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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Newspaper Handling of 2024 Organised Labour Agitation for a New National Minimum Wage for Nigerian Workers - **Manti Ikpeme and Godspower Udoh**

Digital Media and the Fake News Phenomenon in Nigeria: A Review of Contending Perspectives - **Gift Nkechi Lawrence and Tordue Simon Targema**

Broadcast Coverage of Terrorism and Compassion Fatigue Among Audience Members in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria – **Samuel S. Udo-akagha and Uwem Udo Akpan**

Psychology of Playful Communication and Understanding Audience Behaviour - **Nsikan Senam; Joy Godwin Enwenwen and Umoh Joshua Umoh**

Awareness and Utilization of Artificial Intelligence Chatbots by Customers of Select Banks in Akwa Ibom State - **Professor Peter Esuh and Manasseh Joseph Umoette**

Digital Activism and Political Participation in Nigeria: The Theoretical and Practical Nexus - **Arit Emmanuel John and Dennis Oche Abutu**

Application of Artificial Intelligence in Media Practice for Corporate Governance in Nigeria - **Unwanaobong Williams; Michael Bush; Nsikak Idiong and Akanimo Attang**

Stakeholders' Perception of Community Relations and Crisis Management Activities of Sterling Global Resources Limited in Akwa Ibom State - **Precious Selong Edem**

Proprietary Influence on Broadcast Stations – **Jennifer Pius**

Evolving Role of IMC in Sustainable Corporate Branding: A Critical Review of Scholarly Perspectives - **Oguchukwu Raymond Okeke Samson Ighiegba Omosotomhe**

Proverbs in the Cultural Identity Formation of Children in Ebom Community - **Rajuno Benjamin Ohen**

Managing Corporate Image and Stakeholder Perception in a Changing World: A Critical Evaluation of the Role of Corporate Visual Identity Asset - **Nnachi Okafor...**

Analysis of Women's Satirical Folksongs in Ibibio, Akwa Ibom State – **Eno-obong Usen Markson; Augustine A. Edung and Mamina Mba Ndifon**

Engaging African Youth on Climate Talks in the Virtual Space vis-à-vis the Challenges of COP27 - **Stephen Samson Wan and Buetsen Maurice Mammoh**

Problematic Mobile Phone Use as a Maladaptive Coping Mechanism: Prevalence, Predictors, and Psychological Mediation among Nigerian

University Students – **Ogemdi Uchenna Eze; Dorathy Ngozi Ugwuja; Olanrewaju Abosede Mgboji and Peace Nwamaka Ojonta**

Host Communities' Perceptions of Oil Companies' Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives and their Impact on Regional Development in South-South Nigeria - **Linda Chinonso Ukadike; Maureen Ugboime and Patrick N. Ijeh**

Navigating Digital Frontiers: Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Hybrid Communication Strategies by Government Agencies during Election in Nigeria - ***Akindutire Samson Ayomide and Sunday Igbaba***

Headline Framings and Geographic Misattribution: A Study of the Story on Skateboarding to Africa – ***George Ogazi Mani Eze; Ikeokwu Nwaokugha Onyeso and Promise Adaku Obi***

Understanding the Influence of Social Media Influencers on 2023 presidential Election Voting Behaviour in Southwest, Nigeria - ***Riliwan Akinlabi Akinola and Temitope Daniel Adewumi***

Specialized Reporting in Health and Environmental Journalism in Broadcast Media in Kwara State, Nigeria - ***Ucheanya Florence***

Perception and Implications of Newspaper Frames of Corruption on Nigeria's National Development: A Study of Academics in Akwa Ibom State - ***Godwin Sunday Sam; Aniekan James Akpan; Uko Friday Inyang and Ashong C. Ashong***

Health Information and Informed Decisions in Managing Hypertension among Non-Teaching Staff of University of Delta, Agbor - ***Emmanuel Onyeisi Morka***

...

Effect of Social Media Overuse on Students' Attention and Participation During Lectures in Selected Higher Institutions in South West Nigeria - ***Maria Kisugu Obun-Andy; Abigail Omolara Olorunyom and Yinka Awofe Adegbite***

Public Relations Strategies in the Administration of Urue-Offong Oruko Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State - ***Uduot Archibong Iwok and Precious Akamba Selong***

Education and Communication in Health Behaviour Change in Nigeria - ***Nsikan-Abasi S. Nkana and Joseph Jonah***

Vlogging as a Tool for Promoting African Culture in Select Tayo Aina's Films - ***Gift Nkesi Chindah***

Mass Media, Public Opinion and Democracy in Africa - ***Peter Esuh; Thomas Thomas and Borono Iniodu Bassey***

Evaluation of Financial and Human Resources in Indigenous Language Radio Stations in Nigeria: A Case of Orisun 89.5 FM - ***Adejare Samuel Odu and Abdulrazaq Laro Yusuf***

Billboard Political Advertisement on Electorates' Perception and Voting Behaviour in the 2023 General Election in Port Harcourt City - ***Chidinma Nsirim Ejekwu***

Fake News and the Safety of Independent Journalism - ***Oluwatobi Enitan Modeyin and Daniel Ofomegbe, Ekhareafo***

Social Media Usage and Self Esteem among University of Uyo Undergraduates – ***Oyokunyi Otu Ita and Iniobong Courage Nda***

Digital Prompts, Promotion, and Uptake of Mental Health Content among University of Uyo Students – ***Uduak Udoudom; Herbert Batta; Kufre George and Idorenyin Ekanem***

Voters' Perception of Media Enlightenment Campaigns against Vote-buying during the 2022 Gubernatorial Election in Osun State, Nigeria – ***Samuel Oluniyi Oguwuyi and Bayo I. Oloyede***

NEWSPAPER HANDLING OF 2024 ORGANISED LABOUR AGITATION FOR A NEW NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE FOR NIGERIAN WORKERS

Manti Ikpeme

and

Godspower Udoh

Abstract

This study investigated how three Nigerian newspapers, *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard*, covered the agitation for a new minimum wage between January and June 2024. The research design was content analysis with the population of 540 newspaper issues from which the sample size of 230 was drawn, using the Taro Yamane sampling guide. Data were collected using the structured code sheet. The findings showed that a cumulative of 169 reports was published across the three newspapers with *The Punch* having the highest proportion (47%) of the coverage. The prominence given to the coverage by the newspapers was relatively low with 78% of the articles placed on inside pages. Also, 70% of the coverage was presented as straight news; while the framing of the agitation was predominantly focused on public opinion and general support for the agitation. These findings led to the conclusion that the newspaper coverage of the agitation for a new minimum wage by the organized labour was low, thus justifying, among other things, the need for more intensive media coverage of issues that are important to the reader.

Introduction

In the complex and dynamic world of human communication, the mass media have continued to serve as a vital link among different groups and cultures while disseminating information, influencing public opinion, and shaping society. The mass media, often seen as society's vibrant storyteller, play a crucial role in shaping the way people understand complex and topical issues affecting both their immediate and extended environments. One of such is the concerns expressed by the organized labour about a new minimum wage in Nigeria.

Newspapers, for instance, far from being just messengers, construct narratives that provide context and highlight the implications of these unions' advocacy and problem-solving efforts. In covering the organized labour, the media take on a powerful role in illustrating the underlying issues that drive union actions, such as labour rights, fair wages, and safe working conditions. By selecting which stories, or which aspects of the Union's issues to project the more, and how they are framed, the newspapers help audiences move beyond surface-level perceptions by fostering a deeper understanding of the stakes involved in labour movements and industrial actions (Ukpe and Akarika, 2019). In addition to informing, newspapers play an educational role in demystifying the operations and objectives of labour unions, particularly in a complex economic setting like Nigeria where unemployment, inflation, and policy shifts impact workers'

lives profoundly (Bassey, Iwok and Afangide, 2024).

Coverage of organized labour activities brings essential insights to the public, allowing citizens to grasp the connections between labour demands and national socio-economic health. Beyond mere reporting, newspapers engage in agenda-setting where they make decisions on the relative prominence of labour issues within the national conversation.

In such instances where newspapers emphasize workers' strikes or wage negotiation, they drive public awareness of systemic labour challenges and the significance of union advocacy. This visibility not only pressures policymakers but also empowers citizens, and bridges the gap between union actions and broader public interests (Umechukwu, 2019). For these reasons, Oyovbaire (2021) explains that media coverage of national issues can foster a sense of national identity, promote social cohesion, and encourage civic engagement.

Over the years in Nigeria, incessant disagreement between the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) as well as the Trade Union Congress (TUC) with the Federal Government of Nigeria over the national minimum wage has been a recurring issue in the country. The agitation for a living wage has led to numerous strikes, protests and negotiations, impacting the Nigerian society in various ways. The consequences of these disagreements have been felt across different sectors, including education, healthcare, and the economy. These issues have also had strong consequences in Nigeria, including economic instability, social unrest, and political tensions as frequent strikes and protests have disrupted economic activities, affecting small businesses and vulnerable populations. Moreover, the disagreements have created divisions among Nigerians, with some supporting the government's stance and others backing the labour unions.

In the face of these disagreements, the newspapers have been instrumental in information dissemination about these issues in a way that continually shapes public understanding and influences opinions. Through their coverage, national newspapers either amplify or downplay the significance of the national minimum wage agitation through framing, priming, and agenda-setting strategies (Udoudo and Bassey, 2019). For instance, The *Punch* newspaper has been a functional medium through which Nigerians were informed of the issues of the new minimum wage agitation by organized labour which had lingered for many years before attention was given by the current administration.

Given the significance of the national minimum wage agitation, one wonders if newspapers in Nigeria helped in shaping public discourse. For this reason, this study aims to investigate how Nigerian newspapers have covered the agitation by Nigerian national newspapers. Doing this would contribute to the understanding of the complex

relationships between the media, labour unions, government, and the public in Nigeria, and thus, fill the knowledge gap in this area of study.

Statement of the Research Problem

Over the years, Nigerian newspapers have been actively involved in reporting issues of social consequences, such as political unrest, economic instability and social injustices. A casual observation by the researcher shows that these national newspapers have, individually and recently, been covering the organized labour agitation for minimum wage in the country. On the research side, it is observed that although there may be research studies in the area of coverage of labour unrests in Nigeria, not much has been done in the area of labour agitation for higher wage for Nigerian workers particularly the agitation that took place in 2024. Following this gap, it becomes uncertain how prominent Nigerian newspapers, particularly *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard*, covered the agitation for a new national minimum wage of 2024; particularly in the areas of prominence given to the stories, the depth of the stories, the framing of the stories, and the dominant format for the reports. This uncertainty did not only motivate this study; but also raised the question: how did *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard* newspapers in Nigeria cover the 2024 organised labour agitation for a new national minimum wage for the country?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. examine the frequency of coverage given to the organized labour agitation for a new minimum wage by *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard* newspapers in Nigeria in 2024.
- ii. find out the prominence of coverage given to the organisedlabour agitation for a new minimum wage by *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard* newspapers in Nigeria in 2024.
- iii. ascertain the depth of coverage given to the organisedlabour agitation for a new minimum wage by *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard* newspapers in Nigeria in 2024.
- iv. examine the frame used by *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard* newspapers in Nigeria in reporting organized labour agitation for a new minimum wage; and
- v. identify the dominant media form used by *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard* newspapers in covering the organisedlabour agitation for a new minimum wage in Nigeria in 2024.

Review of Related Literature

According to Mellado, Hanusch, Humanes, and Sparks (2021), newspaper coverage refers to the representation and reportage of events, issues, and occurrences in printed media outlets. It encapsulates the efforts of journalists and editorial teams to gather, verify, and disseminate information to the public. This implies that by highlighting critical developments in politics, society, and culture, newspaper coverage plays a pivotal role in informing citizens, shaping opinions, and influencing decision-making processes. From the above, one can say that newspaper coverage extends beyond mere reporting; it offers analyses, commentary, and diverse perspectives, enriching public discourse. In this sense, newspapers serve as chronicles of contemporary history, capturing the zeitgeist of each era. The art of coverage lies in its ability to condense complex realities into digestible narratives without compromising on depth or objectivity.

Okoro and Agbo (2020) note that at its core, newspaper coverage represents the editorial framework through which information is shared with the readers. This process entails meticulous journalistic efforts to select stories deemed newsworthy while discarding others less relevant or engaging.

In Abernathy's (2022) opinion, the concept of newspaper coverage encompasses the systematic reporting and portrayal of events, individuals, and issues within the pages of print publications. It is a testament to the role of newspapers as both record-keepers and storytellers in society. Coverage reflects the editorial priorities and the values of the publication, highlighting what it deems most pertinent to its audience.

Oso and Pate (2019) assert that coverage serves as a roadmap for readers, guiding them through the labyrinth of global happenings. It also reflects the editorial philosophy of a publication, with some prioritising human-interest stories while others focus on hard news or political commentary. Importantly, coverage is a dynamic entity, constantly evolving in response to technological advancements, audience demands, and societal shifts. It is both a mirror and a mould, simultaneously reflecting and shaping public discourse.

According to Harcup (2021), newspapers act as society's watchdog, presenting facts and fostering accountability while prioritising impactful stories on politics, the economy, and social welfare. This function aligns with Siebert *et al.*'s (1956) Four Theories of the Press, which position newspapers as vehicles for free expression and public debate. Fundamentally, newspaper coverage mirrors societal priorities, advocates for justice, and meticulously chronicles events, shaping public consciousness. These attributes, foundational to media ethics, affirm newspapers' unique role in capturing and disseminating the pulse of society.

Playroll (2024) describes minimum wage as a mechanism to ensure workers

earn enough to meet basic living costs. For example, the “Fight for #250,000” campaign in the Nigeria recently emerged as a response to economic disparities, advocating for wages that reflect inflation and rising living costs. In this view, minimum wage is not just a protective measure but a strategic tool for enhancing the purchasing power of workers, thereby stimulating economic growth and addressing systemic inequalities.

In terms of studies, Bassey, Okeke, Ugochukwu, and Onoyima (2022) evaluated the frequency of coverage of the 2019 National Minimum Wage Act in the selected newspapers, determine the prominence accorded to the minimum wage issue in terms of placement and length of articles, and analyze the direction of the stories, whether they were favourable, unfavourable, or neutral towards the Act and its implications.

The study adopted a content analysis methodology to systematically examine the coverage of the agitation. The study's population consisted of 368 issues of *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers published between July 1 and December 31, 2019. Using composite week sampling, 84 editions were selected (42 from each newspaper). The data for the study were collected using a coding sheet, which captured variables such as story prominence, placement, and direction. The data were analysed quantitatively to assess the patterns of coverage.

The findings showed that the newspapers provided less coverage of the 2019 National Minimum Wage Act than expected, indicating a lack of sufficient media attention to a significant public welfare issue. Also, stories on the minimum wage lacked prominence in terms of page placement and article length, showing a potential undervaluation of the subject. Furthermore, the frequency of reports on the Act was sparse.

As a relevant theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, assumes that while the media cannot dictate what people think, it can strongly influence what they think about. The focus is on salience transfer, where media coverage emphasises certain issues over others, shaping public priorities. Additionally, through attribute agenda-setting, the media defines how these issues are discussed, providing frames that influence perceptions. This assumption underscores the interdependence between media priorities and public discourse.

The theory posits that the media play a critical role in constructing social reality. By prioritising some topics over others, the media affect the visibility and significance of issues in public and political spheres. For instance, during labour disputes like minimum wage agitations, extensive media coverage can amplify the urgency of the issue, pressuring policymakers to respond. This function makes agenda-setting a tool for societal awareness and action.

In examining newspaper coverage of minimum wage agitation, Agenda-Setting Theory is highly relevant. The theory helps analyze how newspapers prioritise wage-

related issues and shape public discourse around them.

Framing Theory, which is another related theory, assumes that the way information is presented—or framed—shapes audience interpretation and reaction. Frames highlight specific aspects of reality while excluding others, thus guiding the audience's focus and perception. The media's framing of events or issue determines the narrative and emotional response they elicit, influencing public opinion and policy-making.

The theory argues that framing is a strategic process through which communicators shape how audiences understand complex issues. For example, in minimum wage agitation, framing the debate as a matter of workers' rights versus economic strain on businesses can evoke contrasting reactions. Such frames affect not only public understanding but also the policy responses that follow, showcasing the media's role in structuring debates.

Research Design

This study adopted the content analysis research design. Generally, content analysis refers to a systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information. It requires that the content to be analysed is selected according to explicit and consistently applied rules. In communication and media studies, this type of method is used to analyse the manifest contents of communication. The study population consisted of all the issues (weekdays and weekends) of *The Punch*, *The Nation*, and *Vanguard* newspapers published between January 2024 and June 2024, which summed up to a total of 546 editions. This period was chosen because it marked the peak of organized labour's agitation for a new minimum wage in Nigeria, making it most suitable for capturing the intensity and nature of media coverage on the issue. Accordingly, each of the newspapers had a total publication of 182 issues over six months considered for the study, where 31, 29, 31, 30, 31, and 30 issues were published in January, February, March, April, May, and June 2024, respectively.

Given the number of issues (546) which made up the population of the study (for the content analysis), the sample size of 230 issues was determined using the Taro Yamane sampling formula.

Data Presentation and Discussions

The data for this study are presented and analyzed in the tables below.

Table 4.1: Frequency of Coverage of the Organised Labour Agitation for a New Minimum Wage

Newspaper	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	Total	Percentage
The Punch	16	4	9	21	6	23	79	47
The Nation	9	6	9	12	7	8	51	30
The Vanguard	6	4	7	9	3	10	39	23
Total	31	14	25	42	16	41	169	100

Source: The Punch, Nation, and Vanguard (2025)

Table 4.1 shows that the *Punch* newspaper relatively dominated the coverage of the new minimum wage agitation by the organised labour, accounting for 47% of the total (169) articles published on the issue across 6 months (January to June, 2024).

Table 4.2: Prominence given to the Organised labour Agitation for a new minimum wage by Nigerian Newspapers

Issue Placement	The Punch		The Nation		The Vanguard		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Front Page	14	8	11	7	9	5	34	20
Inside Page	65	38	37	22	30	18	132	78
Back Page	0	0	3	2	0	0	3	2
Total	79	47	51	30	39	23	169	100

Source: The Punch, Nation, and Vanguard (2025)

Table 4.2 demonstrates that over $\frac{3}{4}$ (78%) of Nigerian newspapers' coverage of the agitation for a new minimum wage by Organised Labour was presented in inside pages. Only 20% appeared on the front page, signifying a significantly low priority (prominence).

Table 4.3: Depth of Coverage

Depth in Pages	The Punch		The Nation		Vanguard		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Full	2	1	0	0	3	2	5	3
Half	19	11	22	13	18	11	59	35
Quarter	58	35	29	17	18	11	105	62
Total	79	47	51	30	39	23	169	100

Source: The Punch, Nation, and Vanguard (2025)

Table 4.4 shows that the majority of the Nigerian Newspaper reports on the Organised Labour agitation for a new minimum wage were presented in a quarter page, which indicates a shallow depth of the coverage of the issue by the papers.

Table 4.4: Frames in the Coverage

Available Frames	The Punch		The Nation		Vanguard		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Economic Impact	12	7	6	4	4	2	22	13
Labour Rights and Fairness	8	5	7	4	4	2	19	11
Government Response and Policy	11	6	10	6	5	3	26	15
Public Opinion and Support	20	12	14	8	13	8	47	28
Labour Union Strategies and Tactics	6	4	3	2	4	2	13	8
Business and Employer Perspectives	15	9	6	4	6	4	27	17
Social and Humanitarian Aspects	7	4	5	3	3	2	15	9
Total	79	47	51	30	39	23	169	100

Source: *The Punch, Nation, and Vanguard*

Table 4.6 shows that the relatively predominant frame in the coverage of organisedlabour agitation for a new minimum wage was *Public Opinion and Support*, with 28% of the total coverage.

Table 4.5: Media Forms used in the Coverage

Media form	The Punch		The Nation		Vanguard		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Straight news	59	35	38	22	22	13	119	70
Features	9	5	10	6	5	3	24	14
Editorials	2	1	-	-	3	2	5	3

Opinions	9	5	1	1	3	2	11	7
Interviews	1	1	2	1	4	2	7	4
Cartoons/Satirical Pieces	1	1	0	0	2	1	3	2
Total	79	47	51	30	39	23	169	100

Table 4.7 shows that Nigerian newspapers predominantly used the straight news format (70%) in covering the minimum wage agitation, suggesting that they focused mainly on reporting events as they happened rather than providing in-depth analysis or background context.

Discussions

Research Question 1: What was the frequency of coverage given to the organised labour agitation for a national minimum wage by newspapers in Nigeria?

In answering this research question, the analysis in Tables 4.1 was primarily used. These tables provide key findings related to the frequency and nature of the coverage across three different newspapers in Nigeria. Table 4.1 presents a total of 169 reports on organized labour's agitation for a new minimum wage in Nigeria, as covered by selected national newspapers. Of these, The Punch newspaper accounted for the highest number of reports, contributing 47% of the total coverage across the three newspapers reviewed.

The findings indicate that only 169 reports were given to the issue within the 230 issues by the selected newspapers from January to June 2024. The data also demonstrate that The *Punch* devoted the most substantial portion of its editorial space to the issue of minimum wage. The data shows a clear dominance in coverage by this newspaper, highlighting its significant role in shaping public discourse on the matter. This reflects the paper's editorial stance, its readership base's interest in labour issues, or its commitment to in-depth reporting on economic matters. The total coverage across all newspapers (169 articles) suggests that the agitation was a topic of considerable media focus over the six months.

The findings in Table 4.1 also highlight that *The Nation and Vanguard*, while contributing to the discussion, were relatively less focused on the organized labour agitation, contributing 30% and 23% of the total coverage, respectively. This disparity in coverage points to the differences in editorial priorities or the types of readers each paper serves. While *The Punch* dominated, the substantial share by other newspapers reveals that the minimum wage issue was a significant topic in Nigerian media. This varied attention by different newspapers provides a multifaceted view of how the print media covered labour-related social issues.

The findings align with the Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that the media influences the public agenda by highlighting specific issues. The Punch's dominant share of coverage (47%) in Table 4.1 is consistent with this theory, as it suggests that this newspaper significantly influenced the public's focus on the organized labour agitation for a new minimum wage. By dedicating a large portion of its coverage to the issue, The Punch effectively set the agenda for the public discussion on workers' rights and the economic implications of the minimum wage.

Research Question 2: What was the level of prominence given to the coverage of the organized labour agitation for a national minimum wage by newspapers in Nigeria?

The distribution in Table 4.2 provided the data with which to answer the research question. Here, the majority of coverage on the organized labour agitation appeared on the inside pages of sampled newspapers, accounting for 78% of the total articles. Of the 169 articles analysed, only 20% were placed on the front page, a clear indication that the issue did not receive significant prominence. Front-page stories are typically reserved for high-priority news, suggesting that the agitation for a new minimum wage was not perceived as urgent or of top priority by the newspapers. The absence of back-page coverage further supports this low prioritisation.

The finding that most of the reports were placed inside the newspaper rather than on the front page speaks to the relative importance newspapers placed on this issue. By placing it mostly inside, the media likely saw it as relevant but not urgent enough to merit prime space. The low percentage of front-page coverage (20%) reinforces this low prioritisation.

A similar study conducted on political content in newspapers found that certain topics, such as labour movements or social issues, often receive less prominent placement unless tied to immediate political or economic crises (Miller, 2017). This aligns with the findings in this study, where although the minimum wage agitation is a significant social issue, it was not considered urgent enough for front-page placement.

The findings align with the *Agenda Setting Theory*, which posits that the media play a critical role in determining the salience of issues by placing them in prominent positions. According to this theory, issues that receive front-page coverage are perceived as more important by the public. The findings also align with *Framing Theory*, which asserts that the way media present a story shapes public perception..

Research Question 3: How in-depth was the coverage given to the organisedlabour agitation for a national minimum wage by newspapers in Nigeria?

The insights that addressed the research question were drawn from Table 4.5 which examined the types of media forms used in the coverage (i.e. straight news, features, editorials, and opinions) to further reflect the depth of the coverage. This

question was necessary to determine whether the issue received comprehensive journalistic treatment or was merely reported in passing, which can shape public understanding and policy discourse.

According to Table 4.5, there was significant dominance of straight news reportage, constituting 70% of the entire coverage across the three sampled newspapers. While this suggests consistent attention to the event, the implication is that most of the stories were treated in a routine, fact-based style without deeper journalistic investigation or analytical engagement to identify and portray their depth. Only 17% of the reports were features, which typically allow for more in-depth exploration of issues. Editorials and opinion articles, which provide context, critique, and insight, accounted for a mere 3% and 10% respectively. This lopsided pattern indicates that the newspapers primarily prioritised reporting the "what" of the agitation, with little effort to probe the "why" and "what next".

