EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA, 2015-2024

EZEORAH CLEMENT EZEORAH, RUTH CALEB LUKA Ph.D AND CANICE ERUNKE Ph.D

Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State.
Corresponding Author: ezeorahclement@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/tijssra.v07i6.035

Introduction

Social Media (SM) can be regarded as a 21st century technological invention and innovation. SM, with its attributes, brings knowledge, skills and events closer to the people and has revolutionized access to information. There are different forms of SM networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google Plus, Yahoo Messenger, Instagram, Wikipedia and the list continues. Presently, SM tools and their applications have affected the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of human endeavors. Events and information associated with these aspects are virtually discussed, which gather very large audiences. The tools have also promoted rumors and fake news in the recent past. The general public utilizes the new media to understand and keep in touch with different kinds of socio-economic, political and social events, turning the world into a global village and the speed at which information is disseminated becomes better and enhanced (Nsude &

ABSTRACT

The advancement of internet has grown social interaction across all sphere of life. The far-reaching ability and anonymity it provides have advanced the communication patterns of citizen to citizen, citizen to government and vice versa. This advancement as brought by the new media revolutionised the communication pattern of social interaction as well as government

operations. National security is one of the most precarious aspects of governance in any country today. Several governments across the globe have resorted to use of social media platforms in their operations including interactions and communication with their citizens. This study examined the effect of social media on national security in Nigeria. Premised on the technological determinism theory, the study employed questionnaire and in-depth interviews conducted among communications and security experts in Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that there is a link between ineffective use of new media and the spread of security threats in the country. The paper also 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. The study established that Boko Haram leaders continue to use Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other Jihadist networks to claim responsibility, celebrate success and issue threats for further attacks. Thus, it is recommended the Nigeria government should involve National Orientation Agency in enlightening the general populace on the potentials of new media as well as how to deploy such to enhancing national security. This is because a lot of people do not have trust on the new media especially because of the rise in the misinformation, disinformation, propaganda and fake news among others.

Keywords: Effects, Social, Media and National Security.

Onwe, 2017). 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 utilize 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).

Insecurity is a global phenomenon. Insecurity is one of the major issues of concern that is attracting global attention and is fast threatening the corporate existence of many nations across the World. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States of America, insecurity has been on the increase globally. In the African region, many countries have been engulfed with one security issue or the other. National security is one of the most precarious aspects of governance in any country today. Several governments across the globe have resorted to use of social media platforms in their operations including interactions and communication with their citizens. In the United States, reported news in Reuters (2013) revealed that hackers from the Syrian Electronic Arm undertook several high - profile hacking attempts among which a pillar of tweets from the then President Obama's account were hacked and redirected to You Tube. This received banner headline titled "Syrian hackers hit Obama - link Twitter, Facebook account". In September of the same 2013, the hackers struck a recruiting website of the United States, leading to an exclusive warning by the Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) to entire nation that this group of Syrian hackers might intensify its internet attacks as the US weighed a military strike against Syria in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack by the Syrian government against its people.

Also, one contemporary and recurring challenge facing the Nigerian state is the problem of insecurity which has pervaded almost all parts of the nation. The menace of insecurity is becoming outrageous and devoid of feasible, notable and lasting solution in the current dispensation. Nigerian citizens now sleep with one eye open as a result of insecurity facing the nation. Nigeria is plagued with violent security threats. However, such threats include the Niger Delta crises, Kidnapping, Boko Haram crises and frequent clashes between farmers and herdsmen in the Northern part of Nigeria. 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. As the insecurity situation continues unabated, the mass media has become a very potent tool in the hand of the government, the general public as well as the perpetrators of violence to get across to the public with the social media networks

now taking a lead. The universality and limited restrictions of the cyber world have made a lot of people embrace it as a means of reaching out to the public in various ways. In Nigeria most people especially the youths are hooked to various social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and 247 ureports.com, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. According to Professor Ben Ayade, the then executive governor of Cross River State, "we won't have the kind of peace we have now in the next 20 years if social media is allowed to destroy our country, and our value as those who publish horrible pictures should go to jail because animals are becoming more humans while humans are becoming more animalistic" (The Punch Newspaper, 15th November, 2019). It is in the light of this that the study discusses the effects of social media on national security in Nigeria from 2015-2024.

