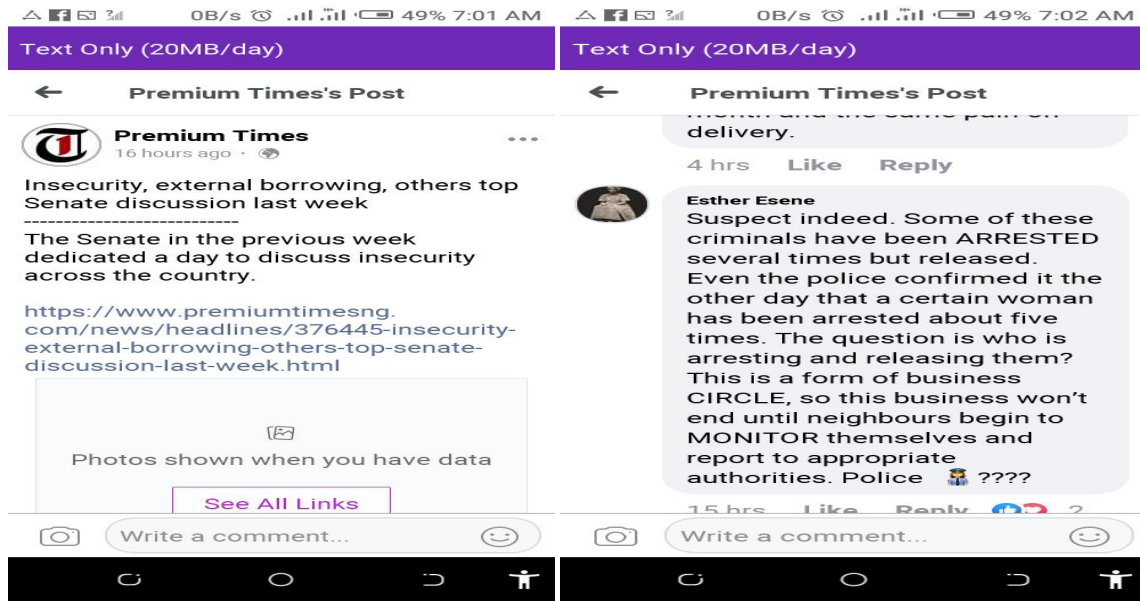
The comments above exemplify the subjective idea some people hold about the identity of Igbos. This subjective idea however, suppresses and misrepresents this ethnic group. It is vivid that this kind of ideology is already engraved in the heart of the first discussant above. Furthermore, the bias it express polarises a negative out-group discourse which criminalises others. It is however of grave consequence on the social fiber of the nation. It clearly indicates that Nigerians are yet to accept and tolerate one another. The specification fully identified the discussants hence we can contextualise these ideologies. The discussants both represent a group which they are out to protect while decimating the other group. Again, this



kind of polarity exists copiously on social media. It indicates a pitiable situation that has made the coexistence of Nigerians fragile.

At the level of abstraction, the first comment above criminalises the entire Igbo race. It is a truism that every ethnic nationality in Nigeria always has the black sheep and we cannot criminalise the entire race on the basis of the few bad eggs. This kind of over generalisation cannot bring the kind of unity that we crave for.

**Text 2**



<b>Setting</b>	<i>Premium Times Newspaper on Facebook</i>
<b>Participants</b>	Esther Esene
<b>Ends</b>	The participants reacts to the claim in the news by asking thought provoking question about how arrests are made and little or nothing is heard about the arrest. This has been consistent in the nation and it has made many lose confidence in the Nigerian Police. In fact, the comment exposes how the whole situation has become business.
<b>Acts Sequence</b>	The news headline performs the illocutionary act of informing the readers of the Senate engagement on security in the week. This act is followed by the illocutionary act of exposing how security in the Nigerian police has become business. Also, the comment calls on the Nigerian populace to take the bull by the horn.
<b>Key</b>	The tone of the comment indicates that the Nigerian Police has failed and can no longer be trusted.
<b>Instruments</b>	English has been used to communicate her thought. More importantly, the graphological import of the last expression is worthy of note. The use of question mark after “police” communicates meaning beyond letters. It questions the credibility of Police in Nigeria.
<b>Norm of Interaction</b>	Again, the news platforms online allows for synchronous discourse and turn-taking by Facebook users
<b>Genre</b>	It is a short Facebook post. Most of the discourse engagements by Facebook users are short, precise and cryptic posts which communicate clear thought on the headlines.



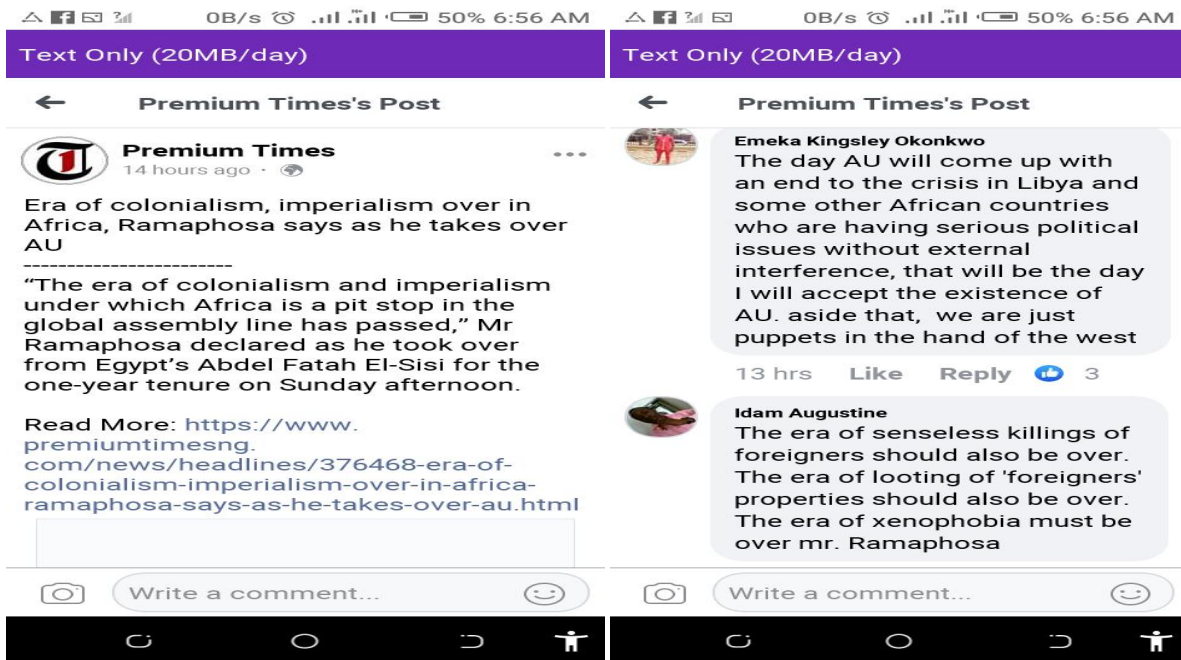


### DISCUSSION

This comment expresses an ideology that negates her personal worldview. It expresses a bias based on what she believed to be the standard practice in fighting crimes. The comment looks innocuous overtly. Ideologies, no doubt, are subjective; however criminalising crime suspects already polarizes the discourse based on negative out-group. Again, the comment also expresses a negative ideology against the Nigerian police. It is against the law to indict a person without evidence. This comment has already indicted the police of releasing criminal suspects. This is indicated by the graphological imprint in the comment. The use of question marks together with a police emoji supports this assertion. Again, reaching a sweeping conclusion on the police is ideologically warped. It is not all police officers that are bad. There are a number of fantastically upright and honest police officers. Therefore, this comment expressed a negative ideology on the police.

he stylistic import of two words used in the comments is worthy of note. “CIRCLE” and “MONITOR”. The user used these words to emphasize certain aspect of meaning. First, when typing, using capital letters indicate shouting. Beyond shouting, the use of these words communicates cryptic ideological meanings. “CIRCLE” is used to further portray the police in a negative light while “MONITOR” is used to call the attention of the people to take the bull by the horn in the matter of security.

### Text 3







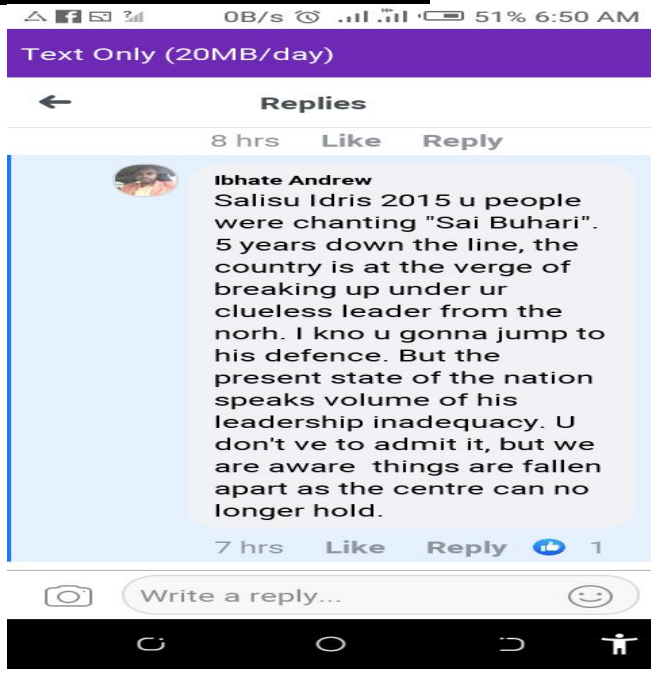
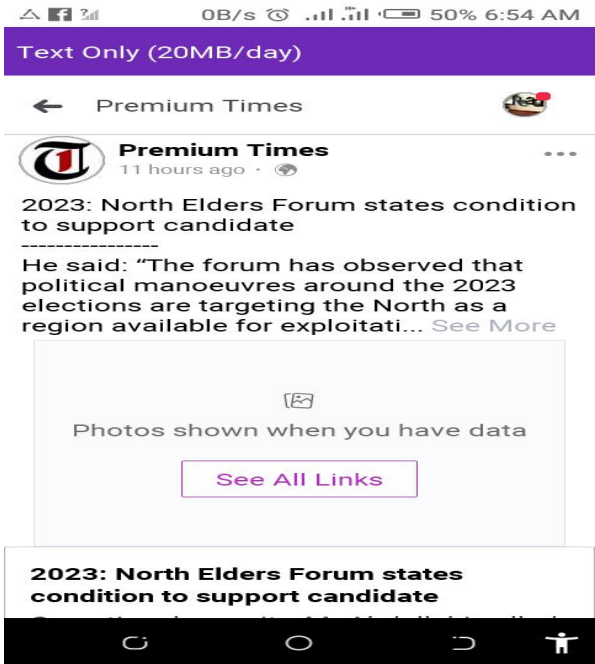
<b>Setting</b>	<i>Premium Times Newspaper</i> on Facebook
<b>Participants</b>	Emeka Kingsley Okonkwo and Idam Augustine
<b>Ends</b>	The comments are deployed to indict the west of continuous colonisation and hegemony, and to challenge the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa to end the xenophobic attacks in South Africa.
<b>Acts Sequence</b>	The illocutionary act of indictment of the west of continuous colonisation in Africa was performed by the headline. Also, the comment by Emeka Kingsley Okonkwo charged the South African President on the way out of the security quagmires in Africa. The comment by Idam Augustine shows indirectly a non-acceptance of the person of Cyril Ramaphosa especially that he was not able to stem the tide of xenophobia in South Africa that many Nigerians had to return to Nigeria because of these attacks. Through the comment, the user seems to be telling Cyril Ramaphosa to put his house in order before talking about other external forces.
<b>Key</b>	The tone of the comments indicates that the issue needs urgent action as the continuous dominance of Africa by the west is uncalled for.
<b>Instruments</b>	The comments are posted in simple English.
<b>Norm of Interaction</b>	Turn taking is evident in the comment
<b>Genre</b>	The comments are typical samples of short posts.

**DISCUSSION**

Typically, Africa is on the trajectory of evolving a peaceful continent. Peace in Africa cannot be achieved in the atmosphere of suspicion and opposition. In a situation where Africans are afraid of fellow Africans, peace and progress will be elusive. It is therefore necessary to look beyond internal peace to the emancipation of the entire Africa from the clogs of war and disunity. A very important tool for this pursuit is the use of language. The comment above shows the state of an average African who is afraid and suspicious of other Africans. The context of this discourse is provided by the news headline posted by *Premium Times* quoting Cyril Ramaphosa, the South Africa President and the newly elected Chairperson of African Union. The ideological polarity of the first comment tilts towards negative out-group against the west and the AU as an enabling tool in their hand. Furthermore, the discussion indicates that there has been unrest in some African countries which require the attention of the AU. Africans believe that the west has a role to play in the unrest in Africa. Africans want this addressed.



Text 4





<b>Setting</b>	<i>Premium Times Newspaper on Facebook</i>
<b>Participants</b>	Ibhate Andrew
<b>Ends</b>	The comment is used to basically show utter rejection of the leadership prowess of the present administration led by a northern president. His comment demeans the capacity of President Muhammadu Buhari in stemming the tide of security in the nation and fostering unity among the different ethnic nationalities in the nation. This kind of comment is a common place on Facebook.
<b>Acts Sequence</b>	The act of stating by the news medium is followed by adjacency sequence of responding with demeaning the leadership ability of the president which in his own opinion has failed in uniting the nation.
<b>Key</b>	This comment does not look like a joke as the tone is serious and it expresses the general feel of the prevailing situation in the nation.
<b>Instruments</b>	The participant has deployed both English language and Pidgin English in responding to the headline and the thread.
<b>Norm of Interaction</b>	Turn-taking
<b>Genre</b>	Short Facebook post.

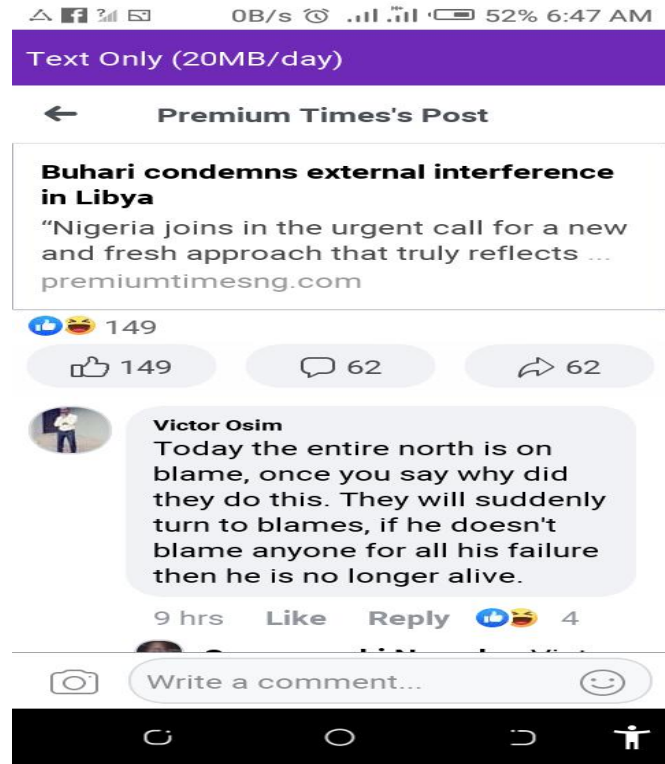
**DISCUSSION**

Ideological thoughts are function of varying factors, but quite strongly is the exposures to ethnic predilections that have shaped the world view of people. The expression of these ideologies is also predetermined by cognitively enshrined personal tendencies which are contextualised within a society. The comment to the headline above shows the stance of the writer on the political and leadership prowess of a government led by a northern leader. Many people from the west hold an ideology about people from the north. It is this general perception that has played out in this comment. While it is quite clear that such comments may be largely unverifiable because of the chaotic and uncanny proclivities of some members of that ethnic extraction, it cannot therefore be correct to say such hegemonic comment.

This disquisition is not in any way in defence of the Buhari led government, but is it a modest attempt to show that language has a way of x-raying the ideological structure of a people. Very importantly also, the comment brings the other user back the memory lane when Gen. Muhammadu Buhari was the APC candidate, there was clearly a clamour for a change of government from every part of the country, but that clamour brought an elusive hope which has made many people critical of this administration. It is on that basis that this discourse was birthed. The comment by Ibhate Andrew shows that he did not first see Buhari as a Nigerian, but rather as a “clueless leader from the north”, on the polarity scale, there is an out-group negative representation of the north and Buhari and implicitly, there is an in-group praise of his affiliation even though unstated. With this kind of clear polarity of discourse, attaining a pan-Nigerianism cannot be achieved.



**Text 5**



<b>Setting</b>	<i>Premium Times Newspaper</i> on Facebook
<b>Participants</b>	Victor Osim
<b>Ends</b>	The comment is used to show that Buhari has always blamed others for his failures.
<b>Acts Sequence</b>	The expressive illocutionary act of condemning external interference in the Libya crisis expressed by Buhari is followed by a comment that changes the theme of the discourse of the Crisis in Libya to the person of President Muhammadu Buhari. The act of indicting Buhari of always blaming others for everything negative that happens around them is evident.
<b>Key</b>	It is clear that the comment is beyond mere Facebook tantrums. The comment reflects a non-acceptance of the Buhari blame-game that has pervaded the administration defence for their failings. It shows that people who have followed the administration hold the belief that the administration has refused consistently to take responsibility for their actions, inactions and even reactions.
<b>Instruments</b>	The commenting was posted in English language.
<b>Norm of Interaction</b>	Turn-taking and synchronous
<b>Genre</b>	Facebook post



## DISCUSSION

The socio-political background of this text points to how the APC government has consistently blamed the previous administrations of their failure on certain fronts. This blame game has not stopped to play out in every slightest opportunity. This background provides the context for this comment. The writer holds the ideology that the president always blame somebody for certain things. The headline reveals how “**Buhari condemns external interference in Libya**”, the writer from the comment deduced that the president is shifting the bulk of the crises in Libya to interference from some quarters. Because of this statement by President Buhari, Victor Osim whose identity is clear says “Today the entire north is on blame, once you say why they did this; they will suddenly turn to blames”. His response to the headline is springing forth from a deep seated ideology and the beliefs about the north. The President Buhari’s remark about the situation in Libya should not be the alibi for any Nigerian to make such vituperative comments about the north. The comment by the Facebook user shows President Buhari and the north in a negative out-group polarity. This shows a society that has consistently refused to be unified; the sentiment that is being entrenched cuts across the different ethnic nationalities of the country.

## CONCLUSION

Language remains a cogent tool for creating and destroying. Language can be used as a fruitful tool for fostering unity among a seemingly divided people and it can be used to separate people. The use of language on Facebook has shown a conceptually divided people staying together in the same geographical location – Nigeria and Africa. The comments of people on issues indicate that while the concerns are legitimate and genuine, the use of language needs to be checked as it reflects an appalling situation. This kind of language use is capable of escalating the already tensed polity and the situation can degenerate into crisis. This study therefore submits that as a nation we must develop a collective sense of tolerance. Great nations are built on the things they have collectively agreed to love about themselves and the things they have agreed to hate about themselves. For peace to reign in Nigeria and in Africa, we need to employ the use of language that shows collective acceptance of the different ethnic groups across the continent. We must conceptually disabuse our cognitive process about the idea of “THEY”. It must change to “WE”. We recognise the role of Government in this process, but language planning and media literacy are intrinsic.

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## **PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS NEWS SOURCES AMONG RESIDENTS OF SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The study explored the perception of South-East residents regarding social media usage as news sources. The perception theory and the Technology Acceptance Model provided explanations for the study. The survey research method was used for the investigation while the questionnaire helped as the data collection instrument. Residents of South-East Nigeria constituted the population of the study from where 400 sample size was drawn using the Creative Research Systems online sample size calculator. The multi-stage sampling technique was used while tables and simple percentages were deployed to present and analyse the collected data. Based on the analysis of data, findings among others showed that residents of South-East Nigeria do not perceive the social media platforms as credible sources of news. Accordingly, the researcher recommends that proper checks should be done to ascertain the authenticity of the news got via social media.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Perception, News sources, Media usage

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this digital era, social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Myspace and others are now used in producing and sharing information. Experts and other users of social media have come to refer to twitter as a medium for breaking news in such way that is close to omnipresent CCTV which helps for collective intelligence. Many breaking news are distributed on Twitter faster than other type of media. Bigger media such "Cable News Network", "New York Times", "Time" get to a lot of people via Twitter. In addition, the journalists as well as media columnists are highly popular; they have lots of people who follow them for the critical purpose of reading their reports. The Turkish Statistical Institute asserts that, access to social network sites and online news have significantly become two of cardinal reasons which propel people to go online (TUIK Data, 2004-2011, p.10). No evidence in this research particularly focused on uses and gratifications by Turkish users, some other research evidence unveils Twitter in particular to be utilised more for information needs than for gratifying the social needs of the people. While most journalists and columnists are followed by one fourth of Turkish users, it was evident that some are much more popular than even their media organisations (Sozeri, 2011, p.73).

Traditionally, when we talk about the meaning of news, we are referring to information about events taking place at the moment or something that took place recently. The emergence of



new technologies including the social networks now makes it possible for news to become more current enabling the audience to be virtually transported to the location of the event. The emergence of Goggle, Twitter, Facebook, as well as other social networking platforms are as well redefining the face of journalism. It is now realistic to build customized news report from all the newsworthy information and articles read in probably in the morning to the many readers' social networks. A practical example is that Digg's web sites make available contents which have been carefully selected by lots of other users from prominent news sources in line with the votes of Digg's members to give highlights. This is significantly changing the notion of professional journalist as a competent gatekeeper; hence, changes in the notion of traditional news values spark debate (Talabi, 2011).

Before the era of the internet, conventional media like television, radio and newspapers were the primary sources of news. Such scenario is changing as news websites, lots of which are hosted by the big media organisations, are currently competing sources of news. Other news sources on the Internet, like websites which also features user-generated content (UGC), blogs, social networking sites as well as wikis have as well come to prominence. Just as the conventional media, the social media platforms provide different types of news. Examples of news reports on the social media are protests, security, governance, etc which are posted by users. More so, there are commentaries on entertainment as well as news stories captured by the conventional media elsewhere. This formed the basis for citizen journalism which has gained prominence including blogs and social media that analyse and debate issues as well as stories transmitted via the conventional media. Those kinds of commentaries and debates generally make stories come alive longer than what was published by the original publishers. A number of researchers and experts assert that this is growing to become a very important function of citizen journalism (Chari, 2013, p.113) cited in (Okoro, Diri & Odii, 2013).

Nigeria is witnessing massive spread of social media across the six geopolitical zones of the country. Reports however reveal that Facebook is the most prevalent in Nigeria. Nigerians use Facebook more than other social media (Agbo, 2016). This is redefining the way and manner news is transmitted to the audience. This is based on the premise that media consumption pattern is changing.

Nigeria is not an exception in social media use for journalism practice. In recognition of capacity and usefulness of social media in the gathering and dissemination of information, journalists and media organisation have started utilising the platforms for the business of news gathering and transmission. They also use the platforms to verify facts, break news and receive audience feedback. Very prominent in this regard are broadcast stations such as Channels Television, African Independent Television (AIT), Premium Times Newspaper, Sahara Reporters and Wazobia FM.

Journalists and other media operators claim that the rapid adoption of the social media for media business is essentially sequel to the changing media exposure and consumption patterns of the audience. The rapidity and ubiquity of the social media in Nigeria is no doubt compelling media operators to accord much attention to such platforms. Digital Media Initiative (2017, p.17) asserts that "a lot of media audiences are now utilising the social media platforms for the consumption of media contents".



As the audience utilise social media platforms for the purpose of getting news across to the audience, perceptions of the platforms as news sources seem to differ from one audience to the other. Some audience seem to have favourable perception while others perceive unfavourably stating that the platforms are good for the reception of news. It is therefore very fundamental to assert here that audience perception of a media platform is very critical to the importance they attach to news from such medium. Perception could lead to rejection of the medium, rejection of the messages from such media and even de-marketing of such medium.