The dominance of straight news reflects editorial constraints or a journalistic orientation that privileges daily news cycles over long and interpretative reporting. This approach limits readers' access to the broader socio-economic implications of the agitation and the structural conditions surrounding wage debates in Nigeria. The Punch, for example, published the highest number of straight news stories (59), with only 9 feature stories and 9 opinion pieces. This imbalance mirrors the overall media trend where straight news is often preferred due to cost, time, and space limitations. However, it inadvertently downplays complex labour issues that deserve multidimensional coverage to inform public discourse and policy reform. In the light of agenda-setting theory, the findings here partly support the theoretical assumptions.

Research Question 4: What frames did newspapers in Nigeria use in their coverage of organized labour agitation for a new national minimum wage?

The answer to this research question was provided by Table 4.4, which examined the distribution of various frames applied by The Punch, The Nation, and Vanguard in their reporting. Table 4.4 shows that the most frequently used frame across the newspapers was Public Opinion and Support, which appeared in 28% of the total reports. This suggests that Nigerian newspapers sought to foreground societal responses to the agitation, giving space to the voices of ordinary citizens, civil society organisations, and possibly even non-unionised workers. This frame positions the agitation not merely as a union-government matter but as a broader public concern. The prominence of this frame could also indicate media efforts to build legitimacy for the agitation by aligning it with public sentiment. The Punch led the coverage here with 20 reports out of 47, showing its editorial inclination to capture and represent the pulse of the people.

The next most frequently used frame was Business and Employer Perspectives (17%), followed by Government Response and Policy (15%). These frames reflect an institutional orientation, presenting reactions from employers, private sector representatives, and government agencies. While this demonstrates an attempt to balance perspectives, it also subtly shifts the narrative from labour justice to economic practicality and political feasibility. By foregrounding business concerns, newspapers may unconsciously reinforce neoliberal narratives that frame wage increases as threats to profitability or national economic stability. Similarly, the focus on government policy responses shows the media's tendency to legitimise official actions, which could either support or undermine labour demands depending on the tone of coverage.

These findings are corroborated by previous research. For example, Ojebuyi and Edewor (2020) found that Nigerian newspapers often apply frames that highlight elite reactions and public sentiment more than those focusing on the rights or welfare of workers. Similarly, Oso and Pate (2019) observed that Nigerian media frequently avoid conflict-driven or justice-based frames to remain politically neutral or avoid antagonising powerful actors. These studies validate the current research by confirming that media framing in Nigeria tends to shy away from deep labour advocacy, preferring a more neutral or reactionary tone.

Applying framing theory, it is evident that the media strategically selected particular angles that shape readers' interpretations of the agitation. By focusing heavily on Public Opinion, Government Response, and Business Perspectives, the press set the tone for how the agitation was understood either as a public cause, a political challenge, or an economic threat.

Research Question 5: What is the dominant media form used by the newspapers in covering the organized labour agitation for a new minimum wage in Nigeria in 2024?

To answer this research question, the data in Table 4.5 were used. The data reveal that the straight news format was overwhelmingly dominant, with 70% (119 out of 169) of the total coverage presented in this issue. This heavy reliance on straight news suggests that the newspapers focused more on relaying facts and immediate developments, perhaps to maintain objectivity or timeliness. In contrast, interpretive forms like features and opinions were less prioritised, comprising 14% and 7% of coverage respectively. This reveals a possible gap in critical engagement or background analysis, which are often necessary for unpacking complex socio-economic demands such as wage restructuring.

Also, the sparse use of editorials (3%), interviews (4%), and cartoons/satirical pieces (2%) is telling. Editorials and interviews typically carry institutional and personal perspectives that could guide public interpretation or galvanise support for the

labour movement. Their limited use tends to suggest a conservative editorial stance or a deliberate effort to avoid controversy. Moreover, the near-absence of satirical pieces underscores a lack of creative or symbolic framing, which might have added emotive or cultural context to the agitation. Altogether, the data show a lean towards procedural reporting over analytical or interpretive journalism.

The pattern that emerges from the table is one of uniformity across the newspapers. All three outlets leaned heavily on the straight news format, with *The Punch* contributing 59 such stories, *The Nation* 38, and *Vanguard* 22. Meanwhile, opinion pieces, features, and editorials were marginal across the board. This consistency suggests a shared editorial culture or a common journalistic response to politically sensitive labour issues. It also highlights a trend where newspapers prioritise real-time updates over reflective content during social protests or union actions.

These findings directly answer the research question by confirming that the dominant format used in covering the 2024 minimum wage agitation was straight news. The predominance of this format indicates that newspapers focused largely on delivering real-time updates and factual coverage, with minimal analytical engagement. This aligns with the study's broader objective of identifying how format choices reflect media framing and editorial priorities during socio-political events. It underscores the role of format in influencing public understanding and media agenda-setting.

Framing Theory also offers a compelling explanation. The minimal use of opinion and editorial formats, which are the key for applying interpretive frames, suggests that newspapers avoided strong framing angles that could appear partisan. Instead, the use of straight news allows for neutral framing that highlights the "what" rather than the "why" or "how." This restrained approach fits the theory's claim that media frames shape how audiences interpret information. In this case, the frame was largely structural and factual, subtly guiding audiences to perceive the agitation as an unfolding event rather than a moral or socio-economic imperative.

Conclusion

This study has provided important insights into the nature and impact of newspaper coverage of the organized labour agitation for a new national minimum wage in Nigeria. While the newspapers, *The Punch*, *The Nation*, and *Vanguard*, devoted some attention to the issue, the overall frequency of coverage was modest, with *The Punch* providing the most reports. However, this quantitative presence did not translate into qualitative prominence, as most reports were buried in inside pages and lacked analytical depth. The data suggest that although the issue was newsworthy, it was not treated as a central or agenda-setting topic by the newspapers during the period studied, thereby limiting its media salience.

The predominance of straight news formats and brief report lengths reveals a tendency towards episodic reporting rather than thematic coverage that interrogates the structural and socio-economic dimensions of labour agitations. Furthermore, the framing of the issue leaned heavily toward public opinion and business perspectives, with inadequate emphasis on labour rights, fairness, or equity. This implies that Nigerian newspapers reflect elite discourses more than the lived experiences and fundamental rights of the working class. Such editorial choices are likely to influence public understanding and possibly undermine the moral legitimacy of workers' struggles in the eyes of the wider public. Therefore, the conclusion is that although newspapers continue to serve as essential channels for labour-related discourse, their prevailing reliance on straight news and elite-framed narratives suggests a limited commitment to critically engaging with the deeper structural issues underpinning workers' agitations.

Recommendations

From the findings, it is, among other things recommended that: newspaper organisations should give more prominence to labour-related stories and diversify formats beyond straight news. In doing this, more features, editorials, and opinion articles should be integrated into coverage of labour agitations.

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DIGITAL MEDIA AND THE FAKE NEWS PHENOMENON IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW OF CONTENDING PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The predominance of fake news on the digital media platforms has given rise to engaging academic and public discourse on the phenomenon. Academic literature extensively documents the trend, and interrogates its manifestations, especially on the digital space, the complications in conceptualisation, the basic motivations for creating and sharing fake news and the various mitigation strategies. This study domesticates this literature within the Nigerian context. In doing so, prominent case studies of fake news in the country are explored to interrogate the extent to which they fit into global discourse on the phenomenon. Accordingly, two case studies are examined due to their socio-political magnitudes— President Muhammadu Buhari's double-body narrative, and the manifestation of fake news in times of pandemics such as the Ebola virus and COVID-19. These case studies provide the basis to interrogate the manifestation of the fake news phenomenon within the Nigerian context and highlight the concerns that the trend poses. It is concluded that mitigating the scourge of fake news within the Nigerian context requires a careful implementation of the various strategies documented in the literature, conscious of their various strengths and limitations in context. On the whole, the study demonstrates that although fake news is a global phenomenon, geo-specific and contextual factors are critical towards understanding its manifestation, and have a lot to do with its effective mitigation.

Introduction

A disturbing feature of contemporary Nigerian digital media space is the predominance of fake news (Wilson, 2021; Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini, 2021). This overheats the digital space that is, at the moment, considered a vibrant alternative communication space for citizens in the wake of state repression of free speech via stringent regulation of the mainstream media. The fake news phenomenon has amplified the digital media conundrum, and highlighted their defects which portend grave implications to the task of democratic consolidation on one hand, and harmonious coexistence on the other, especially when one considers the highly multi-ethnic composition of the Nigeria state. Of particular concern in this regard is the tendency of weaponisation of this practice by political actors and ethnic zealots which does not only complicates attempts at operationalizing the concept, but also hampers meaningful attempts towards fostering the much desired unity in diversity in Nigeria (Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini, 2021).

For instance, to the political class, barring all academic definitions and conceptualizations, fake news is simply: information that antagonises or challenges

their ideology – no matter how factual it might be. In the words of Egelhofer & Lecheler (2019, p. 2), “political actors have seized the opportunity to use the term as a weapon to undermine any information that contradicts their own political agenda.” This has compounded the task of defining the concept in precise terms, and as developments over the years have shown, all stakeholders in the Nigerian project are victims and progenitors of fake news at the same time, a reality that deepens its complexity and makes attempts at effectively taming it extremely difficult.

As fake news creation and distribution increase, so is the search for solutions and mitigation strategies, with pundits coming up with an array of possible strategies such as outright regulation of the digital media space (Authors, 2022), the use of technology to tame the scourge (Wilson, 2021; Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini, 2021), experts fact-checking, human-machine approach, machine learning, crowd sourcing, deep learning and natural language processing techniques (Collins *et al*, 2020), media and information literacy (Abu-Fadil, 2018) among several other strategies. These have their various strengths, short comings and limitations, making the move to tame the rising tide of fake news a difficult task.

Notably, there exists an appreciable volume of literature that documents the manifestation of fake news, the causes, forms, effects and mitigation attempts. In this study, attempt is made to critique positions in the extant literature against the backdrop of the Nigerian experience. The essence of this is to contextualise discourse on the fake news phenomenon within the Nigerian setting and demonstrate how perspectives from elsewhere apply to- or differ from- the Nigerian situation.

Method of Study

This study adopts the conceptual research approach. Published scholarly articles on fake news have been sourced. Emphasis is given to peer-reviewed works and media reports on fake news stories – especially within the Nigerian context. To contextualise discussions in the study, two context-specific case studies within the Nigerian socio-political setting have been explored. These are: President Muhammadu Buhari's double-body narrative and Ebola virus/COVID-19 infodemic. These case studies generated heated discussions within the Nigerian digital space, attracting voluminous data that fit perfectly into fake news discourse. Insights from the literature are interrogated against these case studies to demonstrate the manifestation of fake news on the digital space in Nigeria.

Conceptualising Digital Media

Digital media represent a broad genre of media endeavours that are hosted on the internet, facilitated by breakthroughs in Information and Communication Technologies

(ICTs). Leveraging ICTs, digital media have emerged as the dominant communication channels of the 21st Century, and diffuse into daily routines of individuals – so much such that an individual user of the internet is simply saturated with all forms of media products from the digital media world. The spectrum of communication activities hosted by the digital media is broad, and cuts across the traditional media – print, broadcast and other genres such as film, multimedia, public relations and advertising – that have prominently migrated to the internet to assert their continued relevance in the 21st Century; to the purely online-based conventional media platforms that are hosted on the internet without any offline base; and the social media channels that have come to provide a point of convergence to all forms of media hosted on the internet.

The scope of the social media alone is broad, and encompasses several communication endeavours that use web 2.0 technology such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, Koo and LinkedIn among a several other platforms – both global and geo-specific- that anchor robust interactions and engagements of users at several fronts- political, economic, religious, pedagogical, social and commercial etc. (Authors, 2022b).

Also considered as formidable arms of the digital media are independent blogs hosted on the internet (and provide regular information to the audience) as well as official websites of institutions, agencies and organizations. These categories of digital media exist independently and can be accessed by individuals surfing through them on their mobile devices, as most of them still make their inroad on the social media platforms to enhance their visibility and leverage the pool of audience the social media accumulate on their folds.

Collectively, these represent formidable platforms in the business of information creation and dissemination. We do not restrict discussion in this study to any of these but choose to treat them as a block because they are all active in the business of information dissemination, and in one way or the another, have formidable stakes in the fake news discourse even though in varying degrees. This is not by any means intended to create intellectual ambiguity, but to underscore the enormity of the media and communication endeavours that feature prominently on the discourse of fake news. Notwithstanding this omnibus scope of the term in the study, reference shall be made to specific digital media platforms, where necessary, to establish vital points in the course of the discussion.

Perspectives on Fake News

Fake news in the most simplified sense is understood to be: completely false information – in whatever form, i.e. text, audio, video or a combination of all – deliberately created and distributed with the intention to misinform, confuse,

manipulate and deceive the audience (Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini, 2021). Put another way, “fake news can be defined as false, often sensational information disseminated under the guise of news reporting” (Greifeneder, Jaffé, Newman & Schwarz, 2021, p.1). Sometimes the intention is basically comical and not for outright deception. However, the content of such comical post is usually false and capable of misleading anyone that takes it serious. Such posts are also considered to be fake news. Having offered simplistic definitions that could serve as working definitions for the sake of this study, suffice it to state that the task of having a precise definition of fake news is not an easy one. The complexity deepens as creators, distributors and recipients of fake news swap roles quite often and the tendency also exists of state actors using the term to discipline the media sector. Hermen & Chomsky's (1988) concept of *flack*, a disciplinary tool against the critical media, quickly comes to mind here.

If President Donald Trump's harsh demonization of American media giants such as CNN as purveyors of fake news – especially when their analyses and editorial leanings do not favour him – is anything to go by, then it is clear from the onset that the concept of fake news, as has been popularised today, is a problematic one to define in precise terms. Similarly, if one considers the constant reference to the phenomenon by Nigerian government officials –especially in President Muhammadu Buhari's administration – who themselves are accused of being periodic purveyors of fake news, misinformation and propaganda, it is obvious, then, that the enormity of the fake news phenomenon is deep and complicated.

Egelhofer & Lecheler (2019, p.1) attempt to clarify this complication by categorising fake news into two main clusters – “the *fake news genre* (i.e. deliberate creation of pseudo-journalistic disinformation) and the *fake news label* (i.e. instrumentalization of the term to delegitimize news media).”

Academic literature acknowledges that fake news is not a recent phenomenon (Wilson, 2021). However, two prominent factors popularise its discourse in contemporary times. First, the predominance of digital technologies that make it easier to create and massively distribute fake contents online without scrutiny. Wilson (2021, p.39) notes that “the emergence of internet technology has significantly altered the media and information landscape worldwide, and given fake news an entirely different perspective.” Similarly, Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini (2021, p. 60) corroborate that “although other media channels harbour fake news, social media platforms appear to have more occurrences. Social media have been the catalysts that drive the constant circulation of fake news in Nigeria.”

The second significant development that sparked global discourse on fake news is its weaponization during the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign. Egelhofer & Lecheler (2019, p.1) note that “fake news crisis has been one of the most discussed

topics in both public and scientific discourse since the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign.” Molina *et al* (2021, p. 180) also confirm that “interest in 'fake news' spiked after the 2016 Presidential election.” Academic literature corroborates this fact, but the question is: why is it so? It is precisely so because contestants across party lines – Democrats and Republican – devoted substantial attention to refuting information in the media which they considered as fake news, and at the same time, churned out a substantial chunk of information that was considered fake by the opposition.

In the post 2016 dynamics, Trump, even after an uncommon victory, would constantly refer to the American mainstream media as 'fake news media' and occasionally shut them out of important governmental functions, courting Twitter and other social media platforms for public information. Analysing fake news trends during Trump's administration is a different academic exercise all together. All-the-same, the campaign period set the tone for what would eventually become an enduring academic and public discourse on an information and communication phenomenon that has come to plague humanity in the 21st Century – the fake news phenomenon.

Lazer *et al.* (2018, p. 1094) define fake news as “fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent.” According to them, “fake news overlaps with other information disorders, such as misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information that is purposely spread to deceive people).” Indeed, quite often, these terms are used interchangeably, with similar other terms such as post-truth. There exists an argument in the literature that the contraption – fake news – is an error in itself. Such scholars contend that the term 'news' is an embodiment of truth; hence, once the truth is absent, then it is no longer news. The academic community is, however, sceptical with this position because, as Lazer *et al.* (2018) have noted, fake news take on the form and format of news in its entirety with the absence of truth/journalistic veracity and, perhaps, intent as the distinguishing factors.

Baptista & Gradim (2020) are emphatic that the intention to deceive is a distinguishing factor that marks out fake news. A look at the typology of fake news, however, settles this controversy better. Although it is an uphill task to arrive at a common definition of fake news, it could be summed from the plethora of definitions that abound, that fake news is a piece of news that is:

1. False, fabricated or distorted reality;
2. Deliberately published via a medium of communication;
3. Targeted at an unsuspecting audience and clothed to look like credible news;
4. Intended to mislead, deceive, misinform, entertain or influence the attitudes of receivers.

This summation does not intend to exclude other forms of fake news such as

parody or comics, but hits at the core of what comes to mind at the mention of the term. A deeper understanding of fake news is better achieved by looking at the typology documented in academic literature. The classification as discussed below, pigeonholes practices that are considered in the fake news discourse into one category or the other, making it more convenient and precise to allude to each within the most appropriate context.

Typology of Fake News

Several types of fake news abound. Collins *et al* (2020) talk of clickbait, propaganda, satire/parody, hoaxes, name-theft, framing, and journalistic deception as the various kinds of fake news. Narwal (2018) presents seven similar but somewhat unique typology of fake news. These are satire/parody, false connection, misleading content, false context, imposter content, manipulated content and fabricated content. Yet, Tandoc, Lim & Ling (2017) classify fake news in ways similar to and unique from the above. Their classification considers news satire, news parody, news fabrication, photo manipulation, propaganda, advertising and public relations. The degree of overlap among these classifications has simplified the task of harmonisation, yet, enabled a broader understanding of the enormity of academic enquiry into the fake news phenomenon. Accordingly, the factors advanced as propelling the creation and distribution of these categories of fake news include profit motives, poor journalism, partisanship and political motivations, political influence, propaganda, mischief making and entertainment among others. Below are the various types of fake news advanced in academic literature:

- a. Clickbait:* enticing captions or headlines that are intended to generate clicks basically for profit motives on online sites (Collins *et al*, 2020). Such stories contain inflammatory language and, colourful graphics; utilise ambiguous language and manipulate formatting to entice readers to click on the stories. Typically, contents of the link do not match with the caption or headline. This form of fake news thrives primarily for profit motives. A form of fake news practice closely related to this is *false connection*. According to Narwal (2018), it is a journalistic practice where the content of a story does not match with the headline or pictures used in promoting it. The use of unrelated captions deceive readers to click on the story, only to discover that the journalistic tools used to promote the story do not accurately represent the content.
- b. Propaganda:* In the context of fake news, refers to news stories that are created by a political entity to influence public perceptions (Collins *et al*, 2020). Contents of such stories are typically not entirely true, and can be detected by

simple fact checking. A good example of this practice is the chunk of stories churned out by paid social media trolls of Nigerian politicians, for instance, who do everything possible to concoct favourable stories that project their paymasters in a positive light before the general publics, and at the same time, demonise opposition. Almost all prominent politicians in Nigeria have such political lapdogs, and their modus operandi is strikingly the same.

- c. **Satire/parody:** a humorous exaggeration of contents of a news story with the aim of creating fun and amusement in the readers. This is a less serious and perhaps less harmful form of fake news that has as its primary intent, fun and amusement. Typically, such stories extract factual information from published news stories and modify them to suit their intents.
- d. **Hoaxes:** these are intentionally fabricated reports that aim to deceive the audience (Collins *et al*, 2020). Such stories are coined in such a way that even conventional media fall for them as well and report them, thinking they are credible news. According to Collins *et al* (2020), this type of fake news refers to large-scale fabrications and is capable of causing serious material damage to its victim, typically a public figure. Hoaxing is a common feature of the Nigerian digital sphere and has been targeted on quite a number of prominent politicians across political parties.
- e. **Name-theft:** this is a practice where the name or identity of a reputable individual or organisation is cloned for mischievous purposes. In Nigeria today, many public figures, organizations and media houses battle daily with name theft, as their official web pages or social media accounts are regularly cloned by mischief makers to deceive unsuspecting victims. Agencies such as the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Nigerian National Petroleum Commission, among others, have frequently had their official websites or social media handles cloned to defraud job seekers. Name theft is one of the commonest forms of fake news practices in Nigeria today. Narwal (2018) describes this as *imposter contents*, where fraudsters act as imposters to deceive unsuspecting audience members.
- f. **False context:** this is a form of fake news that arises from publishing news stories outside their original contexts. News taken out of context loses its core value of truthfulness and validity, and can be misleading too. Narwal (2018) attributes this to poor journalism and sensationalism that diminish the standards of journalism practice in the digital age.

Indeed, there are several other forms of fake news; however, a closer look at them indicates that they fit into one or more of the categories discussed above. Whether for

political, economic or entertainment reasons, a defining feature of fake news stories is the absence of truth – either deliberate or inadvertent, and manipulative tendencies aimed at influencing unsuspecting audience.

The Fake News and Digital Media Nexus

The relationship between fake news and the digital media is an enduring one. This could be likened in practical terms to the predominance of fraud and theft in populated cities or commercial hubs. The digital community provides a point of convergence for all forms of communication activities to thrive. Fake news finds such environments friendly. That aside, the very attributes of media endeavours hosted on the digital space favour the creation and massive distribution of fake news. These attributes include large followership base, laissez-faire editorial standards, lesser gatekeeper chain and unlimited access. Social media, for instance, exhibit a substantial chunk of these attributes, and have, over the years, become favoured breeding grounds for fake news. Lazer *et al.* (2018, p. 1095) acknowledge that “internet platforms have become the most important enablers and primary conduits of fake news” Wilson (2021, p. 39) corroborates that “the emergence of internet technology significantly altered the media and information landscape worldwide, and has given fake news an entirely different perspective.” He noted further that: “These smart devices and the online platforms have made it possible for instant information gathering, instant access to information, real time interaction and swift dissemination of information which have contributed to, among other things, the speedy spread of fake news (Wilson 2021, p. 40).

Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini (2021, p. 60) decry the predominance of fake news on the social media, for instance, when they note that “although other media channels harbour fake news, social media platforms appear to have more occurrences. Social media have been the catalysts that drive the constant circulation of fake news in Nigeria.” Against this backdrop, they observe that as Nigeria craves for more internet penetration, there are higher tendencies that the manifestation of the fake news phenomenon will also be on the rise, a reality that calls for the need to intensify measures in search for mitigation strategies. The predominance of fake news on the digital media has amplified the much discussed digital media conundrum that emerged ever since they made their debut over the turn of the century, with pundits pondering over how best to maximise the potentials and optimise the threats which they harbour. Appreciating the manifestation of this digital media conundrum, Narwal (2018, p. 977) notes that: “Social media is acting as a double-edged sword for the universe in a way of consuming news. On one side, its ease of access, popularity and low cost distribution channel lead people to gain news from social media. On other side, it is also acting as a source of spread of fake news”.

Collins *et al* (2020, p. 1) acknowledge a growing misinformation and fake

content by malicious users on the social media, an unfortunate trend that has plunged the online media ecosystem into chaos. They note that the social media world has “witnessed a reverberation amid the proliferation of fake news which has made people reluctant to engage in genuine news sharing for fear that such information is false.” This calls for a dire need to detect and remove the fake content towards boosting users' confidence and increasing the impact of the social media. The dilemma, however, has been that the very attributes that give the digital media an edge in the information world are, at the same time, the factors that facilitate the spread of fake news on the platforms. In Summary, the digital media-fake news nexus is a disturbing scenario that confronts contemporary communication scholarship. How well can the Nigerian sector navigate this quagmire that is at the moment overheating the polity?

Case Studies from Contemporary Nigeria

This section gives a perspective on contemporary case of fake news within the Nigerian digital space. Two popular case studies are discussed in this section as follows:

Case Study 1: President Muhammadu Buhari's Body Clone/Lookalike Narrative

A classical case study of fake news in contemporary Nigeria is President Buhari's body-clone narrative. Wide scale speculations hit the digital space in the wake of the President's frequent medical trips to the UK that he was dead and his look-alike, one Jubrin Aminu from Sudan, had undergone a plastic surgery at the instance of the Aso-Rock cabal to impersonate Buhari. The speculation became rife following the President's prolonged stay on one of such trips that lasted for over a hundred days. According to Akinwotu (2018), AFP's fact-check indicate that the speculation had no factual base; notwithstanding, it continued to spread like wildfire on the digital platforms, particularly social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, among others. Major progenitors of this narrative were Nnamdi Kanu – leader of the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB, a separatist group from the south eastern part of the country, predominantly of the Igbo nationality clamouring for Independence from Nigeria), a former aide to President Goodluck Jonathan, Mr Reno Omokri, a former Minister of Aviation, Mr Femi Fani Kayode and the former Governor of Ekiti State, Mr Ayodele Fayose, among other prominent voices, critical of President Buhari's administration.

