



CHALLENGES OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA, 2015-2024

ABSTRACT

The sites used for interaction online are known as social networking sites and they include; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Yahoo messenger, Google talk, Google messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, among others. Social networking is a welcome development because of its numerous benefits such as the speed at which information is

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, New Media (social media) can be seen as the most widely accepted technological invention in the 21st century. Social Media is now a social communication norm in developing countries. It promotes positive and negative agendas. Globally, terrorists, separatists, political organisations, religious groups, individuals and so on are using Social Media to spread their information and ideas. Around the globe, insurgency has sadly become one of the defining features of our society today. Eze (2019) reported that since 1992 when the first Al-Qaeda attack was recorded, countless numbers of insurgencies have resulted in deaths of millions of people and displacement of many. Eze (2014) posited that in the last ten years, over two million people have died from terror attacks throughout the world. More than half a million have been orphaned, disabled or seriously injured. According to Anna (2019), terrorism is



disseminated, enhancing learning opportunities and so on. On the other hand, the disadvantages of social media abound and they include lack of privacy and sharing false information about themselves and others. Such information could lead to insecurity in Nigeria. So, this study analyzed the challenges of the use of social media in enhancing national security in Nigeria. Premised on the structural-functionalism theory, the study employed questionnaire and in-depth interviews conducted among communications and security experts in Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that Social Media are very difficult to control; rather they are controlling the users because of the freedom and absence of law guiding the cyberspace. The increasing use of Social Media has led to greater privacy challenges. Other challenges found are lack of coordination and strategic planning, political interference, lack of defined structures by security agencies, collapse of rule of law institutions and misinformation, disinformation and seditious messages. To curb the ongoing fake news, attack rumors, propaganda and so many others, the national security agents and others aligned agencies must be able to deploy different kinds of mechanisms to gather information, like through news gathering, online surveillance, information sharing, public diplomacy and many others. The Nigerian government and individuals should stop drawing conclusions from the information they see and read on SM.

Keywords: Challenges, Social, Media, National Security and Nigeria.

basically a media phenomenon; you can look at it as a species of psychological warfare waged through the media, which means that while we know terrorists influence the media, media coverage also influences terrorists. Terrorists, by definition, want attention. They commit violent acts to cause fear, terror and disrupt normal life, all in the hope of gaining attention for a cause. Other continents and nations of the world such as Europe, Asia, Middle East, North America and some countries in Africa are taking proactive steps at checkmating threats to their national security by keying into the revolutions in the information and communication technologies.

One of the most revolutionary aspects of the social media is that it delivers information for free to wide group of people with little to no lag time behind the actual event. In addition, anyone can push news, information or other resources,



which makes anyone with access to the internet a content creator. Content shared through social media has the potential to reach one person or one million people depending on its reach, message and audience. This inadvertently seems to make social media and people who use it just as powerful as the pillar or the gate keepers of the conventional media such as the newspapers, television and magazines. The emergence of social media like facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Pinterest, Whatsapp, messenger etc have changed the face of media practice, by making information sharing easier, faster and quicker. But, this is not without some demerits. The rapid pace of communication technological innovation over the past three decades that evolved, the social media has provided hope to millions while also creating opportunities to create instability and afforded some the leeway to post as threats to national and global securities. Today, individuals are leveraging the power of information networks to organize movement for freedom and human right. Meanwhile, hostile nations, criminal groups, terrorists and individuals seek to exploit the very same communication channels and networks to further a variety of national, ideological, remote, extremist and ulterior objectives.

Abdullahi & Abdul-Qadir, (2019) noted that social media platforms enable activists and social movements to carry out their activities and to distribute movement goals more easily, sighting examples from the abducted Chibok school girls in April 2014 in Borno State, northern part of Nigeria. Social activists, via the social media platform, condemned the nonchalant attitude of the government in equipping the internal security of the country while others decry the carelessness of security personnel which allowed the terrorists to unleash such attack on women and children. However, Nigerian national security is under threat by the activities of Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen, Niger Delta avengers, agitation of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and others. Boko Haram groups are noticeably using Social Media in advancing their activities. However, insecurity in Nigeria has escalated to a worrisome dimension and can be traced to corruption, bad leadership, inequality and illiteracy. In Nigeria, over 87.37 per cent of social media activities are conducted on facebook. The National Communications Commission (NCC) attributes 74 per cent of this traffic 32,513,261 to young Nigerians who use mobile devices. This new media eliminates the gate keeping mechanism of traditional media, which has allowed a large number of youth the freedom to communicate anonymously thereby resulting to direct hate filled comments to other Nigerians.