### **STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The emergence of the social media platforms has redefined the way media audience access news. These platforms have brought a new dimension to audience reception of news. They (the platforms) have continued to expand the sources or channels from where news is transmitted to the audience.

As earlier stated, perceptions of the platforms as news sources seem to differ from one audience to the other. Some audience seem to have favourable perception while others perceive unfavourably stating that the platforms are good for the reception of news. It is therefore very fundamental to assert here that audience perception of a media platform is very critical to the importance they attach to news from such medium. Perception could lead to rejection of the medium, rejection of the messages from such media and even de-marketing of such medium.

Sequel to the need to provide current empirical data in this area of knowledge, this study was carried out. The researcher therefore investigated the perception of social media as news sources among residents of South-East Nigeria.

### **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

The main aim of this study had to do with an investigation of the perception of social media as news sources among residents of South-East Nigeria. However, the researcher specifically sought to:

1. Find out the frequency at which residents of South-East Nigeria use the social media as news sources.
2. Ascertain the perception of South-East residents regarding the use of social media as news sources.
3. Find out South-East residents' perception on the use of social media for breaking news
4. Ascertain South-East residents' perception of social media usage for audience feedback.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Sequel to the study objectives, the following research questions were handled in the study

1. What is the frequency at which residents of South-East Nigeria use the social media as sources of news?
2. How do residents of South-East Nigeria perceive the utilisation of social media as news sources?



3. What is the perception of South-East residents on the use of social media for breaking news?
4. How do South-East residents perceive social media usage for audience feedback?

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study serves as valuable literature for future researchers in this area of knowledge. This implies that those who would want to engage in further studies in this area of knowledge will find this study very helpful especially in the area of literature review.

Media organisations and individuals who use the social media to transmit news shall benefit from this study because it will show how the platforms are perceived as news sources among the audience.

Also, tertiary and research institutions shall find this study relevant in the teaching and learning of online journalism.

### **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Since the study focused on South-East Nigeria, the residents of the five states in the geopolitical zone constituted the scope of the study. The study was however, restricted to only those who use the social media as news sources.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The process of news conception, gathering, production, and dissemination or consumption is now redefined based on the emergence of new communication technologies. Previous studies on how new media technologies are impacting journalism practice seemed to have focused essentially on the reconfiguration of news production, dissemination and consumption as occasioned by technologies to help media practitioners in the gathering of news all over the world and send to their news rooms as much with relative ease as possible. Others show how the internet helps media practitioners to gain unlimited access to critical and relevant information on any cardinal subject, and how email newsgroups enable practitioners to "... gain access into the collective brain, wit and wisdom of so many knowledgeable professional journalists as well as non-journalists" (Berger, 1997, p.124) cited in (Chari, 2013, p.113). The new technologies have brought new world of opportunities to the practice of journalism as well as the modes of producing news. Additionally, the project called the citizen journalism projects, "pro-am" (professional-amateur) actors and crowd sourcing are now veritable sources of information for many independent media alternatively the conventional media (Croteau & Hoynes 2006) cited in (Sozeri, 2011).

This rapid rate at which people now attach importance to social media is not a thing of surprise at all especially when one considers the the fact that editors of mainstream media outlets are seriously talking to their reporters to start using blogs as information sources. In 2013 for instance, Peter Horrocks, who was serving as the Director of the BBC World Service, urged the news reporters in the service to utilise social media as a "primary source" through which they could source for information. While social media platforms are now significantly useful as a source of information to information seekers, scholars assert that the platforms may not really replace more conventional information sources. This is because a tweet does not have the capacity to replace a face-to-face engagement with a relevant person or CEO. Of course, the face-to-face engagement will always be more impactful on the angle of a story. However, surveys carried out by Gunn and MacDonald (2011, p.59) reveal that



posts on sites such as Facebook as well as LinkedIn, blogs, and tweets do arouse initial interest in a story. It also adds clarity as well as something new to developing stories. Consequently, journalists in mainstream media do rely on them for news worthy information.

The emergence of the social media platforms has significantly redefined the way media professionals carry out their duties. It is therefore not a thing of surprise to notice that 40% of U.S. journalists indicated that the social media platforms are good and helpful to their work. The relevance of the platforms to media practitioners is based on the fact that one-third (34.6%) of U.S. practitioners spent between 30 to 60 minutes every day making use of the social networking sites. The study also shows that more than half (53.8%) of all U.S. media practitioners often make use of microblogs like Twitter for the gathering of information and the reportage/coverage of stories. Other social media platforms were deployed much less often, including blogs operated by other practitioners (used by 23.6%), crowd sourcing sites like Wikipedia (22.2%), audio-visual sites like YouTube (20.2%), as well as professional sites like LinkedIn (10.6%). It was also revealed that practitioners were least likely to deploy citizen blogs in the performance of their duties (7.1%). U.S. media practitioners use social media platforms in the reportage of events for several other purposes.

The most frequent purpose for the utilisation of the social media platforms was to check for breaking news (78.5%) and to know what similar news outfits are doing (73.1%). Social media platforms are deployed also by U.S. media practitioners for the identification of story ideas (59.8%), for interaction with audiences (59.7%), for finding more information (56.2%), and for finding news sources (54.1%). Social media platforms are least often utilised for verifying information (24.7%), for meeting or coming in contact with new people in the field (21.9%), or for the interview of news sources (20%) (Willnat & Weaver, 2014, p.18-19).

Talabi (2011) did a study on “The Internet and Journalism Practice in Nigeria”. The purpose of the paper was to appraise the impact of internet on journalism practice in Nigeria with the aim of bringing to limelight the factors that underline the poor usage of new communication technology in the Nigerian journalism profession. The study also explored the power of current modern technology as well as how such technology is redefining conventional journalism practice. The researcher used library research to get secondary data which were very helpful for the study. The study found that a new media ecosystem is emerging. This is a situation where online communities engage in discussions as well as the extension of the stories created by the conventional media. The study also found that the online communities engage in participatory journalism, grassroots reporting, annotative reporting, commentary as well as fact-checking which the conventional media rely on and develop as pool of news tips, sources as well as usage as story ideas (Talabi, 2011).

Findings from the study carried out by Olorede and Oyewole, (2013) showed that internet facilities are provided in the newsrooms of broadcast stations in Nigeria As shown in the responses of 222 respondents which represent 74% of the sample and that the audiences have favourable perception of social media usage as news sources.

Paulussen and Harder carried out a study entitled “Social Media References in Newspapers: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as Sources in Newspaper Journalism.” The study was an exploratory one providing an initial insight on how the social media platforms are utilised as news sources in Belgian newspaper journalism. Data from the study showed that in the two





selected Flemish quality newspapers, De Standaard and De Morgen, there were references to social media which have become commonplace. As such, these findings lend credence to assumptions that for lots of today's newspaper journalists, monitoring the social media platforms has grown to become a part of their everyday newsgathering routines. It is interesting to however note that this does not in anyway mean that social media platforms dominate the newspaper content as an information source. Articles that cite the social media platforms as news sources seem to be on the low side. Both Flemish quality newspapers on an average per day publish just five articles which refer to Facebook, Twitter and/or YouTube, as (part of) subject or as a source, or both. In 7 out of 10 articles published, the social media sites function as a source of information. It also shows that Facebook and Twitter are more prominent/popular as information source in the newspapers than YouTube (Paulussen & Harder, 2014).

Sozeri (2011) found in a study that Twitter has been considered good and credible alternative news/information source to corporate news journalism or conventional media. The contributions of followers such as comments, questions and criticism as well as the opportunity to reach enormous information sources of information have enriched the social media capacity to serve as news sources. It was also found that many journalists' motivations to use twitter for journalism practice is to diversify their sources of information, confirm information as well as follow different critical issues and agenda across the globe (Sozeri, 2011, p.87).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Perception theory and the Technology Acceptance Model were used to explain the study.

### **Perception Theory**

Bovee, Thill, Dovel and Wood (1995) described perception as the process of being exposed to a stimulus, paying attention to some degree, and then interpreting the received message. Hence, perception involves the process of exposure, attention and interpretation. In other words, for perception to take place there must be exposure to stimuli with certain level of attention paid to the stimuli and finally the stimuli are interpreted by the audience (Ezinwa, 2015).

Perception theory helps to explain the process by which individual selects, organizes and evaluates stimuli from the environment to provide meaningful experiences for him or her. This means that people focus on certain features of their environment to the exclusion of others. The audience automatically chooses which information to notice and this kind of selection is dependent on varied filter of perception that is premised on the initial experiences of the consumer (Smith, 2011). The theory provides explanation on why a particular message is perceived differently by the audience. This implies that the way a particular audience views a given message may differ from the perception of the message by another audience. This theory relates with this current study on the basis that it is a perception study. It looked at how the audience perceive the utilisation of social media as sources of news.

### **Technology Acceptance Model**

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed by Fred Davis and Richard Bagozzi in 1989. It is an information system theory which explains how users come to accept and use a technology. TAM postulates that the acceptance and use of a particular technology by an





individual depends on how the individual perceives that technology to be useful to him. Factors such as Perceived Usefulness (PU), which include relative advantage, attached prestige and cost effectiveness, and Perceived-Ease-of-Use (PEOU), are significant in user's choice of acceptance of technology (Olorede and Oyewole, 2013, p.4).

Giving his views on the postulations of TAM, Bagozzi (2007, p.248) cited in Olorede and Oyewole, (2013, p.4) explains that people could be reluctant to accept new technologies because of the technologies' complexity and element of uncertainty which exist in the minds of decision makers with respect to the successful adoption of the technology. Therefore, the reluctance to accept new technologies because of the technologies' complexity and element of uncertainty which exist in the minds of decision makers with respect to the successful adoption of the technology may inform how the audiences perceive social media usage as news sources.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used the survey research method to carry out study and used the questionnaire as data collection instrument. A projected population of 21,602,533 residents of South-East Nigeria constituted the population of the study. A sample of 400 was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamane's formula. The multi stage sampling technique was used to select the States, LGAs, communities and individuals whose perceptions were ascertained regarding the subject of investigation.

In line with the above, the stages of sampling technique used for this study are presented below:

**Stage one:** Since the study focused on the five states that constituted the South-East zone of Nigeria, all the states in geopolitical zone were first of all selected. The states are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. These five states were therefore categorized as five clusters.

**Stage two:** Here, the researcher purposively selected four local government areas in each of the five states. This was based on two crucial factors which are high media concentration and internet penetration. Therefore, in Abia State, Umuahia-North, Umuahia-South, Aba-North, and Aba-South, LGAs were chosen; in Anambra State, Awka-North, Awka-South, Onitsha-North and Onitsha-South LGAs were selected; LGAs that were selected in Ebonyi State are Abakaliki, Afikpo-North, Afikpo-South, and Ebonyi. In Enugu State, Enugu-North, Enugu-South and Enugu-East and Nsukka LGAs were selected; while in Imo State, Owerri-North, Owerri-South, Owerri-Municipal, and Okigwe LGAs were selected for the study.

**Stage three:** In the local government areas are wards. To give all the wards equal chances of been selected, simple random sampling technique was employed to select the number of wards that were studied in the chosen local government areas. Selected wards in Umuahia-North are Afugiri, Umuhu, Isingwu, Ndume, Umuahia II, and Ibeku-East I; selected wards in Umuahia-South are Nsirimo, Amakama, Ubakala "B", Ohiaocha, and Amiaukwu II; selected wards in Aba-North are Uratta, Ogor I, Industrial Area, Umuogor, Ariaria Market, and Osusu II; selected wards in Aba-South are Asa, Eziukwu, Enyiama, Igwebuike, Ekeoha, and Ngw. Wards that were selected in Awka-North are Isu-Aniocha, Ugbenu, Achalla III, Ebenebe II, Urum, Amanuke, and Ugbene; Awka-South are Okpuno, Nise II, Nibo III,



Mbaukwu, Awka V, Awka I, Umuawulu, Agu-Oka, Amawbia III, and Ezinato Isiagu; Onitsha-North are Woluwo Layout, Inland Town II, Trans Nkisi, Inland Town V, Water Central II, Ogbe Umuonicha, and Inland Town VIII; chosen wards in Onitsha-South are Odoakpu VIII, Fegge II, Bridge Head I, Fegge V, Odoakpu V, Odoakpu, Bridge Head III, and Odoakpu II.

In Abakaliki LGA, the following wards were selected Edda, Ndiagu, Izzi Unuhu, Abakpa, Okpoitumo Ndiegu, Amagu Unuhu, and Azumini/Azugwu Layout; Afikpo-North are Unwana-Afikpo I, Amata-Akpoha, Ohaisu-Afikpo ‘B’, Itim-Afikpo, Popere-Amasiri, and Nkpoghoru Afikpo; Afikpo-South are Nguzu Edda, Amiri Ekoli, Ebuwana, Oso-Eda, and Owutu-Edda; selected wards in Ebonyi are Onuenyim, Agalegu, Egwu Dinagu, Mbeke, Ndiebo, and Enyibichiri II; selected wards in Enugu-North are Asata Township, GRA, China Town, Ogui Township, New Haven, and Independence Layout; Enugu-South are Maryland, Uwani -East, Ugwuaji, Akwuke, Amechi, and Awkunanaw; Enugu-East are Amorji, Abakpa II, Trans -Ekulu, Ugwugo-Nike, Mbuluiyiukwu, and Umuenwene; Nsukka are Ihe, Ibeku, Ede-Ukwu, Eha-Uno, Akalite, Nnu, Alor-Uno, Obukpa, Akpa/Ozzi, and Obimo/Ikwoka;

In Owerri-North, selected wards were Naze, Obibiezena, Orji, Emmi, Egbu, and Ihitte Oha; Owerri-West are Obinze, Nekede, Okuku, Eziobodo, and Ihiagwa; Owerri-Municipal are Ikenegbu, Azuzi IV, Aladinma II, New Owerri I, G.R.A. and Azuzi I; Okigwe are Umulolo, Amuro, Okigwe II, Ihube, and Ezinachi

**Stage four:** The individuals who responded to the questionnaire were randomly selected to ensure they had equal chances of selection.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

The collected data were collated, presented and analysed using tables and simple percentages. After the administration of the questionnaire, 391 copies were properly filled and returned while 7 copies were not returned. The researcher therefore analysed the returned 391 copies for the study.

**Table 1: Frequency at which residents of social media use social media as sources of news**

How frequent do you use the social media as news sources?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Regularly	8	2.2 . 5	2.2 . 5	2.2 . 5
Occasionally	297	76 . 0	76 . 0	98 . 5
Don't use as news sources	0	0	0	
Not sure	6	1 . 5	1 . 5	100 . 0
Total	391	100 . 0	100 . 0	

Table one above shows that majority of the respondents (297) representing 76.0% occasionally use the social media as news sources.

**Table 2: Perception of the use of social media as news sources**

How do you perceive the use of social media as news sources?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid C r e d i b l e	1	1	93	0 . 4	3	0 . 4	3	0 . 4
N o t c r e d i b l e	2	6	46	7 . 5	6	7 . 5	9	8 . 0
D o n ' t u s e a s n e w s s o u r c e s			0	0		0		0
C a n ' t s a y			8	2 . 0	2 . 0		1	0 0 . 0
T o t a l	3	9	110	0 . 0	1	0 0 . 0		

Table two above shows that most of the respondents (264) representing 67.5% perceive social media as news sources without credibility.

Table 3: Perception of social media usage for breaking of news

What is your perception on social media usage for breaking of news	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid E f f e c t i v e	1	1	4	2 9 . 2	2 9 . 2
N o t E f f e c t i v e	2	7	1	6 9 . 3	6 9 . 3
N o t s u r e			6	1 . 5	1 0 0 . 0
T o t a l	3	9	1	1 0 0 . 0	1 0 0 . 0

Table three above shows that most of the respondents (271) representing 69.3% perceive social media usage for breaking of news as ineffective.

Table 4: Perception of social media usage for Audience Feedback

What is your perception of social media usage for audience feedback?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid E f f i c i e n t	1	0	9	2 7 . 9	2 7 . 9
N o t E f f i c i e n t	2	7	8	7 1 . 1	9 9 . 0
C a n ' t s a y			4	1 . 0	1 0 0 . 0
T o t a l	3	9	1	1 0 0 . 0	1 0 0 . 0

Table four above shows that most of the respondents (278) representing 71.9% perceive social media usage for audience feedback as ineffective.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The revelations of the study were discussed with reference to related empirical literature.

**Research Question One: What is the frequency at which South-East of Nigeria use the social media as sources of news?**

This research question was put forward to establish the frequency at which residents of South-East Nigeria use social media as news sources. To answer this research question, data collected and presented on table 1 above were utilised. Table one above shows the frequency at which the respondents use the social media as news sources. Data on the table indicate that 88 respondents constituting 22.5% regularly use the social media as news sources, 297 respondents representing 76.0% occasionally use the social media as news sources, no respondent indicate the “don’t use as news sources” option while 6 respondents constituting



1.5% indicated that they were not sure of the frequency at which they use the social media as sources of news. This shows that significant number of respondents occasionally use the platforms as sources of news. Giving credence to this finding, Newman (2015) found in his study that Accra residents regularly use the social media for various purposes but not regular when it comes to accessing news via the platforms.

**Research Question Two: How do residents of South-East Nigeria perceive the utilisation of social media as news sources?**

This research question was posed by the researcher to ascertain how residents of South-East Nigeria perceive the use social media platforms as news sources. Table two above shows how the respondents perceive the use of social media as news sources. Data on the table show that 119 respondents constituting 30.4% perceive the social media as credible news sources, 264 respondents representing 67.5% perceive social media as not credible sources of news, no respondent indicate the “don’t use as news sources” option while 8 respondents constituting 2.0% indicated that they can’t exactly say how they perceive the use social media as news sources. The indication is that a lot of those who responded perceive social media as not credible news sources of news. This finding is in line with Tellen (2015) who found that citizens of Pretoria do not perceive social media as credible news sources.

**Research Question Three: How do residents of South-East Nigeria perceive the use of social media for breaking news?**

This research question was raised to find out how residents of South-East Nigeria perceive social media usage for breaking of news. The data presented on table three above were used to address this research question. From the table, 114 respondents constituting 29.2% indicated effective, 271 respondents representing 69.3% indicated not effective while 6 respondents constituting 1.5% could not tell if its effective or not. It can be said from the above that most of the more of those who responded perceive social media usage for breaking of news as not effective. In a related study, Talabi (2017) found that Oyo residents do not see social media as effective in breaking news to them based on the perception that social media platforms are flooded with fake news.

**Research Question Four: How do South-East residents perceive social media for audience feedback?**

The essence of this research question was to ascertain how residents of South-East Nigeria perceive social media usage for audience feedback. Data as presented on table four above were used to answer this research question. From the table, 109 respondents constituting 27.9% indicated efficient, 278 respondents constituting 71.1% indicated not efficient while 4 respondents representing 1.0% could not say if it is efficient or not efficient. It can be drawn from the above that significant number among those who responded perceives social media usage for audience feedback as not efficient. Accordingly, Olorede and Oyewole (2013) indicated that Osun State residents perceive social media as ineffective for audience feedback.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The outcomes of data analysis reveal that:

- Residents of South-East Nigeria occasionally use social media as news sources



- Residents of South-East Nigeria do not perceive social media as credible news sources.
- South-East residents do not perceive social media as not effective in receiving breaking news
- Residents of South-East Nigeria do not perceive social media as inefficient in sending feedback to the media.

## CONCLUSION

Following the revelations made by the study, the researcher therefore concludes that social media platforms are not seen as worthy sources where the audience can seriously rely for news. This implies that the platforms have credibility problem which has heralded the negative perception among the respondents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the revelations of the study, the researcher made the following findings:

1. The audience should always double check the information they get from social media sources to ensure they have the correct information.
2. Factual and verifiable reports should be disseminated via the social media to gain audience confidence.

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## **SOCIAL MEDIA AND BRIDGING OF COVID-19 INFORMATION GAP AMONG STUDENTS OF FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, OKO**

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### **Abstract**

*This is a survey study. The researcher uses a sample of 112 students to x-ray the impact of new media in dissemination information on COVID-19 pandemic. The study submits that WhatsApp, Facebook and Opera news are rendering front line media services. Based on this, therefore, the paper reveals that new media have been potent at the awareness level. The paper also notes some differentials (gap) among the students in terms of level of awareness of COVID-19 pandemic terminology. This aspect of the result is hypothetically explained in the level of new media dependency, literacy level and income. The paper reinforces the role of the media in national development. The paper consequently recommends that governments and change agents take advantage of the possibilities inherent in the new media in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic.*

**Key Words:** Mainstream media, Social media, Knowledge gap, Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19

### **INTRODUCTION**

Given the tremendous rise in user count of social media—especially Facebook and WhatsApp—in Nigeria, there has been a substantial change in the management of health, political, religious and social information in the country. To some extent, the communication equation in terms of freedom of information and power to reach the public has changed in favour of the public. More people are now able to share information freely and faster. This



scenario was unthinkable before the year 2000. On this basis, communication and political discourses have changed in line with evolving media technological landscape.

The Internet is a precursor to this ongoing media change. In fact, the Internet has accelerated digital convergence with a range of players: Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, books. This convergence has led to the evolution of *mixed media*. Given the foregoing, it is important to understand the way the audience use Social Network Sites (SNS) in comparison with mainstream media.

### **NEWS ALSO BREAKS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA!**

To many, news mainly breaks from social media. Many Nigerians first get fresh stories from social media. On May 12, 2017, soldiers mutinied in Ivory Coast demanding unpaid bonuses— singularity, conflict, violence and tragedy! May 22, 2017, a suicide bomber claimed the lives of 22 people including an eight-year-old girl in an explosion at the Ariana Grande pop concert in Manchester. The Islamic State terror group has claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing— conflict, violence and terror! In 2017, news broke that Chukwuma Onuekwusi, Channels Television’s State House Correspondent, is dead. The veteran journalist died in the early hours of Tuesday, May 23— prominence and tragedy! (Uwakwe, 2017a).

Donald Trump, Republican, was inaugurated 45<sup>th</sup> President of America January 20, 2017, succeeding Barack Obama, Democrat— change! After 100 days in office, President Trump has signed 34 executive orders, with far-reaching effects on Americans' lives and world politics. *Friday, May 12, 2017, former President of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, gave out his daughter, the last child and 2nd from his late wife Mariam Babangida, by name Halimat Babangida to the Sarkin Sudan Gombe, Alhaji Auwal Lawal Abdullahi in marriage— prominence!* Twenty six private jets as well as police and air force aircrafts landed in Minna on Friday, May 12, 2017 for the wedding. Aeroplanes brought the various dignitaries that attended the wedding of Babangida’s daughter. The police also provided air surveillance and security while a cache of security agencies gave watch. Nigerians shared their private video clips on the spectacular event (Uwakwe, 2017a). *All these were highly circulated in social media.*

On Thursday, August 30, 2018, President of Senate, Abubakar Bukola Saraki, declared his presidential ambition under the platform of opposition Peoples Democratic Party, PDP. Senator Saraki made his ambition public at a dialogue with youth and young aspirants held at Sheraton Hotel under the auspices of the “Not Too Young to Run” movement and in the presence of the PDP National Chairman, Prince Uche Secondus in Abuja. This made instant news and was promptly shared by Nigerians in social media. During the Second Republic, the State media might choose to keep the news away from the public.

On July 13, 2015, information on the sacking of Service Chiefs in Nigeria was relayed through subscribing cell phones in Nigeria via the Guardian daily mobile news which costs thirty naira weekly. The information delivered through MTN platform: “President Buhari has sacked the Head of Army, Navy and Air force” (credited to <http://wwnrguardiannews.com>). This information was later retransmitted through social media. All the foregoing events were freely transmitted in social media and are an indication of the trend in information dissemination.