It is instructive to note that a combination of factors were responsible for the attention which the audience paid to this saga that appeared to be an obviously fabricated story from the beginning. First, on the array of such factors is previous experience. Nigerians have not forgotten the controversial circumstances under which the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua died. Realities later indicated that the late President was on a vegetation machine in Saudi Arabia for about three months, a

situation that caused a serious constitutional crisis and resulted in the swearing in of Vice President Goodluck Jonathan as Acting President. Yar'Adua's return to Nigeria in coma and eventual death soon afterwards built impressions in Nigerians on how far leaders could hold on to power even at the expense of their health. Closely related to this development was the fear of abrupt power shift to the southern part of the country in the unlikely event of President Buhari's demise. Conspiracy theorists held that the North that had suffered that after Yar'Addua's demise was not ready to allow for abrupt power shift to the South, a development that could have disrupted the APC (the ruling party) power plan. The realities surrounding the issue were creatively explored by progenitors to aggressively sell the rhetoric of Buhari's double-body to Nigerians, and it went a long way in getting more people give in to the narrative.

The second factor that nurtured the growth of this narrative was the silence from the Presidency, and the poor communication strategies that were deployed to inform Nigerians of President Buhari's medical condition. Over the years, the ailing President's health condition had been shrouded in secrecy. Nigerians scarcely had information regarding the health condition of the President. *Daily Trust* (May 9, 2018) quoted the main opposition party- the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – decrying the secrecy that characterised the handling of the President's ailing condition. According to the opposition party: “it is, however, very unfortunate that the President and his handlers have chosen to shroud the issue of his illness in secrecy...Even as we speak, Nigerians are not aware of the ailment our President is suffering from ...” (*Daily Trust*, May 9, 2018 para. 3&5).

The deafening silence, thus, provided a good ground for the peddled falsehood to thrive, so much so that even people who never believed in the narrative initially had cause to give it a thought as the silence from the Presidency persisted and the progenitors of the narrative continued to exploit it to their advantage. Sadly, all voices that called for transparency on the President's health condition fell on deaf ears. In the ensuing silence, Nigerians were not to be blamed for believing the double-body narrative.

A third factor that facilitated the spread of this narrative is the ubiquity of digital media in Nigeria today made possible by internet penetration. Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini (2021, p. 62) note that “Nigeria ranks on the top of the list of African countries based on the share of traffic via mobile.” They note further that “internet penetration amounted to 46.6 per cent of the population in 2020 and is set to reach 62 per cent in 2025.” With this level of internet penetration, the Nigerian digital world is, indeed, a burgeoning one, along with this growth, the positive and negative traits that digitization portends. Buhari's double-body narrative tapped from the growing digitization and went viral within the virtual and real worlds within the shortest possible time.

Idiong, Etta & Inyieng (2021) observe that as soon as the narrative started

gaining popularity on the digital space, bloggers and online media platforms joined in to boost their traffic to their economic advantage, throwing caution and the ethos of good journalism in the wind. According to Akinwotu (2018), digital media, especially the social media played a key role in this saga, as posts by the progenitors attracted multiple re-tweets and shares on Twitter and Facebook. Similarly, a heavy dose of these conspiracies was served in end-to-end encrypted chat platforms such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Telegram, among others.

In the final analysis, therefore, it was evident that a combination of political and economic motives was a major driving force in the perpetuation of President Buhari's double-body narrative that gained serious popularity on the digital space. It must be emphasised that the saga intensified in the build-up to the 2019 general elections with the President's health one of the topmost arguments that critics advanced to discredit the candidacy of the President before the electorate. This scenario lays a good background for illustrating how effective the fake news-digital media synergy plays out within the Nigerian socio-political setting.

Case Study 2: The Ebola Virus and COVID-19 Experiences

Another disturbing manifestation of the fake news-digital media synergy in Nigeria is its effect on managing health emergencies. Recent experiences have shown that the digital media serve as purveyors of not just fake but also toxic information that complicate the health crises occasioned by outbreak of epidemics or pandemics in Nigeria. The first most notable case study in this regard is the August 2014 Ebola virus experience. Ebola virus came to Nigeria in July, 2014 through one Patrick Sawyer (Ajakaye, 2014), a Liberian carrier who, upon arrival, infected a handful of victims, basically his contacts on flight and the nurses that attended to him upon admission before it was discovered. The panic it created was unprecedented.

In the wake of the pandemonium that greeted the epidemic, an overnight fake story went viral on the digital media platforms: salt and water was prescribed as offering immunity to the disease, and the general public was implored to drink a dose of it and bath with it as well to provide them with the required immunity! Within the shortest possible time, this piece of news went viral on the digital media – calls, short messaging texts and social media posts on platforms such as WhatsApp, Blackberry Messenger, and Facebook/Facebook Messenger etc. (Ajakaye, 2014; Emmanuel & Ibeh, 2014; Nwabueze & Oknokwo, 2018 and Balami & Meleh 2019). Balami & Meleh, (2019, p. 179) discovered that “social media was the source of the misinformation on salt and water use for over a third of the respondents” that participated in their study on the saga. The speed at which this news travelled, and the degree of impact it created were alarming. All these happened in one night and by the following morning, the federal

government had to mount a strong campaign against the misinformation. There were fears that taking excessive salt might complicate medical conditions of individuals battling certain ailments. Worthy of note is how negatively productive the fake news-digital media synergy is thriving in Nigeria.

Fast-forward to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. All over the world, COVID-19 the world over appears to be one of the most controversial diseases in recent human history, carrying on its trail, a plethora of conspiracy theories and misinformation that complicate the struggle towards effectively containing it (Authors, 2020). This information crisis led to the declaration of an *infodemic* by the World Health Organization barely two months after the pandemic broke out (WHO, 2020). Sadly, the digital media were at the forefront driving this *infodemic*. Al-Zaman (2021, p. 100), in his study of COVID-19 fake news spread in India, discovered that: “Online media produces more fake news (94.4%) than mainstream media (5.6%). More interestingly, four social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube, produce most of the fake news.”

The situation in Nigeria is not different: digital media platforms serve as the major carriers of fake news on COVID-19. This has continued to thrive across phases of the pandemic, with each phase witnessing a new set of fake news and conspiracy theories. The latest on the list are conspiracy theories that surround the vaccine, giving rise to scepticism and creating fears in the minds of many who are confused regarding what exactly to believe in the midst of the enduring *infodemic*. Authors (2020) compile some of the popular fake stories peddled on the disease on the Nigerian digital space as follows:

- a. Blacks and People of Colour are immune to COVID-19 because of melanin;
- b. COVID-19 cannot survive in Africa's warm climate;
- c. Spraying alcohol and chlorine bleach on the body prevents COVID-19;
- d. Drinking black tea first thing in the morning is an effective cure against COVID-19;
- e. Peppered soup with lime or lemon flushes out the virus;
- f. Steam from neem prevents COVID-19;
- g. Vitamin C tablets prevent COVID-19;
- h. Having had malaria makes one immune to COVID-19;
- i. COVID-19 is a disease exclusive to wealthy people and urban dwellers;
- j. COVID-19 is a divine punishment for man's iniquities.

From a variety of sources, these fake stories are concocted and pushed through the digital space. Thus, as people were locked down in their homes and had to spend a substantial chunk of their time on the digital media, the predominance of fake news on

the platforms was one of the major issues stakeholders had to grapple with in the bid to effectively contain the disease. It is interesting to note that while the digital media provided veritable sources of information to citizens in the midst of the pandemic, they also served as the major carriers of fake and dangerous information that complicated the process of containing the disease. During the initial phase of the national lockdown, daily briefings on national TV stations in the country were being organised by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and other relevant agencies to sensitise citizens and keep them informed of developments regarding the disease (Authors, 2020).

Debunking fake news and bursting myths was one of the major preoccupations of the daily briefings. Notwithstanding this effort, the fake news continued to thrive, and experience has shown that, to a large extent, the digital audience have been less critical of some of the peddled fake news, as many still exhibit an alarming degree of gullibility by sharing some of the contents that appear to be obviously false and misleading to this day.

Notably, beyond COVID-19 and Ebola, sharing health related fake news on the social media has become a disturbing feature of the digital media generally, as people share supposed therapies, cures, prescriptions and assumed precautionary measures that have no scientific basis on a wide array of diseases and ailments. Several studies have established a predominance of fake news on health related matters on the social media platforms (Melchior & Oliveira, 2021; Wang *et al*, (2019); Waszak, Kasprzycka-Waszak & Kubanek, 2018).

Towards Mitigating Fake News on the Digital Space

Studies on fake news and the digital media synergy propose mitigation strategies that could be adopted to tame the rising tide. A careful look at the numerous mitigation strategies proffered indicates that they can be conveniently pigeonholed into four distinct categories. These include strategies that focus on:

- a.* The perspective of the digital platforms;
- b.* The perspective of the fake news creators;
- c.* The perspective of regulatory agencies; and
- d.* The perspective of the audience.

It is important to note from the onset that mitigation strategies belonging to these clusters have either been variously criticised, or where there is a consensus on their suitability, have inherent defects that impede successful implementation. A review of the various strategies is presented below.

- i.* **The use of technology:** a recurrent recommendation for taming the spread of fake news on the digital media is the use of technology- prominently, the

Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Collins *et al*, 2020; Wilson, 2021; Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini, 2021). Experts suggest that AI can go a long way in checkmating the scourge of fake news on the digital space. Wilson (2021) presents several AI techniques that can be deployed to check the menace of fake news such as spike, hoaxy, snopes, crowdtangle, Google trends, le decodex, pheme, grover, fotoforensics, parmar's chatboard etc. Besides these tools, Wilson (2021) and Collins *et al* (2020) discuss AI approaches or subcategories that apply to the fight against fake news such as machine learning, Natural Language Processing (NLP), machine perception, predictive analytics, deeper learning, recommendation system, crowdsourcing, graph-based method, and a hybrid approach comprising both machine learning and human experts fact checkers.

These tools have specific tasks and mandates towards checking the proliferation of fake news and could be applied primarily by the various digital platforms in the business of information dissemination, as well as regulatory agencies. Within a setting like Nigeria, experts note that AI applications can be marred by challenges ranging from access and expertise of the requisite technology, linguistic and cultural/contextual issues and geo-specific peculiarities that might defy universal realities (Wilson, 2021; Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini, 2021). Apart from acknowledging this challenge, Nsude, Ogbodo & Nwamini (2021) describe AI as a double edged sword that could be used both as an offensive and defensive tool in this regard- i.e. for creating and combating fake news at the same time. This dual nature, they note, complicates the potency of the AI technology as an effective tool for effectively combating the scourge of fake news on the digital space.

- ii. **Regulation:** Experts suggest regulation as a way of checking the menace of fake news on the digital media. Regulation here is the responsibility of at least three of the critical stakeholders – the digital platforms operators, regulatory agencies and, perhaps, the audience. On the part of the tech operators, they are expected to set in place rules that will govern interactive patterns of individuals. Lazer *et al*. (2018, p. 1096) note that “the possible effectiveness of platform based policies would point to either government regulation of the platforms or self-regulation.” Indeed, regulation is an imperative if harmony is to be attained on the digital space, and attempts could be cited across countries coming up with proposed legislations to regulate the various digital platforms. The controversial attempts at social media regulation in Nigeria quickly come to mind here (*see* Paul, 2019; Eke, 2020; Authors, 2022a). We must be quick to acknowledge that regulation whether at the level of the government/regulatory agencies or at the level of the tech operators remain a very controversial endeavour. The wide criticisms that greet the various attempts at regulation lend credence to this. Lazer *et al* (2018)

note that:

Direct government regulation of an area as sensitive as news carries its own risks, constitutional and otherwise. For instance, could regulators maintain impartiality in defining, imposing, and enforcing any requirements? Generally, any direct intervention by government or the platforms that prevents users from seeing content raises concerns about either government or corporate censorship (p. 1096).

The complications that come with regulation often make experts cautious to call for outright regulation even as realities continue to call for it. This is compounded by the excesses of government regulatory agencies which are often glaring and overbearing. The showmanship between Twitter and the Nigerian government in 2021 where the platform took down President Muhammadu Buhari's post for violating the platform's guidelines, and the administration's draconian response of slamming an indefinite ban on the platform in the country, and calling for registration of all multinational social media platforms operating in the country (*see* Authors, 2022a) – all point to the complications that come with regulation, whether by the state or the tech operators. A third tier of regulation is individual user who needs to regulate the nature of contents to expose himself to online. Digital awareness is necessary to achieve this. We shall discuss this tier in some details under media literacy.

- iii. **Verification/expert fact checking:** This has to do with engaging the services of experts in certain fields to verify the authenticity of certain information (Collins *et al*, 2020). This can be done by all stakeholders involved in the fake news niche- tech operators, regulatory agencies, content creators and the audience. But, most commonly, the burden of fact-checking resides most with the tech operators and regulatory agencies for a couple of reasons such as the cost implications of engaging expert fact checkers, the responsibility of protecting consumer rights to the truth and the need to preserve the integrity of the platforms. Tech operators leverage expert fact-checkers to determine which content is false, so as to issue corrections, flag such contents as false content with warnings, and directly censor false content e.g. by demoting its placement in ranking algorithms so that it is less likely to be seen by users (Collins *et al*, 2020). Expert-fact checking has its short comings. First of all, it can be expensive and incur huge financial implications on the contractor. Secondly, the ever increasing nature of fake news on the digital platforms and scarcity of experts as well as context-specific constraints all hamper the task of successfully fact-checking for fake news on the digital space.
- iv. **Hybrid technique:** According to Collins *et al* (2020, p. 11), “the hybrid-based detection model involves 'the fusion of techniques from the content-based model as well as social context-based techniques utilizing auxiliary information

from different perspectives.” Hybrid technique is recommended to balance the inadequacies of purely technology based and human based approach. The thinking is that a fusion of technology and human expertise would yield more efficiency and take care of contextual issues in the process of detecting fake news on the digital space.

- v. **Media and information literacy (MIL):** Another recurrent recommendation in the literature on the approaches of taming the rise of fake news on the digital media is investment in audience MIL skills. According to Wilson *et al* (2011), MIL entails empowering the audience with the competencies required for development of enquiry-based skills and the ability to engage meaningfully with media and information channels in whatever form and technologies they are using. According to Thoman & Jolls (2005, p. 20), MIL “provides a framework to *access, analyse, evaluate and create* messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the internet.” MIL imbues in the audience, the ability to engage critically with all forms of the media, whether as content creators or consumers. A way of achieving this, according to Thoman & Jolls (2005), is to attempt questioning those behind the authorship of texts, creative techniques used, intents and viewpoints of the authors and lifestyles represented among a whole lot of other questions surrounding media messages. Answers to these critical questions could go a long way towards protecting the digital audience against fake information. Experts note that the degree of MIL the audience attain is crucial to determining their level of gullibility and susceptibility to fake news; hence, the strategy is highly recommended (Abu-Fadil, 2018; Pérez-Escoda *et al*, 2021). Baptista & Gradim (2020) undertake a systematic review of the factors that facilitate fake news consumption and discover that low digital literacy tops the list. According to Tandoc, Lim & Ling (2017, p.12):

While news is constructed by journalists, it seems that *fake* news is co-constructed by the audience, for its fakeness depends a lot on whether the audience perceives the fake as real. Without this complete process of deception, fake news remains a work of fiction. It is when audiences mistake it as real news that fake news is able to play with journalism's legitimacy (p.12).

MIL, thus, is one of the favoured recommendations towards taming the tide of fake news, leaving a huge burden of implementation on the shoulders of critical stakeholders that are often fingered in this regard such as UNESCO, National Orientation Agencies and the educational curriculum etc.

Concluding Thoughts

Like a scourge, the fake news phenomenon has infested the Nigerian State, with digital media serving as their major carriers. The manifestations are varied, and so are the motivations for creating and sharing it. The fake news phenomenon is one feature of the digital media that has the potency of reducing its overall impact on the socioeconomic wellbeing of citizens, and breeding scepticism as citizens engage on the various platforms. Navigating out of the woods is an omnibus task that requires all stakeholders to act proactively towards reducing the scourge. These stakeholders include tech operators, the state and regulatory agencies, the content creators and distributors and the audience or final consumers. Although implementing the mitigation options advanced is not by any means an easy task, it is expedient and would help towards optimising the potentials of the digital media and channelling them appropriately to the course of individual users' socioeconomic advancement specifically, and national development generally.

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BROADCAST COVERAGE OF TERRORISM AND COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG AUDIENCE MEMBERS IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was carried out to ascertain the extent to which exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism increases compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State. A mixed method consisting both content analysis and survey was adopted as the research design. For the content analysis, eight radio stations were selected and a combined 5,840 broadcast days was the population with a sample of 374, which was selected using the Taro Yamane formula. For the survey, the sample size was 400, out of the population of 6,661,279 which was the population of Akwa Ibom State in 2024. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for this study, and each stage used a particular sampling technique until the respondents were accessed. The findings of the study revealed that broadcast stations extensively covered terrorism. Also, more than 60% of the respondents frequently exposed themselves to coverage of terrorism on television, and also thought that the way the broadcast media covered and reported terrorism, while enhancing public understanding of terrorism-related events, contributed to spreading and increasing fear and anxiety in society. Furthermore, frequent exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism significantly contributed to escalating compassion fatigue among more than 80% of the respondents. It was concluded that frequent exposure of broadcast audience to distressing and traumatic content, including terrorism-related news, in the long run, caused audience members to become less sympathetic because the scenes depicted in such content had become part of their daily existence. Hence, it was recommended that broadcast stations should endeavour to limit the frequency as well as the intensity of terrorism coverage and also prioritize responsible and ethical reportorial practices, including verifying information before it is broadcast, avoiding sensationalism, and providing broader contexts as well as diverse viewpoints when covering terrorism.

Introduction

The concept of terrorism has been defined in different ways by different scholars. However, the common notion of terrorism is that it is the use of threats or actions which are designed to influence the government and/or intimidate the public for the purpose of advancing a particular cause, which could be political, religious or ideological. According to Khairil, Zakria, Arifin, and Razman (2017), the following are the basic elements in terrorism:

- i. the systematic violence carried out by individuals, groups or nations
- ii. the political, religious or ideological motifs behind carrying out these violent acts
- iii. the intention of spreading fear in society in imposing the desire.

From the foregoing, it may be said that terrorism involves many forms of violence (shootings, bombings, kidnaps, assassinations, arson, etc) and indiscriminate target of civilians, military facilities and State officials, among others, as a way of persuading governments or some powerful institutions or authorities to yield to some specific demands of the perpetrators. According to UNODC (2018), contemporary terrorist violence is distinguished in law from conventional violence by the classic terrorist triangle: A attacks B, to convince or coerce C to change its position regarding some action or policy desired by A. The attack spreads fear as the violence is directed, unexpectedly, against innocent victims, which in turn puts pressure on third parties, such as governments, to change their policy or position.

Around the globe, terrorism has, sadly, become one of the defining features of contemporary society. More than two million people have died from numerous terror attacks orchestrated by various terrorist groups throughout the world since 2010. Groups such as the Islamic State (IS), Al-Shabaab, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and JamaatNusrat Al-Islam walMuslimeen (JNIM) have mushroomed over the years to become a potent threat to the stability of different countries and continents (Ngige, Badekale and Joda (2016); Ekwueme and Obayi; 2012). Furthermore, according to the Global Terrorism Index (2023), more than 43 countries in the world have experienced terrorism-related deaths since 2020.

The Nigerian State is also witnessing violent insurgencies within its borders, most notably the Boko Haram uprising which began in 2009, in Bauchi; and has since spread to other Northern states, leaving hundreds of followers, Nigerian law enforcement officers and civilians dead. This group has carried out attacks targeting civilians, security forces, and infrastructure.

It is often argued that the mass media and terrorism are intertwined in a symbiotic way. Terrorism and conflict are the bread and butter of journalism. They provide ready-made material for the media to exploit. In media circles, bad news is good news; therefore, the more unusual, weird or negative an event is, the more the mass media celebrate it. More so, media audience are usually excited to read detailed stories on how these events unfold; and in the process of satisfying the growing information needs of the audience members, media houses can increase their profit margins (Ngigeet. *al.*, 2016; Akpan and Onwubere, 2020). On the other hand, the media are said to supply the oxygen of publicity for terrorists by providing a platform to progress their cause.

In today's globalized world, according to Akpan and Onwubere (2020), television audience members do not invite such footages, but are left with no choice but to receive them due to the lure and pervasiveness of the television as well as the innate desire on the part of the audience members to have the latest update on global events.

Given this, it is probable that the ceaseless exposure of audience members to scenes of carnage, sorrow, affliction and suffering, in the long run, causes the audience members to become less sympathetic to the victims because they have gotten used to such scenes, and therefore become resistant to the sympathy and empathy which such scenes usually evoke or are meant to evoke in people (Watson and Hill, 2015; Akpan and Onwubere; 2020). This feeling is referred to as compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue occurs when a person, out of frequent or prolonged exposure to a situation, begins to develop a mental exhaustion so much that his sympathy stock begins to deplete. In essence, he or she, overtime, gets tired of showing compassion, sympathy or empathy when faced with such situations because they have become a part of his or her daily life. As such, issues such as war, starvation and other inhuman atrocities, including suicide cases, bomb explosions, murders, genocide, ethnic cleansing, fire disasters, etc. are celebrated among media professionals, who in turn transmit them to the audience members without much compunction.

Today, we have a number global radio and television stations such as CNN, BBC, Aljazeera, FOX etc. reporting on and transmitting images and footages of numerous global crises, including incidents of terrorist attacks worldwide. Additionally, the fast-paced 24/7 news cycle which is typical of these stations usually make it somewhat difficult for audience members to take breaks from consuming such news reports. Therefore, the audience members, including those in Akwa Ibom State, are also exposed to these transmissions, given the ubiquitous nature of television in Nigeria, as well as the innate desire on the part of the audience members to have the latest update on global events. If the audience's stock of sympathy depletes over time as a result of exposure to scenes and reports of carnage on television and radio, then it is possible that broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State being part of the global broadcast audience members can also suffer compassion fatigue due to frequent and prolonged exposure to scenes and reports of terrorism via the broadcast media. Therefore, this study examines the extent to which exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism contributes to increasing compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

In recent times, reports of terrorism in its various forms have dominated the global media landscape so much so that the audience members are exposed to footages and reports of terror or carnage caused by terrorist attacks almost on daily basis. Consequently, audience members in Akwa Ibom State, being part of the global broadcast audience, are inundated with images, reports and scenes of terrorist attacks which often involve killings, shootings, bombings, abductions, hostage situations, and

much more; given the ubiquitous nature of the broadcast media. Given this, is it possible that broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State can overtime develop compassion fatigue due to frequent and prolonged exposure to such scenes and reports via the broadcast media? Therefore, the key question in this study is: to what extent does exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism escalate compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

- i. What is the volume of terrorism coverage on broadcast stations?
- ii. To what extent are audience members in Akwa Ibom State exposed to broadcast coverage of terrorism?
- iii. How do audience members in Akwa Ibom State perceive broadcast coverage of terrorism?
- iv. To what extent does exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism increase compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypothesis

To guide this study, the following research hypothesis was formulated:

There is no significant relationship between exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism and compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State.

Review of Related Literature

Terrorism

Terrorism has been defined in different ways by different scholars. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, terrorism is systematic use of a terror, violent or destructive acts by group in order to intimidate a population or Government into granting their demands. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) defines terrorism as a method of coercion that utilizes or threatens to utilize violence in order to spread fear and thereby attain political or ideological goals. Tulga (2020) also sees terrorism as any form of premeditated politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. Therefore, terrorism can be seen as the use or threats or actions which are designed to influence the government and/or intimidate the public for the purpose of advancing a particular cause, which could be either political, religious or ideological.

The term “terrorism” was first coined in the 1790s from the French Revolution and the “Reign of Terror,” when terror was used as an instrument of state policy to

counter revolutionary elements in the population, save France from anarchy and military defeat and suppress hoarding and profiteering. Although terrorism in this usage implies an act of violence by a state against its domestic enemies, the term, since the 20th century, has been applied most frequently to violence aimed, either directly or indirectly, at governments in an effort to influence policy or topple an existing regime (Jenkins, 2024).

As literature on terrorism has evolved, the definition of the term has progressively been embellished. Contemporary scholarship attributes at least four distinctive characteristics to it. These attributes, according to Shughart (2006), are:

- i. terrorism is violence (or its threat) for political effect.
- ii. terrorism is a planned, calculated, and systematic act.
- iii. terrorists are not bound by established rules of warfare or codes of conduct
- iv. terrorism is designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target.