It is in the light of this that the study discussed the challenges of social media in national security in Nigeria from 2015-2024

Objectives of the Study

- i. To assess the existing strategies for use of social media in enhancing national security in Nigeria.
- ii. To examine the possible challenges to the use of social media to enhance national security in Nigeria.

Social Media

Social media are the internet based tools and services that allow users to interact with one another online. In the course of the interaction, they generate contents, distribute and search for information. By implication, every user becomes a communicator. The sites used for interaction online are known as social networking sites and they include; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Yahoo messenger, Blackberry messenger (BBM), Google talk, Google messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, among others (Nsude & Onwe, 2017). By the above definition, it implies that social networking is a welcome development because of its numerous benefits such as the speed at which information is disseminated, enhancing learning opportunities and so on.

McQuail (2022) in his book, Mass Communication Theory, suggests that media has significant consequences for individuals, institutions, society, and culture because of the social power it wields. He goes further to assert that media can confer status and confirm legitimacy just as they can be channels for persuasion and mobilization. McQuail maintains that media is an instrument of social power, and when attention is paid to its various legitimate structures, it can attract, influence, and retain a broad audience. He concluded that the social power of the media could serve the wellbeing of society, particularly those segments of society that are socially, politically, and economically at a disadvantage. McQuail's standpoint establishes the relevance of media to every segment of society, including national security concerns, but ignored the human component. McQuail's omission of the human component limits his work's applicability to this thesis.

Iredia in a paper presented at the National Workshop on the Establishment of a Culture of Peace in Nigeria on November 21, 2002, conceives media as an avenue by which the public is informed, mobilized, and enlightened on different issues



including, but not limited to, political, cultural, or economic matters. He identifies electronic media, print media, cyber communications, cinema, books, other literary works, and people involved in their production as part of the media. His concept is closely related to that of McQuail, but it is more comprehensive in the sense that it captures the essence of media as well as media operators. For this study, social media relates to the technology and platforms that enable the interactive web's content creation, collaboration and exchange by participants and the public which is an open electronic communication networks that connects diverse people through online platforms, allowing them to exchange thoughts and ideas.

National Security

National security borders on incidence that endangers human existence or welfare. Nigeria's national security means the protection of the lives, rights, dignity and property of its citizens. It also means the protection of its resources, cultural integrity, territory, sovereignty and lawful institutions of the country. The aim of national security is to secure the just and equitable living conditions for all the citizens of the country (Ali, 2021). But the leadership of the country has failed in this respect. Security includes the means at the disposal of the government for protecting the state and its citizens from external aggression and internal insurrection. The state exists for the interest of defense, public safety, public morality etc. The freedom of expression and the press is an aspect of national security and it is necessary for a true democracy.

Although the idea of national security is all-encompassing and permeates every aspect of a country's life, it appears that it has only been applied to ideas related to military might and territorial defence. Communication is crucial to each nation's security since it is the foundation of the human spirit. National security encompasses a variety of factors, including social, physical, economic, technological and social characteristics inside a country that assure the protection of its population; all of these factors perform best in a setting where there is strategic communication. Communication and national security are related, and because they are both symbolic, national security issues also affect communication (Dairo, 2017). The phrase "national security" has long been used to refer to extremely high levels of military security. This meaning has become more and more debatable, questioned, and contentious. National security is a



problem that affects more than just the Army, Navy, and Air Force. It is necessary to take into consideration the country's entire capacity for war, as well as our mining, industries, workforce, research, and all other activities that enter the regular civilian life.

Within the context of this study, national security refers to the capacity of a state to promote the pursuit and realization of the fundamental needs and vital interests of man and society, and to protect them from threats which may be economic, social, environmental, political, military or epidemiological in nature. In this sense, it has both qualitative and dynamic dimensions. Qualitatively, it encapsulates the unending drive of the state for improving the safety of, and protecting the lives, property and resources within its defined territorial boundaries. It is dynamic in the sense that its broad contours oscillate with emergence of new threats or the transformation of old threats, which may come from within or outside its environment. Therefore threats to national security are not static, but dynamic, and just as the political, economic, military and social causes of threats change, so does the national security posture of a country change.