Objectives of the Study

i. To assess the types of social media platform used in promoting insecurity in Nigeria.
ii. To find out the extent of the role of social media in facilitating criminal and terrorist activities in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Nsudu & Onwe (2017) sought to know whether Social Media information promotes positive or negative views. The study reveals that 78(46.4%) of the respondents felt IPOB was labeled a terrorist organization due to information displayed and shown on social media. Overall, the study summarizes that SM information and events can be motivating factors towards the labeling of certain organization (IPOB) as terrorist group. This implies that information and events displayed on SM could be seen as influencing factors pushing government and its security agents to proscribe and label any anti-government movement as a terrorist organization. The study further sought to know whether dedicated servers and websites are used to spread their propaganda. Result shows that they use the medium for recruitment, fund raising, and as training mechanism and other forms of cybercrime. Again, the study reveals that 104(17.2%) suggest that SM mainly facilitates propaganda, and threats of violence are suggested by 98(16.2%). The IPOB displays their activities on Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The activities of Boko Haram are displayed on different SM platforms by the media and individuals as they get hold of this information. Overall, the study concluded

that the use of SM can facilitate propaganda, threats of violence, mobilization, recruitment process, radicalization of ideology, insecurity, training, and many more. All these factors in return lead to social, economic, and political insecurity where lives and properties are endangered.

Chukwuere & Onyebukwa (2018) deployed a quantitative research method through online questionnaire to determine the impacts of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp as social media tools on insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that Nigeria's security climate is very poor and social media is not a threat to Nigeria's national security. The study also revealed that the public is uncertain whether Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp have increased insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria and many more. Eze (2018) offered a descriptive account of the relationship between the social media and national security in some identified countries and Nigeria. The theoretical anchorage of the study is the Uses and Gratification theory. The study critically observed that the social media has long evolved beyond being a mere social platform to satisfying other needs and purposes for which anti - terrorism is paramount since it is observed by proven news stories that terrorists are also infiltrating the social media and hijacking it for nefarious activities averse to national security. Some advanced techniques advocated by security experts through whom the social media networks and other Information and Communication Technologies can be utilized to counter and stem the current waves of national insecurities occasioned by the nefarious activities of Boko Haram were highlighted. Recommendations were offered starting from commendations to the Nigeria's senate for the passage of the bill for an act to provide for the prohibition and punishment for electronic fraud and crime in all electronic transactions. The study was not specific of the types of social media platform used in promoting insecurity and how they have impacted on national security of Nigeria from 2015-2024.

Iyadi & Assay (2019) examined the impact of social media networks on insecurity in Nigeria. A sample size of one hundred and ninety six (196) respondents was drawn from staff and students of Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku. Data were generated through questionnaire and analyzed with Likert five point scale and simple percentage. Result show that majority of the respondents claim that social media have in no small way contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. This is perhaps because everyone is free to post information in the social media such as

facebook, twitter, WhatsApp, instagram, etc, without any form of censorship. It was concluded that facebook and WhatsApp networks contributed more to national insecurity. It was recommended amongst others that there should be an encompassing national legislations (laws guiding the use of social media) that would attract strong sanctions on violators. Even though the study is related to this current one, it fails to use interview and a theory to further explain the types of social media platform used in promoting insecurity and how they have impacted on national security of Nigeria from 2015- 2024.

Obun-Andy, Aluko & Abdulquadir (2021) assessed the place of social media and insecurity in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the paper first reviewed relevant works done in the past in order to look at the issue of social media and insecurity in Nigeria. Using the survey research design, the study collected empirical data from a sample of 200 social media users across various platforms using questionnaire. The data were analyzed in simple percentages and presented in tables and charts. Findings of this research work exposed that social media affects the Nigerian security system to a large extent through dissemination of fake information and extremist ideologies. Findings of the study also revealed that WhatsApp and Facebook were the leading platforms used in promoting insecurity in the country. In conclusion, the study therefore sees social media as playing both the good and bad role in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria. The study recommended that the Nigerian populace should try as much as possible to curtail disseminating and encouraging of aggressive, insulting and false news that may result in communal hate as well as insecurity reports taking place in social media platforms. However, the study fails to use theory in further explaining its points.