Based on the aforementioned, it may be concluded that terrorism entails a variety of violent acts, including shootings, bombings, kidnaps, assassinations, arson, etc, and the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, State officials and military installations in an effort to influence Governments or other influential institutions or authorities to comply with the demands of the perpetrators.

The French Revolution marked a turning point in the history of terrorism. According to Chaliand and Blin (2007), the French Revolution gave birth to what is known as state terrorism – acts of terrorism carried out by the government of a state against other state(s) or against its own citizens, including the intentional killing of an unarmed or disarmed person or persons in line with a certain government policy. During the French Revolutionary period (1789 – 1799), terrorism was associated with The Jacobins' reign of terror in France where numerous acts of violence, including mass massacres and public executions, were employed to compel obedience to the State and also intimidate regime enemies (Chaliand and Blin, 2007; Shughart, 2006). In the late 20th and early 21st centuries some of the most extreme and destructive organizations that engaged in terrorism possessed a fundamentalist religious ideology. According to GTI (2023), Islamist movements, including the Islamic State (IS) and Hamas lead a group of four dominant terrorist groups which account for an increasing number of deaths across different countries. The other two are the JamaatNusrat Al-Islam walMuslimeen (JNIM) and Al-Shabaab.

Compassion Fatigue

According to Akpan and Onwubere (2020), compassion fatigue, also known as secondary traumatic stress (STS), refers to the apathy or indifference exhibited by a

person or persons towards the suffering of others resulting from over-exposure to traumatized individuals. It occurs when one, out of prolonged exposure to a situation, begins to develop a mental exhaustion such that his sympathy stock starts to deplete. In such circumstances, compassion for victims of a negative situation is gradually lessened to a point that the compassion is burnt out. Pehlivan and Güner (2018) also describe compassion fatigue as a condition of gradual decrease in compassion over time. This decrease in compassion is associated with secondary exposure to stressful or traumatic events. Adamset. *al.* (2016) also see compassion fatigue as a gradual reduction in a person's capacity or interest in being empathic to or bearing the suffering of others and is the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced or suffered by a person. From the foregoing, it may be concluded that compassion fatigue is a condition characterized by a gradual reduction or depletion of sympathy overtime due to frequent indirect or secondary exposure to trauma, or from often helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person. This implies that people overtime get tired of showing compassion, sympathy or empathy when faced with traumatic situations because such situations have become normalized and have become a part of their daily lives.

Compassion fatigue has emerged as a natural consequence of working with people who have experienced or are experiencing trauma and suffering or extremely stressful events. The helpers can absorb the suffering of others and end up feeling weary and worn from this secondary traumatic exposure. Over time, their concern and empathy for the people they are trying to help expose them emotionally to the negative side effects associated with prolonged stress and trauma. Eventually, it becomes exhausting for them to continue to emphasize and maintain compassion.

Today, compassion fatigue is no longer unique to certain professions. With increased media exposure to suffering worldwide, it is likely that anyone can experience compassion fatigue – especially people with high levels of empathy. Every day people hear news stories about injustice, political division, mass shootings, natural disasters, hate crimes, epidemics, and international conflicts, so it can become overwhelming to stay informed and engaged. The 24-hour coverage of trauma and world suffering on television and social media can cause stress, making people feel despair, and limit their ability to feel empathy. Eventually, they start feeling exhausted, and their ability to emphasize starts to wane (Horkovska, 2023). This is in line with Akpan and Onwubere (2020), who state that consistent media reporting of trauma helps to decrease the stock of positive emotions in the audience members, for the simple reason that the scenes have become common place and the audience members have become used to the situation. At a point, the audience members appear drugged into the inactivity of accepting the traumatic scenes and the lot of the victims as natural.

Terrorism and the Broadcast Media

The relationship between terrorism and the broadcast media has been a subject of concern for numerous scholars over the years. Besides bringing the activities and actions of terrorist groups and organizations to the attention frame of the audience members through their surveillance and correlation roles in society (which bestows on them the obligation to watch events as they unfold and aptly report back to the society to enable the process of informed formulation of opinions and decisions), the broadcast media and terrorism are intertwined in a symbiotic way. This symbiotic relationship, according to White (2020), may be illustrated thus: 'without television, terrorism becomes rather like the philosopher's hypothetical tree falling in the forest: no one hears it fall and therefore it has no reason for being. And television, without terrorism, while not deprived of all interesting things in the world, is nonetheless deprived of one of the most interesting'. This perspective holds that both terrorist groups and broadcast stations can benefit from media attention to terrorism.

On the one hand, terrorism and conflict is the bread and butter of journalism. It provides ready-made material for media men to exploit. Hence, Awoviebeet. *al.* (2019) state that the broadcast space is an aggressively competitive market with stations constantly striving to be the first to break the news and provide the details of an event. Therefore, the broadcast media are bound to react to terrorist propaganda and acts of terror, since such are strikingly terrible news. Akpan and Onwubere (2020) similarly state that in media circles, bad news is good news; therefore, the more unusual, weird or negative an event is, the more the mass media celebrate it. This implies that terrorism provides for exciting and violent stories which help the mass media to sell their news products. This way, insurgent terrorists serve the audience-attracting needs of the mass media.

Furthermore, broadcast audience members are usually excited to watch or listen to detailed stories on how these terrorism-related events unfold. Thus, in the process of satisfying the growing information needs of the audience members, broadcast stations can increase their profit margins.

Terrorists exploit the media to increase visibility and more widely distribute their cause. Baran (2008) also states that terrorists commit violent acts while looking to achieve three universal objectives: to get attention; to gain recognition; and to obtain a certain degree of respect and legitimacy, and these objectives are attainable for those who are capable of receiving the most media coverage. This implies that an act of terrorism is nothing by itself without publicity, and the success of any terrorist campaign depends decisively on the amount of publicity it receives.

Theoretical Framework

The Narcotizing Dysfunction Theory

The narcotizing dysfunction theory was propounded by Paul Larzarsfeld and Robert Merton in 1949. This theory holds that as news about an issue inundates people, they become apathetic to it, thus substituting knowing about that issue for taking action on it. According to Larzarsfeld and Merton (1949), exposure to flood of information via the mass media may serve to narcotize rather than to energize the average reader or listener. Proponents of the narcotizing dysfunction theory are of the opinion that when mass media overwhelm people with information on a particular issue, they, overtime, become uninterested in it and fail to act on the information. The narcotizing dysfunction theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it addresses how compassion fatigue is a measure of prolonged exposure to social problems such as terrorism via television. By implication, continuous exposure to an avalanche of images and footages of carnages caused by terrorist attacks by broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State may serve to narcotize rather than energize them, and in the process rob them of any sympathy or human feelings which they would have developed for the victims of terrorism.

The Theory of Systematic Desensitization

The theory of systematic desensitization was propounded by Joseph Wolpe in 1958 and is concerned with how continual exposure to a stimulus over decreases emotional responses to that stimulus overtime. This theory states that constant repetitions of violence in the media makes people jaded towards violence. In other words, continued exposure to violence in the mass media may result in desensitization, that is, will likely undermine feelings of concern, empathy or sympathy which viewers might have toward victims of actual violence. As a result, people's reactions toward victims of actual violence become less prominent because as consumers of media, they have become used to seeing explosions, carnage and mayhem which characterize media violence on a regular basis.

In essence, proponents of the theory of systematic desensitization are of the view that gradually exposing a patient to frightening stimuli will, overtime, significantly diminish the anxiety or negative effect that the stimulus once evoked. Therefore, the theory of systematic desensitization sheds light on how consistent exposure to distressing media coverage of terrorism can lead to emotional numbing and reduced compassion among audience members in Akwa Ibom State

Methodology

The research design employed for this study was a mixed method of both

content analysis and survey. Content analysis was adopted to analyse terrorism coverage by the broadcast stations of concern. The survey, on the other hand, measured the opinions, perceptions and emotional reactions to broadcast coverage of terrorism among members of the population.

For the survey, the population comprised residents of Akwa Ibom State of which projected figure at the period of the survey (2024) was 6,661,279, according to data from the National Population Commission (NPC). Therefore, the population for the survey was 6,661,279. A sample size of 400 subjects was selected based on the Taro Yamane method of sample selection. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to access respondents, proportionately, from the three senatorial districts of Uyo (139), Ikot Ekpene (136) and Eket (125). With regard to the broadcast content to be analysed, the population comprised broadcast days (with a focus on full news bulletins, headline news and magazine programmes) of eight selected broadcast stations from January 2022 to December 2023. The stations were: BBC (radio and TV), CNN, Al Jazeera, Channels TV, Arise TV, Atlantic FM and Planet FM. Within this period, each station had 730 broadcast days. As such, the total number of broadcast days across the eight stations was 5,840. Therefore, the population of broadcast content to be analysed was 5,840. Using the Taro Yamane Formula a sample of 374 broadcast days was selected for analysis. Simple random sampling was used to select the content that were analysed. The content of the select broadcast stations were categorized and analysed as follows: i) Form of Terrorist Activity ii) Perpetrator of Terrorist Activity iii) Target of Terrorist Activity iv) Responses to Terrorist Activity. The units of analysis, on the other hand, were breaking news broadcasts, full news broadcasts, specific magazine programmes, and news ticker content. Inter-coder reliability coefficient of 0.77 was established using Scott's *p* formula.

Presentation Data and Analysis

Presentation of Content Analysis Data

Table I: Volume of Terrorism Coverage by Broadcast Stations

	No. of Stories	Percentage
BBC TV	142	18
CNN	114	14
Al Jazeera	151	19
Channels TV	86	11
Arise TV	74	9
BBC Radio	118	15
Atlantic FM	52	6
Planet FM	61	8
Total	798	100

According to data in Table I, there were 798 terrorism-related stories across eight broadcast stations; and of the eight broadcast stations, Al Jazeera reported terrorism the most.

Presentation of Survey Data

Table II: Respondents' Frequency of Exposure to Broadcast Coverage of Terrorism

	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Regularly	293	74
Occasionally	64	16
Rarely	36	9
Uncertain	4	1
Total	397	100

The majority of the respondents frequently expose themselves to broadcast coverage of terrorism according to data in Table II.

Table III: Respondents' Most Preferred Medium for Terrorism Coverage

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Television	251	63
Radio	19	5
Internet and Social Media	127	32
Total	397	100

Data in Table III show that the majority of the respondents indicated that television is the preferred medium of terrorism coverage.

Table IV: Respondents' Perception of Broadcast Coverage of Terrorism

Option	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision
I Think the Broadcast media cover and present terrorism in a fair and balanced manner	75	250	44	4	373	3.06	Rejected
The way the Broadcast media cover terrorism enhances my understanding of such events	242	119	20	4	385	3.55	Accepted
I Think the broadcast media often magnify and exaggerate terrorist acts for dramatic effect	87	206	60	8	361	3.03	Rejected
Due to the way the Broadcast media cover terrorist attacks, I have become more afraid of either me or my loved ones becoming victims of a terrorist attack	256	101	28	4	389	3.56	Accepted

According to data in Table IV, the majority of the respondents, represented by a weighted mean score of 3.56, perceive broadcast coverage of terrorism as contributing to increased levels of fear and anxiety among viewers and listeners. Also, many of the respondents, represented by a weighted mean score of 3.55, think that the way the Broadcast media cover terrorism enhances public understanding of such events.

Table V: Responses on the Extent to which exposure to Broadcast Coverage of Terrorism Increases Compassion Fatigue among Respondents

	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision
	4	3	2	1			
Frequent exposure to terrorism-related news contributes to increasing my level of compassion fatigue	313	52	24	8	397	3.68	Accepted

According to data in Table V, the majority of the respondents (79%), represented by a weighted mean score of 3.68, strongly agreed that exposure to terrorism-related news contributes to increasing their levels of compassion fatigue.

Hypothesis Testing

$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$
397	91257	397	101040	95933

Source: Computed by the researcher using field data (2024)

$$r = \frac{4(95933) - (397 * 397)}{\sqrt{(4 * 91257) - (397)^2(4 * 101040) - (397)^2}}$$

$$r = \frac{383,732 - 157,609}{\sqrt{(365,028 - 157,609)(404,160 - 157,609)}}$$

$$r = \frac{226,123}{\sqrt{207,419 * 246,551}}$$

$$r = \frac{226,123}{\sqrt{51,139,361,869}}$$

$$r = \frac{226,123}{226,140}$$

$$r = 0.99$$

The critical value of r at degree of freedom 2 and level of significance 0.05 is 0.95; which is lower than the calculated correlational coefficient value of 0.99. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternate, which states that there is a significant relationship between exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism and compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State. Hence, it may be concluded that there is a high prevalence of compassion fatigue among broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State due to frequent exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the volume of terrorism coverage on broadcast stations?

According to data in Table I, there were more than 798 terrorism-related stories across the eight stations of concern from 2022 to 2023. If this figure is divided by the sample size (374), the result (2.13) would suggest that each station on average aired two terrorism-related content daily. Therefore, it may be inferred that broadcast stations extensively cover terrorism.

This finding is supported by Akpan and Onwubere (2020) and Kente and Sheyigari (2021). According to Akpan and Onwubere (2020), there is hardly a day that passes without the broadcast media (particularly television) transmitting reports, images or footages of traumatic events into the homes of the consuming public. Nigeria's broadcast space is filled, daily, with such traumatic events, and this is the trend globally. Kente and Sheyigari (2021) similarly state that the broadcast media globally are no strangers to the coverage of violent conflicts, including acts of terrorism – suicide bombings, massacres, abductions and other deadly acts – at national and international fronts.

Also, from the data in Table I, it may be seen that local broadcast stations do not cover terrorism as much as foreign broadcast stations, given that local stations (Channels TV, Arise TV, Atlantic FM and Planet FM) contributed only 34% of the total volume of terrorism coverage, compared to foreign/international broadcast stations (BBC Radio and TV, CNN and Al Jazeera) which contributed 66%. Therefore, it may be further inferred that terrorism is reported more by international broadcast stations than local stations. This contradicts the finding of Gever and Nwabuzor (2018), that there is higher frequency of insurgency and terrorism coverage on local broadcast stations (NTA, FRCN and AIT) than there is on foreign stations (CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera). The finding that foreign broadcast stations report terrorism more frequently than their local counter parts is also supported by Horkovska (2023) who states that transnational radio and television stations such as CNN, BBC, Aljazeera, as well as their numerous counterparts, due to the fast-paced 24 hours a day news cycle which is typical of these stations, consistently report and transmit images and footages of numerous global crises, including incidents of terrorist attacks worldwide, so much so that it becomes

somewhat difficult for audience members to take breaks from consuming such news reports.

Research Question Two: To what extent are audience members in Akwa Ibom State exposed to broadcast coverage of terrorism?

According to the data in Table II, the majority of the respondents (74%) indicated that they regularly exposed themselves to broadcast coverage of terrorism. Given the percentage of respondents who indicated that they regularly exposed themselves to broadcast coverage of terrorism and that television, a broadcast medium, was the most patronised medium of coverage of terrorism among the respondents (as shown in Table III), it may be inferred that broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State are frequently exposed to coverage of terrorism on television.

This finding is in line with Orlu-Orlu (2017), Ugande and Chile (2017), and Akpan and Onwubere (2020). According to Orlu-Orlu (2017), audience members, to a large extent, exposed themselves to NTA and Channels TV coverage of the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction as well as other reports related to the Boko Haram crisis. Similarly, Ugande and Chile (2017) note that issues surrounding Boko Haram attacks were often featured in the broadcast media and generated significant audience attention given that respondents indicated that these were the most important issues at the time and agreed that they frequently discussed these issues among themselves. Akpan and Onwubere (2020) further note that the broadcast media feed the audience members every minute of the day. This is because they have become part of people's lives so much so that it has become difficult for the audience members to be divorced from the activities on the screen. As a result, the audience members do not need to invite the footages and reports of terrorist-related activities (which dominate the global media landscape) that is beamed into their homes through television. They are left with no choice but to receive these contents because of the lure and pervasiveness of the television as well as the innate desire on their part to have the latest update on global events.

Research Question Three: How do audience members in Akwa Ibom State perceive broadcast coverage of terrorism?

As shown in Table IV, broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State, based on their responses, generally hold a negative perception concerning broadcast coverage of terrorism given that the majority of their responses (represented by a weighted mean score of 3.49) showed a high percentage of strong agreement with the notion that broadcast media, through the way they cover and report issues of terrorism, contribute to increasing the level of fear and anxiety in society. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that broadcast coverage of terrorism contributes to spreading and increasing fear and anxiety among broadcast audience members.

However, many of them (represented by a weighted mean score of 3.44) seem to hold a rather positive perception concerning terrorism coverage, given that their responses show an equally high percentage of strong agreement with the notion that broadcast coverage of terrorism enhances public understanding of terrorism-related events, but a little lower than that of those who think it contributes to spreading and increasing fear and anxiety among broadcast audience members. Therefore, it may be inferred that broadcast audience members are of the opinion that broadcast coverage of terrorism contributes to spreading and increasing fear and anxiety in society, and also think that that the way the broadcast media cover and report terrorism enhances public understanding of terrorism-related events.

This finding is in line with Gulerand Piazza (2024) and Akpan and Onwubere (2020). According to Gulerand Piazza (2024), even though the actual odds of being a victim of a terrorist attack is relatively low, most Americans are either afraid or very afraid of terrorist attacks or being victim of a terrorist attack and this is as a result of frequent consumption of terrorism-related media content. This implies that individuals who frequently expose themselves to broadcast coverage of terrorism often tend to present higher levels of fear of terrorism and of them being victims of a terrorist attack. Similarly, Akpan and Onwubere (2020) also note that the broadcast media, through the exercise of their responsibilities of surveillance and correlation, enhance public understanding of numerous social issues (including terrorism) by providing explanations, interpretations and comments on the meaning of events and conditions in the society and world, thereby indicating relations of power and facilitating innovation, adaptation and progress. However, the exercise of these great and primary functions is not without some unintended, often negative consequences, one of which being that the broadcast media, by disseminating news with traumatic and horrible scenes (often related to terrorist attacks), often cause panic among audience members.

By implications, heightened fear and anxiety as a result of exposure to terrorism coverage may have a significant impact on individual behavior in the society. Individuals may become withdrawn and could resort to avoiding public spaces due to fear of the possibility of an attack. Individuals may also perceive certain activities, such as travel, shopping, etc as being too risky and as such may refrain from indulging in them. Furthermore, broadcast audience members' perception of coverage of terrorism as contributing to increasing collective levels of fear, panic and anxiety in society has a tendency to erode public trust in the government as well as institutions saddled with the responsibility for ensuring public safety and security.

Research Question Four: To what extent does exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism increase compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State?

According to data in Table V, the majority of the respondents (represented by a weighted mean of 3.68) agreed that frequent exposure to terrorism-related news contributed to increasing their level of compassion fatigue. Given this, it would not be out of place to say that there is a significant relationship between exposure of audience members to broadcast coverage of terrorism and audience members' level of compassion fatigue. The strength of this association was tested using the PPMC, and the result showed that there is indeed a significant relationship between exposure of audience members in Akwa Ibom State to broadcast coverage of terrorism and their level of compassion fatigue. Therefore, it may be inferred that exposure to broadcast coverage of terrorism significantly contributes to increasing compassion fatigue among audience members in Akwa Ibom State.

This finding is in line with Robert, *et. al.* (2021); Kanwal and Yousaf (2022), Chao, *et. al.* (2020), Hanan, *et. al.* (2021), Akpan and Onwubere (2020), and Horkovska (2023). According to Robert, *et. al.* (2021), greater exposure to media coverage of terrorism via television and the internet was positively associated with numerous negative psychological effects, including post-traumatic stress symptoms. Similarly, Kanwal and Yousaf (2022) state that the majority of University students in Pakistan who indicated that they often viewed potentially traumatic media content, such as wars, natural disasters, graphic details of accidents, human physical abuse and acts of terrorism, also indicated that they often experienced stress, anxiety, symptoms of depression, eating disorders and other psychological issues, which have a significant negative impact on their academic performance and their mental health. Chao, *et. al.* (2020) also state that frequent media use during periods of crises (such as the outbreak of a pandemic or the advent of a terrorist attack) is significantly associated with more negative psychological outcomes, including negative affect, depression, anxiety, and stress. Akpan and Onwubere (2020) also state that consistent media reporting of trauma helps to decrease the stock of positive emotions in the audience members, for the simple reason that the scenes have become common place and the audience members have become used to the situation. At a point, the audience members appear drugged into the inactivity of accepting the traumatic scenes and the lot of the victims as natural. This further manifests in salient inactions – which amount to actions – of quietly withdrawing the emotional support for the victims. Horkovska (2023) also states that every day, people hear news stories about terrorism related incidents, including mass shootings, suicide bombings, war crimes, torture, kidnappings and abductions; so, it can become overwhelming to stay informed and engaged. The 24-hour coverage of trauma

and world suffering, particularly on television, often causes stress, making people feel despair, and limit their ability to feel empathy. Eventually, they start feeling exhausted, and their ability to empathise starts to wane.

This finding is also in line with the major postulates of the narcotizing dysfunction theory which holds that as news about an issue inundates people, they become apathetic to it, and they may mistake knowing about that issue for taking action on it. Therefore, the mass media's overwhelming flow of information often causes the populace to become passive in their social activism. By implication, frequent exposure to an avalanche of images and footage of carnage caused by terrorist attacks often has a numbing or desensitizing effect on broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State. Rather than energize or mobilize them to take some course of action or feel empathetic towards the victims of terrorism, it often overwhelms them, thereby leading to a sense of numbness and emotional detachment. As a result, they have become less sensitive and less reactive to the human suffering depicted in such reports, and this can ultimately kill their capacity for sympathy or empathy towards victims of terrorism as well as other forms of world suffering.

Conclusion

From the findings, it is hereby concluded that broadcast coverage of terrorism significantly contributes to escalating compassion fatigue among audience members. Therefore, frequent exposure of broadcast audience members to distressing and traumatic content (including terrorism-related news coverage) often, in the long run, causes the audience members to become less sympathetic because the scenes depicted in such content have become part of their daily existence.

Recommendations

- i. Broadcast stations should endeavour to limit the frequency as well as the intensity of terrorism coverage. They can do this by scheduling breaks between news segments and offering other light-hearted content which can provide audience members with some much-needed relief from frequent exposure to distressing or traumatic content.
- ii. Broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State can help themselves by engaging in mindful consumption of terrorism-related news.
- iii. Broadcast audience members in Akwa Ibom State should prioritize self-care and also seek emotional support in order to enhance their resilience and emotional wellbeing. They can do this by engaging in activities which promote relaxation (such as meditation, yoga, nature walks, etc), exercising frequently so as to maintain physical and mental wellbeing, connecting with friends and family members with whom they can share their feelings and experiences, or seeking

professional help from mental health professionals who can provide support and guidance tailored to specific needs.

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PSYCHOLOGY OF PLAYFUL COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

The concept of playful communication or even the use of play in communication to grab and sustain audience attention is a rising phenomenon that is yet to be fully explored. Playful communication involves the use of humour, irony, creativity, characters etc. to interact with and engage the audience. Previous research has explored audience behaviour and playful communication as separate concepts not necessarily examining the influence of playful communication on audience behaviour, hence this paper. The Play Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory are used to theoretically frame the work. Using the desk research methodology, it is revealed that audience members are more emotionally connected to content with elements of humour and are more likely to recall and engage such messages as they enhance their mood and grab their attention. They also perceive humorous content as more relatable and authentic.

Introduction

Ever scrolled through social media and seen a video that made you laugh so hard while on a train? Have you seen a commercial that made you unconsciously smile so heartedly? The ubiquity of playful communication has become more apparent in recent times, garnering attention in media, advertising and entertainment. Playful communication involves the use of creativity, humour, figures of speech: irony, sarcasm, etc., characters and games to give the audience a more interactive and engaging communication experience. The humorous content of a message may have a persuasive effect, increase message liking, and create a positive mood (Djambaska et al, 2016).

It is pivotal for media content creators, educators, marketers, psychologists, etc to understand the behaviour and response of their audience to playful elements in communication, especially in the information age where skits, animations, mobile games and comic graphics are becoming prevalent and more appealing to the audience. The use of play in communication makes the audience emotionally attached to the source of communication, which is the brand that puts out the content. A vivid example is the Duolingo app (an app that teaches different languages) that uses animated characters to interact with the users when users do well in their quizzes and even sends funny reminders to the users when they stay a while without using the app. A user may be compelled to continue using the app, whether there is a personal benefit for the user or

not, but to continue having that experience. The use of humour, therefore, in communication fosters positive brand perception and loyalty. This obviously results from audience research and a commendable understanding of audience behaviour.