Challenges to the use of Social Media to enhance National Security

Alfakoro, Yahaya & Abdulhadi (2021) assessed the role of social media on consensus and consent building in governance as citizen's full flagged participation will guarantee accountability, transparency and responsiveness in government. The paper made use of secondary sources of data. The study noted that overtime, the social media have contributed to the development of citizen's participation in government, as it has the potentials to create public awareness and interactions between people in a simple form and different means. Majority of citizens are users of one form of social media or the other in which they interact on daily basis and Nigeria have been experiencing bad leadership, corruption, and economic problems due to bad governance without citizen's consensus and consent. The paper recommended that free access to information, responsible journalism and citizen's participation will aid in governance building. Independent journalism should be emphasized among journalists so as to carry out their work without bias in order for citizens to have access to rightful information across their respective platforms. The possible challenges to the use of social media to



enhance national security in Nigeria were not discussed in the study which it's a gap in literature this study will address.

Edafejirhaye & Ogunwuyi (2022) examined Mass Media, Communication Policy and National Security: The Nigeria's Situation. The paper is driven by social responsibility theory of mass communication, using descriptive analysis and the findings show that political stakeholders are the major policy makers and must be seen performing positive role by creating peaceful nation; addressing security issues without partiality. Issues such as infrastructural failures on highways, cyber crimes, bandits, political killing, Fulani herders' atrocities and others should be addressed firmly and promptly through communication policy and fearless media reporting. The study noted that Mass media are tools of communication for national security when policy markers exploit them for national peace proactively. The recent upsurge of Nigerian insecurity escalated by fulanization of Nigeria, politicization of security system and the discriminatory handling of the bandits and killer herders called for the attention of Nigeria policy makers to amend communication policy to reflect the present national security. Hence; new policy on highway maintenance should be revisited, political actors should drop parochial agenda against Nigerian citizens, investigative journalism and fearless reporting should continue to flourish; and above all, the machineries of national security should be overhauled to give peace a chance in Nigeria.

Akinwalere (2023) discussed Nigerian military, national security and the role of the mass media in democracy. The media are critical stakeholders in the Nigerian project. During colonial rule, the press led the fight for Nigeria independence. During military rule, the media led the fight to return the country to democracy. The study explained that the press has been the foremost instrument of fighting for equity, justice, unity and the development of Nigeria. Journalists should be empowered to tell the powerful stories that will aid our overall collective development; keep our leaders and institutions accountable; foster peace and unity; as well as inspire a sense of patriotic duty amongst the citizenry. To strengthen the media, which is the Fourth Estate of The Realm in democracy is a task that must be done. The mass media in Nigeria should be used to enhance and sustain the security of the nation. This means that mass media should never be used as divisive instrument among the people of Nigeria but rather should be used for the promotion and consolidation of national unity and integration. It is also



recommended that security operatives should work with media practitioners as watchdogs of the society.

Theoretical Framework

Structural functionalist theory is considered as the theoretical foundation of this study. Structural functional theory also views society from the macro-level orientation. It looks at the society as a complex system whose parts work together in the promotion of stability. This theory is largely associated with the works of Parsons (1902-1979) and later Almond (1960). The main thrust of the theory is that society is best understood as a complex system with various interdependent parts that work together. Various parts of the society are seen to be closely related and taken together as a complete system.

The theorists submitted that the basic units of structure-functional are roles not individuals. The integration that characterized a political system takes place between the roles that individuals come to occupy. Political systems are open systems in the sense that they engage in transactions with systems outside their boundaries and are influenced by those transactions. In addition, all political systems must perform a set of tasks for the sake of survival and equilibrium. This can be called the functional requirements of the system. Structural functionalism sees society as an organic whole, with each of its parts working to maintain the other. This is akin to the way the human body works to maintain each other and the body as a whole. The most important features of functionalism are the concepts of structure and function. Therefore, to the functionalist, behaviour in society is structured. In other words, relationships between members of society are organized in terms of roles (Hassan, 2016). The structure is seen as the total of normative behaviour, consisting of the total of social relationships governed by norms; thus, the aspects of the social structure.