Theoretical Framework

Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) is considered as the theoretical foundation of this study. The technological determinism theory posits that media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel and how society operates as it moves from one technological age to another. The theory as propounded by Marshal McLuhan in 1964, explains the impact of ICTs on how information is consumed, retrieved and disseminated in contemporary society. The theory seeks to explain social and historical phenomena in terms of the principal determining factor (technology). The foundation of the theory states that technology shapes and determines events in the society. It was posited that

changes in the modes of communication shape human existence and inventions in technology invariably cause cultural change (Nwabueze, 2017).

Internet is driven by social media and the position of the theory is that such innovation helps change the society and social media platforms have been integrated into the society. Also, the internet and social media are changing the structure of the society because the social media have radically changed the human communication system. The spread of fake news across social media platforms on security challenge is achieved through internet. According to this theory, technology shapes and directs the activities of the society and here the technology is internet.

The theory states that communication technologies in general are the prime causes of changes in society which determines the course of history (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). The theory is relevant to this study as the advent of digital technologies have changed the way the society interacts. The new media have awakened citizen journalism and increased participation of the public in national affairs, people are able to keep in touch with different kinds of socioeconomic, political and social events. The initiation of the new technologies has turned the world into a global village. However, if these new media are not properly managed, it could make or mar the society.

The theory is relevant to the study in the sense that it says new media technologies create new environment; development of any given society is driven by technology. This theory is also relevant to the study because social media and the internet have a great impact on the society and it also affects how people react to news from the media. The theory holds that we humans shape out tools to help us in the society and the tools in turn shape us. This theory is very important in this work considering the fact that the modern means of tracing and exposing crimes in Nigeria and in other part of the world are highly embedded on new technological innovations and inventions like mobile telephones, computer system and network, CCTV camera, etc. This theory is relevant to this study as it says new media technology creates new environment. Thus, the development of any given society is driven by technology. Therefore, the importance of Technological Determinism theory to this study is that the recent breakthroughs in ICTs have greatly enhanced the area of human communication, languages and is used by the recruiting making everyone information creator instead of mere receiver.

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.

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. The pattern of presentation was based on the objectives of the study using frequency table (frequency, count and percentage). The discussion of findings then followed. 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 types of social media platform used in promoting insecurity in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	%
1. **Facebook**	131	**37**
2. **Twitter**	94	**26**
3. **WhatsApp.**	23	**06**
4. Youtube.	109	31
Total	**318**	100

Source: Field Data, June (2024).

Different kinds of SM platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google Plus, Yahoo Messenger, Instagram, YouTube and Wikipedia can be used by social commentators. Statistics investigated show that 37% indicated that Facebook is the type of social media platform used in promoting insecurity in Nigeria, 26% indicated Twitter, 6% indicated WhatsApp while 31% ticked YouTube. Respondents responded that there are more than twenty social media sites where information can be freely shared with the public, including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. These technologies help the connection of people and enabling interaction and information distribution over the internet. The new media has also increased social and political interactions through social networking platforms. Meanwhile, terrorist groups and miscreants use these new media to spread their propaganda, recruitment of new members, fund raising, training mechanisms, organise and strategize attacks and ways of escape, as well as and other forms of cybercrimes. New communication technologies set off new perspectives for communication in different ways from the mainstream media, due to the nature of the new media and how it revolutionises various aspects of our lives, everyone can now be content creators and distributors which has in turn, lead to the rise of fake news, online violence, ethnic disputes, hate filled comments among other online vices especially through Facebook and Youtube.

This is in tandem with an earlier study conducted by Nsudu and Onwe (2017) which revealed that SM platforms such as Facebook have been used in Nigeria to fight against human trafficking and many more. On the African continent, Kenya's national security has been affected by the misuse of SM platforms (Kimutai, 2014); while most times, SM news immediately creates fear, tensions and violence in the society. Nsudu and Onwe (2017) also believed that the northern and south-eastern regions of Nigeria are affected by national insecurity as a result of the misuse of SM.