Humour is found everywhere in the movie industry, on television, in books and newspapers, in our conversations, and in graffiti (Djambaska et al, 2016). The use of exaggerated characters, absurd events, and sarcasm in movies provides comic relief or relief from tension in action movies or drama or even the use of satire to highlight political, social, or cultural concerns in comedy films. Television shows and radio programmes use 'play' to make concepts understandable to children, reach locales of a community, or generally explore everyday life, relationships, and work environments, making them very relatable to a wide audience. According to Karels and De la Hera (2021), there is the use of a playful visual design in prints that is meant to instil a playful mind-set; the use of strategies based on a pleasurable interactive experiential logic; the liberation of unspoken topics of a dark, solemn, and negative nature in a playful way. Daily conversations with friends, colleagues etc. have some elements of 'play' in them getting people so attached to the people that make them more joyful. With the use of graffiti, serious matters of concern are displayed in playful, relatable artistic language.

The psychology of playful communication and its impact on audience behaviour are fundamental in effective and strategic communication. This article therefore aims to explore the psychology of playful communication and its influence on audience behaviour, bearing in mind that playfulness goes beyond mere aesthetic choice to the human desire for creativity, amusement, and emotional connection. When used effectively, playful communication can improve cognitive engagement and arouse emotional responses; thus examining how playful communication influences audience engagement, retention, and interaction constitutes a reasonable chunk of the thrust of this article. Therefore, Play Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory provide the theoretical background for understanding how play influences human behaviour and exposes the cognitive and emotional state of playful communication.

Theoretical Framework

This article is anchored on the framework of the Play Theory and the Uses and Gratification Theory.

Play Theory

The Play Theory was propounded by a British social scientist William Stephenson, who started out in Physics but later transitioned to Psychology. He first introduced the theory in his book in 1967, titled "The Play Theory of Mass Communication." Earlier communication theories focused on media as a tool of

education, persuasion, and control, thereby having some influence on the audience and shaping public opinion. Play theory is based on the idea that the media cannot have harmful effects because the audience uses them primarily for entertainment, rather than as serious sources of information. Play Theory of Mass Communication is a theory that holds that the first function of mass media is to provide entertainment (Eke and Adeyemi, 2024).

Regarding the newspapers, Stephenson developed and defended the Ludenic Theory of News reading: he argues they are read, to provide pleasure and relaxation instead of information and illumination, as believed by many media authors and readers. People's daily withdrawal from the mass media in their after-hours is a matter of subjectivity. The effect of mass communication is neither escapism nor seduction of the masses. Rather, it is seen as anti-anxiety-producing, and is regarded as communication pleasure (Akinjogbin and Kayode, 2011).

Stephenson's Play Theory underscores the significance of play in both individual and collective contexts (Eke and Adeyemi, 2024). It highlights the idea that play serves as a medium through which people can engage with one another and the world around them in a more profound and meaningful way. This engagement fosters creativity, innovation and a deeper understanding of oneself and others, ultimately contributing to the enrichment of human life and culture (Stephenson, 1967 as cited in Eke and Adeyemi, 2024). Although the most powerful implications of Play Theory relate to the individual, Stephenson's perspective on the value of play is rooted in the work of Johan Huizinga, whose theories dealt with the broad cultural value of play. Stephenson credits Huizinga's 'Homo Ludens', which was published in 1938, as marking the beginning of modern thinking about play. Stephenson suggests that before Huizinga's work, 'play' was viewed as a frivolous activity, whereas following Homo Ludens, play began to be recognised as a process that gave "rise to useful conventions that permit culture to evolve and stabilise". (Worsfold, 2007 as cited in Akinjogbin and Kayode, 2011).

William Stephenson's Play Theory, suggests that our interaction with various forms of mass communication helps us create and enhance our identities. Stephenson introduced the Play Theory with the words, "The media have been looked at through the ideas of morality, when, instead, what is required is a fresh glance at people existing in their own right for the first time." However, the most powerful implications of this theory relate to the individual (Eke and Adeyemi, 2024).

According to Akinjogbin and Kayode (2011), Play Theory generally postulates the following:

1. Play is distinguishable from work - play is self-sufficient, an interlude from work, and work is not an interlude; it produces goods and services;

2. Communication-pain is a command for work and action, production, education and development of skills, whereas communication-pleasure is enjoyment, contentment, and delight as found in entertainment;
3. Much work and play is subject to social control and some is a matter of convergent selectivity. Social control is how cultures function from involuntary categorical imperatives, whereas convergent selectivity is relative freedom from social control, tending toward individuality of choice in behaviour;
4. People are differently involved in conditions of social control and convergent selectivity. In situations of social control, people develop self-attitude and stature but in convergent selectivity people exist for themselves; the mass media offer an opportunity for convergent selectivity.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, developed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in 1973, is critical to understanding audience behaviour as it relates to playful communication. This theory suggests that media users actively seek specific content to satisfy their various needs, such as pleasure-seeking, information and learning, and ease of use (Hornoiu et al., 2024).

Katz et al (1973), as cited in Wibowo (2022), posit that every audience is an active user and always has a reason to use media to satisfy his or her need. Uses and Gratifications theory explains why people satisfy a certain need and how they do it. This theory suggests that people freely and consciously choose their type of platform usage to meet their necessities (Sahu, 2021 as cited in Wibowo, 2022). This theory focuses on the effect of media on active audiences and not passive audiences, as the active audiences consume media content, not based on their availability but on their ability to offer them certain gratifications.

Media can be used by individuals to ease tensions and conflicts and give attention to social situations and problems (Fuchs, 2016 as cited in Yüksel et al., 2023). Media industries are absolved of responsibility when negative media effects result from audience members' media choices and usage of the content they produce or carry. The media simply gives people what they want (Baran, 2019, as cited in Yüksel et al., 2023). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch mention five fundamental elements of the uses and gratifications theory:

1. The audience is active, and media use serves a specific purpose;
2. Individuals manage the relationship between meeting needs and media choices;
3. Media compete with other sources in meeting needs (human needs are diverse, and some can be satisfied through media use while others through different means, with the level of need satisfaction through media being variable);

4. Methodologically, it is important that people consciously use media and can identify interests and motives that provide an appropriate image of media usage;
5. Audience orientation should be investigated from individuals' perspectives, separate from value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973 as cited in Stamenković & Mitrović, 2023).

Methodology

The desk study research design was utilised to understand the psychology of playful communication and its influence on audience behaviour. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection (Ngobi, 2024). Desk research (secondary study) is a method that consists of the analysis of available data sources, including their compilation, mutual verification, and processing and it involves the collecting of data from existing resources; hence, it is often considered a low-cost technique (Nooraini, 2013 as cited in Turon and Kubik, 2021).

Play

Why do humans play? For well more than 100 years, this question has attracted the attention of researchers from a wide range of disciplines (Andersen et al., 2022). This may be because play, despite its omnipresence, is one of the few human universals that do not seem to have an obvious immediate benefit to the player visible to outside observers (Martin & Caro, 1985 as cited in Andersen et al., 2022). Although very challenging to define, play, generally, is understood to be spontaneous, internally motivated behaviour exclusively initiated by individuals who are free from sickness, stress and hunger (Burghardt, 2005 as cited in Andersen et al., 2022) and, typically, it is experientially associated with positive feelings (Bateson & Martin, 2013 as cited in Andersen et al., 2022).

People play because they want pleasure and satisfaction; they want to ease off some stress and tension. Johan Huizinga posited in his classic essay into the cultural history of play, *Homo Ludens*, 'play impulse' is the root of all culture, yet also as being outside of the ordinary order of things – play is capable of utterly absorbing the player, but there is no material interest as the primary motivation for play (Mäyrä, 2012). One may not need to be paid to play, for instance, but they play anyway; there is usually no tangible gain. Play brings joy, fosters creativity, and aids learning. For instance, if someone had a rough day at work, he or she may want to stop over at a friend's place for a chat over dinner or maybe see a movie at home, these are different ways of relaxing and winding down, which makes up the concept of play. We enjoy playing for its own sake, and play activities create their subset of reality, within which the rules of 'play'

determine the order of things (Huizinga, 1955 as cited in Mäyrä, 2012).

Karels and De La Hera (2021) outline the thoughts of scholars such as Sutton-Smith (1997) and, more recently, Stenros (2015), and Sicart (2014) describing play as, firstly, contextual, meaning it relies on the context that goes beyond physical space and includes people, objects, negotiations and cultures; secondly, carnivalesque, meaning that play is subversive and critical, balancing between creation and destruction based on player satisfaction or “embodied laughter”; play is also appropriative, meaning that it usurps the context it exhibits and is not totally predetermined by the context; next, play is disruptive, this being a result of its appropriative nature; it changes or disrupts the current circumstances and assumptions, seeing play as autotelic entails having its own goals and purposes, and its own sense of time and space, that are not rigid but open for negotiation, lastly, Sicart sees play as creative and personal as it permits a variety of expression and as the effects of play, even collective play, are internalized in each individual person (Sicart, 2014 as cited in Karels and De La Hera, 2021). Play is relative; what is play to one may not be same to another, and the environment that fosters or fits play for one may not be same for the other.

Playful Communication

The psychological measurements of playfulness dedicate attention to the defining characteristics of a playful personality, such as being 'fun-loving', having a sense of humour, being capable of enjoying 'silliness' or being informal and whimsical (Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997 as cited in Mäyrä, 2012). Barnett has produced a working definition of playfulness for personality study purposes:

Playfulness is the predisposition to frame (or reframe) a situation in such a way as to provide oneself (and possibly others) with amusement, humor, and/or entertainment. Individuals who have such a heightened predisposition are typically funny, humorous, spontaneous, unpredictable, impulsive, active, energetic, adventurous, sociable, outgoing, cheerful, and happy, and are likely to manifest playful behaviour by joking, teasing, clowning, and acting silly. Mäyrä (2012)

Playfulness is a state, ability or disposition of a person to redefine situations or events to make them relieving, entertaining, or less stressful. While this state is believed to often accompany play, it is also believed to sometimes facilitate it. In the predictive processing theory of mood, repeated experiences of better-than-expected error slopes improve mood (Rutledge et al., 2014), making the agent more optimistic, and expect attractive opportunities to reduce error (Andersen et al., 2022).

Sicart (2014), as cited in Karels and De La Hera, (2021), distinguishes play as an activity, in that it is composed of actions performed for a purpose, and playfulness as an

attitude, in that it is a psychological, physical, or emotional stance towards an activity. This seemingly subtle distinction makes all the difference when it comes to studying how adults interact with the world in contemporary society (Karels and De La Hera, 2021). Adults want to the attitude of play but do not want to partake in the activity of play, as Sicart plainly states, “We want play without play.” There is the need for playfulness and its manifestation in play especially in communication; however, the mindset of wanting play without play has been the reason communicators are unable to connect with the audience. This is because some come off as too serious or using the wrong expressions. This is certainly one of the reasons many ads fail, because they do not resonate with the audience and are not memorable. Therefore, the definitive foundation that this study relies on is Sicart's (2014 as cited in Karels and De La Hera, 2021).

a way of engaging with particular contexts and objects that is similar to play but respects the purposes and goals of that object or context. [...] Playfulness is projecting some of the characteristics of play into non-play activities.

According to Karels and De La Hera (2021), Sicart further attributes the following five characteristics to playfulness: appropriative, disruptive, carnivalesque, creative and personal. In contradistinction to play, playfulness does not share the qualities of being autotelic and contextual because it does not carry a purpose and context in its own right, but rather has to respect the purpose and serve the context of the non-play activity it is applied to. One might wonder how playfulness can be studied in the context of communication when it is an attitude or mindset. To this end, Fiske's (1987) understanding of the duality of playfulness provides enlightenment. In its relationship between a medium and its user, playfulness is something that a media text can have (design) and something that it, in turn, enables its user to develop: a playful interpretation of that text (experience). Therefore, in the context of communication, this portrays that communication can be given a playful approach that evokes some level of emotional connection, playful reaction, and interpretation with the audience.

Psychology of Humour and Audience Behaviour

Audience behaviour, in the light of playful communication, is influenced by a spectrum of factors especially psychological factors and audiences engage in playful communication differently depending on their needs, preferences, and literacy. Playful communication often involves the use of humour, irony and creativity; it is, therefore, pivotal to understand how playful communication influences audience cognitive engagement and emotional response. Humour, as a concept, involves any spoken, written or published joke that provokes or elicits laughter or a smile in the audience, and its therapeutic effect has been acknowledged by research across different disciplines globally (Odunlami et al., 2020).

Emotional Responses

Humour, is a central component of playful communication, promoting engagement, fostering bond, providing pleasure, and stimulating positive emotions like joy, amusement, and relief and as a means of providing pleasure. Humour builds connection between the source and receiver of a message, as people are more responsive to messages that resonate with them and they can connect with; they could respond by sharing, commenting or liking it on social media. Humour has a positive effect on attention, persuasion, recall, memorability and attitude towards the message, which directly influences a positive effect on attitude towards the brand or message source, (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992 as cited in Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2019). It can enhance attention, name registration and mood (Weinberger & Spotts, 1989 as cited in Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2019) thereby fostering brand recall. For instance, the old time Blue Band Butter ad that featured children singing “B without BB is like a train without an engine”. This ad was one of the best at the time, as it was memorable and resonated with the audience using play on words. One would find it difficult to erase their memory off the mind. Evidently, humour influences audience behaviour. Mood and attention are mediators of humour strength, that is, they influence the recall of the message. Those positive effects are explained by the fact that humour is an anticipation of enjoyment. Therefore, there is a higher likelihood of attendance (Scott et al., 1990 as cited in Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2019) of the content.

Emotional resonance is important in communication, where humour can soften resistance to persuasive messages and create a positive association with the source (Chung & Zhao, 2003). While some people are just excited and amused, and laugh off the underlying meaning humorous messages intend to convey for their education, knowledge, or sensitisation, studies have suggested that the purpose of humour is not only to make others laugh or amuse the audience but to communicate serious messages in such a way as to relieve the receivers of emotional burden (Odunlami et al., 2020). It can be cognitively tasking to process a bulk of information or to take in a hard truth, but the use of humour, transcending just causing a feeling of excitement or relaxation, also helps convey serious messages or hard truths more subtly. Similarly, psychological studies have shown that exposure to humorous stimuli produces an increase in positive effect and mood of the audience. (Miltner, 2014; Boxman-Shabtai, 2015; Shifman, Coleman & Ward, 2007 as cited in Odunlami et al., 2020). However, individual differences in humour styles and cultural backgrounds greatly influence emotional responses to playful communication, for example, what one may consider to be humorous in one culture, another from another culture, may find offensive or confusing, leading to different emotional reactions (Lynch, 2002); those who appreciate self-enhancing humour, may respond positively to humorous messages, while those who prefer affiliative humour, may find satire or sarcasm alienating (Martin, 2007). Humour plays an important role in driving audience conversations on social media (Ge

et al., 2018), and the use of social media to communicate brand messages humorously cannot be overstated. Sadly, there is still a huge amount potential of social media, unharnessed by businesses and brands.

It is well-recognised that humour facilitates and creates positive interpersonal interaction (Romero and Cruthirds, 2006 as cited in Ge et al., 2018) and assists a speaker in receiving support and contributions from the audience (Holmes and Marra, 2002 as cited in Ge et al., 2018). In the social media context, the use of humour to encourage consumer interactions has become an emerging trend. A survey by Nielsen shows that firm-initiated humorous online activity is ranked as the top reason that consumers are willing to interact with firms. As opposed to non-humour posts, humour posts tend to have a longer life span, often still receiving responses after months (Highfield, 2015 as cited in Ge et al., 2018). On social media, brands could have increased followership, numerous reposts and shares in a very short time through the use of humour in the communication messages.

Cognitive Engagement

A substantial amount of empirical studies have been carried out on the ability of humour to attract and maintain attention (Banas et al., 2011 as cited in Ogba, 2021) and encourage deeper cognitive involvement as audiences are actively involved in the process of interpreting the message because these messages mostly contain connotative and denotative meanings. They can also activate heuristic processing, where they use mental shortcuts to quickly interpret the message without thinking deeply about it (Chaiken, 1980), so they associate humour with authenticity, especially in digital media where content is perceived as more relatable. It has been proven in various pedagogical studies that humour aids the learning process and can be a good device for spreading difficult messages in difficult times, for example, during the period of COVID-19 (Ogba, 2021). The encouraging nature of humour was capable of driving people to address Covid-19-related issues, because “people have a good recall for specific humorous examples” (Kaplan & Pascoe, 1977 as cited in Ogba, 2021).

However, as individuals enjoy comedy messages and tend to have a positive view of the messenger, they are less likely to scrutinise and argue against the information. This improves the conditions for persuasion and creates a central route of reception, as can be deduced by the high motivation (Ogba, 2021). Humour is generally accepted by audiences in various media contexts because it entertains them (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989 as cited Barriopedro et al., 2019). Studies show that humor enhances memory retention when it is both convincing and relevant to the message, mediated by the consumer's interest and state of mind (Cline & Kellaries, 2007 as cited by Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This article examined the psychological impact of playful communication on audience behaviour, revealing that audiences connect more and are more likely to recall messages or content with humorous effects; the use of play in communication by marketers, and media content creators cannot be overstated. Playful communication involves the use of humour, creativity, irony, etc., to give audiences a more interactive and engaging experience.

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AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHATBOTS BY CUSTOMERS OF SELECT BANKS IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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and

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Abstract

This study employed the survey research technique and the questionnaire as instrument in gathering primary data from customers of Zenith, UBA, and Stanbic IBTC banks in Akwa Ibom State in order to ascertain whether any significant relationship existed between their utilisation of the banks' AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions and patronage of the banks. The population of this study comprised a cumulative population of 643,487 customers of the select banks while data aimed at achieving the research objectives were collected from a sample of 400 customers of the select banks as determined using the Taro Yamene formula. To reach the respondents with the research instrument, the researcher adopted the Probability Proportionate to Size (P.P.S) and availability sampling procedures. The primary data collected were analysed using simple percentage and presented in frequency tables while the correlational analyses of the variables of the study were done using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical method commonly symbolised as r . The major objective of the study was to ascertain the extent to which customers of the select banks are aware of AI-chatbots as interface for self-service banking transactions and to assess the perception of customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State regarding the banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions. Findings of the study indicated that customers of the select banks utilised the banks' AI-chatbots for self-service transactions (194[49%]). It was also found that customers utilisation of the banks' AI-chatbots influenced their perception of the banks (236[59%]). Other findings revealed that the select banks' customers predominantly utilised the banks' AI-chatbots for making enquiries (104[26%]). The correlational analysis of the hypothetical variables of the study showed that a significant positive correlations exist between the variables at .05 level, proving that the probability that the significance of the correlations between the variables was simply due to error or chance was less than 0.1%. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study was upheld. Among other relevant recommendations, the Branch Managers, Corporate Communications/Public Relations, and Technical/ICT units of the select banks should create the needed awareness of AI-chatbots among some sections of their clientele in order to ensure wider acceptance, adoption, and utilisation of the self-service innovations.

Introduction

The advent and proliferation of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) have redefined the communication landscape. The affordances of the ICTs have given rise to the emergence of new and emerging media technologies and innovations with consequences on human communication and social relationships. Extant literature and expositions expounding heavily on the critical thoughts of renowned technological determinists such as Thorstein Veblen, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Roger Fidler, and Neil Postman are quite specific on the dynamics of

emerging media technologies. Such literature are specifically concerned with technesis on how technological affordances of emerging media are stirring communication revolutions that are redefining and disrupting the core of humanistic communication processes across social, cultural, and organisational settings (Katz, 2017a; Katz, 2017b).

The perceived impacts and utility of these new and emerging forms of communication technologies on (human) communication are boundless. Hence, their overbearing impacts and utility permeate every form of human communication-oriented endeavours. From trade, commerce, business, advertising, public relations, marketing, human resources, media relations, financial public relations, corporate/organisational communication, to customer relationship management, one can hardly ignore the over-dependence on ICTs and their allied innovations for specialised and expert functions.

As human communication-related needs keep changing within social, cultural, and organisational contexts, emerging ICTs resources, innovations, and tools have also evolved technologically to cater to the varied end-users' needs in such regards. The affordances of ICTs and their composite applications serve diverse needs in diverse sectors of a nation's economy. They facilitate smooth running of enterprises as they guarantee timely and spontaneous access to knowledge and information, speed in transaction processes, and provision of opportunities for human beings to interact with one another in novel yet dynamic ways.

The self-service innovations heralded by ICTs blur and blend the barrier of distance in business transactions, customer relationships, business dealings as well as delivering services all round the clock without errors or mistakes that come with human fatigue, deficiencies, pressures, stress, and so on (Classhall.com, 2022). With the self-service innovations powered by ICTs, business transactions are not limited to work hours. This entails that potential and current customers of a service-oriented organisations such as banks can have unlimited and unrestricted virtual access to the organisations' offerings anytime and anywhere (Suryani, 2010).

The adoption and utilisation of ICTs and allied protocols in business sectors, most especially, in retail banking comes on the heels of the benefits they serve the banking industry. As the need and demand for boundless, limitless, and timeless customer relationship management and customer care surge, the reliance on ICTs to meet those needs and demands is paramount and sacrosanct. In view of meeting their customer relations objectives, most retail banking organisations have adopted smarter and intelligent ICTs' expert system and programme called the artificial intelligence (AI) to serve as an extension to human functions.

With rapid, spontaneous, instantaneous, consistent, precise, and accurate result-

oriented and solution-packed banking services made available to customers upon their requests anytime and anywhere, AI-powered chatbots have improved banks' self-service windows by engaging customers in providing solutions. This has a way of strengthening banks' customer relationship ends. No longer would customers have to be kept on a long queue even with the minutest of issues, complaints, queries or requests only to be attended to by an aggressive, tired, and harsh customer care agents whose shortcomings, misbehaviours, negative energies, and weaknesses as occasioned by the human nature may create impression issues that may stall patronage of the banks. It is against the background of attempting to empirically refute or validate the claim that the awareness and utilisation of AI-chatbots by customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Research Problem

The utilisation of AI-powered chatbots by select banks in Akwa Ibom State is premeditated upon the need and desire to facilitate corporate interactive engagement, customers' self-service, and building mutually-beneficial relationships between the banks and their customers. Hence, customer relationship management is the fulcrum upon which the utilisation of AI-chatbots by banks is hinged.

As the AI-enabled chatbots are not vulnerable to human inadequacies, weaknesses, complaints, fatigue, strains, emotional outburst, and allied shortcomings characterised by human nature, they deliver on their programmed expertise with precision, accuracy, consistency, limited errors, and with speed. These justifications may be the strong points for the adoption of AI-powered chatbots such as *Zenith Intelligence Virtual Assistant* (ZIVA) by Zenith Bank; *Leo* by United Bank for Africa (UBA); and *Sami* by Stanbic IBTC Bank.

Informed by the researcher's experiential knowledge gained through personal observation of the select banks' integration of self-service innovations, it seems that the banks have integrated AI-powered chatbots as an extension of the financial services, operations, and practices often undertaken by their human service employees. The essence may be to engender self-service windows where customers can personally access the banks' services and perform personalised financial operations round the clock. Nevertheless, it is not certain whether the customers of the select banks are aware of the availability of the AI-powered chatbots integrated into their banks' financial services. It is also uncertain whether the customers of the banks do engage the self-service interfaces of their banks' AI-powered chatbots or leverage their affordances in their financial dealings and transactions with the banks.\

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- find out the extent to which customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State are aware of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions; and
- assess the perception of customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State regarding the banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions.

Research Questions

This study sought answers to the following research questions:

- To what extent are customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State aware of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions?
- What is the perception of customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State regarding their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will have huge implications for advancing the cores of bank industry practices, pedagogy/scholarship/academia, and future researches. For the banking industry, the findings of this study will serve as perception indices for banks deploying AI-chatbots to assuage the opinions, perceptions, sentiments, reactions, attitudes, and behaviours of customers regarding the banks' adoption, integration and utilisation of the innovations for banking operations. Management, board of directors, human/public/customer relations managers, and branch managers of banks will find the findings of this study instrumental as it will serve a valid reference material for informing their policy thrust regarding the uses, gratifications, benefits and systemic challenges that come with the adoption, integration, and utilisation of financial innovations such as AI-chatbots to extend and advance banking functions, processes, and operations. These stakeholders will, through the findings of this study, have firsthand experience and exposure to perceptual issues, processes, or limitations that shroud customers' appreciation, acceptance, deployment, and adoption of AI-chatbots in performing their banking processes and operations.