June 12, 2020, President Buhari addressed the nation and touched on COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after the broadcast, many Nigerians began sharing the speech on social media. It enabled many Nigerians who usually do not have regular access to electricity to get informed online. In the United States, President Trump regularly tweets to Americans on COVID-19 and other world issues. Ahead of TV or radio broadcast, news on the disqualification of incumbent Governor Obaseki of Edo State also spread rapidly. The foregoing accounts are indicative of the power of social media.

### **THE ISSUE**

March 11, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) alerted the world on a novel coronavirus. The WHO continues to closely monitor the spread of the virus, said Director-General of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom, during the announcement. “We are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction,” he said. “We have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action.” By this time, there had been large outbreaks of the virus in Italy, South Korea, and the United States. The WHO classified the novel Coronavirus as a global public health emergency on January 30, 2020. On March 11, 2020, Tedros stated that “we have made an assessment that COVID-19 can be characterised as pandemic” (Wetsman, March 11, 2020).

The mass media have always played important roles in promoting modernisation and development to people as well as articulating the views of the common man. Progressively, decades of technological milestones have dramatically changed the way news is produced and consumed (Uwakwe, 2017a). Media ecology is changing aggressively and the Internet is the prime agitator. But we were alerted by Dominick (2009) who saw them come together!

In Nigeria, with a cell phone of less than 10,000 naira or less, and active Internet network data bundle, you can sign in to the Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and similar social media. Even though these low-quality phones cannot be used anywhere in Europe and America, these affordable handsets have created opportunities for media access and rise in Internet use in Nigeria. In any case, irrespective of poor per capita income, media dependence in favour of the new media is on the rise. Several factors account for this phenomenon.

If your data bundle is adequate and the network is friendly, you can remain online as a king and navigate 24/7! As an online king, you can hunt and peddle information as you wish. And this ability may include bullying a political opponent or spread disinformation. This is media revolution. On the above basis, communication and political discourses have to change in line with media technological changes and new communication ecosystem. In part, this inevitable discussion on how people use social media prompted this work. In general, the work attempts to find out the roles of the social media in the management of COVID-19 information, and by so doing point out knowledge gap on COVID-19 pandemic based on social media.

Based on the foregoing, the following objectives and research questions are put forward.

### **Objectives**

- i. To determine the extent to which people rely on different media for information on COVID-19.



- ii. To determine the extent to which people rely on social media as sources of information on COVID-19.
- iii. To determine the extent to which people use information on social media.
- iv. To determine the extent people are conversant with the pandemic terminology through social media.

### **Research Questions**

- 1. To what extent do people rely on different media for information on COVID-19?
- 2. To what extent do people rely on social media as sources of information on COVID-19?
- 3. To what extent do people use information on social media?
- 4. To what extent are people conversant with the pandemic terminology through social media?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

At a time in Nigeria, few privileged urban dwellers had access to broadcast services. At that time, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) diffusion radio-wired radio system brought information to the city people. Information was mainly on colonial and government activities as well as world developments. Opinion leaders and the like information mongers were to retransmit such information to the less information privileged. In those days, it was obvious that only a few had access to immediate political and social information. During this era, information circulation was slow, especially among rural people.

Today, a public event such as Democracy Day, or Governor Obiano's state broadcast could reach a very large population instantly. The power to reach large audiences is now enjoyed by many citizens. We now talk about citizen journalism and we live in an "electronic republic!"

In Nigeria, broadcasting began in Lagos first as wired system in 1933 as Radio Distribution System when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) launched the first regulatory short wave programme service. This service was launched under the watch of the Department of Post and Telegraph (P&T). Under this programme, radio signals were connected to speakers and making it possible for the public to hear the BBC foreign radio service in designated locations of subscribers. The service was a reception and relay base for the BBC. The service relayed the voices of the British administrators such as Winston Churchill and Bernard Shaw but also featured news and public affairs programmes. "The re-transmitted programmes encouraged the British administrators by informing them about events in Britain. It also gave the colonized people a view of the imperial authority of Britain" (Owuamalam, 2008, p.10).

On December 1, 1935, the Radio Distribution System was changed to Radio Diffusion System. The aim was to spread the activities of the British colonial government and her allies and was used to spread the World War 11 information and propaganda. With a new name, Radio Distribution System took off with stations at Ikeja and the other in the Glover Memorial Hall. Diffusion subscribers paid for the listening boxes. In time, stations were opened in Ibadan



(1939), Kano (1944) and later in Enugu, Kaduna, Jos, Zaria, Calabar and Port Harcourt. Opinion leaders and the like information mongers were to retransmit such information to the less information privileged. In those days, it was obvious that only a few had access to immediate political and social information. Thus it is obvious that desire to reach the public as fast as possible has been in the front burners of colonial administration till date.

In April 1951, The RDS changed to Nigeria Broadcasting Service and radio stations were established in Lagos, Kaduna, Enugu and Ibadan. The stations were broadcasting on both short and medium waves, which till today is a government monopolised waves. The NBS Act was enacted in 1956. However, by another Act of Parliament, this service was later reorganised into Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation on April 1, 1957.

We see that from the beginning, broadcasting arrived under the control of the government, serving mainly as a medium of propaganda and for controlling the information. All these have changed.

### **NEW TECHNOLOGIES HERALD CHANGES**

Media ecology is changing forcefully across the globe, and the Internet is the prime change agent (Uwakwe, 2018). Generally, technology has caused massive changes and traditional or mainstream journalists know this revolution. Today, professionals explain the new media landscape in various terms! You may have heard of the e-editorial board! You may have heard of *global Public Square* meaning world capacity to share ideas communally and faster. You may also hear of virtual citizenship –capacity of digitally compliant fellows to enjoy worldwide interaction and neighbourhood. Any mass communication specialist operating without basic knowledge of the electronic world and new media is doing so at a great disadvantage. Media practitioners now talk about “digital natives” and “digital immigrants”, etc.

The Internet has been busy redefining the old process and irreversibly doing a revolution. In fact, it has put a question mark on what used to be the traditional features of the mass media and examples abound. Think of the changes: First, an individual can communicate with a large audience – one to many model process – which traditionally is the function of an organization or a corporation. Second, the traditionally delayed feedback has become immediate on the Internet. Third, this Internet induced redefinition of the elements of the mass communication process is refocusing attention on issues such as freedom of “expression, privacy, responsibility, and democracy” (Baran, 2002, p. 83).

You may have heard of “open source journalism,” or “citizen journalism,” which describes a process by which citizens, the ordinary, acting as amateur journalists without pay, submit information to Web sites such as YouTube and Facebook. You too can upload your information, and within minutes, could be shared worldwide

### **COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic is putting words in the mouths of billions of people worldwide. Ventilator, BiPap, face coverings, homemade masks, PPE are words quickly becoming part



of our daily terminology as the disease COVID-19, which has now killed more than 74,000 people around the globe, continues to spread (Dolcourt, April 8, 2020).

Currently, there are over 7 million confirmed cases worldwide. As of June 12, 2020, Nigeria has about 15,181 confirmed cases, 399 deaths but also recorded 4,891 discharged patients. Arising from this, educating yourself on the science and the social responses will help you understand the situation and help explain it to others (Dolcourt, April 8, 2020) and perhaps help in better management of the pandemic.

### **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Due to rapid changes in the media landscape, more extensive theoretical studies are needed to understand the dynamics of digital communication (Ezepue, 2019, pp.1-15). In any case, two theories—Media Ecology and Knowledge Gap help shape the work.

#### **Knowledge Gap Theory**

Back in the summer of 1970, three researchers published an article called "Mass Media Flow and Differential Growth in Knowledge". These researchers, P. J. Tichenor, G. A. Donohue, and C. N. Olien, proposed something known as the knowledge gap hypothesis (Artem, 2018). The knowledge Gap theory is the notion that individuals with a higher socio-economic status absorb information presented by mass media at a faster rate than those with a lower socio-economic status. This leads to an increased gap in knowledge between these two segments of society as a result (Artem, 2018). It posits that as more and more information is made available to a people, more socially privileged groups will acquire more information at a faster rate than less privileged groups so that the relative gap between them will increase (Cecilie, 2019). In simple words, as the access to mass media increases those particular segments of population inevitably gain information faster and hence the wide gap increases with the lower economic status of the population (n.a.).

**Media Ecology Theory:** Media ecology argues that media act as extensions of the human senses in each era, and communication technology is the primary cause of social change (Hakanen, 2007). The theory, therefore, is concerned with the study of media, technology, and communication and how they affect human environments (West & Turner 2014). The theoretical concepts were proposed by Marshall McLuhan in 1964 (McLuhan, 1964).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research approach is the quantitative research design and adopts the survey method. This is because the survey method can measure belief, idea, opinion, attitude, and behaviour. This method has also the ability to allow for descriptive and inferential analysis and interpretation.

#### **Population of Study**

The population comprises current students of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Oko Anambra State, Nigeria officially put by registry unit at 320.

#### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

A sample of 120 respondents was purposely drawn for the study. The decision was guided by the need to include students who have access to the Internet as they have the characteristics for the study. At the point of retrieving the questionnaire, 8 students were unreachable. Therefore, a sample of 112 was used for the study.





### Instrument of Data Collection

The researcher made use of a questionnaire.

### Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally retrieved the by online returns. Where online returns were difficult, the researcher used the telephone interview with the questionnaire as a guide.

### Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected by the researcher was presented in tables and analysed in percentages.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: *Access to Online Media*

	Response	Percentage
Yes	112	93.3
No	8	6.6
Total	120	100

Based on the above and in line with the objectives of the study, 112 respondents were adopted as a more useful sample. The table is also indicative of the rise of Internet access in Nigeria and a signpost to the online penetration among students. Over 100 million Nigerians are now connected to the internet, with 250,000 new subscribers logging on in the last quarter of 2019, according to data from the Nigerian Communications Commission (Russon, February 20, 2020).

Table 2: *Major Source of information*

ITEM	Response	Percentage
TV	10	8.9
Radio	12	10.7
Newspaper	8	7.14
Magazines	Nil	Nil
Interpersonal	11	9.8
Internet-related sources	71	63.3
Total	112	100

Table 3: *Comparative sources of online information*

ITEM	Frequency	Percentage
WhatsApp	43	38.39
Facebook	25	22.32
Twitter	2	1.78
Yahoo/Google News	3	2.67
Opera News	22	19.64
Personal Blogs	7	6.25
Internet-based mainstream media (TV/Radio/newspaper on	10	8.92



net		
Total	112	100

Tables 2 and 3 above shed light on the objective of the study. A recent survey of 819 individuals and 48 retailers and phone sellers from seven Nigerian states that overall, respondents were interested in owning a phone and having mobile internet (Wang, March 4, 2020). WhatsApp accounts for the greatest source of information from social media. This is an indication that the site is popular among students and, perhaps, many Nigerians.

This is followed by Facebook and Opera news. The paper highlights the current strength of Opera as a source of news. This is consistent with earlier industry study which shows that respondents have a specific perception of Internet content that is very different from that of the developed world. For example, using Opera, a major web browser app, is seen as synonymous with “browsing the internet.” This leads to the unintended consequence of users not discovering the browser app that comes with their mobile device if the app icon does not look similar to the Opera icon (Wang, March 4, 2020). In any case, some studies suggest that when Nigerians go online (predominantly with their mobile phones) they spend much of their time on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and so on).

Table 4: How people use online information on the pandemic

	Response	Percentage
share to individuals	51	45.53
Share to groups	33	29.46
Keep privately	5	4.46
Discuss with people	17	15.17
Take no action	6	5.35
	112	100

From the table, users retransmit information to friends and relatives and they also discuss developments verbally. This accounts for why information on the Internet spreads rapidly. Agbanu (2013, p. 95) states that “people are no longer passive receivers of information, but active partners in most communication processes.” The New York Times Customer Insight Group partnered with Latitude Research to conduct a three-phase study to understand why people share online—which included interviews, a sharing panel, and a survey of 2,500 medium-to-heavy online sharers (Eleventy Marketing Group, October. 6, 2015). The study has some findings based on “The Psychology of Sharing” study that gives a glimpse at what could inspire or motivate someone to share a link, deal, video or picture online.

The study further breaks it down into different motivations. It comes down to four primary drivers:

- For YOU
- To help, entertain or enlighten someone else.



For I

To say something about who you are and what you stand for.

For WE

To build or maintain a relationship with a person or group.

For THEM

To help, support or draw attention to something you care about (Eleventy Marketing Group, 2015).

Table 5: Awareness of Basic COVID-19 Terminology

ITEM	Yes	No
Index case	43 (38.39%)	69 (61.60%)
Pandemic	90 (80.35%)	22 (19.64%)
SARS-CoV-2	46 (41.07%)	66 (58.92%)
COVID-19	92 (82.14%)	20 (17.85%)
Coronavirus	112 (100%)	Nil (0%)
Flatten the curve	10 (8.92%)	102 (91.07%)
Mitigation	16 (14.28%)	96 (85.71%)
Social distancing	88 (78.57%)	24 (21.42%)
Self isolation/ quarantine	70 (62.5%)	42 (37.5%)
Isolation Centre	87 (77.67%)	25 (22.32%)



Community spread	66 (58.92%)	46 (41.07%)
Positive cases	112 (100%)	Nil (0%)
Active cases	110 (98.21%)	2 (1.78%)
Testing	112 (100%)	Nil (0%)
Nose Mask	112 (100%)	Nil (0%)
Sanitiser	112 (100%)	Nil (0%)
Hand wash	112 (100%)	Nil (0%)

The above table describes the level of awareness of issues relating to the pandemic. Of importance is the fact that all respondents are aware of the pandemic. They are also aware of some key issues about the pandemic such as hand wash, sanitizer and nose mask. There are some differentials (gap) among the students in terms of level of awareness of COVID-19 pandemic. This is hypothetically explained in the level of new media dependency, literacy level and income.

This aspect of the work also relates to Dependency theory of the media. Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur proposed the “Dependency theory” in 1976 and scholars agree the theory was expanded from the Uses and Gratifications theory. The Dependency theory (also called media system dependency theory or simply dependency theory) holds that the mass media’s influence varies based on how much people need or use particular media (Bentley, n.d.).

## CONCLUSION

It is important to note that public responsiveness to government and non-government initiatives remains critical to world development drive. Consequently, using social media to propagate development initiatives such as improved health has been the practice the world over. This practice remains crucial in the fight against COVID-19. The theories used in the paper were appropriate and have buttressed the work. We can conclude:

- More and more people are getting access to online services
- Not every person has access to online media.
- Opera browser is a significant source of online information.
- WhatsApp and Facebook remain attractive to many online users.
- Many people are aware of coronavirus and fewer number are aware of COVID-19.
- Coronavirus, Facemask, sanitizer appear to be a house-hold name.
- There are some differentials (gap) among the students in terms level of awareness of COVID-19 pandemic. This is hypothetically explained in the level of new media dependency, literacy level and income.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:



1. Workshops and seminars for professional journalists are necessary for sensitisation on online journalism and user-generated contents. This is expected to help guard against fake news associated with online media.
2. The curriculum in mass communication related departments should be enriched to accommodate critical areas of new media and online journalism. This will include teachings in media literacy.
3. Secondary school curriculum should incorporate salient areas of new media to deal with issues in user-generated contents.
4. Religion has been described as the opium of the masses. Consequently, religious practitioners should be considered partners in any attempt to fight a war against COVID-19.
5. National crusade focusing on restraints in sharing unverified information and fake news is important. This will help reduce the incidents and consequences of fake news and fake medical advisory on COVID-19. In some instances, people were asked to take salt, drink chloroquine without dosage, take excessive Vitamin C, etc.
6. In line with the study, it has become pertinent that governments and change agents take advantage of the possibilities inherent in the new media in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Development of acceptable online news ethical values at national and international levels cannot be over-emphasised in any new media literature.

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## **PRESS COVERAGE OF ETHNIC INTEREST GROUPS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF SELECTED NATIONAL DAILIES**

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### **Abstract**

*Ethnic interest groups constitute influential actors in Nigeria's sphere of political engagement and public discourse generally. These groups, like other social actors, largely rely on mass media to be seen and heard, and the way media report them tends to shape public perception and engagement with the groups. Therefore, this paper examined press coverage of ethnic interest groups in Nigeria. Situated within the framework of agenda setting and framing theories, the study was designed as a content analysis. Four national dailies – Daily Sun, Vanguard, The Nation and Daily Trust – were purposively selected between May 29, 2015 and May 29, 2017, while 432 editions (108 issues for each paper) were selected. Findings showed that newspapers gave frequent and prominent coverage to ethnic interest groups in Nigeria. Reports on the groups revolved mainly around advocacy and antagonistic communication from the groups. The reports*



*were slanted to favour ethnic groups of the respective owners. The study concluded that the continued visibility enjoyed by ethnicity-related issues in the sphere of public discourse in Nigeria may be partly explained by the frequent and prominent coverage given to them by newspapers, and that newspapers' slanting of their reports in favour of ethnicity of their owners underscores their role in reinforcing ethnic consciousness and divisiveness in Nigeria as found by several previous studies. The study recommended, among others, more efforts by the press towards objectivity and non-sensationalism in their reportage of ethnicity.*

**Keywords:** Press, Coverage, Ethnicity, Ethnic interest groups, Newspaper

## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic politics has become a defining phenomenon in Nigeria's nationhood (Adetoye, 2016). An important actor in this ethnic politics has been ethnic interest groups which are non-state bodies that project interest of respective ethnic groups they represent. Historically, the activities of these groups had begun long before the independence of Nigeria in 1960. In fact, their rise and growth in prominence can be attributed to the rise of ethnic consciousness in the country, as the amalgamation of 1914 foisted the co-existence under one political roof of peoples of widely differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Eric, 2016).

As it turned out, that British-imposed unification has left in its trail a long-running tale of tensions, frictions and bloody clashes that have become a recurring decimal in the Nigeria's political journey (Edewor, Aluko & Folarin, 2014), with the civil war of 1967 – 1970 arguably being the climax so far. Consequently, from the outset, Nigeria became burdened by ethnic divisiveness which immediately inscribed its mark on every aspect of the life of the emerging nation. Hence, the early socio-political institutions, including political parties and the press, became infected with the pervading ferment of ethnicity (Daramola, 2013; Nwafor, 2015). The nation became inscribed with what Umejesi (2012) describes as "grievance dynamics" manifesting as "contestation for sovereignty" between the state and previously independent local (ethnic) communities (p.47).

Beginning from 1953, there have been tens of ethnic crises in Nigeria resulting in uncountable deaths and property destruction (Sagay, 2009; Ndujihe, 2011). Incidentally, given the interlocking of religion and ethnicity in the country, especially in the context of the north-south divide, many of these crises have also come with some religious undertone.

Thus, ethnicity has emerged a very powerful force shaping the socio-political landscape of Nigeria. It is an important factor in the structuring of the country starting from its initial regional set-up to the current state arrangement (Vande, 2012; Kasali, 2013; Adetoye, 2016). Similarly, several policies of the country including notably the federal character principle and revenue sharing system have been influenced wholly or partly by ethnicity (Ojie & Ewhrudjakpor, 2009). In fact, the footprint of ethnicity remains visible in virtually all facets of national life.

Ethnic interest groups arguably constitute the major voice of ethnicity in Nigeria. These interest groups essentially have their ultimate objective as to project and fight for the interest of the respective ethnic segment they seek to represent. These groups, whose presence has been felt since the pre-independence era (Nnoli, 1978), now serve as the key corporate voice



of ethnicity and ethnic groups in the country. Some of them such as ACF, Ohanaeze, Afenifere and Ibibio People's Union are more conservative and conformist, while others such as MASSOB, MOSOP, IPOB and OPC are more radical and tend towards self-determination. These bodies are informal entities in that they have no formal place in the politico-legal set-up of the country. Unlike other political groupings (such as state and local governments), their existence and activities are *permitted* and not *commanded* by law. However, they have become quite influential in political discourse and engagement in the country (Kukah, 2012). Notably, ethnic interest groups are an important actor in the unity-versus-division politics in Nigeria, as their claims and actions often have implications for national cohesion and peace (Ayatse&Akuva, 2013).

Consequently, understanding the ethnic interest groups is important for appreciating the dynamics of ethnicity and ethnic politics in Nigeria (Nnoli, 1978). In the same vein, understanding how the media represent these groups will be important for appreciating how ethnicity is generally represented in the media. These ethnic interest groups operate and communicate within a very vast geographic and cultural space known as Nigeria; and so, like other political actors and interests, they require mass media to be able to assert a presence within this huge space. It is what media report about the groups that members of the public tend to know about them. Therefore, media reportage becomes critical to how society relates with these groups and how their activities impact society. More importantly, such coverage contributes critically in shaping ethnic discourse and ethnic relations in the country. Against this backdrop, this paper studied press coverage of ethnic interest groups in Nigeria with focus on selected national daily newspapers.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In Nigeria, ethnicity has been identified as a major problem. It has been blamed for all sorts of counter-developmental tendencies in the country including strife, violence, nepotism and corruption (Ayatse&Akuva, 2013). In fact, Ayatse and Akuva (2013) claim that ethnicity "has been discovered to have been responsible for most of the political, administrative, economic, social and cultural maladies in Nigeria" (p.178). Hence, ethnic interest groups, who champion ethnic claims, maintain an uneasy presence in the polity – as their activities often bear the potential for inciting tensions and conflicts (Ayatse&Akuva, 2013). With the media thrown into the middle of these tensions and disputes, they arguably walk a tight ethical rope as their professionalism is brought under pressure.

Studies on press reportage of ethnicity (such as Omenugha & Ukwueze, 2011; Ngwu, Ekwe & Chukwuma, 2013; Nwafor, 2015) point to biases on the basis of the ethnicity of owners. This would suggest that newspapers, as against objectively engaging ethnicity, are also implicated in ethnic politics.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study was to investigate press coverage of ethnic interest groups in Nigeria with focus on selected national daily newspapers. More precisely, the following objectives are targeted:

- i. To find out how frequently newspapers reported ethnic interest groups in Nigeria;
- ii. To find out how much prominence newspapers accorded these interest groups;
- iii. To identify issues and events the newspapers reported of the groups;
- iv. To ascertain the slants of newspaper reports on the ethnic interest groups; and



- v. To establish the likely influence of owner's ethnicity on newspaper coverage of the groups.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of the above objectives, the following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. How frequently did newspapers report ethnic interest groups in Nigeria?
2. How much prominence did newspapers accord these interest groups?
3. What issues and events did newspapers report of the groups?
4. What were the slants of newspaper reports on the ethnic interest groups?
5. What was the likely influence of owner's ethnicity on newspaper coverage of the groups?

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Studies on media and ethnicity in the country have predominantly focused on specific ethnicity-related issues and events (Medubi, 2002; Anim, 2007; Salawu, 2013; Ngwu, Ekwe & Chukwuma, 2013; Sule, 2015). This study however focused on the overall activities of all ethnic interest groups in the country in order to have a more holistic picture. This approach was significant given that these groups have been described as the major organised voices of ethnicity in the country (Nnoli, 1978); hence their activities and communications offer a vital understanding of ethnic relations and discourses in Nigeria. By focusing on their reportage, therefore, this study arguably added some depth to the extant empirical literature in the area of ethnicity and media.

Newspapers (and perhaps other forms of mass media such as TV and radio) in Nigeria could benefit from this study by way of gaining some form of feedback on their performance in reporting ethnic interest groups and ethnicity in general. In other words, these newspaper houses could find the data to be generated by the research useful for self-assessment and possible improvement in their reportage of ethnicity.