When asked, all the respondents believed that new media are used for security purposes and could have positive impact on the security structure of a country. Majority of the respondents believed that the new media can be used to alleviate security menace citing examples with how the Nigerian government is exploring and exploiting the opportunities of new media in establishing strategies such as security policies and bills. One of the respondents explained that "the Nigerian government is taking advantage of the opportunities of new media to ensure security especially around digital safety, privacy and curbing fake news." Another

respondent who is a security expert reported that "the new media is used by security agents in Nigeria to get information and inform people about the true happenings in the troubled areas. This is in form of tips, alarms and intelligence in security prone areas. Also, to ascertain this, one of the respondents said that "the Nigerian army was able to record success in its war against insurgency in Nigeria, especially because of the tips and information shared using new media." The information shared through new media helps educate the populace thereby turning their hearts against the insurgency that is causing insecurity. Confirming that, one of the respondents reported that "at any time, people are willing to supply the security agencies with security information via social media and other available online platforms to help people informed and the security agents in their fight against insecurity.

Amidst the recent security challenges ranging from farmers/herders' clashes, bandits attack to armed robberies, Ayih and Shem, (2020) opined that citizen use the opportunity to manipulate information related to these activities to achieve political and religious goals on social media platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook. According to Ngige, Badekale and Hamman, (2016), social media plays a very crucial role in the fight against global terrorism but also opined that the platform can be used to duel different kinds of criminal activities. Chukwuere and Onyebukwa, (2018) describe social media as an open world of communication with minimal or no control by the government and noted that Boko Haram and IPOB have noticeably used the platform in advancing their activities and in turn, threatening the country's security. Social media platforms, according to Pandalai, (2016) play a pivotal role in some instances to strengthen good governance as citizens share social issues among themselves to ensure effective communication flow. On the importance of social media, Abdullahi and 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.

Table 2: Is SM used as a tool to facilitate any or all of the following?

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Radicalization of ideology	31	9
2. Insecurity	44	12
3. Recruitment	52	14
4. Propaganda	103	29
5. Threats of violence	81	23
6. Training	26	7
7. Mobilization	20	6
Total	357	100

Source: Field Data, June (2024).

Table 2 presents different kinds of activities that SM can facilitate in the security situation of the northern corridor of Nigeria as the case study for this paper. According to this study, Table 2 shows that 103 (29%) suggest that SM mainly facilitates propaganda, and threats of violence are suggested by 81 (23%), 52 respondents accounting for 14% indicated that SM is used as a tool to facilitate recruitment of new members for terrorism, 44 respondents accounting for 12% indicated that SM is being use to facilitate insecurity, 31 respondents accounting for 9% indicated radicalization of ideology, 26 respondents accounting for 7% indicated training while 20 respondents accounting for 6% indicated mobilization. This is in agreement with Nsudu & Onwe (2017) which posits that social networking sites are used by terrorist groups with dedicated servers and websites to spread their propaganda. They use the medium for recruitment, fundraising and as training mechanism and other forms of cybercrime.This platform helps in promoting local and international terrorist groups and the insecurity associated with it.

International and local terrorist groups deploy SM to organize or strategize attacks and ways of escape (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). The authors further alluded to the fact that they use the medium to increase their presence and to spread propaganda. Locally, Nigerian insecurity is increasing and lives and properties are threatened on a daily basis. This insecurity is affected by the penetration and diffusion of SM. SM cannot be easily controlled or censored from the general public as a result of social freedom and a lack of cyberspace law. The social freedom of speech associated with SM makes it free for users to generate contents at any time and post them online. SM is not only used by terrorist groups

to challenge the peace and stability of a country; the citizens themselves are using the medium to render terror on each other by means of fake news and fake postings, which promote propaganda and fear. An example is the increased number and differing nature of unverified news or information surfacing on SM platforms, emanating from the corridor of northern and south-eastern Nigeria.