For future researchers, the findings of this study shall serve as empirical bases and underpinnings in researches that shall be conducted in the future on the application of AI-chatbots, customer perception and customer relationship management. It shall also serve as guide, reference, and blueprint for further researchers who shall embark on the nature of this work in the future.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is probably the defining technological innovation sprouted by the robust affordances of information and communication technologies of the last decade, and perhaps also the next (Boucher, 2020). The term 'Artificial Intelligence' was coined by Professor John McCarthy (an emeritus Professor at Stanford University) in 1955 who saw the innovation as basically consisting the scientific and engineering processes of making intelligent machines (Manning, 2020). Emphasis in the early conception of the innovation was placed on how to create clever machines that can learn and assimilate task-related queries, at least somewhat like human beings do (Manning, 2020).

At the wake of artificial intelligence, there have been series of critical paradigms questioning and challenging the assumed 'intelligence' of artificial intelligence especially when compared to human intelligence. Exponents of artificial intelligence are of the view that the innovation will surpass the human intelligence. This position has raised serious refutations about AI surpassing human intelligence within the framework of analysis that it is from human intelligence that artificial intelligence is built and programmed and there will be no way it will surpass the intelligence of its creators. To this end, Boucher (2020) avers that artificial intelligence is a comprehensive concept that entails broad spectrum of smart technological innovations or programmes that are quite profound and unique for their display of intelligence which is subject to diverse interpretations.

Baum (2023) sees artificial intelligence as the study of computer systems that attempts to model and apply the intelligence of the human mind. Artificial intelligence is a way of making a computer, a computer-controlled robot, or a software think intelligently, in the similar manner the intelligent humans think (TutorialsPoints, 2015). Artificial intelligence can also be referred to as innovative or technological systems that display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking action – with some degree of autonomy – to achieve specific goals (European Commission, 2018).

As the name implies, artificial intelligence (AI) is man-made or un-natural performance-driven technological innovations developed to act in similar ways like human beings. It is an automated innovation programmed to carry out functions or perform specialised instructions that human expertise and knowledge would have been engaged to perform. AI can also be called machine intelligence, that is, the intellection or cleverness technological innovations bring into addressing real time issues and tasks.

Mohammed (2019) considers this kind of machine-intelligence as a programmed intelligence demonstrated by machines in performing specific activities such as speech recognition, learning, perception, planning, problem-solving, personal assistantships, decision-making, delivering insights, improve productivity, prediction,

forecast, data analysis, data integration, trend adaptation, and logical reasoning, in contrast to the natural intelligence displayed by human beings in those regards. AI is specifically used to augment human intelligence in performing specialised queries and tasks.

Though there are diverse branches of AI which include Machine Learning (ML) (comprising deep learning, supervised learning, and unsupervised learning); Natural Language Processing (NLP) (comprising content extraction, classification, machine translation, question answering and text generation); Expert Systems; Vision (comprising image recognition and machine vision); Speech (comprising text to speech and speech to text); Planning; and Robotics, it is AI's ability to perform tasks that are peculiar to human knowledge, experience and expertise that has earned it the name 'expert system'. Expert systems can be considered as computer programmes programmed to solve problems which are in their nature, complex and which can particularly be subjected to the domain of extra-ordinary human intelligence, expertise or ingenuity (TutorialsPoint, 2015). Expert systems are capable of advising, instructing and assisting human in decision making, demonstrating, deriving at a solution, diagnosing, explaining, interpreting input, predicting results, justifying the conclusion and suggesting alternative options to a problem (TutorialsPoint, 2015).

As an expert system, AI is a smart and intelligent machine with memories programmed with relevant humanistic knowledge in such a way that it can offer intelligent advice, explanations, suggestions, and justifications of its programmatic decisions as human beings would (Singh *et al.*, 2013). It relies on a large database of well-defined and specialised knowledge about a particular area used by human experts in contrast to knowledge gathered from textbooks and other print-based instructional or knowledge-equipping materials (Singh *et al.*, 2013). AI is adopted to enhance and improve organisations' service delivery, especially, in areas, environments or contexts that are not suitable or conducive for humans (Singh *et al.*, 2013). It is in this instance that AI is considered to serve better functions with consistency, precision, and less mistakes as well as improving organisations' productivity than humans (Singh *et al.*, 2013). Application of AI to industry practice comes with less cost compared to the cost of having to pay human experts.

Customer Relations

Customer relations refers to the practice and strategy a company employs to manage and analyse customer interactions and data throughout the customer lifecycle. The goal is to improve customer service relationships, retain customers, and drive sales growth. A strong relationship between a business and its customers helps build trust, which can enhance the growth of referrals and client retention for future transactions. In

this regard, a business forges a long-term relationship that can increase the brand's reputation and long-term profits. Acquiring new and retaining existing customers requires dedicating resources and investing in creating a long-term business relationship with customers, helping them see their value in the corporation and achieving their goals through purchasing products and services (Smith, 2019).

Consequently, creating a solid long-term relationship between new and potential customers can allow a business to offer a highly personalised and enticing customer experience. Essentially, the quality of a company's customer experience tends to determine whether or not that company will establish a long-term relationship with its past, existing, and potential customers. A recent study by Greenhalgh found that 86% of customers value their experience with the same weight as the actual products and services they purchase from a company (Greenhalgh, 2021).

The idea of customer relationship management (CRM) emerged from an information technology practitioner and vendor community in the early 1990s (Thompson, 2012). Over the last few decades, different authors and scholars have developed various approaches to defining CRM and identified its benefits to large corporations. For example, Payne and Frow (2005) claimed that CRM is the implementation of an integrated series of customer-centric technology activities. Similarly, Chen and Ching (2004) see CRM as a process that involves the use of technology for a better understanding of customer needs and to establish a good relationship. Currently, CRM is a widely used business strategy in determining and targeting the most profitable customers of a corporation (Patil, 2020).

The CRM concept involves using both advanced and new marketing strategies that help retain existing customers and acquire new ones. A successful CRM is characterised by people, technology, and business processes. Increased application of CRM activities in business helps improve close rates, increase call center efficiency, increase marketing activities, facilitate customer targeting and profiling, and increase profitability. In this technology era, the focus has changed from product-centric to customer-centric approaches, where marketers base their strategies on customers' experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The basic, primary, and foundational groundwork to the audience media-use and gratifications framework was laid by Jay Blumler and Denis McQuail in 1969 (Idiong *et al.*, 2023). Later conceptualisations of the framework was developed based on the central philosophical tenets that the audience are critical forces of media processes and effects which are credited to the seminal works of Elihu Katz, Jay

Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the 1970s (Obong and Targema, 2023). The theory turns attention away from media sources and message effects to audience uses of media contents for personalised benefits (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009; Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). The UGT theoretical framework presupposes that the audience, often thought to be at the receiving end, are self-willed and socially-deterministic individuals who decide their pattern of usage of media technologies, innovations, and contents and by implication, twist the nature of influence media technologies, innovations, and contents exert on them (Obong and Targema, 2023; Akpabio *et al.*, 2023).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is an audience-centered media analytical approach that focuses on what people do with the media technologies and innovations and not what the media do to people (Idiong *et al.*, 2023). The theory is concerned primarily with the use to which people put the media such as the AI-chatbots into, and the attendant pre-conceived needs and expectations to be satisfied in such media-use experience (Idiong *et al.*, 2023). The UGT framework is an approach to media study that focuses on the uses to which people put the media and the gratifications they seek from those uses whether on a micro or macro level (Baran and Davis, 2010; Targema *et al.*, 2023).

An epistemic analysis of the theory as maintained by Ruggiero (2000), is the position that the audience member are active consumers of diverse, multi-modal, and dynamic streams of mass mediated messages, rather than playing passive (almost inert) role in media content consumption. Scholars believe that the theory is a reflection of a seismic shift from the traditional effects models and theories of mass media consumption to a more functionalist theoretical perspective (Ruggiero, 2000; Idiong *et al.*, 2023).

Contextually, the Uses and Gratifications Theory provides both theoretical and conceptual vistas to explicate the diverse financial self-service needs and purposes to which bank customers' utilise AI-chatbot and whether or not the needs have been met and purposes, fulfilled. Its application and relevance to this study are underscored on the fact that it is a media-use theory, deeply concentrated on gratifications sought and gratifications or outcomes obtained after utilising the media for a personalised needs and purposes (Rayburn, 1996). It is from such theoretical window can knowledge be vented on whether or not the needs and purposes to which bank customers leverage AI-chatbots for financial self-service of the banks have been gratified. The framework is expected to conceptually validate or refute the claim as to whether or not the gratifications sought by using AI-chatbots could influence continuous use or discontinuation of the use of AI-chatbots for banks' financial self-service (Idiong *et al.*, 2023).

Research Methodology

The research design that was adopted for this study was the survey research method. The survey research method allowed the researcher to effectively measure the perception, behaviours, opinions, and attitudes of customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State in order to gain empirical knowledge and draw inference on result of the banks' awareness and utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions (Babbie, 2011; Ary *et al.*, 2014; Agbo and Ugwu, 2015). The population of this study comprised all the customers of the Uyo branches of Zenith Bank (Oron Road Branch); United Bank for Africa (Banking Layout Branch); and Stanbic IBTC Bank (Nwaniba Road Branch) in Akwa Ibom State. According to the data obtained from the Manager, Human Relations/Public Relations Departments of the Uyo branches of the select banks, the customer base of the banks was provided as follows: Zenith Bank (292,349); United Bank for Africa (152,937); and Stanbic IBTC Bank (198,201). Therefore, the cumulative/total population of the study is 643,487 customers of the select banks as at June, 2023.

Selecting representative sample is often done with the hindsight that studying an entire universe beset a researcher with enormous difficulty especially in situations where the population is rather too large to be studied conveniently. In such situations, researchers are at liberty to select representative samples as the entire universe cannot be conveniently studied (Agbo and Ugwu, 2015). This underlies the researcher's rationale for determining a sample size for this study using Taro Yamene's statistical formul which a sample size of 399.7 was arrived at. It was approximated to 400. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 400 customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State.

The primary data for this study were collected by the researcher with an additional support from two research assistants who administered the four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire on the respondents in the select banks in Akwa Ibom State. The data collection exercise took thirty days to be completed. To avoid mutilation and filling copies of the instruments wrongly, the researcher and the two research assistants did due diligence in explaining the nitty gritty of the instrument to the respondents. Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire administered on the respondents, 399 copies were retrieved and found fit for the analysis of data for this study. One copy was discarded because it was found to be mutilated and riddled with multiple responses. Hence, the analysis of data was based on the number of the correctly-filled and returned copies of the questionnaire. This represented 99.7% response rate of the sample of the study. Retrieval of the copies of the questionnaire duly answered were used to analyse the data for this study using simple percentage calculation and frequency tables.

Data Presentation, Analysis And Discussion Of Findings

TABLE 1: Respondents' awareness of the utilisation of AI-chatbots by select banks in Akwa Ibom State for the purpose of facilitating customers' self-service banking transaction(s)

Item	Nature of Responses						WMS	Decision
	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (15)		
By coming across my bank's AI -chatbots means that I am sufficiently aware that my bank utilises AI -chatbots in facilitating customers' self -service banking transaction(s).	286	103	0	4	6	399	4.67	Accept
	1,430	412	3	8	6	1,859		

Since the computed value (4.67) of the weighted mean score is greater than the mean of the aggregate weighting (3.0), it implies that customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State were aware that their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots was to facilitate customers' self-service banking transaction(s).

TABLE 2: Respondents' awareness and usage of AI-chatbots in performing self-service banking transaction(s) with the select banks in Akwa Ibom State

Item	Nature of Responses						WMS	Decision
	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (15)		
As a result of my awareness of my bank's utilisation of AI-chatbots, I have used the innovations at some point to perform self-service banking transaction(s) with my bank.	246	143	0	4	6	399	4.56	Accept
	1,230	572	3	8	6	1,819		

Since the computed value (4.56) of the weighted mean score is greater than the mean of the aggregate weighting (3.0), it is inferred that the awareness that customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State have of their banks' AI-chatbots necessitated their utilisation of the innovations in performing self-service banking transaction(s) (*see* Table A3 in Appendix II).

Table 3: The extent to which respondents are aware of the utilisation of AI-chatbots in facilitating customers' self-service banking transaction(s) by the select banks in Akwa Ibom State

Extent of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Very large extent	181	45
Large extent	132	33
Neutral	6	2
Little extent	32	8
Very little extent	48	12
Total	399	100

The presentation and analysis of data in Table 4.5 indicate that most of the customers (181 [45%]) of select banks in Akwa Ibom State were aware of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots in facilitating customers' self-service banking transaction(s) to a very large extent.

Table 4: Respondents' extent of awareness of AI-chatbots utilised by the select banks in Akwa Ibom State as a factor necessitating their adoption of the innovations in performing self-service banking transaction(s) without having to physically visit the banking halls

Item	Nature of Responses						WMS	Decision
	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total		
	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(15)		
My extent of awareness of my bank's utilisation of AI-chatbots influence my adoption of the innovations in performing self-service banking transaction(s) without having to physically visit the banking hall.	206	133	40	14	6	399	4.30	Accept
	1,030	532	120	28	6	1,716		

Since the computed value (4.30) of the weighted mean score is greater than the mean of the aggregate weighting (3.0), it is inferred that the extent of awareness of customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State of the banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots necessitated their adoption of the innovations in performing self-service banking transaction(s) without having to physically visit the banking halls.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: To what extent are customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State aware of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions?

Table One above was concerned with customers' awareness of the utilisation of AI-chatbots by select banks in Akwa Ibom State for the purpose of facilitating customers' self-service banking transactions. Table two was concerned with customers' awareness-induced usage of AI-chatbots in performing self-service banking transactions with the select banks in Akwa Ibom State. The computation of data in the table yielded a weighted mean score (WMS) of 4.56 which was greater than the mean of

the aggregate weighting (3.0). This suggests that the awareness that customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State have of their banks' AI-chatbots necessitated their usage of the innovations in performing self-service banking transactions.

Table Three was concerned with the extent to which respondents were aware of the utilisation of AI-chatbots in facilitating customers' self-service banking transaction(s) by the select banks in Akwa Ibom State. The presentation and analysis of data in the table indicate that most of the customers (181 [45%]) of select banks in Akwa Ibom State were aware of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots in facilitating self-service banking transactions to a very large extent. This finding was closely-followed by 132 (33%) customers of the banks who were aware of AI-chatbots as utilised by their banks in facilitating self-service transactions to a large extent.

Table Four was concerned with analysis of data bordering on the extent to which customers' awareness of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots necessitated their adoption of the innovations in performing self-service banking transactions without having to physically visit the banking halls. The analysis of data in the table yielded a weighted mean score (WMS) of 4.30 which was greater than the mean of the aggregate weighting (3.0). This inferred that the extent to which customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State were aware of the banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots in facilitating virtual transactions necessitated their adoption of the innovations in performing self-service banking transactions without having to physically visit the banking halls.

The summary of data-related insights and the inferences that can be drawn from the analysis of those data are that customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State were exposed to the AI-chatbots as used by the banks to facilitate virtual and self-service banking transactions. The findings suggest that the banks' customers were sufficiently aware of their banks' integration of AI-chatbots as self-service innovations in augmenting habitual or traditional customer relationship management often undertaken by the banks' human experts. Hence, AI-chatbots were recognised by the banks' customers as serving as extensions to human functions in financial transactions that would have required the services of human bankers or banking agents. Perhaps the awareness that the banks' customers have of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots in banking operations necessitated their adoption and usage of the innovations for banking transactions. From these inferences, it can be established that the level of awareness that the banks' customers have of the availability and integration of AI-chatbots for self-service transactions by the select banks in Akwa Ibom State influenced their adoption, accessibility, and usage of the innovations to perform programmatic self-service operations. Therefore, having knowledge of the availability and integration of the innovations influenced their usage among the customers.

Exponents of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) are of the view that users

of media innovations are critical forces of media processes and effects (Obong and Targema, 2023). This entails that media users are self-willed and socially deterministic individuals whose decision on patterns of usage of media technological innovations are conditioned by their prior awareness, knowledge, and conviction borne out of their perceived benefits for using such technological innovations for specific purposes (Obong and Targema, 2023; Akpabio *et al.*, 2023). Perhaps, from such hindsight, the use to which banks customers put AI-chatbots into are based on their pre-conceived needs that are cushioned by their awareness of the availability of such technological innovations as well as their expected gratifications when applied within specific context of use (Idiong *et al.*, 2023).

Research Question Two: What is the perception of customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State regarding their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions?

Table 4 was concerned with the analysis of responses on whether the self-service interfaces provided by AI-chatbots have been beneficial in helping customers to efficiently resolve bank-related issues with the select banks in Akwa Ibom State. The computation of data in the table yielded a weighted mean score (WMS) of 4.45 which was greater than the mean of the aggregate weighting (3.0). It was inferred that the self-service interfaces provided by AI-chatbots of select banks in Akwa Ibom State have been beneficial in helping their customers to efficiently resolve bank-related issues.

From the above, perceived efficiency of AI-chatbots sufficiently helping respondents to accomplish stress-free self-service banking transactions with the select banks in Akwa Ibom State. The analysis of data in the table yielded a weighted mean score (WMS) of 4.23 which was greater than the mean of the aggregate weighting (3.0). This suggests that AI-chatbots were found to have been sufficiently efficient in helping customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State to accomplish self-service banking transactions with the banks without stress.

Summary of Findings

Drawing inferences from the data-related insights analysed and presented in Chapter Four, the following findings were made that:

Customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State were aware of their banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots in facilitating self-service banking transactions to a very large extent (181 [45%]). This implies that customers of the select banks were sufficiently exposed to and have adequate knowledge of availability, utility, and operationalisation of the AI-chatbots as used by the banks to facilitate virtual customer relationship management through self-service innovations.

Customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State had very good perception of the

banks' utilisation of AI-chatbots in facilitating customers' self-service banking transactions (251[62%]). This may be as a result of the customers' consideration of the banks' AI-chatbots as being very efficient and convenient to use (94[23%]). Perhaps due to their opinions of the self-service innovations as being effective in: churning out their expected outcome (87[22%]); saving their time during transactions (86[21%]); supporting their custom-made inputs (53[13%]); and having the reputation to deliver results with precision (51[13%]).

Customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State utilised the banks' AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions to a very large extent (194[49%]). The extent to which the customers have utilised the banks' AI-chatbots and the experiences that were gained from such utilisation influenced their perception of the banks' reputation in virtual customer relationship management to a large extent (236[59%]).

Customers predominantly utilised the self-service innovations of the AI-chatbots of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State for bank-related enquiries (104[26%]). Hence, it can be inferred that the predominant self-service transactions that customers of select banks utilised AI-chatbots was mainly for enquiry-based transactions with the banks.

Conclusion

The inferences drawn from the findings of this study are that the integration of AI-chatbots into banking practice or operationalisation by the select banks in Akwa Ibom State significantly influenced customer patronage of the banks. The correlational analysis of the hypothetical variables of the study clearly indicated that a correlation exists between customers' utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions and their patronage of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State. The correlational analysis of the variables was found to be statistically significant at the .05 level. Thus, affirming that the probability that the correlation between the variables of utilisation of AI-chatbots and customer patronage of the banks was simply due to error or chance is less than 0.1%.

In the study, it is inferred that the correlation between utilisation of AI-chatbots and patronage of the select banks by customers was foregrounded by varied but inter-related factors. The prime factor in this regard is the exposure to the idea that the banks integrate AI-chatbots as self-service interfaces to drive virtual customer relationship management. The experiences gained from such exposure made the customers aware of the availability, utility, and operationalisation of AI-chatbots and how to access them as self-service tools.

Moreso, the level of awareness that the banks' customers have of the availability and integration of AI-chatbots for self-service transactions by the select banks in Akwa

Ibom State influenced their adoption, accessibility, and usage of the innovations to perform programmatic self-service operations. Therefore, knowledge gained through exposure and awareness of the availability, utility, and integration of the innovations within the banking context influenced their usage among the customers. Consequently, empirical evidences which underscore the place of exposure to and awareness of chatbots and utilisation cum patronage within the banking industry abound (*see* Gupta and Sharma, 2019; Joshi, 2021).

The second pre-conditional factor that influenced patronage of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State at the backdrop of utilisation of AI-chatbots is user experience. Hence, the experience that come with the utilisation of AI-chatbots among the bank customers serves as a pre-condition for their adoption in patronising the banks' self-services. As the customers found the innovations to be convenient and efficient when used in their self-service transactions with the banks tell a lot about their perception of the innovations in performing creditably in the self-service banking tasks in which they were programmed to augment.

The foregoing leads to the next factor which is satisfaction. As it was found that the customers were completely satisfied with their utilisation of AI-chatbots by the select banks in Akwa Ibom for self-service banking transactions, it is implicative that the extent of their satisfaction with the banks' self-service innovations would influenced their patronage of the banks by continually using the innovations for subsequent banking transactions.

In addition to the factors earlier mentioned is the factor of perception and its perceived roles in customers' acceptance, adoption, and utilisation of AI-chatbots in patronising the banks' self-service operations. Some of the inferences drawn in the study also pointed to perception as being instrumental to customers' acceptance, adoption, and use of AI-chatbots in patronising the select banks in Akwa Ibom State. Such inferences are supported by the critical position held by exponents of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) who had explicated that users' perception, intention, and behaviour are the core variables associated with the adoption of technological innovations for mainstream practices within an organisational setting (Viswanath *et al.*, 2003; Joshi, 2021). In retrospect, the perception of customers of select banks in Akwa Ibom State regarding their utilisation of AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions is consequential on the manner in which they rated the quality of the innovation-driven services provided by the banks in tandem with their perceived expectations and satisfaction (Rizan *et al.*, 2014).

Supportively, exponents of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) are of the view that users of media innovations are critical forces of media processes and effects (Obong and Targema, 2023). This entails that media users are self-willed and socially

deterministic individuals whose decision on patterns of usage of media technological innovations are conditioned by their prior awareness, knowledge, perception, and conviction borne out of their perceived benefits for using such technological innovations for specific purposes (Obong and Targema, 2023; Akpabio *et al.*, 2023). Perhaps, from such hindsight, the use to which banks customers put AI-chatbots to is based on their pre-conceived needs which are often cushioned by their perception technology-use in line with their expected gratifications (Obong and Targema, 2023; Idiong *et al.*, 2023).

Nevertheless, as all the aforementioned factors are the culminations of the processes and effects of AI-chatbots within the banking industry in Akwa Ibom State, the submissions underscore the disruptive impacts of the emerging media technologies in augmenting humanistic functions, tasks, and transactions within banking context. This has inspired a technological discourse which supports the idea that technological innovations are at the intersection of human existence. It is in this light that AI-chatbots, as used to drive virtual customer relationship management in virtual spaces and platforms, can be considered as extensions of human functions in the banking sector. The humanistic extensions that AI-chatbots augment human agents in the banking practice include customer service, customer relationship, digital-do-it-yourself, independent transactions, and self-help (Meuter *et al.*, 2000).

The foregoing makes it apposite to say that the integration of self-service technological innovations such as AI-chatbots in the banking system in Akwa Ibom State is one of the banks' creative and deliberate strategies to retain and satisfy customers and in creating a competitive advantage amongst competing brands (Ezechirinum *et al.*, 2020). So, rapid adoption and use of AI-chatbots as self-service innovations among the banks' customers are indications of the bank-customers emerging trends and patterns on the novel ways in which customers could access the various services of the banks across virtual platforms and contexts (Bobbitt and Dabholkar, 2001).

Recommendations

The first implication of the findings of this study is that the level of awareness that the banks' customers have of the availability, utility, and integration of AI-chatbots for self-service transactions by the select banks in Akwa Ibom State played a significant role in their adoption, accessibility, and usage of the innovations to perform self-service banking transactions operations. Therefore, knowledge acquired through awareness of the availability of the self-service innovations by the banks was one of the pre-conditions for their utilisation by the banks' customers.

Customers of the select banks considered the banks' AI-chatbots very efficient

and convenient to use as the innovations assisted them in undertaking stress-free self-service operations compared to the banks' human experts. This implies that users of AI-chatbots considered them more professionally oriented in the discharge of customer relationship responsibilities compared to their human experts.

Customers' perception of the efficiency of the affordances of AI-chatbots of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State in solving bank-related issues was critical to dual kinds of patronage. Firstly, direct patronage of the banks' AI-chatbots' self-service interfaces and innovations. Secondly, indirect patronage of the banks' virtual services.

Customers of the select banks in Akwa Ibom State have over-utilised and over-dependended on the affordances of the banks' AI-chatbots for self-service banking transactions to a very large extent. The customers seem to be addicted to the convenience, ease, and efficiency that the digital banking innovations offer them in their daily banking transactions and affirmed not to patronise the banks should they discontinue from using the innovations.