Similarly, the government and other stakeholders in Nigeria's sphere of political relations could find the data to be generated by this research useful for enhancing ethnic cohesion and national unity. Since the mass media play a dominant role in how ethnic consciousness and ethnic relations are generated and shaped (Brooks & Hébert, 2006), understanding how newspapers in Nigeria represent ethnicity could offer some useful insight to government and other stakeholders towards better management of ethnic relations in the country. This improved management is required at this time the nation is experiencing an upsurge in the activities of secessionist groups such as MASSOB and IPOB.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focused on press reportage of ethnic interest groups in Nigeria. While this subject encompasses a lot of issues, this study concerned itself with only five variables as reflected in the objectives of the study i.e. frequency, prominence, issues, slant and possible influence of owners' ethnicity on coverage.

Also, the study restricted itself to only national dailies being that they constitute the mainstream in the nation's newspaper industry (Eze, 2017). Further, data collection was confined to only four newspapers; however, they were selected in such a way that they would



represent the ethnic spread of ownership and readership of newspapers in Nigeria. Similarly, the study was delimited to a two-year period.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptualising Ethnicity

Like other forms of social identity, ethnicity is not easily definable. But basically, ethnic identity is ascribed to persons based on their membership of a certain form of collective known as ethnic group. Defining ethnic groups, Ukiwo (2005) opines that they are groups with ascribed membership, usually but not always founded “on claims or myths of common history, ancestry, language, race, religion, culture and territory.” Although these factors need not necessarily be present before a group is identified as an ethnic group, the basic thing is that such a group is attributed with a common identity that differentiates it from others. Therefore, ethnicity is a very complex and fluid form of identity generated via interpenetration of all or some of the following variables: history, race, language, culture, religion and geography (Nnoli, 1978). In Africa, nonetheless, language has been identified as the most common variable in ascribing ethnicity (Ademola, 2009).

However, ethnicity does not isolate itself; it reaches out and interlocks with other identity forms including political, economic, social, religious, class and other shades of identity. This makes ethnic identity fluid as people can cross ethnic boundaries. Frank Salamone (as cited in Kukah, 1993) avers that ethnic “boundaries are permeable, and people, sometimes singly and sometimes in groups, cross them. They do so in general, either to maximise their opportunities or to minimise or neutralise their threats” (p.1 – 2). This fluidity of ethnicity has been particularly advanced by the critical school including in particular postmodernism and Marxism (Nnoli, 1978; Waters, 2009; Omoniyi, 2014).

After New Guinea and Indonesia, Nigeria ranks as the most ethnically and linguistically diverse country in the world (Blench & Dendo, 2003). Apparently, no agreement has been reached as to the exact number of ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, popular views have put this at between 250 and over 300 (Blench & Dendo, 2003; Ayatse & Akuva, 2013; Nwafor, 2015). The nation is a multi-ethnic entity where three major ethnic groups – Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, and tens of smaller groups have had to coexist under one political roof.

Undoubtedly, ethnicity has been a recurring component of power relations in Nigeria (Ekeanyanwu, 2007; Ademola, 2009; Ojie & Ewhrudjakpor, 2009; Ayatse & Akuva, 2013; Ekeanyanwu, 2013). In fact, it has been widely noted as one of the most powerful forces that have shaped the country’s history, for good or for bad (Blench & Dendo, 2003; Ukiwo, 2005; Ajayi & Owumi, 2013). Ebegebulem (2011) argues that the influence of ethnicity has been pervasive, having a major impact on Nigeria’s political and economic growth, influencing selection of leaders, siting of industries and other developmental projects; it brews inter-ethnic hostility and violence and generally undermines national unity and socio-economic wellbeing. Ethnicity exerts visible influence on the process of policy formulation and institution development in Nigeria (Ojie & Ewhrudjakpor, 2009).

### Ethnic Interest Groups

An important actor in ethnic relations in Nigeria is the ethnic interest groups. These groups have as their main objective the pursuit of the interest of their respective ethnic groups. The





rise of ethnic interest groups in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era with the Ibibio State Union, founded in 1927, reportedly being the first to come into existence. Today, the organization bears the name, Ibibio People's Union. The Igbo State Union was another ethnic interest group that came up in those early days (Orizu, 1994). The EgbéỌmọOdùduwà, which was a Yoruba interest group, was founded in 1945 while a Hausa group, Jam'iyyar *MutanenArewa*, came subsequently (Nnoli, 1978).

However, the ethnic interest groups that still exist today came much later than these pioneer bodies. The OhanaezeNdigbo was founded in 1976 to represent Igbo interest (OhanaezeNdi - Igbo, Enugu State Chapter, 2015). The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) came in 2001 (ArewaConsultative Forum, 2016) to represent the interest of northern ethnic groups, while both O'odua People's Congress, OPC (founded in 1994) and Afenifere are Yoruba interest groups (O'odua People's Congress, 2015). Within the context of the Niger Delta struggles, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) founded in 1990 and the Ijaw Youth Council founded in 1998 were some of the high profile interest groups (Ojoma, 2015).

Worthy of note also is that ethnic interest groups sometimes are organized around other interests such as profession, education or gender. Groups organized around education include students' groups like National Union of Ikwere Students, National Union of Urhobo Students, National Association of Igbo Students, Yoruba Students Association, Hausa Student Association of Nigeria, National Association of Ijaw Female Students, National Union of Isoko Students, and Igala Students' Association, among others. Those organized along gender include women's groups like Ikwere Women Progressive Union, Ijaw Women's Association, and Association of Bini Women of Honour, among others (Ojoma, 2015).

While ethnic interest groups generally promote interests of their respective ethnic groups, ideology and method sometimes differ from one group to another. Some of the groups could be considered more conservative while others could be considered more radical by virtue of their more drastic demand such as self-determination. Among the former groups would include ACF, Afenifere and Ohanaeze while MASSOB, OPC and MOSOP could easily fall into the latter category.

### **Media and Ethnicity in Nigeria**

Literature has implicated the media in the rise of ethnic consciousness in Nigeria (Kukah, 1993; Taiwo, 2007; Daramola, 2013; Nwafor, 2015). In his fairly detailed historical analysis, Daramola (2013) shows that Nigerian newspapers have from the outset been tied to the apron string of their owners, hence becoming partisan and tribal as necessitated by the respective political and ethnic affiliations of these owners. Some of the earliest newspapers established in the country as well as the broadcast stations that came later assumed ethnic colouration as politicians who established them employed them in pursuit of regional interests (Nwafor, 2015). Two of these early newspapers, *West African Pilot* and *Daily Service*, owned by Dr. NnamdiAzikiwe and Ernest Sessei Ikoli respectively, had reportedly been in a feud which at times assumed ethnic colouration.

This feud, according to Omu (as cited in Daramola, 2013), contributed to "the regionalisation of nationalism and crystallisation of inter-group tension and animosity which characterized political developments for a long time" (p.41). Daramola (2013) contends that the ethnic cleavages evident in newspaper content in Nigeria are so obvious that one cannot but easily





decipher them. Taiwo (2007) specifically accuses the Nigerian media of sensationalism in reporting ethnicity which sees them unduly focusing on conflicts in their coverage of ethnicity-related issues. This charge incidentally has been confirmed by empirical studies (Njoroge, Kimani & Kikech, 2011; Doki, n.d.).

Studies on newspaper reportage on key national issues in the country have also shown that many of the reports tend to take sides on ethnic, political, regional or religious issues. Salawu (2007), Omenugha and Ukwueze (2011), Ngwu *et al.* (2013), Nwafor (2015) and Sule (2015) found that media coverage of ethnic issues was less than objectives as each establishment tended to slant its report in favour of a given ethnic group. Ownership has also been found as factor, as reports seemed to have been slanted to favour the owner's ethnic group (Salawu, 2007; Ngwu *et al.*, 2013; Sule, 2015).

While the studies cited above are on media reportage of ethnicity-related issues, none of them focused specifically on coverage of ethnic interest groups, which being the only organised corporate ethnic players in the Nigeria's socio-political sphere (Ojoma, 2015), arguably present an ideal case for assessing media representation of ethnicity in the country. Stated differently, these studies were restricted to specific ethnic issues with none focusing holistically on the activities of ethnic interest groups. This constituted the research gap necessitating this study.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The agenda setting theory helps to view Nigerian newspapers as being able to project issues in society, including as related to ethnic interest groups. The theory posits that media, through regular and prominent coverage, elevate issues to the level of public agenda. In other words, media determine how much visible an issue becomes in the domain of public discourse; it sets public agenda (McQuail, 2010; Baran, 2010). Hence, while media may not tell us what to think, they certainly tell us what to think about. Stated differently, the theory is not about media persuading us, but about media suggesting to us what to think about and talk about. This is what is known as priming; the process whereby media makes a news event or issue more visible than others. Thus, Nigerian newspapers, through their manner of coverage, may elevate issues related to ethnic interest groups to the status of public agenda.

Also relevant to newspaper coverage of ethnic interest groups is the framing theory which explains the process whereby an originator of communication builds into their message the perspectives which they want audience to read the message from. The basis of the theory is that any given issue, event or development can be viewed and understood from varying perspectives. Stated differently, every phenomenon can be seen through different frames of meaning depending on who is seeing and the circumstances of the seeing (Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Chong & Druckman, 2007b). Hence, framing has been described as "the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue" (Chong & Druckman, 2007a, p.104). It is "a way of giving some overall interpretation to isolated items of fact" (p.380). A frame is developed "through selection, emphasis, and exclusion." A given frame makes people to direct their attention on certain messages while failing to see the other" (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015, p.428). In other words, a frame determines what is perceived and what is not perceived, what is understood and what is not understood, what is felt and what is not felt (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015).



Media gatekeepers in selecting and packaging news inevitably engage in framing. As all other members of society, they are not immune to social judgments and biases. Thus, McQuail (2010) contends that it “is almost unavoidable for journalists to” engage in framing “and in so doing to depart from pure ‘objectivity’ and to introduce some (unintended) bias” (p.380). Consequently, framing has been described as “an essential feature of news” (Tuchman as cited in Scheufele, 1999, p.106).

Within the context of this study, the framing theory helps to put in perspective the role of the gatekeepers in influencing the judgments and feelings of the audience by virtue of what they highlight and what they fail to highlight in their reportage of ethnic interest groups. Thus, the process of news production in regard to these groups could be understood from the perspective of the thought, judgment and emotion the gatekeepers intended to provoke in readers.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was designed as a content analysis. The study population was all national dailies published in Nigeria from May 29 2015 to May 29 2017 which was the first two years of the President MuhammaduBuhari administration. This period was chosen given its significance within the context of recent ethnic contestations in Nigeria. The period followed a presidential and other elections mired in ethnic tensions in March and April 2015 (Batta, Batta & Mboho, 2015), and these ethnic tensions lingered under the administration as the government continued to be accused of ethnic bias by some interests in the country (Ojoma, 2015). Ethnically charged issues such as attacks by Fulani herdsmen, agitations by secessionist groups like IPOB, MASSOB and Niger Delta groups, and arrest and detention of the IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu and leader of the Shiite Islamic Movement Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, among others, were all news stories with ethnic overtone in this period (Ojoma, 2015; Ezeonwuka & Igwe, 2016). Within this period, a total of 22 national dailies were found to be publishing in Nigeria, and each would have presumably published 732 issues in the two-year period of the study which gives a total of 16, 104 issues.

The sample size for the study was 432 newspaper editions. This size was chosen based on Basden and Wright’s (1997) recommendation that selecting one edition per week would be appropriate for a newspaper study extending up to a period of six months – and this study extended to a two-year period. Hence, for each of the four newspapers used here, 108 editions were selected (one from each of the 108 weeks that ran between May 29 2015 and May 29 2017). These, on the whole, amounted to 432 editions.

This sample selection was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved selecting newspaper titles, wherein the researcher looked out for two major characteristics; first, the market strength of a title, and second, the ethnic background of the owner. Hence, the researcher purposively selected *Daily Trust*, *The Sun*, *The Nation*, and *Vanguard*. The second stage of the sampling involved choosing particular editions of the four newspaper titles. Here, the researcher’s aim was to ensure that every day of the week (excluding Saturday and Sunday) was duly represented.

The weekend editions were excluded being that their content and style are more in the nature of magazine than newspaper. In other words, they don’t usually represent the typical newspaper tradition in terms of content and style (Bellhouse, 2005). In ensuring that all days



of the week were evenly represented, the researcher was guided by the recommendation by Basden and Wright (1997) that selection of editions should occur in a regular interval that would ensure that successive days are chosen every other week. Thus, the researcher began by picking the first day that occurred within the first week of the study – Friday, May 29, 2015. Then, moving to the second week, he chose Monday edition (June 1), the third week, the Tuesday edition (June 9), the fourth week, Wednesday June 17 and so on. This process continued up to the last week of May 2017 where the Tuesday edition (May 23) was selected. On the whole, 108 editions for each of the four newspapers and 432 editions for the entire four become the sample

The units of analysis were news, features, editorials, pictorials and cartoons. A coding sheet was used as the data collection instrument. The researcher was assisted by coders, who were first trained and an inter-coder reliability test conducted using Kappa formula as put forward by Cohen (as cited in Lombard, 2010). The test result stood at 0.96 which amounted to 96% reliability. Data was quantitatively analysed using simple percentages.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### RQ1: How frequently did newspapers report ethnic interest groups in Nigeria?

Frequency was measured by examining the number of times reports on ethnic interest groups were published in the newspapers. Data generated in that regard are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Frequency of Coverage*

	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total
Editions with reports on ethnic interest groups	75% N = 81	52.8% N = 57	47.2% N = 51	89.8% N = 97	66.2% N = 286
Editions without reports on ethnic interest groups	25% N = 27	47.2% N = 51	52.8% N = 57	10.2% N = 11	33.8% N = 146
Total	100% N = 108	100% N = 108	100% N = 108	100% N = 108	100% N = 432

Table 1 shows that on the whole, 66.2% of the newspaper editions had reports on ethnic interest groups while 33.8% came with no such reports. Apart from *Daily Trust*, all of the newspapers had such reports in majority of their issues published within the period under study. Nevertheless, the number of *Daily Trust* editions with such reports was only slightly below majority. The foregoing indicates that ethnic interest groups were a regular news subject in the newspapers, at least within this period, suggesting that these groups and their activities are viewed as important and critical to the nation by the newspaper gatekeepers. This tends to reinforce the belief expressed by writers like Daramola (2013) and Nwafor (2015) that ethnicity has over the years constituted an important and recurring news subject in the Nigerian media.

### RQ2: How much prominence did newspapers accord these interest groups?

Prominence was measured by examining the placement, page rating and headline size of reports published on ethnic interest groups in the newspapers. Data generated in that regard are as presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4.



Table 2: Placement

	Newspapers				Total
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	
Front page	21.4% N = 60	24.8% N = 37	8.6% N = 12	14.3% N = 26	18% N = 135
Centre page	0% N = 0	0% N = 0	2.1% N = 3	0% N = 0	0.4% N = 3
Back page	0% N = 0	0% N = 0	0% N = 0	0% N = 0	0% N = 0
Editorial page	0.7% N = 2	0.7% N = 1	0.7% N = 1	0.5% N = 1	0.7% N = 5
Others	77.9% N = 218	74.5% N = 111	88.6% N = 124	85.2% N = 155	81% N = 608
Total	100% N = 280	100% N = 149	100% N = 140	100% N = 182	100% N = 751

Table 2 shows that overall, 18% of the reports were placed on the front page, 0.4% appeared on centre page, 0% was on the back page, 0.7% appeared on the editorial page, while 81% appeared on other pages. The overwhelming dominance of other pages over front, centre, back and editorial pages (across the four newspapers) is natural because they constitute most of the newspaper space, and so most reports find themselves there. However, for ethnic interest groups to get up to 18% front page placement is remarkable considering the number of subjects and issues competing for that single but most treasured page in every edition. The centre page almost did not get any material given that only *Daily Trust* publishes report in that page; others use that mostly for advertisements. Then, the back page, being mainly for opinion columns in the newspapers, had no reports placed on it. For the editorial page, its content is already fixed i.e. editorials, editorial cartoons and letters to the editor. In all, it could be stated that the pattern of placement, to whatever extent, suggests that newspapers placed some value on the activities and communications of the ethnic interest groups; they found them worthy of prominent placement.

Table 3: Page Rating (Excluding Features, Pictures and Editorials)

	Newspapers				Total
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	
Page lead	50.5% N = 106	21.6% N = 25	11.6% N = 32	60% N = 96	40.1% N = 240
Non page lead	49.5% N = 104	78.4% N = 91	88.4% N = 99	40% N = 64	59.9% N = 358
Total	100% N = 210	100% N = 116	100% N = 112	100% N = 160	100% N = 598

Table 3 shows that overall, 40.1% of the reports were published as page lead reports as against 59.9% that came as non-page lead reports. Ethnic interest groups could be said to have got an impressive share of the page lead reports considering that many other subjects also compete for that status, and there can be only one lead report in each page. Remarkable, *Daily Sun* and *Vanguard* respectively published 50.5% and 60% of their reports as page leads.

Table 4: Headline Size (Excluding Pictures, Editorials and Cartoons)



	Newspapers				Total
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	
Large	60.5% N = 133	43.5% N = 54	23.5% N = 28	66.1% N = 109	51.6% N = 324
Medium	8.6% N = 19	8.9% N = 11	0% N = 0	22.4% N = 19	7.8% N = 49
Small	30.9% N = 68	47.6% N = 59	76.5% N = 91	22.4% N = 37	40.6% N = 255
Total	100% N = 220	100% N = 124	100% N = 119	100% N = 165	100% N = 628

Table 4 shows the sizes of the headlines of the reports. This was measured by the number of columns across which a headline was spread i.e. “large” (five to six columns), “medium” (three to four columns) or “small” (one to two columns). Overall, 51.6% of the reports came with large headlines, 7.8% came with medium headlines, while 40.6% came with small headlines. Almost a similar pattern is reflected in all but one of the individual newspapers. Looking at the data holistically, it could be stated that the newspapers gave large headlines to a good number of the reports which is a pointer to the extent of value attached to ethnic interest groups by the papers.

On the whole, the foregoing data indicate that the newspapers gave prominence to the activities and communications of the ethnic interest groups in terms of pattern of placement (Table 2), page rating (Table 3), and headline size (Table 4). Such treatment shows prominent coverage of the groups.

**RQ3: What issues and events did newspapers report of the ethnic interest groups?**

Issues and events reported were measured by examining the subject matter of reports published by the newspapers on the groups. Data generated in that regard are as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Issues Reported of Ethnic Interest Groups*

	Newspapers				Total
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	
Advocacy	29.6% N = 83	35.6% N = 53	40.7% N = 57	25.3% N = 46	31.8% N = 239
Antagonistic communication	31.4%	20.1%	17.9%	25.8%	25.3%



by an ethnic interest group	N = 88	N = 30	N = 25	N = 47	N = 190
Antagonistic communication	3.6%	2%	1.4%	4.4%	3.1%
by government	N = 10	N = 3	N = 2	N = 8	N = 23
Demonstrations/riots/clashes	4.6%	6%	7.1%	2.7%	4.9%
Internal divisions	N = 13	N = 9	N = 10	N = 5	N = 37
	0%	9.4%	2.1%	2.2%	2.8%
Arrest/trial of members	N = 0	N = 14	N = 3	N = 4	N = 21
	18.2%	12.8%	5.7%	19.2%	15%
Ceremonies	N = 51	N = 19	N = 8	N = 35	N = 113
	7.9%	14.1%	3.6%	5.5%	7.7%
Others	N = 22	N = 21	N = 5	N = 10	N = 58
	4.6%	0%	21.4%	14.8%	9.3%
	N = 13	N = 0	N = 30	N = 27	N = 70
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	N = 280	N = 149	N = 140	N = 182	N = 751

Table 5 indicates that 31.8% of the reports on ethnic interest groups were on advocacy, 25.3% were on antagonistic communication by an ethnic interest group, 3.1% on antagonistic communication by government, 4.9% on demonstrations/riots/clashes, 2.8% on internal divisions, 15% on arrest/trial of members, 7.7% on ceremonies, while 9.3% was on other issues. Thus, the newspapers largely reported the ethnic interest groups in terms of the advocacy they make; the ideas they promote and what they want done.

This suggests that they tend to view them as important voices in the national discourse whose opinions and suggestions on the nation should be heard. Similarly, antagonistic communication by these groups was frequently reported as well; this sort of communication is usually in the form of aggressive demands, warnings and accusations by the groups. It is often dramatic and sensational and so makes the typical sort of audience-pulling news that interests the press (Jenkins, 1981; Hieber, 1998; Akin, 2005). Also, the relative dominance of arrest/trial of members among the issues reported of the groups may be understood also by paying attention to the typically dramatic nature of such occurrence which became a common experience of more radical groups like MASSOB and IPOB.

#### **RQ4: What were the slants of newspaper reports on the ethnic interest groups?**

Slant was measured by examining the direction of reports in the papers in terms of how favourable it appeared to the respective ethnic interest groups. Data generated in that regard are as presented in Table 6.

Table 6: *Slant*

	Newspaper				Total
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	
Favourable to an	7.1%	3.4%	45%	2.2%	12.3%
Hausa-Fulani interest group	N = 20	N = 5	N = 63	N = 4	N = 92





Favourable to an Igbo interest group	51.8% N = 145	12.% N = 18	15.6% N = 22	45.1% N = 82	35.6% N = 267
Favourable to a Yoruba interest group	17.9% N = 50	30.9% N = 46	10.7% N = 15	3.8% N = 7	15.7% N = 118
Favourable to a minority interest group	13.2% N = 37	9.4% N = 14	5.7% N = 8	27.5% N = 50	14.5% N = 109
No Clear Slant	10% N = 28	44.3% N = 66	22.9% N = 32	21.4% N = 39	22% N = 165
Total	100% N = 280	100% N = 149	100% N = 140	100% N = 182	100% N = 751

Table 6 shows that on the whole (across the four newspapers), 12.3% of the reports were favourable to Hausa-Fulani ethnic interest groups, 35.6% to an Igbo interest group, 15.7% favoured Yoruba groups, 14.5% favoured minority groups, while 22% came with no clear slant. Interestingly, it can be observed that the news slants largely followed the ethnicity of the proprietors of the newspapers; each of the papers tended to give more positive slant to the ethnic group where the owner(s) come from. However, the exception was *Vanguard* which gave the most positive slants to Igbo interest groups while minority groups (where the proprietor belongs) came second. This same pattern was also seen of *Vanguard* in the amount of reports published of the ethnic interest groups (Table 2).

**RQ5: What was the likely influence of owner’s ethnicity on newspaper coverage of the groups?**

To measure the likely influence of owners’ ethnicity, ethnic background was correlated with the pattern of the reportage. This is as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Zero Order Correlation Matrix (Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Owners’ ethnicity	1	-.025	-.235**	-.257**	.332**	.176**
2. Placement		1	.259**	.310**	.072*	-.006
3. Page rating			1	.774**	.066	-.016
4. Headline size				1	.025	-.041
5. Ethnic group reported					1	.327**
6. Slant						1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 shows that owners’ ethnicity correlates negatively with page rating ( $r = -.235$ ) and headline size ( $r = -.257$ ), and positively with ethnic group reported ( $r = .332$ ), and slant ( $r = .176$ ). This indicates that a likelihood of association between ethnic backgrounds of the respective newspaper proprietors and how they report the ethnic interest groups exist. Instructively, influence of owners’ ethnicity in reporting ethnic issues in Nigeria has been observed in previous studies including Sule (2015), Omenugha and Ukwueze (2011), and Ngwuet *al.* (2013).

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**



The finding by this study showed that the newspapers gave frequent and prominent coverage to the ethnic interest groups is an indication that the papers viewed these groups as deserving of being kept on the public agenda. Frequent and prominent coverage is the most critical element in the agenda setting process, as subjects accorded such treatment by the media are likely to emerge as part of the public agenda (Daramola, 2003; Baran, 2010). This finding may have been lent credence by the assertion of Sule (2015) that ethnic interest groups and ethnicity-related issues are dominant in the sphere of public discussion and debate in Nigeria. In this light, one could state that these subjects have gained their prominent status due to the manner in which the newspapers, and perhaps, other mass media, have treated them. However, this is after allowance must have been made for other intervening variables that might influence the agenda setting process.