Furthermore, a respondent posited that Nigeria's national security has been implicated in the misuse of SM. Most times, this news and information are neither confirmed nor verified, which results in the dissemination of fake news. However, at the broadcast of any kind of attack or terrorist news, thousands and millions react immediately, attacking one another based on ethnicity, religion, and tribe. At the same time, such news immediately creates fear, tensions and violence in the society. Therefore, the insecurity situations in the northern part of Nigeria are being affected by the presence of SM in the following manners: Terrorist and other criminal groups use the platform to execute attacks, kidnaps, rape, robbery and many more (June, 2024). According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), the medium is also used to combat terrorism and other forms of crimes in developed countries. A study has revealed that SM platforms such as Facebook have been used in Nigeria to fight human trafficking, and many more (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). At this point, insecurity is regarded as an impediment towards social development in Nigeria. Meanwhile, terrorist groups and miscreants use these new media to spread their propaganda, recruitment of new members, fund raising, training mechanisms, organise and strategize attacks and ways of escape, as well as and other forms of cybercrimes. Therefore, the link between information as a tool and objective of achieving national security has thrown concern on who should be helm of this tool and how its use can in order to achieve national security (Dalhatu, Erunke & Idakula, 2019).

Table 3: Do you think social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube) have increased insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria?

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Strongly Agree	103	29
2. Agree	99	28
3. Disagree	75	21
4. Strongly Disagree	70	20
5. Undecided	10	3
Total	357	100

Source: Field Data, June (2024).

Table 3 illustrates that 103 respondents representing 29% strongly agreed that social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube) have increased insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria while 99 respondents representing 28% agreed. On the other hand 70 (20%) of the respondents strongly disagree that social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube) have increased insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria, while 75 (21%) disagreed. However, 10 respondents representing 3% were undecided.

Another respondent submitted that the extent to which Social Media has caused insecurity in Nigeria is great, describing Social Media as a haven for uncensored free-wheeling discussions on everything from sexual fantasies to religious dogmas. 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. Facebook causes insecurity more than any other Social network (June, 2024). According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), ethno-religious and political conflict in Nigeria between 1999 and 2005 has occurred more than 90 times. Different forms of conflicts have occurred from 2005 to the present, with the increase in terrorism by Boko Harm, Fulani Herdsmen and many others. Directly and indirectly, SM is affecting these conflicts; for example, in March 2017, BH released a 27-min video featuring the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, vowing to continue his insurgency until he establishes an Islamic caliphate across west and central Africa (The Associated Press, 2017).

Terrorism under BH remains a fundamental security challenge facing Nigeria today. The insurgent group became a terrorist organization in 2013 following the style of its activities in Nigeria (BBC News online 24 November, 2014). According to a CNN online publication on 2 February 2018, BH started its heinous activities in Nigeria in 2002 with the worse hits carried out between 2014 and 2015. Moreover, from inception up to the present, BH has remained consistently resolute in perpetrating its callous activities in the country. Unfortunately, their nefarious engagements have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and destruction of properties across the country and most particularly in the north-eastern part of the country. It is on record that approximately 20,000 lives have been lost and more than 2.3 million people are displaced due to attacks by the BH. The activities of this terrorist group, especially in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, endeared the United States of America to list the country as one of the terrorist prone countries

of the globe in 2010. Apart from the globally condemned abduction of approximately 276 teenage girls from a secondary school in Chibok, also known as the Chibok girls, on 14 April 2014, the group had on 19 February 2018, attacked Government Girls and Technical College Dapchi and abducted yet another 110 students of this institution (Vanguard Newspaper online 02 March 2018). Although they have since been released, a great deal of controversy still surrounds the story of their abduction and subsequent release.

Although BH has not abated in its almost daily assassination and kidnapping spree, the insurgent group in recent times has advanced from its original strategic guerrilla form of attack into a new type of threat that engages women and child suicide bombers to unleash their mayhem on soft targets (Knoope and Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). The federal government of Nigeria has grappled with curbing the security challenges originating from the activities of BH. The almost daily loss of lives and properties resulting from the activities of this group has defiled several security strategies advanced against them by the federal government. Ironically, Nigerian security services have employed a number of counterproductive strategies and tactics to defeat BH. Unfortunately, the group continues to carry out its despicable terrorist activities in the north-east with no end in sight.

Table 4: How do SM platforms contribute towards insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria?

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Terrorism attacks	69	19
2. Rumour attacks	118	33
3. Hate speech	106	30
4. Tribal clashes	44	12
5. Undecided	20	06
Total	357	100

Source: Field Data, June (2024).