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DIGITAL ACTIVISM AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA: THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL NEXUS

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and

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Abstract

The rise of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of political participation in Nigeria, particularly among youths. This study investigated the nexus between digital activism and political participation ahead of the 2027 general elections, focusing on emerging patterns of online mobilisation and their influence on voter registration, grassroots engagement, and election-day turnout. The theoretical nexus included agenda-setting, resource mobilisation, and uses and gratifications. The study adopted a survey research design. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample of 389 respondents was drawn from the projected 2025 Uyo population. Findings revealed that Nigerian youths are highly engaged in diverse forms of digital activism, with hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X (26.2%) and peer-to-peer content sharing on WhatsApp (22.9%) emerging as the most dominant practices. Digital activism was also shown to boost voter registration by enhancing awareness of registration deadlines and providing procedural guides. Furthermore, it significantly facilitated grassroots mobilisation through video sharing, volunteer recruitment, and coordination of local rallies. The results indicated that digital activism could positively influence voter turnout during the 2027 elections via online motivation, WhatsApp reminders, and mobile tools for locating polling units. Despite these positive trends, a minority of respondents reported disengagement, highlighting structural and resource-related barriers to full participation. The study concludes that digital activism plays a transformative role in shaping youth political behaviour in Nigeria and offers actionable recommendations for electoral bodies, civil society, and policymakers to leverage digital tools for enhanced voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and election-day participation.

Introduction

Nigeria's political landscape has been significantly transformed by digital technologies, particularly social media platforms, which have reshaped how citizens mobilise, engage, and participate in governance. From the globally resonant #EndSARS protests of 2020 to the dynamic online campaigns surrounding the 2023 general elections, digital platforms have become powerful tools for collective action, political mobilisation, and citizen empowerment. In this new terrain, tweets, hashtags, livestreams, and viral videos have not only amplified public grievances but also facilitated real-time coordination and international solidarity. Consequently, understanding the intersection of digital activism and political participation is essential for unpacking the evolving dynamics of Nigeria's democracy (Bello, Hassan, & Sani, 2023; Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025).

Digital activism refers to the strategic use of internet-enabled technologies to organise, advocate, and mobilise for political or social change. It encompasses a range of activities, including online petitions, crowdfunding, real-time protest coordination, hashtag campaigns, and livestreamed storytelling. Scholars argue that digital activism goes beyond symbolic “clicktivism” by converting online engagement into offline action, particularly when online discourse is supported by physical protests and policy advocacy (Bello et al., 2023). In Nigeria, digital activism has become especially significant, as mobile technology and social media provide avenues for bypassing traditional media gatekeepers and amplifying citizen voices during critical moments of governance and state accountability.

Political participation refers to the various activities citizens undertake to influence government decisions and public policy. Traditionally, this included voting, campaigning, petitioning, and attending town halls. In the digital era, however, participation increasingly extends to online engagement. It shares political content, debating issues, donating to campaigns via crowdfunding, or organising civic events digitally. In Nigeria, research on the 2023 elections indicates that social media profoundly shaped political discourse and voter decisions, particularly among youths and first-time voters (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). These findings underscore how digital spaces are now integral to both formal participation (e.g., voting) and informal activism (e.g., online protests).

Social media platforms, particularly Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, play an outsized role in facilitating political engagement in Nigeria. They allow for rapid information dissemination, real-time coordination, and amplification of citizen voices to national and transnational audiences. For instance, during the 2023 presidential elections, Facebook emerged as the dominant platform, with 34.9% of users actively engaging with political content, while Twitter was critical for youth-driven discourse and agenda-setting (Lapai Journal of Humanities & Management, 2024; East African Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 2023). However, these same platforms present vulnerabilities, including exposure to disinformation, harassment, surveillance, and state-led censorship, factors that can undermine the very activism they enable.

Nigerian youths are at the forefront of digital activism and online political participation. Empirical studies show that platforms like Twitter/X enhanced young people's belief in their ability to influence politics, a concept known as political efficacy (East African Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 2023). In the 2023 elections, social media became a key tool for mobilising young voters, disseminating real-time updates, and fostering peer-to-peer political dialogue. However, the link between online engagement and sustained offline participation remains complex: while online

mobilisation boosted awareness and turnout, long-term effects on institutional trust and policy change remain limited (Chukwu, 2025).

Scholars examining Nigeria's evolving political environment emphasise the interdependence between digital activism, social media affordances, and political participation. Studies on #EndSARS demonstrate how digital networks rapidly scaled local grievances into nationwide protests, forcing government responses and attracting international attention (Bello et al., 2023). Similarly, analyses of the 2023 elections reveal that online platforms shaped political narratives, candidate visibility, and mobilisation strategies, particularly among first-time voters (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). However, findings are mixed: while some scholars celebrate digital activism's capacity to democratise political spaces, others point to persistent structural barriers, including state repression, misinformation, and the episodic nature of online movements (Chukwu, 2025).

Despite a growing body of literature on digital activism and political participation in Nigeria, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on episodic events like #EndSARS or offers cross-sectional analyses of past electoral cycles, leaving unanswered questions about how digital activism influences specific aspects of political participation. There is limited evidence on how online engagement translates into voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and actual voting behaviour, particularly among Nigerian youths who dominate digital spaces. Moreover, little is known about how emerging patterns of digital activism ahead of the 2027 general elections could reshape participation dynamics and influence democratic outcomes. This study therefore seeks to examine how digital activism shapes political participation among Nigerian youths, with particular attention to its influence on voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and actual voting ahead of the 2027 general elections.

2. Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's democratic experience has shown that elections are not only a test of institutions but also of citizen participation. The rise of digital activism, powered by platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, has already transformed how Nigerians, particularly youths, register their grievances, mobilise, and participate in politics. The #EndSARS movement and the 2023 general elections demonstrated the power of digital platforms to amplify voices, encourage youth registration, and facilitate grassroots organising. Yet, despite this progress, Nigeria still struggles with persistent challenges: low voter registration among youths, weak grassroots mobilisation, and voter apathy on election day. These challenges raise important concerns as the country looks toward the 2027 elections, where youth

participation will again be critical to democratic legitimacy.

The urgency of this study lies in the approaching 2027 general elections, where Nigeria's large youth population is expected to once again dominate the digital space. If their online energy translates into formal participation, it could significantly alter the country's political trajectory. However, if digital activism remains episodic or disconnected from institutional processes, the momentum may dissipate without meaningful reform. This tension makes it critical to ask: to what extent can digital activism ahead of the 2027 elections influence voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and actual voting on election day in Nigeria?

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the emerging patterns of digital activism among Nigerian youths ahead of the 2027 general elections.
2. Analyse how digital activism is likely to influence voter registration among Nigerian youths before the 2027 elections.
3. Assess the potential role of digital activism in grassroots political mobilisation leading up to the 2027 elections.
4. Evaluate how digital activism could affect actual voter turnout and participation on election day in 2027.

4. Literature Review

Digital activism describes the use of internet-based tools, such as social media platforms, messaging apps, blogs, and websites, to organise, advocate, and mobilise for political or social change. In Nigeria, digital activism has emerged as a potent force in shaping public discourse and collective action, particularly among youth. For instance, the #EndSARS protests of 2020 demonstrated how online platforms enabled rapid sharing of protest information, visual documentation of police brutality, and national and global solidarity (Bello, Hassan, & Sani, 2023). Beyond protest outbreaks, digital activism continues to facilitate civic engagement, offering Nigerians avenues to bypass traditional media censorship and consolidate dispersed voices via viral hashtags, livestreams, and digital petitions. Despite infrastructural and literacy challenges, the expanding reach of mobile internet enhances its transformative potential for democratic engagement and accountable governance.

Digital activism in Nigeria spans several interrelated types that each serve distinct strategic functions. Hashtag mobilization, for example #EndSARS or #BringBackOurGirls, aggregates individual narratives into a single, searchable thread that can frame national conversations and attract global attention; empirical analyses

show that hashtag campaigns can sustain public engagement by creating shared identities and urgency (Ogunderu & Afolaranmi, 2024). Messaging-app coordination, notably via WhatsApp, supports granular organisation: users share logistics, livestream information, and protest updates within trusted groups, facilitating secure coordination that is less visible to state surveillance channels (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Meanwhile, media advocacy campaigns, such as feminist or rights-based drives on Twitter or Instagram, use storytelling, testimonies, and visual content to build awareness and pressure policymakers. Cumulatively, these forms interplay to produce cohesive mobilisation: hashtags raise awareness; WhatsApp directs action; media campaigns deepen narratives.

The media channels through which digital activism flows in Nigeria are diverse yet complementary, each offering unique affordances. Social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram operate as public-facing spaces that facilitate mass communication, narrative framing, and engagement with political content; studies of youth participation in recent electoral cycles show that platforms like Facebook and Twitter are central to shaping election discourse and forging issue salience (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). WhatsApp, conversely, excels in closed-group usability, enabling organisers to share mobilising calls, polling unit info, and protest logistics discreetly; research into the #EndSARS movement indicates WhatsApp was pivotal for on-the-ground coordination (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Together, these platforms create a layered digital ecosystem: Twitter for visibility, WhatsApp for operational coordination, and Facebook/Instagram for storytelling and deepening engagement. Understanding these channels' unique functions helps map how digital activism transitions from online expression to tangible civic action.

Political participation encapsulates all the ways through which citizens attempt to influence public policy, governance, or leadership decisions. It ranges from traditional avenues such as voting, campaigning, and petitioning, to more contemporary forms like online advocacy, digital petitions, or mobilising awareness through social media. In Nigeria, structural challenges such as institutional distrust, election irregularities, and infrastructural limitations have historically undermined youth engagement (Fasola & Oyadeyi, 2021). However, digital tools are increasingly reshaping these dynamics by offering lower-cost, accessible, and interactive entry points for marginalised groups, particularly the youth, to engage in the political process (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Through platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter, youth find new modes to voice concerns, mobilise around issues, and participate in governance in ways previously constrained by physical and political barriers.

There are three phases of political participation: In the pre-election phase,

political participation often centres on voter awareness, education, and registration efforts. Digital platforms have proven pivotal in amplifying these efforts among youth, making the process more visible, communal, and urgent. For example, a 2023 study found that online activism among Nigerian youth positively correlated with political knowledge, particularly about registration and candidate information, suggesting that digital channels are critical conduits for pre-election engagement (Akeusola, 2023). Furthermore, the #YouthVotes campaign reportedly increased youth political awareness by 78%, while 65% of participants credited the campaign with influencing their decision to vote—a clear indicator of the effectiveness of digital media in mobilising voter registration and interest (ENEMS PROJECT, 2025).

During elections, political participation shifts from planning to execution—most importantly, casting ballots. Social media has played a crucial role in guiding youths through the voting process by disseminating polling unit information, security updates, and turnout expectations in real time. In the 2023 Nigerian presidential campaign, for example, Facebook emerged as the dominant platform, with 62.4% of respondents acknowledging social media's influence on their voting behaviour (Arowolo & Ogande, 2024). Additionally, in Benue State, social media platforms were instrumental in voter mobilisation efforts, with both Facebook and Twitter cited as primary channels for mobilising electoral participation (Ojomugbokenyode & Ogande, 2024).

The post-election phase provides opportunities for citizens to engage in accountability, monitoring, and advocating for electoral or policy reform. Digital tools offer unprecedented reach and immediacy for such endeavours. While explicit studies focusing solely on Nigeria are limited, broader evidence indicates that social media activism can sustain civic engagement post-election by facilitating discourse, enabling result monitoring, and organising collective follow-up actions (Anyawu & Onuoha, 2021). These platforms create spaces where citizens can hold leaders accountable and sustain political attention beyond election cycles.

5. Theoretical Framework

Digital activism operates at the intersection of media power, networked organisation and individual motivations; understanding how it maps onto political participation, specifically voter registration, grassroots mobilisation and election-day turnout, requires an integrated theoretical lens. Agenda-setting theory establishes the first link in this chain by explaining how media (now including social platforms) influence what citizens perceive as important and worthy of action; when digital campaigns make registration deadlines, civic education or protest calls salient, they alter public priorities and prime users to act (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Building on

agenda-setting, the logic of connective action demonstrates that contemporary collective action often does not depend on formal organisations but on digitally enabled, personalised links and shared action frames; connective logics enable rapid diffusion of calls to register, local meeting points, or get-out-the-vote appeals across loosely connected networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In the Nigerian context, empirical analyses show that such connective, decentralised mobilisation was a defining feature of recent episodes of digital activism, including how campaigns framed civic duties and circulated concrete calls to action (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023; Bello, Alhassan, & Inuwa-Dutse, 2023).

Castells's network society perspective ties these strands to broader structural implications by emphasising that networked media reconfigure power and collective identities: digital networks create public spheres where dispersed actors can coalesce into politically meaningful communities capable of coordinating offline action (Castells, 2012). This explains why hashtag movements and coordinated WhatsApp groups in Nigeria not only raised awareness but also facilitated on-the-ground organising and resource pooling—key resources for converting online attention into measurable outcomes such as mass registration drives or coordinated turnout on election day (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Complementing the macro view, networked publics theory (boyd, 2014) focuses on the affordances, persistence, visibility, spreadability and searchability, that allow messages to remain accessible and to be amplified over time; these affordances help explain why certain campaigns (those that combine public signalling with local logistics) achieve greater conversion from online interest to offline participation. Empirical work on #EndSARS and subsequent electoral cycles documents how Twitter amplified testimonials and visibility while WhatsApp groups handled discrete coordination tasks, together producing measurable spikes in civic mobilisation (Bello et al., 2023; Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023).

The micro-level mechanism that links exposure to action is clarified by uses and gratifications theory: individuals actively select media to satisfy needs (information, social identity, efficacy), and when digital activism fulfils these needs, by providing reliable registration information, social validation, or practical logistics, users are more likely to follow through with offline political acts (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Recent surveys and content analyses from Nigeria find that youth users who engaged with actionable digital content (how to register, where to vote, local meeting points) exhibited higher political knowledge and stronger intentions to register and vote; importantly, the presence of localised, trustable coordination channels (for example, moderated WhatsApp groups that link users to offline volunteers) strengthened the translation from online intent to real-world participation (Akeusola, 2023; Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). In short, agenda-setting explains salience, connective and network theories supply the organisational mechanism, platform affordances explain reach and

persistence, and uses and gratifications supply the motivational bridge that converts online mobilisation into voter registration, grassroots mobilisation and election-day turnout. This integrated nexus both organises the empirical puzzles your study addresses and generates testable propositions about when and how digital activism will matter for youth political participation ahead of the 2027 elections.

6. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design and collected quantitative data using structured questionnaire administered to residents of Uyo to examine how digital activism influenced political participation, particularly voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and election-day turnout. According to the most recent estimates, the population of Uyo metropolis in 2025 was approximately 1,457,000 residents (Macrotrends, 2025; World Population Review, 2025). To determine the appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane formula $n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$ was applied, where $N = 1,457,000$ and the level of precision was set at $e = 0.05$. The computation yielded $n \approx 400$ respondents, which formed the sample size.

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, combining cluster sampling, where Uyo was divided into major streets with simple random sampling within each cluster to select participants, thereby achieving representativeness while maintaining feasibility. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire, which was pre-tested on about 10% of the calculated sample (≈ 40 respondents) to ensure validity and reliability. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, and the reliability coefficient achieved was 0.74, which was considered acceptable for social science research. Data were analysed using both descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and percentages) to summarise respondents' characteristics and inferential statistics (chi-square tests to determine associations and logistic regression to predict voter registration, mobilisation, and election-day turnout).

Data and Results

Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire that was sent out, 389 copies were retrieved and valid for this analysis. The tables below present the data collated from the analysed responses:

Table 1: Patterns and Forms of Digital Activism Among Nigerian Youths

Patterns/Forms of Digital Activism	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X	102	26.2
Sharing political content on WhatsApp	89	22.9
Signing online petitions	51	13.1
Participating in virtual protests	67	17.2
Creating digital political content	48	12.3
Donating to online political causes	32	8.2
Total	389	100

Table 1 indicates that Nigerian youths are engaging in diverse forms of digital activism ahead of the 2027 general elections. The most common activity was hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X (26.2%), followed by sharing political content via WhatsApp (22.9%). Activities requiring deeper involvement, such as signing petitions (13.1%) and participating in virtual protests (17.2%), recorded moderate engagement. Less common were content creation (12.3%) and donations to online causes (8.2%). These patterns suggest that while youths are highly active in awareness-driven activism, financially and time-intensive actions are less popular.

Table 2: Influence of digital activism on voter registration

Influence Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improved awareness of registration deadlines	116	29.8
Encouraged peers to register	84	21.6
Provided step-by-step registration guides	97	24.9
Facilitated online voter education	55	14.1
No significant influence	37	9.5
Total	389	100

Table 2 shows that digital activism plays a significant role in promoting voter registration among Nigerian youths. Improved awareness of registration deadlines (29.8%) and step-by-step registration guides (24.9%) were the most impactful contributions. Encouraging peers to register (21.6%) and facilitating voter education (14.1%) also highlight the social and informational roles of digital platforms. However, 9.5% of respondents reported no significant influence, suggesting a small but notable segment remains disengaged despite online mobilisation.

Table 3: Role of digital activism in grassroots political mobilisation

Mobilisation Activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Organising local community meetings	91	23.4
Recruiting volunteers	78	20.1
Sharing grassroots mobilisation videos	102	26.2
Coordinating local rallies	64	16.5
Mobilisation through faith-based and student groups	54	13.9
Total	389	100

Table 3 reveals that digital activism has emerged as a vital tool for grassroots mobilisation. Respondents reported that social platforms are most effective in sharing mobilisation videos (26.2%) and organising local meetings (23.4%), both of which facilitate community-based engagement. Recruiting volunteers (20.1%) and coordinating local rallies (16.5%) demonstrate that digital tools are increasingly linked to on-the-ground actions, while faith-based and student groups (13.9%) further expand reach. This shows that digital activism bridges online discourse with offline grassroots structures.

Table 4: Impact of digital activism on election-day voter participation

Election-Day Influence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Motivated by online campaigns to vote	112	28.8
Followed reminders from WhatsApp groups	95	24.4
Used mobile apps to locate polling units	74	19.0
Engaged in election monitoring initiatives	61	15.7
Digital activism had no effect	47	12.1
Total	389	100

Table 4 illustrates that digital activism could significantly boost voter turnout during the 2027 elections. Online campaigns motivating voters (28.8%) and WhatsApp reminders (24.4%) emerged as the strongest factors, showing the power of targeted mobilisation. The use of mobile apps to locate polling units (19.0%) and participation in citizen-driven monitoring initiatives (15.7%) also highlight how digital tools can enhance both accessibility and accountability. However, 12.1% of respondents indicated that digital activism might not affect their participation, suggesting the persistence of structural or personal barriers.

7. Discussion of Findings

RQ1. What are the emerging patterns and forms of digital activism among Nigerian youths ahead of the 2027 general elections?

The dominant patterns were hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X (102; 26.2%) and sharing political content on WhatsApp (89; 22.9%), with moderate engagement in virtual protests (67; 17.2%) and signing online petitions (51; 13.1%). Content creation (48; 12.3%) and online donations (32; 8.2%) were less common. These frequencies indicate that Nigerian youths primarily used low-cost, highly viral modes of participation (hashtags and peer-to-peer sharing) rather than resource-intensive actions (financial donations or frequent content production). Hashtag campaigns supplied visibility and a shared frame for issues, while WhatsApp provided private, trusted channels for circulating messages and coordinating small-scale activities. The relative scarcity of donations and content production suggests either resource constraints or a preference for quick signalling and information sharing over longer-term investment in campaigns.

This pattern aligns with empirical work showing that Twitter is a central arena for public signalling and agenda-setting in Nigerian activism while WhatsApp functions as the backend coordination tool (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023; Bello, Hassan, & Sani, 2023). Uwalaka and Nwala (2023) found WhatsApp instrumental in protest logistics during #EndSARS, and Bello et al. (2023) documented Twitter's role in amplifying testimonies and hashtags. Akeusola (2023) similarly reported that young Nigerians tended to engage more in information-sharing and awareness behaviours online than in

financially costly support. Where our data add new insight is in quantifying these patterns ahead of 2027: hashtags and private messaging remain the leading forms of engagement, while deeper resource commitments lag.

These findings are best interpreted through the Networked Publics / Logic of Connective Action lens (boyd, 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). The prominence of hashtags and peer sharing reflects a connective logic in which personalised content and affordances of networked platforms generate large numbers of low-threshold acts (shares, retweets, group forwards) that aggregate into visible movements without requiring formal organisational structures. In short, the data show connective action in practice: high visibility + low cost = widespread online participation but limited costly engagement.

RQ2. How is digital activism likely to influence voter registration among Nigerian youths before the 2027 elections?

Digital activism most strongly influenced improved awareness of registration deadlines (116; 29.8%) and providing step-by-step registration guides (97; 24.9%); 84 respondents (21.6%) said they encouraged peers to register. Only 37 respondents (9.5%) reported no significant influence. The data show that digital activism functioned primarily as an informational and normative catalyst for registration: platforms raised salience of deadlines and supplied procedural guidance that lowered the transaction costs of registering. Peer encouragement figures suggest social influence—youths not only received information but also acted as conduits within their networks to spur registration. The minority reporting no influence underscores persistent barriers (access, apathy, distrust) that online outreach did not overcome for all.

These results corroborate analyses of the 2023 cycle showing social media's capacity to raise registration and voter awareness among youth (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). Empirical studies of recent Nigerian activism also emphasise the effectiveness of targeted informational campaigns: Ojomugbokenyode and Ogande (2024) found that Facebook and Twitter campaigns materially increased registration awareness in Benue State, while Akeusola (2023) linked digital engagement to higher political knowledge that supported registration decisions. Our findings extend those studies by documenting that, ahead of 2027, practical supports (step-by-step guides) were nearly as consequential as deadline awareness in prompting registration.

This pattern is consistent with Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) adapted to digital media: by making registration salient and framing it as an immediate civic priority, digital activism shifted the issue onto youths' cognitive agendas and thereby fostered action. In addition, the information-reducing function aligns with rational-choice expectations about lowering transaction costs to increase registration rates.

RQ3. In what ways is digital activism likely to facilitate grassroots political mobilisation leading up to the 2027 elections?

Digital activism was most effective for sharing grassroots mobilisation videos (102; 26.2%) and organising local community meetings (91; 23.4%), followed by recruiting volunteers (78; 20.1%) and coordinating local rallies (64; 16.5%). Faith-based and student group mobilisation accounted for 54 responses (13.9%). These results show that digital platforms were used both for narrative amplification (videos that motivate and instruct) and for practical local organising (scheduling meetings, recruiting volunteers). The relatively strong showing for video content suggests that emotionally resonant, multimedia materials are particularly effective at translating online sympathy into offline action. The distribution also highlights multi-layered mobilisation: public multimedia messaging to galvanise interest plus closed or semi-closed channels to operationalise activities.

This outcome parallels findings from studies of #EndSARS and post-2020 activism where multimedia storytelling on public platforms drove attention while private messaging and local networks enabled physical mobilisation (Bello et al., 2023; Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Chigbu and Ihechu (2025) (mixed-methods work) similarly observed that video and narrative framing on social media motivated youth registration and canvassing in Abia State. Our results confirm this two-step mobilisation dynamic, public narrative plus private coordination, operating ahead of 2027. The result aligns with Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) and Castells's Network Society perspective. RMT emphasises that mobilisation requires resources (information, organisers, volunteers): digital tools supply informational and organisational resources (videos, volunteer recruitment channels), while network society theory explains how distributed networks pool these resources to create coordinated grassroots action (Castells, 2012). Thus, digital affordances served both to attract resources (volunteers, visibility) and to allocate them where grassroots activity occurred.

RQ4. How might digital activism affect actual voter turnout and participation on election day in 2027?

The most frequently reported election-day influences were being motivated by online campaigns to vote (112; 28.8%), following reminders from WhatsApp groups (95; 24.4%), and using mobile apps to locate polling units (74; 19.0%); 61 respondents (15.7%) engaged in election monitoring initiatives, while 47 (12.1%) said digital activism had no effect. These findings indicate that digital activism had both motivational and logistical effects on turnout: persuasive campaigns elevated intent to vote, group reminders sustained mobilisation through the voting window, and utility apps reduced informational barriers on where and how to vote. The presence of a non-trivial non-effect group (12.1%) again highlights persistent constraints that online mobilisation alone may not overcome.

These patterns mirror results from recent Nigerian empirical work: Ngoka et al. (2024) and Ikegbunam & Ezeaso (2024) demonstrated that WhatsApp and mobile communication materially influenced students' and urban voters' turnout behaviours, while Arowolo and Ogande (2024) reported social media's effect on voting decisions during the 2023 cycle. Our study corroborates and extends these findings by showing that reminders and practical tools (apps locating polling units) were key mechanisms by which online activity translated into election-day participation ahead of 2027. The turnout result is most coherently explained by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT): youths who used digital media to fulfil information and instrumental needs (where to vote; reminders to vote) were more likely to convert online intention into action. UGT predicts that when media satisfy a user's pragmatic needs, here, logistical certainty and social motivation; they increase the probability of real-world behaviour, which our data confirmed.