The third finding would also advance the argument that the press views ethnic interest groups as significant voices that ought to be heard, as the papers largely reported them in terms of the advocacy they make, the ideas they promote and the demands they make. The finding also showed frequent reportage of antagonistic communication of these groups by way of their aggressive demands, warnings and accusations; a pattern that validates the belief that the press often gives dramatic and sensational treatment to divisive subjects like ethnicity as a way of exciting audience interest (Jenkins, 1981; Hieber, 1998; Akin, 2005).

Similarly, results equally indicate that the respective newspapers slanted their coverage in favour of particular ethnic interest groups and that this slanting corresponded with the ethnicity of the respective owners. This suggests that the coverage is reflective of the beliefs, biases and prejudices upheld about ethnicity in Nigeria. Interestingly, influence of ethnic ideology on reportage in the country has been investigated by several previous studies including Omenugha and Ukwueze (2011), Medubi (2012), Ngwu *et al.* (2013), Salawu (2013), Nwafor (2015) and Sule (2015) – with the results generally showing that this influence is real and strong. Studies such as Ekeanyanwu (2007), Ngwu *et al.* (2013) and (2013) Sule (2015) were also interested in the role of ownership in this influence, and just like the present study, the ethnicity of the owner was found to be significant.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it may be concluded that the continued visibility enjoyed by ethnicity-related issues in the sphere of public discourse in Nigeria may be partly explained by the frequent and prominent coverage which this study found newspapers to be giving to ethnic interest groups. Such coverage, according to the agenda setting theory, is critical for elevating an issue to the level of public agenda. Furthermore, the fact that the newspapers slanted their reports in favour of ethnicity of their owners underscores media's role in reinforcing ethnic consciousness and divisiveness in Nigeria as found by several previous studies (Salawu, 2007; Omenugha & Ukwueze, 2011; Ngwu *et al.*, 2013; Nwafor, 2015; Sule, 2015). So, in effect, findings of this study validate results of previous studies to the effect that media coverage of ethnicity has been largely biased, with the ethnicity of the owner influencing the slant.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Newspaper houses in Nigeria should work towards improving objectivity in their representation of ethnic interest groups through adopting deliberate editorial policies



aimed at giving even amounts of coverage to different ethnic interests as well as reporting them fairly irrespective of whatever interest a newspaper house might have.

2. Given how sensitive and emotive ethnicity-related issues have proven in Nigeria and other places (Umejesi, 2012), there is need for periodic internal review of performances of Nigerian newspapers. This could be done under the auspices of bodies like the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and Nigerian Press Council, among others. The aim will be to continually appraise how much practitioners have been faithful to the established norms of practice in terms of equal representation and objectivity. Such peer review mechanism could help individual journalists and newspaper houses to continuously improve their performance without threat to press freedom.
3. A repeat of this study using other newspapers different from those employed in this study may be necessary. For instance, based on ethnic backgrounds of owners (which informed the researcher's choice of newspapers), *The Punch* could be substituted for *The Nation*, *The Authority* for *Daily Sun*, *New Nigerian* for *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* for *Vanguard*. Study of these other newspapers may help in further validating the generalisations made in the present study.
4. In the same vein, other media forms such as radio and television should also be subjected to this sort of study. This is important given that various media forms have their various unique characteristics and dynamics. For instance, television, given its greater capacity to graphically depict and glamorise events, has injected much dramatisation to political events (Lewis, 2005) such as represented by ethnic relations in Nigeria.

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## REVOLUTIONARY UNDERPINNINGS IN POETRY: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF OSUNDARE'S *THE EYE OF THE EARTH*

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### Abstract

*Language, whether written or spoken, is used for different purposes by man. The textual function of language makes it possible for writers especially poets to lend their voice to local, national and international matters of interest through written poetry. In most cases, poetry functions more than being just a mirror to the society; it has the implicit intent of causing a change, thus, it is underpinned with criticisms that could incite revolution in readers which could upturn the status quo. The intention is to awaken readers to the reality and to critically engage their mind in order to make a rethink so as to see the 'evil' behind the 'good' in the society. The data for analysis were purposively selected from Osundare's poetry collection *The Eye of the Earth*. Stylistics was deployed as the theoretical framework to analyse the selected data while, Blending Theory was deployed to unearth the meaning-making process in the analysed data. From the analysis, different stylistic devices used such as simile, rhetorical question, metaphor, parallelism etc. reveal societal ills and condemn apathy in readers with the aim of inciting revolution towards having an egalitarian society. The study found out that new meaning is created through blending of concepts from different input spaces. A general and common ground is derived from the input spaces which are used to derive new meaning. This linguistic dexterity is intended by the poet to project his message to readers in a subtle way. The study concluded that Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* contains implicit revolutionary nuances aimed at motivating readers to rise against the injustices in the society towards achieving an egalitarian society. Also, the poet decries man's injurious activities to nature and opts for preservation of natural endowments thus, the aim of this study is achieved which is to unearth the revolutionary nuances embedded in the selected and analysed data. Apart from its contribution to existing literature especially in communication, this study presents a methodology and a theoretical framework that is helpful in the appreciation of literary writings.*

**Keywords:** Blending, mapping, style, stylistics, revolution, masses, leaders, stylistic devices, input spaces

### INTRODUCTION

Poetry serves as a mirror to the society as poets use it to portray various activities of the society. Language as a potent tool to poets lends itself to creative manipulations as an exploration of the linguistic plurality to capture the changing dynamics of the society and diverse linguistic needs of the speaker in different contexts. Since language could easily lend itself to creative manipulations, it could be seen as a tool that could be used to condition



people's thoughts. From the colonial era, poetry has often served as a means to reveal societal ills in a bid to correct them. There have been calls to pay attention to the emerging challenge of the depletion of the ozone layer and the environment in order to address issues of environmental degradation and global warming. Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* could be seen as response to those calls as its focus lies in the call for preservation of nature's endowments. *The Eye of the Earth* is a collection of poems. It is divided into three sections: "Back to Earth", "Rainsongs" and "Homecall. It presents various themes ranging from the unhealthy activities of man on the earth to the presentation of the earth as a repository of wealth for man's judicious use. It portrays Osundare's perception of the earth in relation to man's activities and the effects on the environment. Nature is the crux of this collection as it hinges on the celebration of the rich cultural traditions of his people and emphasizes their reverence for nature. The collection addresses issues of environmental degradation and desertification. By exploring the theme of environmental degradation and the theme of socio-political injustices, Osundare portrays various societal ills through the deployment of both stylistic devices to achieve his aim effectively. This study concludes that revolutionary poets do more than informing readers about the various happenings in the society; through their poems, by carefully deploying both stylistic devices, they unearth societal ills aimed towards challenging the people to rise up and fight for their freedom. This study reveals that the poets as writers are also 'righters' who seek to correct societal ills, injustices and other social vices using poetry.

Deploying stylistics and blending theory to unearth the revolutionary nuances inherent in Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* is very rewarding as it portrays the meaning-making process through blends using stylistic devices. This meaning-making process helps to uncover hidden revolutionary nuances inherent which are targeted towards readers in order incite revolutionary with the aim of attaining an egalitarian society and a healthy environment.

### **THE HISTORICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF AFRICAN POETRY**

Poetry as an art form has undergone several phases of evolution from pre-colonial to colonial and then to post-colonial eras in most African countries. There existed a thin line between poets and musicians as poets composed and rendered poetry in musical form. Poets rendered their works at funerals, marriage ceremonies and other ceremonial avenues where they could give their renditions, with themes focused on praising virtues and condemning vices in society. Themes of liberation, independence and negritude began to permeate African literature in the late colonial period when Africa began to seek independence from the colonialists. African poets (as well as playwrights and novelists) began to write condemning slavery and colonialism and advocating for self-rule. African literature at that time was protest in nature. It came as a reaction to various forms of injustices meted out on Africans by the colonial masters and later, post-colonial African masters. African poets preoccupied themselves with themes such as: the clash between Africa's past and present, between tradition and modernity, between indigenous and foreign, between individualism and community, between socialism and capitalism, between development and self-reliance and between Africanity and humanity. Other themes in this period include social problems such as corruption, the economic disparities in newly independent countries, and the rights and roles of women.

These themes explored by the writers are a reflection of what is happening in the society. Hence, it is obvious that literature does not develop in a vacuum. It is the political, economic,



social and cultural events of a society that shape its literature. Indeed, it will be right to say that for any literary work to be relevant, it is necessary that it bears relevance, explicitly or implicitly, to the social milieu in which it is set (Kehinde Ayo, 2005). The various historical and developmental stages of African poetry (written) reflect the historical realities of such era; the pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-colonial and poets largely drew their themes from these eras.

## STYLISTICS

Stylistics is a word which has its origin from “Style”. From the layman’s point of view, style is the general way of doing something thus, we could refer to a person’s style of writing, walking, sitting, dressing etc. Leech (1969) describes style as “the way in which an act is spoken, written or performed”. Stylistics can be defined as the study of language usage in different contexts either linguistic or situational. Lawal (2003), posits that stylistics is concerned with the analysis and description of linguistic features of texts in relations to their meanings. It is aimed at analyzing language habits with the purpose of identifying those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts. According to Simpson (2004), “to do stylistics is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use”. Literary stylistics is more concerned with providing ‘the basis for fuller understanding, appreciation and interpretation of avowedly literary and author-centred texts (Carter and Simpson, 1989). Literary stylistics helps to explore the stylistic devices used by an author to present his message. It focuses on how textuality is achieved by writers through the various literary and stylistic devices. In literary stylistics, the devices that can constitute style include figurative devices and rhetorical tropes such as simile, metaphor, rhyme and rhythm, hyperbole, personification, point of view and narrative technique, etc. Style in literature involves the investigation into the ways that an author uses words through the deployment of literary elements and devices. Issues to consider include choice of words, sentence structure and arrangement, imagery, figurative language, etc.

The approaches to style include the following:

- (a) Style as choice from variant forms: The crux of this approach is that a language user makes certain choices from variant forms (an array of possible elements) and combines them to convey a particular situation. In other words, speaker selects from lexical possibilities that the language permits in order to express themselves. These choices are determined by the context of situation of the speech event. According to Osundare (2003), style as choice stands out as the most author-oriented because it transcends the arrays of physicalities of the language used to the various dynamics and imperatives that style offers. Going further, Osundare (2003) explains that the selection of lexical items and grammatical elements are chosen by the pre-verbal choice and form. He distinguishes between pre-verbal and verbal choices which cover the psychological and cultural choices and the actual use of the choices made with the pre-verbal choices greatly determining the use of the verbal choices.
- (b) Style as deviation from the norm: This approach is both a rule governed behaviour and accumulation norms. Osundare’s (2003:18) schema for style as difference bifurcates into variation and deviation. Variation could be code-oriented, subject-oriented or author-oriented while deviation could be extro or intro normic which branches to intra-authorial and inter-authorial. Osundare (2003) explains that code-oriented variation could be lexical, syntactic, or rhetorical. Subject oriented variation covers the different fields of human activities such as law, medicine, construction, engineering, teaching, ICT, carpentry, etc. which vary with different manifestations of peculiarity based on each profession. Author oriented variation on



the other hand, centres on the peculiarity of individual author. In simpler language, this approach to the study of style deviates from the standard graphological, phonological, lexicon-semantic, morphological, syntactic and discourse rules language.

(c) Style as idiosyncratic and constant form: This approach states that every individual uses language in a unique way different from others. This approach is tantamount to the sociolinguistic concept of “idiolect” which deals with the peculiarity of language use of every individual. In the opinion of Osundare (2003:29), “This perspective gives style some attribute of a habit, a trait, a linguistic behavior that, through settled practice, has become the hallmark of a language user or a domain of linguistic experience.”

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Here, the theoretical frameworks on which this study is based are presented.

### **The Concept of Marxism**

The German philosopher, Karl Marx propounded Marxism. According to Asika (2014), Marxism is the economic and political theory originated by the German political philosopher Karl Marx that actions and human institutions are economically determined, that the class struggle is the basic agency of historical change, and that capitalism will ultimately be superseded by communism. Karl Marx believes that in production, there is the exploitation of the lower class group by the privileged class (bourgeoisie). It therefore tries to uncover these exploitations with the aim of encouraging a revolt by the exploited class against the exploiters, the masses against the bourgeoisie, the poor against the rich, etc.

Class struggle is the crux of Marxism. It aims at bringing to the fore, the unfair and exploitative conditions with the aim of concentrating the wealth of the society in the hands of its producers. Marxist writings are revolutionary in nature and are written with the aim of raising a consciousness of exploitation, inequality and injustices of those in privileged positions in the society. Marxists are preoccupied with injustices in the society and how to create a change in the status quo so as to create a balance especially in the distribution of society’s wealth. Ngugi (cited in Asika, 2014) commenting says: “...It can either evidence a consciousness that seems to consciousness congruent with the interests of the oppressed class which is engaged in the struggle to change the social status quo.” (472)

Marxism x-rays the structure of the society to unravel areas of imbalances between the rich leaders versus the poor masses, the upper class versus the lower class, the bourgeois class versus the proletariat (the poor peasant masses), producers of labour versus workers etc. in order to address these imbalances. This is done in various areas of the society; economic, political, and social. Marxism achieves its aim through literature by using writings (poetry, drama, and novel) to scrutinize the different strata of the society in order to create awareness in the masses and the oppressed in the society about the injustices in the society and how they need to throw off the yoke from off their shoulders by opposing and overturning the political, social and economic strata of the society so that there will be equality regardless of one’s social, political or economic stance.

### **Blending Theory**

This theory is also known as conceptual blending theory or conceptual integration. Though a new theory, it draws from existing theories and models. Its main proponents according to Abrams (1999) are Fauconnier and Turner (1998, 2002) with contributions from other



scholars like Coulson (2001, 2006), Coulson and Oakley (2000), Grady (2005), Grady, Oakley and Coulson (1999) and Sweetser (2000) among others. It is a theory derived from blending Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Mental Spaces theory (MS) but has now developed into a fully-fledged theory independent of both theories. It blends the notion of spaces from mental Spaces Theory and the notion of mapping between spaces from Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Norgaard et al (2010:60) attempted to define it as ‘an understanding of concept A in terms of concept B; it is the understanding of some conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain’ which is realized at the cognitive level rather than the sentence or word level. This theory in order to construct meaning through the blend comprises two (or more) input spaces, the generic space and the blend. The input spaces are the various areas that the blend is derived from which are according to Coulson (2006:190 cited in Abrams, 1999) typically structured by information from discrete cognitive domains.

The generic space is the interface among the various input spaces; it contains some components common to all the inputs while the blend which is the end point is created as a new and independent space which derives a new meaning generated from the generic space which is also generated from the input spaces. According to Norgaard et al (2010) blending theory has become a theoretical proposition firmly embraced by practitioners of stylistics, which is not surprising considering the particularly creative nature of literary discourse and its inclusion of novel blends. The researcher chose this theory to analyze Niyi Osundare’s poetry collection *The Eye of the Earth* because in concurrence with the position of Norgaard et al above, the theory affords the researcher the opportunity to investigate the literary and stylistic creativity of the author.

Marxism as presented above is a theory that investigates society’s socio-political and ethno-religious aspects in order to bring to uncover areas of oppression, injustices and inequalities meted out on especially society’s less-privileged and downtrodden especially by those in authority. This theory is significant to this research as it enabled the researcher to explore the ‘‘The Eye of the Earth’’ by Osundare to bring to the fore the revolutionary forces inherent in them. More so, in order to look at the language and style of the author, the researcher adopted literary stylistics as an approach in order to look at the language of the poet and to bring out the stylistic (figurative and literary) devices used in order to unravel nuances of oppression and injustice in the society. The data analysed were purposively selected from the poetry collection.

## **ANALYSIS OF OSUNDARE’S *THE EYE OF THE EARTH***

### **Simile**

Simile compares two people or things directly. It is a comparison between two distinctly different things which is explicitly indicated by the word ‘‘like’’ or ‘‘as’’. M.H Abrams (2005). This is the indirect comparison of two objects, people, animals etc. by placing them in contrast to each other.

### **Simile in *The Eye of the Earth***

- (1) I have seen  
    ‘‘...laboring mouths famish like desert basins.’’ (*What the Earth Said*, line 19-20)
- (2) I have seen foremen soulless like their whistling whip. (*What the Earth Said*, line 15-16)
- (3) I have seen





Lives snuffed out like candles in the storm. (*What the Earth Said*, line 27-28)

Osundare in the above datum makes use of simile through the use of 'like'. The author through simile compares the situation of 'mouths' (a synecdoche for persons/people) to that of the desert. Here, the situation of people referred to in the above is likened to that of desert basins. Through this simile, Osundare creates a blend which is a new meaning. The input spaces would be 'mouths' (people) and 'desert basins'. A cognitive attribute of 'desert basins' is used to comprehend the domain of 'people' thus, giving rise to a novel meaning called the blend derived by mapping attributes of 'desert basins' unto laboring 'mouths' which refers to people. 'dryness' and 'abandonment' as attributes of 'desert basins' are mapped unto those working class (laboring) people which means that the masses who work are left with very little to live on. Meaning that, the masses that constitute the working class live in penury. In datum 2, the input spaces are foremen' and "(whistling) whip" to generate a blend by mapping attribute of 'whip' to foremen. The blend created is that just as the 'whip' through whistling sound continues to go up and down the back of the recipient, so do foremen continuously torment the masses in their hostage.

Also, in datum 3, an attribute from the input space (candles) is mapped unto the input space; lives (people) to create a blend to mean that as 'suddenly and without thought' as light goes out of candles in the storm, so does death come on the masses suddenly and the killers do this without hesitation. This means that the lives of the masses mean nothing to the 'killers' and can be suddenly taken anytime. Using simile to create blends as analysed above, the author is able to project his message of revolutionary instincts by portraying the horrendous ordeal of the masses; poverty, torment and death (datum 1, 2, and 3 respectively) in the hands of privileged few in the position of power in the society. Through this, Osunadre decries the inhuman treatment being incessantly meted out to the poor masses by few people in the position of power.

### Parallel Construction/Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of similar words or structures in successive lines. Parallelism according to Okunowo, Y. (2012) "is a linguistic phenomenon, which explains the relationship that may be understood between units of linguistic structures, which are constructed parallel to each other or related in some other ways." Also, Myers and Simms (1989:223) define parallelism as "a rhetorical device of grammar in which words, phrases, clauses or ideas of equivalent value share a similar grammatical structure to create an inherent comparison among them.

### Parallel Construction/Parallelism in *The Eye of the Earth*

- (4) (for) earth is where we stand  
Earth is where we strive. (*The Rocks Rose to Meet Me*, St.5 line 3, 4)
- (5) ...this earth is:  
Ours to work not to waste  
Ours to man not to maim (*Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder*, St.6 line 2,3)
- (6) I have seen  
Labouring mouths famish like desert basins  
I have seen  
Factory lords roll in slothful excess  
I have seen





Backs creak on heartless machines  
 I have seen  
 Lungs powered with asbestos death  
 I have seen  
 Lives snuffed out like candles in the storm.  
 (“What The Earth Said”)

In datum 4, the parallel construction “earth is where we...” does not only give the poem rhythm but also communicates the author’s message of the valuableness of the earth to mankind due to its multiple uses. By using the input spaces “stand” and “strive”, a blend is created that earth serves multiple uses to mankind hence, the need to preserve it. Through parallelism, Osundare reminds us of the importance of the earth and advises us against unwholesome practices on it. This stance of the author is clearly understood in another parallel construction in datum 5, “ours to... not to...” clearly decrying, through the input spaces ‘work (not waste)’ and ‘man (not maim)’, the unwholesome practices of ‘wasting’ and ‘maiming’ the earth we are to work and man.

Parallelism in datum 6 lies in the repetition and sameness of structures enhanced by the graphological arrangement of the subject-verb “I have seen”. This parallelism using repetition and structural equivalence helps to provide the poem a certain rhythm which helps the poet to build up the mood of sadness through the various inhuman treatment meted out on the poor masses as listed in the poem. The input spaces are ‘the laboring mouths (masses)’ and their ‘lords or foremen’. Through these input spaces, Osundare creates a blend through parallelism that the poor masses who are used to do various arduous works under very horrendous treatments by the same lords they work for in addition, continue to wallow in penury while the lords have in excess. The horrendous treatment of the poor masses continues to increase and sometimes leads to death; this is evident in the parallelistic crescendo of the horrendous treatment of the masses culminating at death.

**Personification**

Personification is a figure of speech used to animate inanimate objects. According to Wales (2001:294), personification is “a figure of speech or trope in which an inanimate object, animate non-human, or abstract quality is given human attributes. It involves the transfer of attributes of living things to non-living things. It involves giving life to non-living things so that they are meant to act like living things.

**Personification in *The Eye of the Earth***

(7) uncountable seeds lie sleeping  
                   in the wombs of the earth. (*Harvestcall*, St.8 line 1)

(8) Lynched  
           The lakes  
           Slaughtered  
           The seas  
           Mauled  
                   The mountains (*Our Earth Will Not Die*, line 1-6)

In datum 7 above, the human attributes ‘sleeping’ and ‘wombs’ are attributed to ‘seeds’ and ‘earth’ respectively to bring alive the unharnessed (sleeping) earth’s myriads of resources that



are buried (wombed) in the earth. The input spaces are ‘seeds (lie sleeping)’ and ‘(wombs of the) earth’ which create the blend that the earth houses so much that is left unharnessed by the people who are complaining of insufficiency. This means that if we put our fingers to work, there will be no lack in the land. Through personification as shown above, Osundare condemns the laziness of the people which has led to scarcity in the land whilst the earth houses so much. This is aimed at reminding the people of the abundant earth’s resources and to motivate them to shun laziness and harness these resources for man’s benefit.

Through personification in datum 8 above, objects are given human attributes thus, we picture the ‘lakes’, ‘seas’ and ‘mountains’ as though they are human beings who have been ‘lynched’, ‘slaughtered’ and ‘mauled’. The input spaces ‘lakes’, ‘seas’ and ‘mountains’ preceded by ‘lynched’, ‘slaughtered’ and ‘mauled’ represent earth’s natural resources used together with the verbs ‘lynched’, ‘slaughtered’ and ‘mauled’ create the blend that earth’s natural resources suffer from unwholesome activities by man. Through this, Osundare condemns all unwholesome practices by man against natural resources and calls for a change for man to protect the earth’s resources not destroy them; use them not misuse them. Osundare gives human qualities to inanimate objects in order to have the maximal appeal since it is to be read by human beings. He believes that it is bound to have more effect if objects are given human attributes which the people are familiar with. Personification proves very impactful especially in a revolutionary writing as this which intends to not only inform the people but to also get them to act towards change.

(9) I have seen/heard. (*What the Earth Said*, St.1 line 1, 4, St. 3 line 1,3, 4 line 1,3 St. 5 line 1, 3 St. 6 line 1, 5)

In datum 9 above, the earth is given the human attributes of “seeing” and “hearing” by the author. This is done to make the earth feel as a human all the abuse and misuse it is being put into by having the painful experience of seeing and hearing them. The use of this personification is to tell how devastating man’s activities are to the earth that even the earth which is inanimate could “see” and “hear” them. Through this, the author seeks to not only highlight these abusive acts and misuse the earth is put into but also condemns them and appeals to the people to protect the earth and its myriads of endowed natural resources rather than destroy it.

## REPETITION

This is to reiterate what is earlier stated for certain reasons and to achieve certain effects. Usually, a word, phrase, sentence etc that has been used is repeated by the writer intentionally to achieve a purpose. It is an emphasis necessary to fix the attention of the reader on the key-word of the utterance.

### Repetition in *The Eye of the Earth*

(10) Where are they? (*Harvestcall*, St.8 line 1,5,8,11,14)

In datum 10 above, through repetition and rhetorical question, Osundare emphasizes the blessedness of the land endowed with myriads of resources and fertility of the soil and further questions the disappearance of these things from the land. Through this, rhetorically asking the people is a pointer that the people know the whereabouts or are the cause of the disappearance of those natural endowments.