Media organisation both traditional and new media work to support the existence of government by providing information, education and correlation of issues bordering security and other important issues to the people. This theory is relevant to this study, as the media (new media) is seen as a structured institution in the society that contributes its functions to the society. According to functional-structural theory, the contents the new media disseminates is information that aims to satisfy the need of society by observing natural and human universe that help people to survive in their physical and social reality (Nossek, 2015). Also, the



falls and limitations of the new media directly and indirectly affects the general security of the society as proper functioning of each part of the society ensures the well-being and survival of the whole society.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design to assess the place of social media and national security in Nigeria. The research population consisted of communications officers and security personnel of the Nigerian Army selected based on their level of experience and expertise in dealing with communications and national security issues in Nigeria. These are: selected social media users in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States (BAY States), Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Ministry of Information (FMI), National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Emergency Communications Centre (ECC), Nigerian Army (NA), Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and State Security Service (SSS). The population units are equally chosen because of their anticipated deep knowledge of issues related to the effects of social media on national security in Nigeria. Therefore, the target population of this study stood at ten thousand, ninety-six (10,096) persons.

However, in selecting the sample size from the target population, the study adopted sample size determination formula propounded by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). Therefore, the sample size of the study is 370. The methods of data collection are based on both primary and secondary methods of data collections. Both interview and questionnaire are employed. The purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select respondents for interview and questionnaire. Content analysis was adopted to analyze the data gathered from the in-depth interviews while data from questionnaire was analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23.0 and presented on table, simple percentage and frequency.

Data Presentation & Analysis of Results

Three hundred and seventy (370) copies of questionnaire were administered while three hundred and fifty - seven (357) copies of questionnaire were duly completed and retrieved. Thirteen (13) copies of questionnaire were not retrieved and all efforts to retrieve them proved abortive as some respondents could not be found on sit as a result of official assignment and leave. Therefore, the presentation and



analysis was done based on the 357 retrieved copies of questionnaire. Interviews were equally held with purposively selected members from above mentioned institutions. The interview results were supplemented with information from the extant literature.

Table 1: Responses on the existing strategies for use of social media in enhancing national security in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Public diplomacy	24	7
2. Online surveillance	52	15
3. Intelligent monitoring	49	14
4. Counter Propaganda	51	14
5. Information sharing	46	13
6. Informant	37	10
7. GPS technology	19	5
8. Social networking tools	32	9
9. News	47	13
Total	357	100

Source: Field Data, June (2024).

The question in Table 1 aimed to determine whether participants are aware of any kind of mechanism and machineries deployed by Nigerian security agents in getting information and combating SM threats to social and national security. Table 1 indicates that security agents mostly use news (online and printed), online surveillance, information sharing and many more to halt the challenges emanating from the abuse of SM usage by citizens. All these provide information and ideas to security agents, which they use to curb and avert terrorism (BH) and other organisations. Then, the study found that Nigerian security agents use different information gathering techniques to retrieve information and ideas that lead to their counter-operation of SM threats and challenges.

However, the respondents have contradictory views on whether what is on ground regarding new media can be regarded as effective strategies for national security. For instance, the security experts that were interviewed believe that there are strategies for use of new media for national security include establishment of new media policies and bills such as social media bill, Freedom of



Information Act and public communication Act on countering fake news and have been quite effective as they are able to create some level of sanity in issues of fake news and hate speech which has caused so much tensions and conflicts in the country (June, 2024).

Also, other respondents acknowledged efforts such as use of dashboards, websites and other platforms designed by security agents, international and local organisations to monitor fake news or propaganda on some insecurity issues like Boko Haram insurgency as quite helpful in use of new media for national security. One of them reported that “apps are dashboards are employed by local and international organisations to inform the public about the extent of the security situation towards finding lasting solution.” Breaking this point further, other respondents said, “so far, the security personnel, especially police and military have been able to track some criminals and terrorists through social media tracking devices and are able to monitor security prone areas through dashboard created by organisations such as Centre for Information Technology advancement hate speech dashboard and Transparency international security dashboard” (June, 2024).

While the other respondents who disproved that what is on ground cannot be regarded as effective strategies for use of new media for national security believe that issues of monitoring and implementation are critical in ensuring success of such efforts. One of the respondents said “what is on ground on use of new media for national security like acts and bills cannot be regarded as effective strategies. This is because they are hardly followed and difficult to implement or even monitor” (June, 2024).