Table 4's question seeks to understand how SM platforms contribute towards the security challenges in the northern part of Nigeria. Participants suggest that SM contributes towards rumor attacks (118; 33%), hate speech (106; 30%), terrorism attacks (69; 19%), tribal clashes (44; 12%) while 20 respondents accounting for 6% were undecided. This finding proves that SM contributes negatively towards

various kinds of rumor attacks, promoting hate speech, tribal clashes and terror attacks. These lead to high levels of insecurity and threats to lives and properties in the northern region and the country at large. This is supported by Ngige et al. (2016) who submitted that terrorist and other criminal groups are using SM to pass their information to the general public and to execute their strategies.

Another respondent also puts that "the rise of hate speech, black mail, misinformation and disinformation as a result of cheap platforms to speak or write such as what the social media gives to citizens is worrisome. It does not just deter people from using the platforms, but reduced the level of trust that people have for these new media and this has limited the way people accept information for security proposes that are displayed or channeled on the platforms." Furthermore, a respondent raised concern on use of social media for trivial purposes rather than serious issues saying "majority of people use new media such as social media for trivial news and socialization than for serious purpose such as getting informed on security matters. Where serious issues such as security are discussed, then they are traded carefully as they also have the potential of inciting public sympathy, disagreement among others. Therefore, this is a serious limitation to ensuring use of new media platforms to pass information that will enhance national security." 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 (June, 2024). 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.

Mohammed (2018) argues that fake news has emerged as the propeller to the forces that engender insecurity. Collaborating this position is the words of the former Nigerian Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, who submits that fake news threatens the peace, security and corporate existence of Nigeria, describing it as a time bomb waiting to explode. National security is therefore a sine qua non for development and the total wellbeing of a nation and for this to be attained, all hands is required to be on deck to curb the spread of fake news.

Discussion of Findings

i. The study reveals that in Nigeria, Boko Haram leaders continue to use Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other Jihadist networks to claim responsibility, celebrate success and issue threats for further attacks. It was found that Facebook causes insecurity more than any other Social network. Nsudu and Onwe (2017) reported that "there are unconfirmed reports that the Boko Haram continue to gain support from international terrorist groups and they use Social Media to contact and organize attacks". Nsudu and Onwe (2017) also believed that the northern region of Nigeria is affected by national insecurity as a result of the misuse of SM because most times, SM news immediately creates fear, tensions and violence in the society.

ii. Finding shows that 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 paper 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. The findings prove that SM contributes towards various kinds of rumor attacks, promoting hate speech, tribal clashes and terrorism attacks. These lead to high levels of insecurity and threats to lives and properties in the region and country at large. The extent to which Social Media has caused insecurity in Nigeria is great, describing social Media as a haven for uncensored free-wheeling discussions on everything from sexual fantasies to religious dogmas. Therefore, as opine by Salawu (2023) the insecurity situations in the northern part of Nigeria are being affected by the presence of SM.

Conclusion

Social media whose purpose is to serve as source of information and education has metamorphosed to medium of spreading fake news and extremists ideologies. This paper examined the effects of SM on Nigerian security challenges. Despite receiving limited attention from scholarly research, its relevance as a burning socio-political issue within Nigeria, in particular, and the globe at large is not in doubt. The paper locates the ineffective use of SM within the scope of

increased national security challenges in the northern part of the country. To this end, this paper argues that the use of SM in spreading falsehood and negative information creates and amplifies unnecessary tension among citizens. One of the fundamental empirical results of this paper is that there is a correlation between the ineffective use of SM and the promotion of security threats in the country. The connection was robustly accentuated as one the fundamental avenues through which security challenges in the region under study escalated. On the one hand, users of SM make ineffective use of the medium to spread negativity and raise false alarm.

Secondly, it was also an easy, accessible and cheap channel through which the BH terrorist group peddles undesirable information to the citizens. On the other hand, participants agree that Nigeria's security challenges are not escalated when SM is effectively used. Galvanizing these two scenarios confirms that the impacts of SM on Nigerian security challenges could be positive or negative, depending on the purpose, intention and reason attached by the user during usage. Against all the threats emanating from wrongful use of SM by individual and terrorist organizations, it is crucial that individuals' wellbeing is protected, which, in turn, improves national security conditions.