(11) They (too) are the earth. (*They Too are the Earth*, St.1line 1, 4, St. 2 line 1, 4, St. 3 line 1, 4, St. 4 line 1, 4)



In datum 11 above, through repetition, the author emphasizes his message. The input spaces are “they” and “earth”. An attribute of “earth” (“dust” from which everybody was made regardless of colour, age, education, riches, etc.) is mapped unto “they” a particular group of people. Through this repetition, the author emphasizes that everybody is equal being all made from dust. This creates the blend that nobody should be looked down on because of one material possession or the other as ultimately, everybody is equal and has the same fate of life and death. The author, through this repetition explores the theme of inequality in the land and further condemns it. This is intended to make the so-called rich and powerful people who oppress others to stop and think on the sameness of fate of everybody and stop oppressing the masses.

- (12) I have seen/heard. (*What the Earth Said*, St.1 line 1,4, St. 3 line 1,3, 4 line 1,3 St. 5 line 1,3 St. 6 line 1, 5)

In datum 12 above, through the use of the repetition “I have seen/heard”, the author personifies the earth so as to be able to “see” and “hear” the numerous abusive acts and misuse it is being put to by the people. For the earth which is inanimate to “see” and “hear”, the author stylistically communicates how devastating these acts are to the earth and calls for a change to rather protect the earth and enjoy its plethora of resources.

### ALLITERATION

Alliteration as a phonetic and stylistic device provides melody and rhythm to an utterance. “Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonants in two or more words” (Wales, 2001). The essence of this device lies in the repetition of similar sounds, in particular consonant sounds, in close succession, particularly at the beginning of successive words:

#### Alliteration in *The Eye of the Earth*

- (13) ... under snakesskin shoes and Mercedes tyres. (*They too are the Earth*, St.1 line 5)
- (14) ...of gold dreams and blood banks. (*They too are the Earth*, St.3 line 5)
- (15) ...toilwards in dreary dawns. (*What the Earth Said*, St.1 line 3)
- (16) Foreheads foraged by grit and grime. (*What the Earth Said*, St. 2 line 4)
- (17) foremen soulless like their whistling whips. (*What the Earth Said*, St.4 line 2)

Alliterations are used in the poems to give them a kind of melodic effect through the repetition of initial consonant of successive lines. For example, the repetition of the voiced labio-velar sound /w/in the initial position of the successive words gives a kind of rhythm and melodic effect to the poem (datum 17)

### INTERROGATION/RHETORICAL QUESTION

Rhetorical questions are asked for emphasis or to achieve certain effect thus, no response is required. A rhetorical question according to M.H Abrams (2000:315) is a sentence in the grammatical form of a question which is not asked in order to request information or to invite a reply, but to achieve a greater expressive force than a direct assertion. This is a situation whereby questions especially rhetorical questions constitute style. These questions are more than just questions and they bear the poets’ message to readers. The following are identified and analysed:

- (18) Where are they? (“Harvestcall”, St.6 line 1,5,8,11,14)

In datum 18 above, through rhetorical question, Osundare tells of the blessedness of the land endowed with myriads of resources and fertility of the soil and further questions the disappearance of these things from the land. By rhetorically asking the people is a pointer that



the people know the whereabouts. Through this rhetorical question, the author not only questions the disappearance but indirectly blames the people for the disappearance which must have been through various activities of the people which they carry out on the land. Apart from informing readers about this disappearance, the author condemns the activities of the people which have led to the disappearance. The preceding and following lines suggest that what is referred to as “they” are the fruitful farm products ubiquitously displayed in the village as harvest time approaches which no longer exists or have greatly reduced which has caused the author great concern.

(19) with our earth so warm  
how can our hearth be so cold? (“Harvestcall” St.9 line 6,7)

In datum 19 above, the author questions the misuse of the earth’s resources. This draws attention to an anomaly that the author perceives; how the earth is so blessed to yield sufficiently to benefit man but how yet, they wallow in hunger and lack. This rhetorical question also shows the author criticism of the people who by implication have either misused the earth’s resources or out of laziness not used them at all which has resulted to hunger and lack in the land. The author decries abuse, misuse and underuse of earth’s resources and sees lack as self-made.

### **METAPHOR**

Metaphor is the opposite of simile; while simile indirectly compares people or objects, metaphor on the other hand directly compares them. Metaphor describes a ‘carry over.’ When words are used with metaphoric senses, one field or domain of reference is carried over or mapped onto another on the basis of some perceived similarity between the two fields (Wales 2001:250). It is the transference of some quality from one object to another. Metaphor makes comparison just as simile, but unlike simile, metaphor is a direct comparison without the use of “as” or “like”.

(20) Our earth is an unopened grainhouse.  
A bustling barn in some far, uncharted jungle  
A distant gem in a rough unhappy dust (*Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder*, St.5 line 1)

In datum 20 above, the ‘earth’ is metaphorically “an unopened grainhouse”, “a bustling barn” and “a distant gem”. The input spaces are “earth” and “grainhouse”, “barn” and “gem”. Mapping an attribute of “grainhouse” (harbours food), “barn” (store) and “gem” (preciousness) creates the blend that the precious earth stores abundance of food for man’s uses. This underscores the usefulness of the earth; the abundant useful natural resources the earth is endowed with. The author uses this to open the eyes of the masses to the earth’s rich endowment if only man will work it. Through this, Osundare unearths the richness of the earth and further encourages the masses to maximize this richness by working the earth. Thus, idleness is discouraged and that lack is only a manifestation of laziness.

### **ANTITHESIS/ANTONYMY**

Antonymy is the expression of opposite words and when the oppositeness is expressed in the entire constructions or ideas, it is called antithesis. Antonymy according to Wales (2001) refers to contrasts in meaning or opposition in meaning. Antithesis is the use of structures that have sharp contrast. This is done by a writer to achieve certain effects which synonyms might



not actually express i.e. by using that, he is able to pass his message effectively to the readers. The following have been analysed:

(21) I have seen

...native executhieves hold fort for alien wolves. (“*What the Earth Said*”, line 18)

In datum 21 above, the antonyms “native” and “alien” are used. The input spaces are “native *executhieves*” and “alien wolve”. An attribute of “native *executhieves*” (corrupt leaders) is mapped unto “alien wolves” to create the blend that exploitation of the country’s resources which has penuried the masses is a collaborative work between the corrupt leaders and foreigners of their kind; their involvement gives the foreigners the impetus and opportunity to carry out their nefarious and exploitative enterprise. Through this, Osunadare takes a swipe at the corrupt leaders who are supposed to care for the masses but oppress them and even give room to foreigners for more exploitation and plundering of the nation’s resources. This is to awaken the people’s consciousness of the exploitation of the nation’s resources by their leaders and to act towards achieving a change.

(22) with our earth so warm

how can our hearth be so cold? (“*Harvestcall*” St.9 line 6,7)

In datum 22, the antonyms “warm” and “cold” are used. The input spaces are “warm earth” and “cold hearth”. The author through contrast highlights an abnormality in our “hearth” which does not correspond with what the “earth” holds. The input spaces are a “warm earth” and a “cold hearth” which create a blend of an abnormal situation where the people live in lack whilst the earth holds so much for their use. Osundare informs that the people’s plights are man-made and self-induced because all they will need is available but only needs ‘the waking finger of the seasoned tapper’ to enjoy these benefits

(23) Only a membrane very thin

Separate your sheepish grin

From your wolfish insides. (“*Tell them, Mandela*”)

In datum 23 above, the opposites “sheepish” and “wolfish” are used to communicate some message. The opposites “sheepish grin (appearance)” and “wolfish insides (reality)” are also the input spaces from which the author maps out some attributes to the people being referred to. From the input space “sheepish”, the author maps out an attribute of “innocence” and from the input space “wolfish”, the author maps out an attribute of “danger” to the people referred to. The two opposites refer to the same set of people to bring to the fore their double-sidedness. Through the input spaces, the author creates the blend that reveals the dangerousness of the inside of the people (referred to) even though they appear innocent and friendly. Through this, the author explores the theme of pretense and deceit where the people (referred to) are outwardly friendly but inwardly wicked and are deceiving the people by pretending to be who they are not. The author, through this condemns pretense and preaches sincerity where everybody will be known for who he is.

From the analysis, it is shown that writers carefully choose stylistic devices that help to convey their message to readers. This is seen in stylistic devices such as personification, parallel construction, metaphor, simile, rhetorical question etc. These devices used by Osundare constitute a means of drawing the attention of Nigerians and outsiders to the various vices; injustices, corruption, greed, self-aggrandisement, etc. being perpetuated in the society. Beyond unearthing these societal ills, the poet through the deployment of these stylistic devices seeks to cause a change that will bring about a sane society where everybody is treated fairly regardless of their ethnic, political, religious and economic status. The aim is





towards an egalitarian society where there is even distribution of the nation's natural resources and wealth and everybody is equal before the law; a place where the earth's various resource are used judiciously. Sometimes, people are aware that they have societal problems but may not know the source of those problems or take upon themselves to find out and may be reluctant towards rising to the occasion and fighting their way out of the problems especially when they are caused by their self-chosen leaders who use their privileged positions and authority to oppress them. Thus, ultimately, these societal ills are revealed to incite revolution to cause a change.

## CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to show that Osundare through the use of some stylistic devices whose inherent meanings could be unearthed through the blending approach, seeks to condemn apathy and incite readers to rise up against societal ills and injustices meted out to them especially by those in positions of authority. It has also been shown that within the literary stylistics scope, Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* is replete with literary stylistic devices such as simile, metaphor, parallel constructions, personification, repetition, alliteration, interrogation/rhetorical question and antonymy/antithesis which aided the meaning-making process and the projection of his message to readers. Specifically, it is revealed that *The Eye of the Earth* is targeted towards having an egalitarian society and a healthy environment. It is noteworthy that while an attempt was made in this study to class Osundare as an ace stylistician, keen attention was paid to the impact of his poetry collection on the readers and by extension, the society.

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## **ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK COMMENTS ON BBC DOCUMENTARY ON SEX FOR GRADES IN TWO FAMOUS UNIVERSITIES**

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### **Abstract**

*This study analysed Facebook comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous universities. The objectives of this study were: to find out the frequency of the comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page, to identify the tone of the comments on sex for grade in two famous universities and to ascertain the dominant mood of the comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous universities. This study adopted quantitative and qualitative research methods. This study found that the commentators used the Facebook medium to express their views on the BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous universities, especially after the documentary was posted on BBC Africa Facebook page. It was further discovered that comments posted on the release day of the BBC documentary had 37 (54.40%) items, while comments posted after Dr Igbenegbu's suspension had 31 (45.50%) items. The dominant tone of the comments was positive. Most of the commentators supported the idea of exposing such crime to the society. The study recommends that media organisation should sustain the online platform as it enables commentators to react*



*to online news and provide an avenue for them to interact with one another and express their opinions on the contents of the article or news events.*

**Key Words:** Facebook, Comments, BBC, Documentary, Sex, Universities

## INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment in tertiary institutions has become a raising global endemic in the last decade. It happens in different spots such as home, school and workplace. According to Akinade (2005), sexual harassment is an unacceptable concept that involves aggression against another person's body or psyche using sex as a weapon. The University of Ibadan, defines sexual harassment as undesired sexually motivated conduct, comments, touching and articulation capable of undermining a person's freedom, rights and privileges. Such acts could include but are not limited to outright demands, ogling, lewd comments and unnecessary bodily contact which could

lead to psychological or physical unsolicited sexual relationships or unwanted indicative looks, phone calls or use of other multimedia format and comments intended to lure a person into a sexual relationship (The University of Ibadan Sexual Harassment Policy, 2012).

Sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in West Africa has been an issue that surfaces in the public sphere every now. However, it is usually underreported and swept under the carpet as quickly as it comes. But one question that has attracted global attention was the recent British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Africa Eye explosive documentary on Sex for grade reports on the University of Lagos, Nigeria and University of Legon, Accra, Ghana.

In a year-long finding released by BBC on October 6; 2019, a BBC Africa Eye investigation, focused on two of West Africa's leading universities; the University of Lagos and the University of Ghana, which exposed how the epidemic of sex for grades have left several victims traumatised for years. Using undercover reporters posing as students, the documentary revealed how female students are extorted and sexually harassed by male lecturers in exchange for good grades and mentorship. The documentary also concentrates on how lustful academics target the most vulnerable female students; those who were struggling with studies, seeking admission or in search of tutors. Through the use of secret cameras, the undercover reporters captured the gut-wrenching and cringe-inducing dialogues of four predatory lecturers from both institutions as they attempted to cajole and manipulate the undercover journalists into engaging in sexual acts with them.

According to Ibekwe (2019), the most startling case of the four cases of sexual harassment displayed in the documentary was the case of Boniface Igbenegbu, a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lagos. They tried to manipulate an undercover reporter posing as a 17-year-old girl seeking admission into the University; Dr Igbenegbu, who betides to be a pastor of Foursquare Gospel Church, a Church with more than 8 million members worldwide, was fingered as a known sexual predator on campus, and He left no one in suspicion about his notoriety as he started making discussions of sexual manner during his first meeting with the undercover reporter (Kiki Mordi). During their second meeting, he was asking the reporter details of her sexual record while promising not to tell her mother.



Oblivious that he was being filmed, he also disclosed how lecturers take female students to a sanctum of some kind of inside the University's Senior Staff Club, by name the 'Cold Room'. Dr Igbenegbu depicted the 'Cold Room' as a gloomy lit room where lecturers engross in forms of casual sexual acts with students. Dr Igbenegbu even attempted to enact what happens in the cold room in his office with the undercover reporter, by switching off the light and inviting her to kiss him. The full hour-long documentary also featured interactions with two lecturers at the University of Ghana. Both of the men, Professor Ransford Gyampo and Dr Paul Kwame Butakor, have denied they were offering "sex for grades" in the undercover exchanges (bbcnewsafrika.com)

Dr Igbenegbu has been suspended by the University of Lagos, while his Church also condemned his act. The film sparked widespread social media comments. The emergence of the internet has encouraged and widened the reach of media organisations and eased audience access to media substances. Through news blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Skype platforms, mainstream media organisations are now able to reach a broader audience with news and other contents at little or no costs (Ezegwu, Chime-Ngnya and Obilichi, 2020). One of the good qualities of the online news website is that it allows readers to instantly comment on any news story and the comments' section of online media have changed into spaces for debate and discussions by the readers

The World Editors Forum (2013) further posits that for news organisations, online comments can be an extremely precious resource as they supply further detail and insight to articles from sensible readers who are ardent about the subject, offer a broad assort of supplementary opinions and give newsrooms a window into how their readers see both their journalism and the World around them. Their feedback and outlooks can also broaden the publication's coverage from their better point, inspire new stories and provide possible sources or ways to address an issue. Therefore, this study analyse Facebook comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The airing of BBC Africa Eye documentary sex for grade on October 6; 2019, shook may people and it brought to light the burning issue of sexual harassment in higher institutions across West African. The documentary titled Sex for grade focused on two conspicuous Universities, the University of Lagos (Nigeria) and the University of Ghana where some covert journalists posing as students stealthy filmed their discussions with some lecturers that have harassment allegations trailing them. Dr Boniface Igbenegbu, a former sub-dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos was one of those caught in the scandal. He was also a pastor of a local Church, Foursquare Gospel Church. He was caught on tape making sexual advances at a covert journalist disguising as a 17-year-old secondary school graduate seeking admission into the Department of European Languages and Integrated Studies where Igbenegbu lectures. The release of the tape on BBC Facebook account has met with tons of comments and mixed reactions on the social media. The agenda-setting role of the media can develop the audience knowledge level and attitude regarding a particular issue. It could also increase or decrease the level of prominence given to items on sexual harassment.

Studies been conducted on sexual harassment around the World, such as: Prevalence of Sexual Harassment of Female Students of Tertiary Education in Taraba State, North-East



Nigeria: Implications for Counselling (Onoyase, 2019), A Survey of Teachers' and Students' Perception of Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions of Edo State, Nigeria (Imonikhe, Idogho and Aluede, 2011), BBC Sex-for-Grades-Report: Nigeria Tertiary Institutions 'Crisis Management Strategies and Stakeholders' Reactions ( Ayinla and Adesola, 2020). Among all these works, none have significantly captured audience reaction on sexual harassment-related issues, most notably on sex for grade between lecturers and students. Thus, this study fills a gap in knowledge by analysing the issue. There is the need to examine different reactions of opinions of online readers, taking into consideration the frequency which such comments come. This heightens some questions, such as: What is the tone of comments and dominant tone of comments on BBC documentary on sex for a grade in two famous Universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page?

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The Specific objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To find out the frequency of the comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page.
2. To identify the tone of the comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page.
3. To ascertain the dominant tone of the comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities on BBC News Africa Facebook page.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the frequency of comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two Universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page?
2. What is the tone of comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page?
3. What is the dominant tone of the comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities on BBC News Africa Facebook page?

### **THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE STUDY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The reasons behind the study were to know how members of the public reacted to BBC documentary on Sex for grade report on two famous Universities in West Africa. Knowing the audience reactions would help to understand what they think and feel about the documentary. Also, the study is also significant as it will serve as reference material for future researchers and contribute to literature in communication field and other related discipline.

### **SCOPE OF STUDY**

The scope of this study is on analysis of Facebook comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities. It is restricted to BBC Facebook page specifically BBC news Africa's page on Facebook, October 2019.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Concept of Social media (Facebook)**

Social media has emerged to be one of the most vital communication means. It exists so as to ease communication among people regardless of the expanse, making it open to people to easily share information, files and pictures and videos, create blogs and send messages, and



conduct real-time conversations. These systems are referred to as social, simply because they allow communication with friends, course mates, teachers, project supervisors, lecturers etc so easily and effectively. Social media is a group of internet-based operations that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that permit the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

In the 2010s, social media applications and websites allow for television displays to be accessed online on a range of desktop and mobile computing devices, smartphones and smart TVs. Many social media websites enable users to post online comments on the programs, both negative and positive in a variety of ways. Observers can actively partake while watching a TV programme by posting comments online, and have their interactions examined and responded to in real-time by other viewers. Technologies such as smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers allow viewers to watch downloaded digital files of TV shows or stream digital files of TV shows on a range of devices, both in the home and while on the go (Wikipedia, 2019).

Mark Zuckerberg in 2005 invented Facebook as a social networking site that acts as a social medium and it has been regarded as the world most popular social media network (Bellis, 2019). The press now provide access for their contents on the internet and makes use of the social media platform like Facebook. This is the reason why television stations like African Independence Television (AIT), Silverbird, Channels Television as well as international television station such as British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), to mention a few have found a way to publish the digital format of their contents on the internet and provided a forum for audience feedback and interaction. The media through the use of evolution of Facebook as the top social networking site, television stations via their programmes have taken benefit of a great number of users by creating pages for users to "like", by clicking on the "like" button, showing that they have a positive view of content regarding the show. After clicking "like" on a page, it will then show up under the user's interests.

According to statistics from the Global Digital Report (2014), there is motivation to the growing use of social media by media organisations universally. For example, Reuters Breaking news through the social media network recorded for 1.19 billion users. Over 727 million people use Facebook day-to-day; 260 billion view the Facebook page monthly. Out of this, 100 million users access their Facebook page over mobile phones. It is peculiar that out of these figures from the Reuters Breaking news, 4.3 million are Nigerians, an increase from 400,000 in 1999. This resulted in a meaningful proportion of mobile web traffic in the country (Akinreti, 2013).

With the steady need to partake in up-to-date information, journalists now have to learn how to market their stories and work to get readers to click on and share their stories. Like television news users, online news consumers have special reasons for following particular news organisations and sharing their content.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

Otikor and Otikor (2018) analysed the patterns of comments adopted by online readers on the electronic version of the *Vanguard* and the *Punch* between April 1 and June 30, 2017. The objectives of the study were: To ascertain the number of readers who commented on the





comment-thread of news reports of the electronic version of the *Vanguard* and *ThePunch*. Find out the frequency of each tone of the comments in the news reports of the newspapers. A total of 182 issues of the electronic version of the two newspapers formed the population of the study, with a sample size of 126.

The content analysis research design was adopted by researchers. Findings showed that 3,189 readers posted comments on the news reports of the two newspapers and that more persons commented on the *Vanguard* than *ThePunch*. The study further found out that 52.56% comments were positive, 43.17% were negative, while 4.33% constituted zero comments. The researchers recommended that the electronic newspapers should sustain the online platform to provide opportunities for more participants to engage themselves in discussions which is a critical role that the mass media play in any democratic setting, and that *The Punch* should improve on its comment platform to attract more participants.

Degarr, BO and Tine (2020) examined online readers' comments on corruption stories and hate speech in Nigeria. The study adopted the critical discourse analysis and purposively examined comments on four high profile corruption stories of 2016 in two national newspapers, *Vanguard* and *Punch*. The results showed that the dimension of these conversations sometimes slides into hateful expression that is generally aimed at not just those commenting but the central figure of the corruption story as reported in the news. Such hateful expressions are targeted directly at the entire tribe and region of the main actors in the news. The researchers suggested a thorough moderation of readers' comments to guard against comments that tend to portray hate.

Onoyase (2018) investigated the prevalence of sexual harassment of female students of tertiary education in Taraba State North East, Nigeria. The study used a survey research method. The result indicated that there is a frequency of sexual harassment of female students of tertiary education in Taraba State. Sexual harassment of female students' occurred through improper sexual comments, unwanted touching of female students' breasts, tapping of female students' buttocks and tempting of female students with high scores for sex amongst other. The result also revealed that there is no significant difference among the respondents in the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the prevalence of sexual harassment of female students. The study recommended that the management of tertiary educational institutions should put in place sufficient measures to ensure that lecturers do not leak examination questions to students.

Imonikhe, Idogho, and Aluede (2011) examined how teachers and students of tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria, perceived sexual harassment. The study adopted survey research method. The sample of the study consisted of two hundred lecturers and 200 students of tertiary institutions in Edo State. The results indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that sexual harassment is prevalent in schools and that sexual harassment impacts negatively on the academic performance of victims. The researchers recommended, among others that tertiary institutions should provide the framework where teachers and students can dialogue on issues bothering on students' and lecturers' relationships.

Ayinla and Adesola (2019) examined the crisis management strategies of Nigerian tertiary institutions and stakeholders' reactions after the British Broadcasting Corporation's sex-for-grades report. They adopted qualitative research design. The study analysed 13 available



press releases of institutions retrieved from some institutions' websites and sampled opinions of 20 stakeholders comprising parents, students and lecturers through a in depth interview. The study discovered that the institutions mostly used denial with diminish response strategy to blame societal decadence, scapegoat female students for and downplayed the severity of sexual harassment incidence by the institutions. More so, all the stakeholders distrust the credibility of local media in the reportage of sexual harassment cases. The researchers recommended that Nigerian higher educational institutions should not adopt a denial response strategy for sex scandal cases.

Adedokun, (2005), carried out a study to establish the existence of sexual harassment in University of Lagos, determine its form and degree, document efforts at addressing the problem and explore the link between sexual harassment and the risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The study involved getting qualitative data from focus group discussions and interviews involving 30,000 male and female students (who had spent at least one academic session in the University) and both academic and non-academic staff of the University. Findings from the study provided evidence of the prevalence of sexual harassment in the University, as every discussant and interviewee, either had an experience or knew other people who have had experience. There was also the consensus opinion that the problem had been on the increase in the last ten years and that male academic staff are the main perpetrators followed by male non-academic staff that oversees admissions, records and exams. Indecent dressing, inevitable failures in the Nigerian educational system, lack of respect for the female gender and poor performance of some female students were found to be promoting factors of sexual harassment.