Conversely, Ogbette, Enwemeka & Okoh (2021) assert that existing strategies like the Nigerian Communications Acts (2003), Freedom of Information Act and Nigerian Communications Commission are not effective as regards regulating the social media in aspects content sharing and there is poor enforcement of these strategies due to low technological base. This means that the Nigerian government if at all willing, can leverage on social media and all other components of new media for its security operations however must improve its technology base to ensure success especially in creating awareness among the people as well as tracking of security activities. In the same vein, one of respondent lamented that “use of new media as a strategy for achieving national security is somewhat



coming in Nigeria; however, there is need to tread with caution because there are a lot of misinformation on both new media and traditional media.

Media organisations have over the years, influenced strategic decisions in the world, especially on outcomes of conflicts. During times of crisis, nations have used the media, in some instances, as a strong weapon to determine outcomes of counter insurgency (Akale & Udegnunam, 2018). Then advancements in the new media came onboard with digital platforms and internet and regarded one of the used sources of information and communication by both citizens and government operations. The mass media comprises the means by which a society disseminates and receives information. The traditional instruments of the mass media to the modern man are the newspapers, magazines, radio and television. The Journalist is a human being, he studies other human creatures, report about human being and human beings are the source of his information. In essence, journalism is a social relation. The information disseminated by the journalist could be harmful or useful depends on its contents. This is where the issue of security comes in. The media transmit messages about a particular society. No one else can play this role. The information is passed across a destination to achieve a goal. The mass media are expedient in nation building. No government can survive without effective use of the mass media as described as the fourth estate of the realm by Edmund Burke in the 18th century. The media are saddled with the traditional role of transmission of information, correlation of social values and surveillance of the society. Media agencies and organisations have been vital tools in the propagation of national security and plays an important role in the global fight against terrorism (Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016). However, over the years, with the advent of digital technologies, the mass media have refined the landscape and, especially with the tremendous improvements to what is now known as the new media.

Similarly, the National Assembly passed the Prohibition of Frivolous Petitions and Other related matters bill 2015, popularly known as the social media bill. The bill is aimed at censoring aspects of conduct on new media technologies. Also, the Prohibition of Hate Speeches and for other Related Matters otherwise known as Hate Speech Bill 2019 and the Protection from Internet Falsehoods and Manipulations and Other related matters bill 2019 were measures adopted by the Nigerian government to regulate the online space. Despondently, all these efforts received condemnations from stakeholders and failed in controlling hate speech,



incitement to violence and other criminal activities over the internet (Ogbette, Enwemeka & Okoh, 2021).

Table 2: Responses on the possible challenges to the use of social media to enhance national security in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Lack of coordination and strategic planning	82	23
2. Misinformation, disinformation and seditious messages	56	16
3. Political interference	63	18
4. Lack of defined structures by security agencies	94	26
5. Collapse of Rule of Law Institutions	62	17
Total	357	100

Source: Field Data, June (2024).

Table 2's question seeks to understand the possible challenges to the use of social media to enhance national security in Nigeria. Statistically 82; 23% suggest lack of coordination and strategic planning, 56; 16% indicated misinformation, disinformation and seditious messages, 63; 18% indicated political interference, 94; 26% indicated lack of defined structures by security agencies while 62 respondents accounting for 17% indicated collapse of rule of law institutions as the possible challenge to the use of social media to enhance national security in Nigeria. This is supported by the following information from both interview and secondary sources:

Furthermore, one of the respondents who is a major general lamented "the reason we are facing the challenges in use of new media for security purposes is lack of coordination and strategic planning. If these things are put in a better shape, people will welcome the idea. In general, almost all the respondents agreed on the fact that lack of regulation and unethical influencers available in the country are serious challenge to use of new media for the purposes of enhancing national security in Nigeria. On the contrary, Chukwuere & Onyebukwa (2018) aver that social media is not a threat to Nigeria's national security however, the country's security climate is poor.

On the issue of misinformation, disinformation and seditious messages raised as a challenge to use of new media and its potential to enhance national security, one of the respondents agreed that the new media has caused several unrests and conflicts in the country. However, the prospects of the new media are also faced with peculiar challenges which have crippled its role, especially in propagating national security. The new media has allowed everyone to be content creators and distributors which have in turn, led to the rise of fake news. Some lawbreakers and



cybercriminals utilise the new media to modify legitimate documents and distribute them as part of disinformation campaigns. Terrorist and other criminal groups use the new media to pass their information to the general public to their advantage due to its cost advantage (Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016).