Recommendations

The following measures are, therefore, recommended:

i. The Nigeria government should involve National Orientation Agency in enlightening the general populace on the potentials of new media as well as how to deploy such to enhancing national security. This is because a lot of people do not have trust on the new media especially because of the rise in the misinformation, disinformation, propaganda and fake news among others.

ii. Furthermore, government security agents should deploy proactive mechanisms to gather information through news (printed and online), and online surveillance to counter any misuse and abuse of SM comments and postings. All the participants use Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, and therefore it is recommended that they use these platforms devoid of abuse on anyone or the general public. Then, government and its security agents should implement effective enlightenment programmes to educate the public on how to be responsible while using SM platforms.

References

Abdullahi, M.M., &Abdul-Qadir, U.A. (2019). Social Media in an Emergency: Use of Social Media in Rescuing Abducted School Girls in Nigeria. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 13, 67-75.

Asemah, E. S., Nwammuo, A. N., & Nkwam-Uwaoma, A. O. A. (2017). Theories and Models of Communication. Jos: *University Press.*

BBC News Online. (2014). Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamist Group? A BBC News Online Publication 24 November 2014. Available from: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501.

Chukwuere, J. E., & Onyebukwa, C. F. (2018). The Impacts of Social Media on National Security: A View from the Northern and South-Eastern Region of Nigeria, *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 8(5): 50-59.

Cuman, K., (2012). The role of internet and social media in international relations. *Arab Revolution of 2011.*

Dalhatu, M. Y., Erunke, C. E., & Idakula, A. R. (2019). Media, terrorism and national security in Nigeria's fourth republic. *Scientific Research Journal*, 7(4) 115-123.

Iyadi, R.C., & Assay, B. (2019). Impact of Social Media Networks on Insecurity in Nigeria. *LAPAI International Journal of Management and Social Sciences,* Vol. 11 No.2, December, 2019.

Kimutai, J. K. (2014). Social media and national security threats: *A case study of Kenya. MA Dissertation, University of Nairobi.*

Knoope, P., Buchanan-Clarke, S. (2017). The Boko Haram Insurgency: From Short Term Gains to Long Term Solutions. Cape Town, South Africa: *The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) Publication.*

Krejcia, R.V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement.*

Mohammed, L. (2018). Fake news, hate speech, threat to national security. Retrieved from https://punch.ng.com.

Ngige, C. V., Badekale, A. F., & Hamman, J. I. (2018). The media and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: A content analysis and review. *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 3(1): 58-65.

Nsudu, I., & Onwe, E.C. (2017). Social media and security challenges in Nigeria: The way forward. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 35(6), 993-999.

Nunez, R. (2018). The effects of post-truth politics on democracy. *Revista de Derecho Político,* 1(103), 191–228.

Nwabueze, C. (2017). Synergizing traditional and modern mass media for sustainable development communication in Africa, in Nsude and Nwosu (ed.). Trado-Modern Communication Systems-Interfaces and Dimensions. Enugu: *Rhyce Kerex Publishers.*

Obun-Andy, M.K., & Aluko, T.A., Abdulquadir, B. (2021). Assessing the place of social media and insecurity in Nigeria. *1st ASUP National Conference of Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi Chapter*, 6th – 7 th July, 2021

Ogbette, A. S., Enwemeka, S. & Okoh, J. O. (2019). Social media and National Security in Nigerian state. *American Based Research Journal,* 8 12-22.

Salawu, I. O. (2023). Governance and national security in a democracy: Avoiding the down risks to statehood in Nigeria. *Scientific Research Journal,* 1(2) 19-25.

The Associated Press. (2017). Boko Haram Leader in New Video Vows to Establish Caliphate. West Africa: *An Associated Press.*

Vanguard Newspaper Online. (2018), Boko Haram Contacted me Over Abducted Dapchi School girls'-Aisha Wakil. AVanguard Newspaper Publication.

Walker, A. (2022). What is Boko Haram? *A Special Publication of United States Institute of Peace.*