Fayankinnu (2004) carried out a study at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba – Akoko Ondo State in which 200 students were interviewed using a questionnaire. The findings revealed that males, female lecturers and students are harassers. The study also revealed that male lecturers (83.4%) and female students (65.6%) were the major harassers. On how female students harass the male lecturers, the study revealed that they do so through their mode of dressing (70.2%), visits to their offices at odd times (52.9%), buying gifts such as pants or pornographic tapes (64.2%), passing pleasant remarks about lecturers (55.0%) and telling lecturers indirectly that they want them (59.7%). The study reported that in spite of the prevalence of the phenomenon; minimal efforts are taken to address the problem.

The literature reviewed revealed that sexual harassment in the Universities is prevalent and happens in most institutions. Also, online commentators sometimes slide into hateful expression and use foul languages in expression of their views. Also, literatures are lacking on Facebook comments on BBC documentary on sex for grades in two famous universities. This is the major lacuna which the present study attempts to fill.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Technology Determinism theory**

This study is anchored on technological determinism theory. The Media Technological Determinism theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1964 and founded on technological innovations. The basic assumptions of the theory, according to McQuail (2010) are that: "communication technology is fundamental to society; that each technology has a bias to particular communication forms, content and uses, the sequence of invention and



application of communication technology influences the direction and pace of social change, and that communication revolutions lead to social revolutions” (p.103).

The bane of this theory is that technology in any given society defines its nature. Technology is regarded as the exerting force of culture in a community, and it determines its course of history. Karl Marx affirmed that technological progress leads to newer ways of production in a society and this eventually influenced the cultural, political and economic aspects of a community, thereby unavoidably changing culture itself. New media are not only an addition to existing media, but are also new technologies and thus do have a deterministic factor as the introduction of newsprint, television and the internet have all shown how technological advances have an impact on the society in which we live in. Technology inevitably causes specific changes in how people think, in how society is structured, and in the forms of culture that are created (Baran and Davis, 2012).

McLuhan as cited by Ekwenchi, Chiaha, and Abuah, (2015) asserts that alterations in communication technology necessarily produce profound changes in both culture and social order. The theory helps to explain in this study that technology determines how the audience members respond to news items because technology gave the means. The approach sees technology as the basis of all human activity and since media is an aspect of human business; it has been dramatically influenced by the social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, Google plus, Skype, Blog and others which are by-product of the 21st century media technology (Akinreti, 2013).

Technology determinism theory focuses on how the media using the internet or social media places emphasis on specific events or happenings in the society that become the point of discussion among the targeted audience. Concerning the study, it shows that social media users used social networking sites like Facebook to air their opinions on BBC sex for grade documentary in two famous Universities.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative content analysis method which is the analysis of existing manifest contents of communications. Nwodu (2017) observes communication scholars often use this research method to investigate the level of presence of a given content in mass communication primarily to establish the impact of such comment on the audience. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication.

The quantitative content analysis method was used for data presentation (nominal level data measurement). Quantitative data analysis is helpful in evaluation because it provides quantifiable and easy to understand results (Pell Institute, 2016). While qualitative content analysis used critical discourse to analyse the pattern of Facebook comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities. According to Hililary (1997), critical discourse analysis stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. Critical discourse according to Johnstone (2008) is a form of discourse analysis that studies the relationship between discourse and ideology (a set of belief) attitudes and perspectives in the world. It dwells on critiquing social injustice, and has strong links to the study of language and power. This approach is adopted to study the



texts along the line of the ideologies expressed with emphasis on the objectives of the study. According to Daymon and Holloway as cited by Wimmer and Dominik (2011), researchers who use discourse analysis look at three specific aspects of language: The form and content of the communication used, the ways people use word to communicate ideas and beliefs and institutional and organisational factors that might shape the way the word is used.

The core informed the choice of critical discourse analysis, which is to analyse audience comments on the BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities. It will also help to understand how they express their position or view concerning sex for grade issues in the Universities. The study population comprised the total number of comments posted by Facebook users on the sex for grade documentary via the BBC News Africa Facebook page. This broadcasting page of BBC News Africa was purposively chosen because of their promptness in sharing or posting news stories about the documentary via their Facebook page.

As a result of other constraints and researchers discretion, it is impractical to study the whole comments from all the posts concerning the story posted by BBC Africa’s Facebook page. However, the systematic random sampling was employed in selecting the remarks at a fixed interval of after selecting two posts which had the highest comments and shares which was posted 6th, October and 8th, October 2019. In all 1350, comprising of the comments on the release date of the documentary had 737 comments and the post-suspension of Dr Boniface Igbenegbu who was one of the lecturers caught in the sex for grade documentary had 613 comments which gave us a total of 1350 observations. For the sample, 5% was drawn from the population, resulting in a sample of 68 observations from the selected post. To ensure that each post is fairly represented, 5% of the total comments for each post were selected.

The unit of analysis in this study consist of individual comments posted on BBC News Africa Facebook page in relation to the documentary on sex for a grade in two famous Universities. In using this research approach, the need to define and categories the contents to be analysed into which unit of analysis are huddled, is also necessary. These are the content categories for the study; they are:

- **Positive comments:** These are comments that praised Kiki Mordi and the BBC for carrying out such investigation and advocated against the act of sexual harassment of students by lecturers in universities.
- **Negative comments:** These are comments that blamed the students for the act and not the lecturers who were seen as perpetrators in the documentary.
- **Media imperialism:** These are comments that criticised the documentary and the fact that it focused on universities in Africa.
- **Neutral comments:** This category of comments had no issue with the fact that it was conducted in Africa or how the investigations were carried out. Instead, they were thoughtful and objective comments that were made without any form of sentiments.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Table 1: *Distribution of comments on BBC documentary on sex for a grade in two famous select Universities*

Variable	Frequency of comments	Percentage (%)
Comments posted on the release of the documentary	37	54.40



Comments posted after the suspension of DrBonifaceIgbenegbu	31	45.50%
Total	68	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

The table above indicates that comments posted on the release day of the BBC documentary have the highest percentage (54.40%) of comments, it then followed by remarks posted after Dr Igbenegbu’s suspension.

Table 2: *Distribution of tone of comments on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities*

Tone of the comments	Comments posted on the release day of the documentary	Comments posted after the suspension of DrIgbenegbu	Total	%
Positive	13	15	28	41.17
Negative	5	4	9	13.2
Media imperialism	8	3	11	16.17
Neutral	10	9	19	27.8
Total	37	31	68	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

The analysis of table 2 above indicated the tone of comments employed by Facebook users to express their views on BBC documentary on sex for a grade in two famous Universities.

Table 3: *Dominant tone of comments on BBC documentary on sex for a grade in two famous Universities*

The tone of comments	Comments posted on the release day of the documentary	Comments posted after the suspension of DrIgbenegbu	Total	%
Positive	13	15	28	41.17
Negative	5	4	9	13.2
Media imperialism	8	3	11	16.17
Neutral	10	9	19	27.8
Total	37	31	68	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 3 above showed the dominant tone of comments, which are positive comments. Facebook users made positive comments to express their views on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities. The implication of the data presented above is that majority of the Facebook users expressed their views positively on BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**



**Research Question One: What is the frequency of comments on BBC documentary on “sex for grades” in two famous Universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page?**

The findings revealed that comments posted on the release day of the BBC documentary had 37 (54.40%) items, while comments posted after Dr Igbenegbu’s suspension had 31 (45.50%) items. These indicated that commentators used the Facebook medium to express their views on the BBC documentary on “sex for grades” in two famous Universities, especially after the documentary was posted on BBC Africa Facebook page. The online platforms have enabled readers/commentators to interact with people of diverse ethnicity/tribes.

No wonder Natalie and Holmes (2013) observe that comments in reaction to online news provide an avenue for readers to interact with one another, express their opinions on the content of the article or remark of others. Commenters may also change what they perceived to be half-truths in the comments of other readers, provide support, facts and links to the websites with more relevant content. This interaction among readers creates a conversation in which ideas are debated and negotiated (Natalie and Holmes 2013, as cited in Oyedele and Agberu, 2018). Also, the ability of people from different parts of the world to air their opinions via BBC Facebook page on sex for grade in two famous Universities showed the power of social media, linking people together, irrespective of their locations/distance. This agrees with the “global village” assertion of Marshal McLuhan (1964) as expressed in his technological determinism theory. Time and distance barriers no longer limit communication. With social media, we are already in the ‘global village’. Thus, powered by technology, the social media facilitates the interactivity and diversity of views or opinions.

**Research Question Two: What is the tone of comments on BBC documentary on “sex for grade” in select West African Universities on BBC news Africa Facebook page?**

The findings showed that the commentators employed varieties of tone in their comments as identified in the study, which includes: Positive, negative, media imperialism and neutral comments. We align our finding with assertion by Chung (2008), Manosevitch and Walker (2009) that readers’ comments posted in response to on-line news articles are a form of participatory journalism that gives the public a medium for expressing their perspectives on current issues. Comments have the potential to increase our understanding of public opinions, how the public makes decisions and how beliefs are formulated. Also, Henrich and Holmes (2013) observe that comments have the potential of increasing our understanding of public opinions, how the public makes decisions and how beliefs are formulated.

**.Research Question Three: What is the dominant tone of the comments on BBC documentary on “sex for grade” in select West African Universities on BBC News Africa Facebook page?**

The aim of this research question three is to identify the dominant comments as posted by the audience to the BBC Africa home page. The data in table 3 showed that out of 68 items analysed, the dominant tone of comments on the BBC documentary on sex for grade in two famous Universities was positive comments with 28 (41.17%) items. Others include: Neutral comments (27.8%), media imperialism comments (16.17%) and negative comments (13.2%). These findings revealed that most people liked the BBC investigation as well as the suspension of Dr Boniface Igbenegbu. They supported the idea of exposing such crimes to





society. These findings correlate with scholars who argue that most people online are far more likely to be nice than resort to rude, hostile, and uncivil communicative behaviour. The result is also consistent with that of Ollay and Ekhareafo (2013), who did a textual analysis of the January, 2012 anti-subsidy removal protests in Nigeria. They found that 70.5% of texts messages and comments on social media were positive and in support of the protests.

**Few examples of positive comments are:**

*“Well done BBC news to reveal the evil act by some lecturer in our high institution, Nigeria government BBC has started so finish it” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

*“A project supervisor in one of Nigeria Universities, asked my sister to pay him #50,000 to supervise her work. Or he will sleep with her. The lecturer even invited her to a hotel in town. My sister informed me about it, and luckily I was in Nigeria then. And the rest was the case. EXPOSE THEM” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

*“Those ladies involved need to speak up, These Abominable acts need to stop. Dismissing the lecturer when caught in the act should be one of the best solution, or probably Prison sentences should be another vital solution” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

*“Suspending d lecturer is not enough those found guilty should be locked in cold room too freeze for 30 min, the University of Lagos cold room is a collaborated and organised by those dirty lecturers they should b fish out..” (BBC News Africa, October 2019)*

These comment under this category encouraged universities and the legislature to act and make laws and policies that can remove this menace from the education system.

**Few examples of negative comments are:**

*“In as much as you try to expose these lecturers n bring sanity to our public universities, you need to be circumspect in your dealings, n you shouldn't end up rendering breadwinners jobless. Mind u, some of these female students are already gold diggers, or if u want to slay queens, n they hardly have time for their handouts” (BBC News Africa, October 2019)*

*“It's a traditional norm in higher institutions in Nigeria, so I don't think it's should be cast this way; the people who reported this menace are just being extra.”*

*“Next joke, please! This is no news! BBC News, please don't disappoint. There are better issues to report on than things we know already from the beginning of creation, and you want make it look new. Stop accusing the dog of barking” (BBC News Africa, October 2019)*

*“This happens in everywhere across the globe, stop shaming Africa, by Africans as you are yourselves. Develop your minds. Nowonder you're refereed as monkeys!!!” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

*“Please also focus on Muslims lecturers, not just Christians; or is your spy journalist afraid. All those investigated are Christian please we don't want biased investigation.”*

**Examples of comments which fall under media imperialism include:**

*“BBC is doing the right thing by exposing such. My worry, however, is BBC should at least say something good about Africa for once. I'm yet to read a piece of positive news about Africa from the BBC” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

*“Why not Harvard and Oxford, but Ghana and Nigeria are those school saints what a waste of time. Leave Africa matter to us and focus on your numerous scandalous issues in the west, rubbish” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

*“BBC should focus on Sex for Grades in Oxford, Harvard and other top-class Universities in the Developed World. Who doesn't know Lecturers all around the World Eat "Shi" for good*



*grades? This is a list to put Africa up again for ridicule. The whites keep bringing us down” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

**Examples of comments which fall under neutral include:**

*“This is why I don't like the education system of having the same person teaching you to mark your exam common in academic courses. Where is the independence? And if they hate you, then you will never pass. I have never liked the idea of having a lecturer teaching me and the same one marking me. Even those who are not supposed to pass get high grades than intelligent ones because of biasness. I am glad I went the professional way of studying where there is no compromise. The systems need to change, and exams should be given and marked by independent examiners. Zambia” (BBC News, Africa, October 2019).*

*“I suggest the government should have agencies that will work with the students' affairs government where students will have free access to share their views as regards to all this harassment and abuses in our institutions and laws will be enshrined for the culprit, then the identity of such student that fall to victim of their harassment will also be protected with the law to sanction other staff colleagues from threatening such individual in her studies.” (BBC News Africa, October 2019)*

*“Is from VC to the lecturers, is a corrupt system. Some of our ladies are really enjoying it, while some are the recruiters and advisers, some are dying in salient. Lets encourage them to come out and talk. Let there be an establishment body where victims can report with full confidence and get Justice” (BBC News Africa, October 2019).*

**CONCLUSION**

This study examined Facebook comments on BBC documentary on sex for a grade in select West African universities. Based on the findings, we submit that the commentators used the Facebook medium to express their views on the BBC documentary on “sex for grade” in select West African Universities, especially after the documentary was released or posted on BBC Africa Facebook page. We also conclude that the commentators employed varieties of tone in their comments as identified in the study, which includes: Positive, negative, media imperialism and neutral feedback. The dominant tone of comments was positive. Most of the commentators supported the idea of exposing such crime to the society. The effect of sexual harassment any place in the World no doubt is devastating, traumatically affecting the victims as much as those directly or indirectly linked to them. Thus, efforts must be made to prevent it.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the following were recommended:

1. There is need for media organisations to sustain the online platform as it enables commentators to react to online news and provide an avenue for them to interact with one another and express their opinions on the contents of the article or news events.
2. The positive tone of comments should be sustained to ensure the free expression of ideas and reorient the minds of commentators/readers to make the useful suggestion that will foster national development. Use of foul languages, derogatory words, name-calling and prejudicial posts should be moderated on social media platforms.
3. Institutions of higher learning need to update their discipline procedures to address sexual harassment by providing clear information on how to report an incident and offer more significant support for students who report harassment.



4. Higher institutions of learning should organise periodic training and campaign for staff and students on sexual harassment as it will help in keeping the scourge on the front-burner of such institution life.

Research work should be carried out on the media coverage of Sexual harassment-related issues and the effect it has on the audience in Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

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## **EVALUATING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF HAND WASHING MESSAGES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined the Knowledge and Practice of handwashing messages among Secondary School Students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The essence is to enhance the spread of infections like diarrhoea, Ebola and other diseases associated with dirty hands and contacts. It is premised against the background that students live, and interact closely and there is the need to control the spread of bacteria among these students through proper handwashing. The objectives include; to determine whether the respondents' know about handwashing messages; the respondents' source of handwashing messages and to determine whether the respondents practice handwashing after exposure to handwashing messages. The study was anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action. It also adopted a survey research method with the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The study used multi-stage sampling techniques to select three schools from the three senatorial districts in Anambra State. The total population for the study was 121,087 junior secondary school students from where a sample of 384 respondents was studied. Descriptive statistical tools - mean, frequencies and percentages were used in answering research questions. Results showed that there was no significant relationship between the knowledge of handwashing messages and the practice of handwashing. Results further showed that respondents had experience of handwashing messages. Sequel to the findings, the researcher recommended, among others, the need to mobilize handwashing with soap and water at critical times to ensure greater compliance.*

**Keywords:** Handwashing, Knowledge, Practice, Handwashing messages, Secondary school

### **INTRODUCTION**

Handwashing is not only important for personal hygiene; but also a religious and cultural practice for many people. The tradition of handwashing started many years ago. The link surrounding handwashing and health was initially observed less than two centuries ago in 1846 by Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis, a physician from Hungary, regarded as the progenitor of hand sanitation. He observed that greater number of the pregnant women from his hospital that gave birth in the medical student/doctor run maternity ward mostly developed fever that resulted to deaths compared to the mid-wife-run maternity for pregnant women in the adjacent ward. During the investigation, it was discovered that doctors and medical students were not exposed to appropriate hand sanitation after autopsies before visiting the maternity ward. This however justifies the early attestation that proper hand sanitation could prevent infection.

However, in an attempt to promote and mobilize people everywhere to upgrade their hygiene habits especially on the aspect of washing hands with soap, the campaign on handwashing was instituted in 2008 by the Global Handwashing Partnership GHP; in Stockholm, Sweden during the Annual World Water Week. Other members of GHP; were United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Unilever, USAID, World Bank, Procter and Gamble and other international agencies. The United Nations UN; General Assembly selected October 15 of every year as the handwashing day. GHP; (2017) noted that every year, more than 200 million persons are part of the celebrations in more than 100 countries of the world. In Nigeria, handwashing awareness was officially launched on May 22, 2008 at Federal level by





the then former First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Hajia Turai Yar'Adua with the Acting United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) delegate in Nigeria Dr Robert Limlim and other dignitaries. Hand washing campaign was brought in as a peculiar method for hygiene advancement in alliance with the Federal Government/UNICEF Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) events in 2004. The general missions of the campaigns include:

- (i) To elevate the degree of awareness of hygiene; and sanitation particularly hand washing for the stakeholders, children and the entire society;
- (ii) To mobilize the policymakers, opinion leaders, community leaders and the entire society on the importance of handwashing as it pertains to health and the economic well-being of the populace;
- (iii) To campaign for greater monetary and bureaucratic responsibilities for hygiene promotion; and
- (iv) To advance for sustainable development; of WASH for accomplishing the MDGs;

Checkmating of infectious diseases is part of the problems facing developing countries. In line with the advantages of hygiene advancement particularly hand washing for the promotion of man's welfare and growth, UNICEF in association with Nigerian Government and some Non-Governmental Organization; are advancing the furtherance of handwashing sensitizations; at the State, Local Government with schools and at community levels. Nigeria participated in the first international hand washing ceremony on October 15, 2008 in consonance with the global goal of propagating a culture of washing hands with soap and water. Handwashing awareness was inaugurated to emphasize and accelerate the process of sanitation growth. It is the uncomplicated and the easiest method of avoiding most known infectious diseases that cause mortality in the environment. Hand hygiene involves handwashing, the utilization; of disinfectant for washing hands. Katie (2015) notes that throughout the previous few decades, health communications have become a widely recognized; and validated discipline, a critical component to most health programmes.

World Health Organization (WHO) (2005) reiterates that health is not just the shortage of disease but a "state of thorough bodily, psychological and general well-being." The need to better the well-being of people across the world relies upon acceptable recognition of the societal convention and economic condition of the content through which the general health issues are actualized. Umueri&Galadima (2008) noted that health status of people in any geographical setting is so imperative that if the leaders of that nation fold their arms and do nothing to better their well-being, it will merely be a moment before plagues or diseases will ravage such people. Following the commitment to advance the health of the people, different handwashing messages are organized; to inform, persuade, educate and dissuade the diversified, critical and seasoned audience. In this vein, the media and multi-media approaches have been significant later in the campaign against societal health diseases. De-Buck, Remoortel, Veegaete& Young (2017) explained that Sustainable Development Goal for sanitation is to achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene; for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations by 2030.

Effective communication; can as well promote the knowledge, awareness and the best practical way of creating understanding on an issue. Communication is, therefore, essential in championing healthcare delivery. Different rallies and carnivals; Behavioural Change



Communication materials; jingles on broadcast media; discussion programmes relating to health; documentary; drama; features on print media and so on have been utilized; to pass the message across. Olukanni (2013) revealed that the provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene; in schools had been established to improve health and boost educational achievement.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian society was threatened in the past with occurrence of Ebola virus and monkeypox diseases. According to Ilesanmi&Alele (2016) factors like lack of knowledge, limited or lack of infection prevention and control resources, insufficient public health amenities and extremely endemic structure of virus provoke and accelerate the outbreak of diseases. One of the ways of contracting diseases is the hand, arousing the exigency for appropriate hand hygiene. UNICEF (2007) explains that large numbers, consisting of urban/rural schools and health centres, still lack access to adequate sanitary facilities like latrines and handwashing facilities. Infrequent hand washing is a poor hygienic exercise that can trigger diseases like diarrhoea, cholera and others. The means of spreading these viruses is through blood contact and bodily fluids of infected persons, Olalekan et al. (2014).

Also, Olukanni (2013) notes that most public secondary schools in Nigeria are short of the necessary water/sanitation facilities and hygiene education programmes are often inadequate. Hands are contaminated through many ways like after defecation, sneezing into the hands, contacts with pets and animals; babies used diapers and so on. Illness is a hindrance to the progress of both child and adult, which could affect the socio-economic life of the nation. Apart from family, schools are the most important places of learning for students for they have a central place in society. When Water, Sanitation and Health (WASH) amenities are lacking, or are poorly used and managed, schools grow into unsafe environment for disease transmission UNICEF (1998).

To address all these mentioned health concerns, government and other international agencies have endorsed the application of communication interposition or approach to achieve positive changes and improve the value of life through handwashing messages. In all these, it is not clear if the respondents in the study areas are favourably disposed to these interventions. This circumstance obviously motivated this study that investigates the knowledge and practice of handwashing messages among the respondents in the study area. To the researcher, it is a major gap in knowledge that calls for empirical examination. This, in essence is the major problem the study resolves to investigate.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do the respondents have knowledge of handwashing messages?
2. What are the respondents' sources of information about handwashing messages?
3. Do the respondents' support handwashing practice after exposure to handwashing messages?

## THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories entail a clear explanation regarding why a particular concept behaves in a specific way (Nwodu 2017). This study is anchored on two theories, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory was developed by Everett Rogers in 1945, popularized; in 1962. Rogers (2003) defines diffusion



as the process by which an innovation is communicated through specific channels over time among members of a social system. The theory believes that the media and interpersonal contacts have a way of providing information which could influence opinion and judgment.

The four stages of innovation, according to Rogers, include invention, diffusion or communication; through the social system, time and consequences. Information flows through a process or network like the opinion leaders whose roles may determine the extent that the innovation will be adopted. The rate of diffusion and the degree of saturation are degrees of adoption of change in a particular community. Rishante (2011) notes that diffusion as first elaborated by Everett Rogers in 1945 outlines certain factors which have been consistently found useful by researchers in trying to understand the diffusion process as it relates to development efforts.

These factors are:

- (i) the characteristics of the innovation and the degree of novelty associated with it;
- (ii) the rate of diffusion is influenced by individual differences among potential adopters;
- (iii) the features of the social system; and
- (iv) the existing diffusion channels or networks in the particular community.

The diffusion of new ideas and ideologies for advocacy and mass mobilization; are usually targeted at non-specific, anonymous and heterogeneous audiences as in the mass media, (Rishante 2011). The theory acknowledges the mandatory role of opinion leaders, the influence of the mass media and interpersonal reinforcement of mass media messages in the individual's adoption of the decision making process. Eze (2010) explains that the more complex the health behaviour being advocated, the longer it takes to be accepted; and the more inconsistent a practice is to current practices, beliefs and norms; the longer it takes for the people to accept..