Globally, terrorists, separatists, political organisations, religious groups, individuals and so on are using New Media to spread their information and ideas. Nigerian national security is under threat by the activities of Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen, Niger Delta avengers, agitation of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and others. New Media is an open world of communication platform with little control by government agents. Boko Haran and IPOB groups are noticeably using New Media in advancing their activities. However, Insecurity in Nigeria has escalated to a worrisome dimension and can be traced to corruption, bad leadership, inequality and illiteracy.

Nigeria has the misfortune of undermining its rule of law institutions that would have countervailed its dangerous slide to instability. Right from independence, this practice of weakening rule of law institutions began. It has continued. Before independence, minority ethnicities in Nigeria feared domination in a newly independent country. The legal framework of societies should be solid as to withstand the pressure of competitive politics. Nigerian state institutions, especially its law enforcement institutions are established on quicksand; they lack the procedural integrity and normative constraints to be effective and fair. In the matter of Fulani herdsmen and banditry, law enforcement institutions have been mostly complicit and ineffective in applying the law to restrain the violent impulses of the killing herdsmen. The centralization of policing has enhanced the ethnic capture of law enforcement and the growing ineffectiveness. By encasing policing in the exclusive legislative and executive competence of the federal government in the 2nd Schedule to Part One of the Constitution (a federal government that has little incentive for the impartial administration of justice), the Nigerian constitution has further damaged the prospects of effective and fair policing (June, 2024).

Discussion of Findings

- i. The study found that Nigerian security agents use different information gathering techniques such as news, online surveillance and others to gather and retrieve information and ideas on how to counter SM threats and challenges. Conversely, Ogbette, Enwemeka & Okoh (2021) assert that existing strategies like the Nigerian Communications Acts (2003), Freedom of Information Act and Nigerian Communications Commission are not effective as regards regulating the social media in aspects content sharing and there is poor enforcement of these strategies due to low technological base. This means that the Nigerian government if at all willing can leverage on social



- media and all other components of new media for its security operations however must improve its technology base to ensure success especially in creating awareness among the people as well as tracking of security activities.
- ii. Social Media are very difficult to control; rather they are controlling the users because of the freedom and absence of law guiding the cyberspace. The increasing use of Social Media has led to greater privacy challenges. Other challenges found are lack of coordination and strategic planning, political interference, lack of defined structures by security agencies, collapse of rule of law institutions and misinformation, disinformation and seditious messages. This is in agreement with the submission by Ngige, Badekale & Hamman (2016) which states that the new media has allowed everyone to be content creators and distributors which have in turn, led to the rise of fake news. Some lawbreakers and cybercriminals utilise the new media to modify legitimate documents and distribute them as part of disinformation campaigns. Terrorist and other criminal groups use the new media to pass their information to the general public to their advantage due to its cost advantage.

Conclusion

The ineffective use of new media is placed within the context of increased national security challenges in the country and to that end this study argues that using social media to spread false information and negative information causes and amplifies unnecessary tension among citizens and governments inability to provide strategies that will enhance using the platforms poses threats to national security. One of the study's most important empirical findings is that there is a link between ineffective use of new media and the spread of security threats in the country. The link was emphasized as one of the most important ways in which Nigeria's security challenges have worsened. On one hand, users of social media make ineffective use of the platform to spread negativity thereby affecting the security situation of Nigeria while on the other hand, there are few not properly implemented government efforts towards proper use of new media to enhance national security. This, the study found out that it is mainly as a result of the rise of fake news, unsubstantiated claims, misinformation, disinformation, seditious messages and conspiracy theories, propaganda, lack of policies, regulation and unethical influencers.

This study identified different mechanisms that can be adopted to curb the offensive use of SM by the general public as well as different agitation groups. The techniques include public enlightenment on the positive use of SM, blocking sources that promote insecurity on SM, as well as creating laws and policies to control SM abuse. Information gathering and sharing is a common thread between social media and national security. Authorities must understand and leverage the relationship and how to ensure the highest levels of social media.



Recommendations

- i. The Nigerian government through its security agencies should design and implement a well-coordinated media strategy for use of new media and this should spell out policies and bills to regulate activities of users and misuse for national security purposes.
- ii. To curb the ongoing fake news, attack rumors, propaganda and so many others, the national security agents and others aligned agencies must be able to deploy different kinds of mechanisms to gather information, like through news gathering, online surveillance, information sharing, public diplomacy and many others. The Nigerian government and individuals should stop drawing conclusions from the information they see and read on SM.

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