Diffusion of innovation theory provides a useful framework for studying the adoption process. Diffusion studies have found that the way targeted adopters perceive the attributes of an innovation is critical and that these perceptions account for 49–87% of the variance in whether or not they adopt (Rogers, 1995). Abdullahi, Gbaje & Mohammed (2015) noted that Perceived attributes of innovation include:

- (i) Relative advantage—the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes. The higher the perceived position, the more likely the change will be adopted.
- (ii) Compatibility—the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences and needs of potential adopters. If the innovation is perceived as an extreme change, then it will not be compatible with past experiences and is less likely to be adopted.
- (iii) Complexity—the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and use. Changes that are perceived as complex are less likely to be adopted.
- (iv) Observability—the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others. If the observed effects are perceived to be small or non-existent, then the likelihood of adoption is reduced.
- (v) Trialability—the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis. This may include trying out parts of a plan or having the opportunity to watch others using a new program. Trialability is positively related to the likelihood of adoption.



The relevance of the theory to the study refers to how handwashing messages seek to communicate information that will promote handwashing, especially at critical times among secondary school students in the study areas. The change may be immediate or long term behaviour change. Nwosu (2008) asserts that intensive, well-organised, and implemented advocacy campaigns are needed for the expected results to be achieved. The flow of advocacy impacts can range from information or awareness creation, knowledge change, opinion change, attitudinal change, to behaviour, actions or practice adoption or amendment.

This study is also anchored on the Theory of Reasoned Action. This theory seeks answers to the fundamental question of why people or audience behave the way they do. The Theory of Reasoned Action TRA; was first developed by Martin Fishbein in the late 1960s but was revised and updated by Fishbein and IcekAzjen in the decades that followed. The theory analyzes; a person's intention to act or behave in a particular way in specific situations. It also suggests that a person's behaviour is determined by his/her intention to perform, and such purpose is a function of his/her attitude towards the action. Similarly, the theory also focuses on a person's attitudes towards that behaviour and even the subjective norms of influential people and groups that could influence those attitudes. The method further elaborates how attitudes towards a particular action are influenced by a combination of two related factors: our beliefs and our evaluation of the potential outcome. They provide insight into why things happen in specific ways through certain structures with certain results (Nwabueze 2012).

The theory assumes that individuals will mostly act upon their intentions which comprise of two primary attributes: an individual's attitude towards behaviour and an individual's beliefs regarding social pressures to either perform or not. Attitude is a function of beliefs- that is beliefs that the behaviour will lead to certain expected outcomes as judged by the individual, (Des Wilson &Aniebo 2010).

The relevance of the theory to the study aptly refers to how respondents perceive handwashing messages; it could be as a result of their belief or exposures and consequently the evaluation of the potential outcome of their dispositions.

Also, the more we comprehend the attitudes and norms that influence the intent, the more accurately interventions can be designed to affect the desired direction.

### **EMPRICAL REVIEW**

Azuogu, Ilo, Nwimo, Azubogu & Owunaka (2016) did a study on "the extent of handwashing practice among Secondary School Students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria". The study noted the high incidence of infectious diseases like diarrheal among secondary schools in Nigeria; the study explained how contaminated hands promote the transmission of infections, especially with people living in close like school. The study indicated that washing the hands with running water and soap prevents the spread of diseases. The study used a cross-sectional survey to determine the extent the secondary school students in the study area (Ebonyi State) practice handwashing exercise with a sample of 420 students from both junior and senior classes from government schools in the rural and urban area of the state; the study used a 3-point scaled while the instrument of data collection was 18 items self-structured questionnaire.

Also a Cronbach Alpha that obtained the reliability of 0.862 while T-test statistic was used for the hypotheses with 0.05 alpha level. The study found the extent of handwashing to be low among secondary school students in Ebonyi. The study revealed that findings of the



study have implications towards handwashing campaign in the country and recommended the use of mass media to promote the campaign and improvement of hygiene education and its curriculum, that all the concerned agencies from the government take appropriate policies that will enhance good hygiene; in terms of education in schools, mainly the primary as well as the secondary schools in the area of creating a conducive environment for handwashing practice to improve through the provision of handwashing facilities in all the schools.

Vivas, Gelaye, Aboset, Kumie, Berhane& William (2015) conducted a study on the “Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices KAP; of Hygiene among school children in Angola, Ethiopia,” The study noted that poor hygiene practices and insufficient sanitary conditions play significant parts in the increased problem of infectious diseases, the study examined the knowledge, attitude and practice of hygiene; among rural school children in Ethiopia with a sample size of 669 students carried out in a government-owned institution from the study population made up of all Angolan primary school children from grades 1-6. The research design used was survey while the questionnaire provided both demographic questions and frequencies to which pupils maintained the personal hygiene; and issues relating to handwashing during the day, especially at critical moments. Knowledge about sanitation, proper hygiene; and presence of parasite were highlighted. The findings show that 52 per cent of the pupils knew about basic hygiene; the frequency of handwashing with soap was at 36.2 percent.

Arthi, Abarna, Bagyalakshmi, Anitharaj&Vijayasree (2016) performed a study on “Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Hand Hygiene among Nursing and Medical students in a tertiary care hospital in Puducherry, India.” The study used a self-administered structured questionnaire to solicit answers from nursing and medical students. The results were analysed; with Chi-square test using SPSS 16 software to analyse; the variables of hand hygiene. A total of 140 participants were used in the study, and it was found that a good number of students had moderate knowledge of hand hygiene in contrast; the overall attitude of the participants was not satisfactory, only a few respondents show proper hand hygiene practices.

Similarly, Sultana, Mahmud, Sarker& Hossain (2016) studied “Hand hygiene knowledge and practice among university students: Evidence from private universities of Bangladeshi”. The study revealed how adequate hand hygiene could hinder the spread of infectious diseases. The study used a cross-section of 200 students from four selected universities with pretested, semi-structured questionnaire that had a checklist relating to handwashing practice. The study found a good number of students washed their hands with water. At the same time only 22.5 percent did that effectively by following the correct procedures and frequency of handwashing using water, soap or hand sanitizer; The study used Regression coefficient to show that age is considered as a negative influence on handwashing practice while the older respondents accounted for lower scores when compared. The study also revealed insufficient hand hygiene practice by university students.

Steiner-Asiedu, Van-Ess, Papoe, Setorglo, Asiedu& Anderson (2011) carried out a study on “handwashing practices among school children in Ghana”. The study was carried out to ascertain the practice of handwashing on children in both private and public schools in Ghana with a population of 295 school children that were randomly used for the study. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. Copies of the





questionnaire were used to gather information on demographics during checklist for observation of handwashing as well as an interview guide for focus group discussion. The study adopted a quantitative and qualitative method collection, while Focus Group Discussions were also used for data collection. Findings revealed that the majority of school children under investigation did not demonstrate good handwashing practice with soap in school and at home as a result of non-provision and open running water, soap and towel. Hand washing was poorly done in both public and private schools.

Furthermore, Ikogho & Igbudu (2013) studied “Availability and Utilization; of handwashing facilities among primary school pupils in Ughelli North L.G.A; of Delta State” the study explained that infectious diseases if not checkmated through proper handwashing exercise could cause tremendous morbidity and mortality on school children and absenteeism at school. The study used a sample size of 50 head teachers through simple random sampling from a total population of 90 head teachers from the study area. Also, copies of the questionnaire were used for data collection and analyzed; through frequencies and arithmetic mean. Findings from the study show that the schools have few handwashing facilities and the utilization; hindered by poor maintenance culture and lack of handwashing supplies.

Merenu, Barbara & Hornik (2015) wrote on “knowledge, attitude and practice of handwashing amongst residents of Orlu metropolis” The study was carried out during the Ebola crises in Nigeria to teach how effective preventive practices of constant and efficient handwashing are. The study aimed to determine the respondents’ knowledge, attitude and practice of handwashing amongst residents of Orlu Metropolis in Imo State. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional study and examined 405 participants; the instrument for data collection was a questionnaire that was both self-administered and interviewer-administered bearing in mind the respondents’ level of literacy. It found that 97.6 percent of the respondents had a good knowledge of diseases that are contracted through dirty hands; also a good number of the respondents (90.4 per cent) knew of alternatives to handwashing like hand sanitizers; The study found that 93.64 percent believed that hands should be kept clean always, 92.65 percent of the respondents used soap and water for handwashing while 33.89 per cent of the respondents practised handwashing under running water. The study mentioned that the obstacle to washing hands energetically included forgetfulness 34.48 percent, 14.66 percent for lack of water, 13.48 percent due to busy schedule and ignorance at 10.40 percent. The study concluded that though the respondents washed their hands, it was neither done under running water nor dried with disposable paper towels. The washing of hands was done in basins of water.

Asekun-Olarinmoye, Omobuwa, Adebimpe & Aseku-Olarinmoye (2014) examined the “knowledge, attitude towards and practise of handwashing among mothers of under-five children in Igona Area of Olorunda Local Government in Oshogbo, Osun State Nigeria” The study reported how the use of dirty and contaminated hands especially while cooking and eating stimulates the transmission of germs into the body thereby causing ill-health. The study enumerated the dual roles of mothers as children’s nurse who handles their faeces, as well as the family chef who takes care of family food.

The study revealed that the poor knowledge and practice of simple hygiene; increase the risk of disease dissemination. The study selected 300 mothers of under-five children through multistage sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents had a definite knowledge of handwashing, though influenced by the level of their education and religion. Also, age and exposure to school





influenced the practice of handwashing as a majority of the older respondents with higher educational exposures practised handwashing than the younger ones.

Ekanem & Johnson (2015) evaluated “Handwashing practices at critical times among mothers in selected health facilities in AkwaIbom State” The study objectives were to examine the practices of handwashing using soap and water at critical moments and to ascertain how caregivers of under-five children practice handwashing from selected health facilities in Uyo. The study examined 219 mothers/ caregivers of under-five children from two selected primary health facilities from two Local Government Areas of Uyo Senatorial District who were present for immunization; A Self-administered questionnaire was used to solicit information for the study. The study found that 61.2 percent of the respondents washed their hands before preparing food, a total of 47 percent of the respondents washed their hands before feeding children. In comparison 84.9 percent of the respondents washed their hands after defecation.

Alula (2016) examined “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice KAP; on handwashing and associated factors among public primary school children in Hosanna town, SNNPR, Ethiopia” The study aim was to investigate the KAP study of the above topic in the study area using a sample size of 246 of the respondents from April 15-30. It used a pre-tested structured questionnaire from trained assistants. The study found that 69.9 percent of the respondents had good knowledge of handwashing which was affected by their area of residence and grades in school while 59.4 per cent also had right attitude to handwashing exercise. In terms of practice, 71.97 per cent of the respondents practised hand washing.

Setyautami, Sermsri&Chompikul (2012) wrote on “Proper Handwashing Practices among Elementary School students in Selat sub-district, Indonesia”. The study stressed that even though handwashing is regarded as the most useful and easiest way of preventing diseases, many people are yet to wash their hands correctly. The study used a cross-sectional descriptive study to explain handwashing with emphasis on the correct way of washing hands and other related issues for the sixth grade of elementary students of Sela sub-district in Indonesia. The study used 274 students from seven schools selected randomly from five villages and then used a self- administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used for analyzing; data, also chi-square test and multiple logistic regressions to critically explore the various study factors. The study revealed that 40.5 percent of the respondents practised handwashing correctly. The study concluded that the practice of washing hands correctly was low among the respondents and recommended the provision of better facilities and promotion of handwashing campaign.

Thanh & Ngoc (2013) conducted a study on “Handwashing among school children in an ethnically diverse population in Northern rural Vietnam”. The study examined the handwashing behaviour with emphasis on Hand Washing with Soap (HWWS) and found other related issues among the school children residing in multi-ethnic rural communities of northern Vietnam. The study evaluated six primary and secondary schools as well as ethnic villages comprising of four homes. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods and logistic regression method to determine the relationships between behaviour and demographic factors. Findings show that 66 percent of the respondents (school children) practised handwashing with soap (HWWS). However, during demonstrations, it was discovered that ten school children out of 319 respondents performed handwashing with soap correctly. The study concluded that handwashing with soap in the study area was weak in terms of compliance.



White, Kolbe, Carlson & Lipson (2005) carried out a study on “The Impact of a Health Campaign on Hand hygiene and Upper Respiratory illness among College students living in residence halls”. The study aim was to determine if a campaign message on hand hygiene and the possibility of using gel hand sanitizer; would likely lower the spread of cold and flu. The study used an experimental-control in residence halls of 4 campus residence. The findings revealed that good exposure to a media campaign by the students as well as the exposure to gel hand sanitizer; added to their knowledge on health benefits.

Anthony, Salule, Tracy, George, Tara, Steven & Kingsley (2014) conducted a study on “Knowledge, Awareness and Practice of the importance of handwashing amongst children attending state-run primary schools in rural Malawi,” highlighted the objectives of the study to include: to determine Escherichia coli presence on the hands of primary school pupils numbering 126; to find out the pupils and teachers knowledge, awareness as well as hygiene practices and to determine the school environment through monitoring or observation. The study found that the greater percentage of e-coli on hands as well as the hygiene; which was not significant as the standard of the facilities for sanitation was abysmal. The study found poor evidence of understanding the necessary disease transmission from both the teachers and pupils and recommended a multidisciplinary approach that will promote sanitation.

Junxiong, Shao, Lumen & Liyang (2015) evaluated a study on “Current Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviour of hand and food hygiene in a developed residential community of Singapore: A cross-sectional survey,” The study was carried out in the residential area in the West of Singapore under a cross-sectional study from June to August 2013. A random sampling technique was used to select a total of 1,156 household units in interviewer assisted survey with a standardized; questionnaire. Survey method was used, and results analyzed; using descriptive statistics. The study conducted the test with Fisher’s Exact test and multivariate logistic regression modelling. The test was done at a 5 percent level of significance and a 95 percent confidence interval where applicable. Findings show that despite a good knowledge and attitude of the respondents, the result was not able to translate to the compliance of good hygiene practices, and so it affected the motivation to perform as well.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted survey research method. It enables the researcher to ascertain the opinions of a study group or population by examining a sample from the population, which will be generalized;

### **AREA OF STUDY**

The study was carried out in Public Secondary School in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study was specifically carried out from secondary schools from the three senatorial districts in Anambra State. The choice of junior secondary school students was based on the principle that handwashing awareness recognizes the use of children as behavioural change agents in society.

### **POPULATION OF STUDY**



The population of the study was one hundred and twenty-one thousand, and eighty-seven junior secondary school students from the three senatorial districts of Anambra State.

**Table 1**

Population:	
State	Anambra
Male	56,888
Female	64,199
Total:	121,087

2014 Student Enrolment for Public Junior Secondary School: UBEC Database 2015

### Sample size

In determining the sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan table was used to determine the sample size. The population of the study which was 121,087 was known. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size determination was applied to obtain the sample size of 384. The researchers made a total of 384 copies of the questionnaire and shared them according to the population strength of each school under study and used multistage sampling techniques because it allows the study the opportunity to vary the sampling techniques at each stage.

### Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

**Table 2**

S/N	State	District	School	No. Distributed	No. Returned	Percentage
1	Anambra	North	Urban Girls Secondary School Fegge Onitsha	128	120	93
		South	Achina Girls Sec School Achina	128	113	88
		Central	Community Sec School Umuokpu Awka	128	102	80
Total				384	335	87

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, while 335 copies were retrieved and found usable. This represented 87% of the respondents. The analysis for the study was based on the 335 (87%) respondents who were considered significant enough to make an objective analysis.

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ANALYSIS

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by gender**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
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<b>Male</b>	107	32
<b>Female</b>	228	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown from the table, both males and females were found in the secondary schools. Majority of the respondents were females representing 68% while the males represented 32% of the total population under study.

Age was another demographic data considered to be relevant to the study. The age brackets of the respondents were assessed from the nine secondary schools and presented in Table 4.3

**Table 4: Respondents’ Age Distribution**

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
10-12	14	4
13-14	282	84
15 and above	39	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100</b>

As indicated in the table, the dominant age range was between 13-14, representing 84% of the respondents, the age range of 15 and above represented 39% while between 10-12 age range represented 14%.

**Answers to Research Questions**

**Research Question One: Awareness/ Knowledge Response**

The objective one of the study was to determine whether the respondents know about handwashing messages in the study area. Thus the research question that elicited responses for the survey is: “Do the respondents know about handwashing messages?” The opinions of the respondents from the secondary schools under investigation were sought.

**Table 5: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Knowledge/Awareness Response**

S/N	Do you know about handwashing messages?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	I know little about handwashing messages	78 (390)	60 (240)	62 (186)	58 (116)	77 (77)	335 (1009)	3.0
2.	I only hear of the messages occasionally	122 (610)	74 (296)	59 (177)	50 (100)	30 (30)	335 (1213)	4.0
3.	It is a message that encourages the proper washing of hands with soap and water.	145 (725)	60 (240)	47 (141)	39 (78)	44 (44)	335 (1228)	4.0



4.	It is a message for disease prevention.	44 (220)	37 (148)	152 (456)	64 (128)	38 (38)	335 (990)	3.0
5.	I do not know anything about the message	40 (200)	42 (168)	144 (432)	50 (100)	59 (59)	335 (959)	2.86

Figures in Parenthesis are Alternative Response Scale Values

The table above shows the mean distribution table of the responses to the five items in the questionnaire on knowledge/awareness of handwashing messages among the respondents. The mean score associated with item one on research question one which has to do with knowledge response produces a mean score of 3 showing that respondents knew of handwashing messages. The second item from the questionnaire shows a mean score of 4.0, indicating that respondents got to hear about handwashing messages occasionally. The respondents agreed that handwashing message encourages the proper washing of hands with soap and water with a mean score of 4.0. Thus the mean score of 3.0 indicated that respondents believed that hand washing messages have to do with sensitization; for disease prevention. Finally, the last item on knowledge/awareness response shows the mean score of 2.86 below the decision rule of 3.00, indicating that respondents did not know anything about the handwashing messages. From the analysis above, the results from knowledge/awareness of hand washing message revealed that respondents from the study area know of handwashing messages.

**Research Question Two: Response to Sources of information**

Objective two of the study was to determine the respondents’ sources of information of handwashing messages. To further this objective the study formulated this research question: “what are the respondents’ sources of information of hand washing?”

The study sought the responses from the nine public secondary schools in South-East Nigeria as indicated from the table below.

**Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Response to Knowledge Source**

**Table 6**

S/N	Do you know about handwashing messages?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	It is through radio Programmes	170 (850)	45 (180)	52 (156)	49 (98)	19 (19)	335 (1303)	3.88
2.	It is through television Programmes	175 (875)	52 (208)	45 (135)	42 (84)	21 (21)	335 (1323)	3.94
3.	It is through fliers, posters and handbills	165 (825)	47 (188)	51 (153)	45 (90)	27 (27)	335 (1283)	3.83





4.	I don't know of any source of handwashing messages	22 (110)	38 (152)	149 (447)	74 (148)	52 (52)	335 (909)	2.71
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Figures in Parenthesis are Alternative Response Scale Values

The results from research question two revealed that the highest mean score recorded 3.94 followed by 3.88 and 3.83 indicating that the respondents' information sources for handwashing messages were through television and radio programmes as well as through flyers, posters and handbills. The result further revealed the mean score of 2.71 indicative of the respondents' reaction of not knowing any source of handwashing messages showing negative mean score that should be rejected.

**Research Question Three: Response to Practice**

Objective three of the study was to ascertain whether the respondents practice handwashing after exposure to handwashing messages. In pursuance of this objective, the study raised a research question: "Do respondents support handwashing practice after exposure to handwashing messages?" The respondents' opinion was used to answer the research question raised

**Table 7: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Response to Practice**

S/N	How do you practice handwashing messages?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	I only wash my hands with water.	48 (240)	39 (156)	155 (465)	47 (94)	46 (46)	335 (1001)	2.9
2.	I wash my hands with soap and water when my hands are dirty.	55 (275)	40 (160)	139 (417)	46 (92)	55 (55)	335 (999)	2.9
3.	I wash my hands often	55 (240)	60 (240)	76 (228)	68 (136)	76 (76)	335 (955)	2.8
4.	I don't wash my hands at all	45 (225)	49 (196)	120 (360)	62 (124)	59 (59)	335 (964)	2.9

Figures in Parenthesis are Alternative Response Scale Values

The table above shows the response to the practice of handwashing messages. All the four items from the questionnaire relating to handwashing practice revealed the mean scores that are below the decision rule, indicative of the respondents' poor performance of handwashing practice.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study was aimed at evaluating the knowledge and practice of handwashing messages among the respondents from the study area. The results of the demographic data of the respondents enabled the researchers to determine the eligibility of respondents in the study area. A majority of the respondents were within the age range of 13-14 (84%). Therefore, the respondents are true representative of all the students in Anambra State. Research questions one and two sought to know about students' exposure to handwashing messages. Results showed adequate knowledge of handwashing messages with positive mean scores of 3 and above (3 as decision rule). This was evident in the number and frequency of the surveyed



students from the study area that affirmed to the research questions one and two on exposure to handwashing messages. The findings from the study show the respondents were aware of handwashing messages. Also, the findings are in agreement with White et al. (2005) on “the impact of a health campaign on hand hygiene and upper respiratory illness among college students living in residence halls” and found that exposure to media campaign and the availability of gel hand sanitizer; increased students’ knowledge of health campaign. Despite the acquired knowledge from the handwashing messages, the practice of handwashing has remained insignificant or low.

The responses from research question three showed that respondents do not practice nor advocate the handwashing messages. These findings are in agreement with the research findings of Azuogu et al. (2016) where the study found the extent of handwashing to be low among secondary school students in Ebonyi. Also, the study is in agreement with the findings of Junxiong et al. (2015) that a high knowledge and attitude of the respondents have not translated to good hygiene practices. Similarly, the study also agreed with Ikogho et al. (2013) and found few availability of handwashing facilities where utilization; was hindered by the maintenance of a few available ones.

The findings also supported Merenu et al. (2015) where it was discovered that majority of the respondents had adequate knowledge of the use of hand sanitizer; while few practised correct hand washing exercise. The findings also supported Mwachiro (2012) where it was observed that lack of provision of soap in schools, inadequate water and disappearance of soap and handwashing facilities as obstacles towards handwashing practice. Therefore, the study found that despite the knowledge acquired from handwashing messages, the practice still remains low.

In line with the diffusion of innovation theory which the study was anchored on, it was observed that the rate of diffusion was influenced by individual differences among potential adopters as well as the social system of the respondents. Though the respondents were exposed to handwashing messages through media information by the government and different agencies like UNICEF, the adoption of the practice of proper handwashing still has to do with individual differences. Also, the social system of the respondents has a lot to offer towards the realization; of the practice of handwashing messages. If the respondents were adequately exposed and have a favourable attitude to handwashing messages without a conducive environment, then the practice of the knowledge gained from these messages may not be realistic. Thus, irrespective of the acquired knowledge from handwashing messages, the practice of handwashing has remained insignificant or very low.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study examined the knowledge and practice of handwashing messages among secondary school students in Anambra. The study found that respondents were exposed to handwashing messages, but the exposure did not affect the practice of handwashing. This had a significant impact on advocacy which had also suffered negatively. In essence, handwashing messages will have more impact when the respondents’ practice and advocate for handwashing after exposure to handwashing messages. The outcome of the study shows that the practice of handwashing was poor, and the respondents’ advocacy to the messages was negative. From the above findings and conclusion made, the following recommendations aimed at encouraging handwashing practice in the study area include:



- (i) The need to emphasize; handwashing with soap and water at critical times to ensure greater compliance. Also the messages should be designed and disseminated in the patterns that will be attractive and interesting to the respondents.
- (ii) Adequate provision and maintenance of handwashing facilities by government, NGOs; and school management to schools in the study area in other to create and sustain handwashing practice among the students.
- (iii) Hygiene awareness and public health education programmes should be included in the students' syllabus for proper sensitization; and practice.
- (iv) Finally, the use of the findings made from this study to promote handwashing practice among the students in the study area should be encouraged.

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