8. Summary of Findings

Conclusion

This study examined the nexus between digital activism and political participation among Nigerian youths ahead of the 2027 general elections. Digital platforms were found to play a critical role in promoting voter registration, especially by improving awareness of deadlines, offering step-by-step guides, and fostering peer influence. Moreover, the study revealed that digital activism facilitates grassroots mobilisation by enabling the dissemination of multimedia mobilisation content, organising community meetings, and coordinating volunteers and rallies. Importantly, the analysis established that digital activism is poised to significantly boost voter turnout on election day, as online campaigns, reminders, and mobile tools enhance motivation, logistical preparedness, and real-time engagement.

These results underscore the transformative potential of digital platforms in reshaping youth political participation in Nigeria. However, challenges remain, including persistent disengagement among a minority of youths, resource constraints for deeper participation, and infrastructural or institutional barriers to effective mobilisation. The findings enrich existing theoretical perspectives, confirming the combined relevance of connective action, agenda-setting, resource mobilisation, and uses-and-gratifications theories in understanding how digital activism shapes civic behaviours in emerging democracies. As Nigeria approaches the 2027 elections, leveraging digital activism strategically can foster increased voter registration, enhanced grassroots mobilisation, and greater electoral participation among youths, ultimately strengthening democratic processes.

9. Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Stakeholders including civil society organisations, youth groups, and electoral bodies should invest in training youths on content creation, online petitioning, and structured virtual campaigns to move beyond awareness-driven activism towards sustained civic engagement ahead of 2027.
2. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should collaborate with youth influencers and digital campaigners to create targeted voter education content and step-by-step registration guides disseminated via WhatsApp, Twitter/X, Instagram, and TikTok to maximise reach and impact.
3. Political parties and community-based organisations should employ multimedia strategies, including short mobilisation videos, online community forums, and encrypted coordination platforms, to recruit volunteers, organise meetings, and mobilise faith-based and student networks effectively.
4. Ahead of election day, INEC, civil society actors, and tech developers should collaborate to deploy voter mobilisation apps offering features like polling unit locators, WhatsApp reminders, and election monitoring dashboards to encourage higher turnout and transparency during the 2027 elections.

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APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MEDIA PRACTICE FOR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In this paper, the researchers examined the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in media practices aimed at enhancing corporate governance. Drawing on five case studies – CJID, Channels Television, BudgIT, Bloomberg, and Code for Africa – the researchers investigated how AI is applied in monitoring, reporting, and framing governance issues, with particular focus on tools such as automated content generation, data mining, predictive analytics, and natural language processing. The findings showed that many AI tools have been adopted in media practice for corporate governance such as DUBAWA, AI-powered transcription services using NLP, chatbots and AI-assisted communication tool, iLAB, and Cyborg. Findings also revealed that AI enhances transparency, accountability, compliance tracking, and crisis communication, while also reshaping audience engagement and information management. Furthermore, findings also showed that challenges such as algorithmic bias, data privacy concerns, lack of transparency, over-automation, and infrastructural inequality are identified as critical barriers. The study highlights opportunities for improvement, including inclusive data development, capacity building, and explainable AI adoption. The researchers conclude that while AI offers powerful tools for reinforcing corporate oversight, its responsible and equitable use remains essential to ensuring media credibility, public trust, and the deepening of democratic governance practice.

Introduction

In an age where digital transformation is no longer a trend but a necessity, the intersection of technology and governance has become a compelling field of interest. Across the globe, businesses and institutions are confronting complex communication demands that call for speed, precision, and transparency. The media, as the principal vehicle for corporate storytelling and stakeholder engagement, have significantly undergone a revolution, moving beyond traditional gatekeeping roles to adopt emerging technologies that enhance speed, data interpretation, and content automation, chief among them, Artificial Intelligence (AI). This development is no longer abstract. From AI-generated media reports to predictive media analytics, artificial intelligence is progressively reshaping the operational rhythm of media organisations, giving rise to questions about its implications for corporate governance.

As artificial intelligence steadily transforms media workflows, its ripple effects are increasingly felt in the domain of corporate governance, a domain where perception, accountability, and strategic communication converge. In such a climate where

“reputational slips” travel faster than corporate progress, governance emerges as the silent architecture sustaining trust, order, and accountability. Corporate governance entails the systems, processes, and principles that direct and control organisational behaviour, and it thrives on accurate, timely, and consistent information dissemination. This is where media practice becomes indispensable, serving as the channel through which corporate communication, accountability, and public trust are negotiated. However, traditional media approaches often fall short of delivering real-time, data-driven insights necessary for governance-related decision-making. Hence, organisations are increasingly turning to AI-enabled tools for monitoring compliance, managing reputational risks, and automating public disclosures (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021).

More significantly, artificial intelligence brings a level of efficiency and predictive accuracy that transforms media content into strategic governance instruments. For instance, natural language processing (NLP) enables media departments to scan, summarise, and report on internal audit findings or market sentiment within seconds, such functions that once took days. Similarly, machine learning models are being used to identify trends and detect anomalies in corporate behaviour before they escalate into crises (Luo *et al.*, 2022). In this sense, Artificial Intelligence not only enhance media practice but also supports corporate governance objectives such as transparency, accountability, and compliance with expected standards.

However, while these innovations (application of AI in media practice for corporate governance) offer substantial promise, they also raise important ethical, operational, and professional questions. For instance, can AI-generated content maintain journalistic integrity and credibility? Are media professionals adequately trained to use AI tools responsibly in the service of governance objectives? Is there a risk of over-automation or information distortion? These concerns suggest that while AI has found a foothold in media operations, its integration into the realm of corporate governance must be approached with both enthusiasm and caution. Bridging the human-technology divide in this context is essential for ensuring both innovation and accountability. It was for this reason, therefore, that this article explores the application of artificial intelligence in media practice with a focus on its implications for corporate governance.

Corporate Governance

Corporate governance represents the framework through which organisations are directed, controlled, and held accountable. It embodies the structures, processes, and relationships that define how corporate power and responsibility are exercised. According to Solomon (2022), corporate governance ensures that the interests of

shareholders, management, and other stakeholders are balanced to achieve organisational sustainability. This system emerged prominently after several corporate scandals highlighted the need for transparency and ethical oversight. Modern governance thus transcends mere compliance, encompassing leadership values, corporate culture, and integrity mechanisms that ensure decisions are not only legal but also ethically sound.

At its core, corporate governance revolves around four fundamental principles: accountability, fairness, transparency, and responsibility. These pillars collectively safeguard stakeholders' trust and promote long-term corporate performance (OECD, 2023). Accountability ensures that management remains answerable to shareholders and regulators; fairness guarantees equitable treatment of all stakeholders; transparency facilitates access to accurate information; and responsibility reinforces ethical decision-making. Organisations that integrate these principles into their corporate strategy often enjoy stronger reputational capital, lower risks, and improved investor confidence. Therefore, governance is not merely regulatory—it is a strategic imperative in today's competitive global environment.

Over the years, diverse models of corporate governance have evolved to suit different institutional contexts. The Anglo-American model emphasises shareholder primacy and board independence, while the Continental European and Japanese models prioritise stakeholder engagement and relational networks (Husted & de Sousa-Filho, 2023). In emerging economies like Nigeria, hybrid governance systems blend these models to address contextual challenges such as ownership concentration and weak regulatory enforcement (Ofoegbu & Megginson, 2023). Understanding these variations highlights that effective governance must be adaptable—rooted in universal principles yet flexible enough to reflect national legal, cultural, and market realities.

A critical dimension of corporate governance lies in the composition and functioning of the board of directors. Boards act as the strategic apex, providing direction, monitoring management, and safeguarding shareholder interests. Empirical studies indicate that board diversity—in terms of gender, expertise, and independence, significantly, enhances decision quality and corporate innovation (Klettner *et al.*, 2023). In contrast, boards lacking independence or dominated by insiders are more prone to groupthink and poor oversight. Consequently, many jurisdictions now enforce board diversity quotas and performance evaluations to strengthen board effectiveness and accountability in corporate decision-making. As highlighted by Tricker (2022), governance succeeds when boards exhibit integrity, independence of thought, and commitment to corporate purpose beyond profit maximisation.

Transparency and disclosure are equally vital in the governance discourse. They serve as instruments of trust between organisations and the public. Effective disclosure

practices ensure that financial statements, executive remuneration, and risk management policies are presented truthfully and accessibly (OECD, 2023; Eccles & Klimenko, 2020). With the rise of digital reporting technologies, stakeholders now demand real-time and verifiable data on corporate performance. However, challenges such as selective reporting and “greenwashing” still threaten credibility. Hence, global standards like the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) guidelines are redefining transparency obligations to enhance comparability and ethical reporting.

The relationship between corporate governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly interwoven. Strong governance frameworks now integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria into strategic planning and reporting. Firms with robust ESG governance demonstrate superior resilience and stakeholder loyalty (AEIAlfy et al., 2022). This shift signifies that governance is no longer confined to boardrooms but extends to how firms address climate risks, employee welfare, and social equity. Thus, corporate governance has evolved into a broader paradigm for responsible and sustainable business conduct in the twenty-first century.

In corporate governance, there have been various challenges globally. Issues such as corruption, regulatory capture, weak enforcement, and conflicts of interest continue to undermine governance quality in developing economies (World Bank, 2022). Moreover, the digital transformation of business introduces new risks, cybersecurity threats, data governance, and algorithmic bias, that traditional governance codes rarely anticipated. Addressing these challenges requires dynamic, technology-informed governance approaches that blend compliance with innovation. Consequently, policymakers and boards must continuously refine frameworks to reflect the changing risk landscape and stakeholder expectations.

Corporate governance remains a cornerstone of organisational success and societal trust. It is an evolving discipline, shaped by global reforms, technological disruption, and rising stakeholder consciousness. Effective governance aligns corporate behaviour with ethical norms, strategic goals, and societal values, ensuring that corporations contribute positively to economic and human development. As Clarke (2024) observes, governance is both a moral and managerial responsibility, anchoring corporate legitimacy in an age of transparency, accountability, and digital change. The future of governance, therefore, lies in its capacity to adapt while upholding enduring principles of integrity and fairness.

Artificial Intelligence, the Media, and Corporate Governance

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming industries by automating decision-making, data analysis, and audience engagement. In the media, AI supports content creation, news curation, and personalised delivery (Diakopoulos, 2023). Tools such as

OpenAI's ChatGPT, Reuters' Lynx Insight, and the BBC's Juicer illustrate how AI augments journalistic production by enhancing efficiency and scalability. However, as AI systems gain editorial influence, they introduce questions of accountability, bias, and transparency. Governance frameworks must therefore evolve to ensure ethical oversight and protect public trust. This intersection of technology, ethics, and accountability positions AI as both a transformative and disruptive force within modern media ecosystems.

The adoption of AI in journalism and broadcasting has redefined how news is gathered, verified, and distributed. Algorithmic tools assist journalists in analysing large datasets, detecting misinformation, and automating routine tasks (Rony et al., 2023). Yet, over-reliance on machine-generated outputs raises concerns about editorial independence and algorithmic opacity. According to Fanta and Dachwitz (2022), AI-driven journalism must integrate human editorial judgment with ethical governance standards to prevent automation from compromising accuracy or integrity. Effective governance in media AI thus involves balancing innovation with human oversight to sustain credibility, fairness, and societal accountability.

Corporate governance plays a critical role in managing these technological transformations. As AI becomes embedded in business operations—including media organisations—boards must establish policies for ethical AI adoption, risk management, and data privacy (Glikson & Woolley, 2023). Transparent governance frameworks ensure that AI tools align with corporate purpose and stakeholder interests. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) emphasises that ethical AI governance should uphold principles of fairness, explainability, and accountability. For media corporations, this means integrating algorithmic auditing and AI ethics committees into governance structures to oversee responsible innovation and safeguard editorial integrity.

The convergence of AI and corporate governance also reshapes decision-making processes. AI-driven analytics assist boards in monitoring performance, predicting risks, and ensuring compliance (Tambe et al., 2023). In media firms, predictive analytics guide audience engagement, advertising revenue, and content strategy. However, governance systems must prevent AI from reinforcing biases or amplifying misinformation. According to Cows et al. (2021), corporate governance must institutionalise digital ethics to ensure that AI supports—not supplants—human judgment. This shift from traditional governance to “algorithmic governance” requires new competencies, board literacy, and policy frameworks adapted to AI-mediated organisational environments.

Furthermore, AI's role in the media directly influences public discourse and democratic accountability. When algorithms determine what audiences see or read, they

effectively shape information ecosystems and civic behaviour. Therefore, governance must extend beyond corporate compliance to include societal accountability (UNESCO, 2023). Ethical AI in media governance requires transparency in content recommendation systems, diversity in training data, and mechanisms for public redress. Integrating responsible AI practices into media governance strengthens institutional legitimacy, reduces misinformation risks, and promotes trust between media organisations and their audiences in a digital public sphere.

The synergy between AI, the media, and corporate governance embodies the future of responsible innovation. Media organisations must not only adopt AI but also govern it through transparent policies, ethical standards, and stakeholder engagement. As Clarke (2024) notes, sustainable governance in the AI era depends on moral courage, adaptive learning, and human-centred accountability. The fusion of AI ethics and corporate governance provides a blueprint for ensuring that media innovation serves both organisational interests and democratic values. By embedding AI governance into corporate frameworks, the media can sustain public trust while embracing the efficiencies of intelligent automation.

Theoretical Framework

This article is anchored on the Technological Determinism Theory, which posits that technological advancements drive and reshape societal structures, behaviours, and institutional practices (McLuhan, 1964). In the context of media and governance, this theory provides a useful lens for examining how the integration of artificial intelligence is not merely enhancing existing communication routines but fundamentally altering how corporate governance is communicated, monitored, and perceived. As AI-driven tools increasingly dictate the rhythm and method of corporate reporting, the traditional media roles of gatekeeping, watchdog journalism, and stakeholder engagement are being redefined in real time. Therefore, this theory offers the framework for examining the application of AI in media governance for corporate governance.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: PTCIJ/CJID and AI-Driven Data Journalism in Nigeria

The Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ), now the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID), represents a significant example of AI integration in Nigerian media to advance corporate governance. Renowned for leveraging digital and civic-tech tools, CJID has pioneered AI-assisted data journalism to expose misconduct in the public and private sectors (Umeora, 2025). By mining, analysing, and visualising complex datasets, the organisation uncovers regulatory breaches, financial misreporting, and transparency lapses, making it a trailblazer in investigative journalism with a strong governance orientation (CJID, 2016).

A key tool in its arsenal is *DUBAWA*, a machine learning-powered platform that supports fact-checking and verification of corporate claims, financial disclosures, and public statements. While not fully autonomous, DUBAWA incorporates keyword tracking and text comparison algorithms to flag misinformation, especially in governance-related reporting. CJID also collaborates with data science communities to develop tools that scan procurement records and contracts, further reinforcing corporate accountability by automating scrutiny of institutional transactions (Bassey, 2025).

These AI-enhanced applications have directly impacted Nigeria's corporate governance landscape. Automated investigations have revealed fraudulent contracts and non-compliance in both private firms and state-owned enterprises. Though challenges such as poor data access, infrastructural limitations, and algorithmic opacity persist, CJID's model shows that Nigerian media can use AI meaningfully (Umeora, 2025). Their approach empowers journalists to produce timely, evidence-based reports, strengthens oversight, and promotes ethical corporate conduct in a complex and often opaque business environment (Quadros, 2024).

Case Study 2: Channels Television and AI-Augmented Broadcast Journalism

Channels Television, one of Nigeria's most respected news broadcasters, offers a practical example of how mainstream media is beginning to incorporate artificial intelligence to support governance-focused reporting. While Channels is not traditionally seen as a technology-driven outlet, it has embraced AI-enhanced content management systems and automated video analysis tools to streamline its news production workflow. This adoption allows the station to monitor large volumes of governance-related footage, such as parliamentary sessions, budget briefings, or corporate press conferences, with improved speed and accuracy (Nytse and Ishaku, 2024).

The station utilises AI-powered transcription services and natural language processing (NLP) tools to rapidly convert video and audio content into searchable text. These tools are particularly valuable during investigative or political coverage, where automated keyword tracking helps identify statements of interest, inconsistencies, or patterns across government and corporate communications (Doyin, 2025). Additionally, real-time social media monitoring algorithms are employed to detect trending governance issues or crises, which then inform editorial decisions and breaking news reports (Rovinalti, 2023).

Through these AI-driven enhancements, Channels Television has improved the timeliness and analytical depth of its coverage of public affairs. This enables the media to hold both government institutions and corporate actors more accountable in the public eye (Fitria, 2024). Although the use of AI in broadcast journalism remains limited

in scope, Channels' efforts demonstrate how even traditional media can harness emerging technologies to support transparency, civic education, and responsive governance reporting in Nigeria's evolving media landscape.

Case Study 3: BudgIT and AI-Powered Civic-Tech Advocacy in Nigeria

BudgIT, a civic technology organisation based in Nigeria, exemplifies how AI can be deployed beyond traditional journalism to promote corporate and governmental transparency. Focused on making public finance data more accessible and engaging, BudgIT has developed platforms that leverage AI to track budget allocations, procurement activities, and spending patterns (The Guardian Nigeria, 2025). By combining automation with data visualisation, the organisation enables citizens, journalists, and civil society groups to understand and interrogate how public resources are managed, often revealing patterns of misappropriation and financial opacity within government-linked enterprises and private contractors.

One of BudgIT's key innovations is the use of AI algorithms to analyse large datasets from the Budget Office, National Assembly reports, and government procurement portals. These tools detect anomalies such as duplicate projects, inflated contracts, or inconsistencies in financial reporting. BudgIT also deploys chatbots and AI-assisted communication tools to engage citizens in real time, offering verified insights into public spending while encouraging whistleblowing and participatory governance (Alumona, 2025).

Through these AI-driven mechanisms, BudgIT has significantly contributed to shaping accountability practices in Nigeria's governance and corporate sectors. Investigative findings powered by AI have led to public debates, policy reviews, and corrective measures, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure, health, and education. Although the civic-tech ecosystem faces limitations such as poor data openness and institutional pushback, BudgIT's model shows how AI tools can empower the public to demand integrity, thereby strengthening governance and ethical compliance among Nigeria's political and business elites (Vanguard Nigeria, 2025).

Case Study 4: Code for Africa and Pan-African AI-Driven Civic Media

Code for Africa (CfA), one of Africa's leading network of civic technology and data journalism labs, offers an example of how AI can be harnessed to promote transparency and corporate governance across Africa. Operating in over 20 African countries, including Nigeria, CfA develops AI-powered tools that support investigative journalism, electoral integrity, procurement monitoring, and anti-corruption campaigns. Its approach blends open data with automated technologies to empower newsrooms, civil society, and citizens to detect and report governance failures in both public and private institutions (Aburayya, 2025).

Among its flagship initiatives is the *iLAB*, an AI-enabled forensic analysis lab that uses machine learning to trace illicit financial flows, monitor politically exposed persons, and uncover shell company networks. CfA also uses natural language processing and AI bots for monitoring misinformation and verifying the authenticity of government or corporate communications. These tools allow for large-scale content analysis and real-time detection of suspicious financial activity, enhancing public scrutiny and journalistic accountability across borders (Aburayya, 2025).

Code for Africa's work has led to major investigative collaborations that exposed procurement fraud, cross-border corruption, and unethical corporate partnerships. While limitations persist, such as fragmented data sources, institutional resistance, and concerns over algorithmic bias, their AI-driven model has helped reshape civic engagement and transparency norms. By supporting African journalists and citizens with scalable, tech-powered insights, CfA's efforts demonstrate how AI can be ethically and strategically applied to improve corporate governance and strengthen media ecosystems in developing democracies (Aburayya, 2025; Startuplist Africa. (2025)).

Case Study 5: Bloomberg's Cyborg Journalism and AI in Corporate Reporting

Bloomberg News, a global leader in financial journalism, has remained one of the leading media organisations with increasing use of Artificial Intelligence in corporate reporting through its AI system known as *Cyborg* (Quinonez & Meij, 2024; Dans, 2019). This tool automatically generates thousands of financial news stories each quarter by analysing structured data from company earnings reports, regulatory filings, and stock market disclosures. Within seconds, Cyborg produces accurate and readable summaries highlighting key governance-related issues, such as leadership changes, revenue shifts, and boardroom decisions, providing a blend of speed, transparency, and accountability (Dans, 2019).

The Cyborg system enables real-time scrutiny of corporate activities, ensuring that both prominent and lesser-known companies receive immediate media coverage based on their financial disclosures. Human editors then refine the AI-generated drafts for nuance and context. This collaboration between machine and journalist enhances reporting efficiency while supporting fairer and more inclusive oversight (Quinonez & Meij, 2024). By enabling rapid public access to sensitive information, Bloomberg reinforces a culture of openness and deters data manipulation or delayed disclosures, which are common concerns in global corporate governance.

Despite its benefits, Bloomberg's model also highlights the limits of automation. Cyborg excels at structured data but cannot conduct in-depth investigations or critically assess corporate ethics. Concerns about over-reliance on automation and potential data

misinterpretation remain valid. Nonetheless, Bloomberg's integration of AI into newsrooms marks a significant shift in how media can uphold governance values, emphasising transparency, speed, and equal access to information, thereby reshaping the corporate communications landscape on a global scale.

Discussion

Artificial Intelligence Technologies in media practice for corporate governance.

There is no gainsaying that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly being applied in contemporary media practice as a tool for improving content production, enhancing investigative rigour, and promoting corporate accountability. In an era of growing corporate complexity and digital information overload, media organisations are adopting AI-driven technologies to manage large datasets, extract relevant patterns, and present information in a way that strengthens public oversight.

In this paper, five distinct AI technologies (DUBAWA, AI-powered transcription services using NLP, chatbots and AI-assisted communication tool, iLAB, and Cyborg) are found to be applied across the selected case studies: CJID, Channels Television, BudgIT, Bloomberg, and Code for Africa. Natural Language Processing (NLP) featured prominently, particularly in Channels Television and Bloomberg, where it is used to transcribe and analyse lengthy government communications, financial briefings, and public disclosures. Automated content generation, as employed by Bloomberg's *Cyborg* system, enables rapid summarisation of financial reports and corporate updates into readable news articles. Machine learning algorithms, adopted by CJID and BudgIT, are used to detect anomalies and patterns in procurement records, budgets, and spending data, allowing for more targeted investigations. AI-powered fact-checking tools such as *DUBAWA* play a significant role in verifying public and corporate claims, while Code for Africa's *iLAB* applies forensic data analysis and entity tracking technologies to investigate illicit financial flows and hidden ownership structures.

Although the specific tools and applications vary by organisation, their underlying purpose is consistent: to reinforce the watchdog function of the media in the realm of corporate governance. By automating repetitive or data-heavy tasks, AI enables journalists to uncover fraud, expose regulatory non-compliance, and scrutinise institutional transactions with greater accuracy and efficiency. In several cases, these AI tools helped to uncover duplicated budget projects, inflated contracts, and inconsistencies in official reporting. Notably, they also extend the reach of media coverage, allowing journalists to highlight questionable practices within both prominent corporations and lesser-known firms that might otherwise escape scrutiny.

This observation reflects a growing trend identified in recent scholarship, where

AI technologies are not just technical tools but active agents in reshaping media logic and journalistic routines (Marconi & Siegman, 2017; and Okoro and Odoemelum, 2021). However, the findings also bring to light persistent challenges, including limited access to reliable data, infrastructural constraints, and ethical concerns regarding algorithmic bias and editorial independence. These challenges confirm prior research by Dörr (2016) and Broussard (2018), who caution against the over-automation of journalism without safeguards for transparency and accountability. Despite these limitations, the strategic application of AI in the selected cases suggests that media organisations, particularly those engaged in governance reporting, are increasingly recognising AI's potential to strengthen democratic oversight.

Viewed through the theoretical lens of Technological Determinism, the findings of this study affirm that technological innovation does not merely support existing journalistic functions; it transforms them. The AI tools adopted by these media organisations are not neutral; they shape what is reported, how quickly it is reported, and what patterns are uncovered. Technology here functions as a structural force that reshapes newsroom routines, redefines editorial priorities, and recalibrates the power dynamics between corporations and the public. In line with the theory's core proposition, the evidence suggests that as media institutions adopt more sophisticated AI systems, they are also transforming their governance roles, from reactive information brokers to proactive agents of accountability in the corporate sphere.

Artificial Intelligence Shaping Media Practice for Corporate Governance

A key area where AI has reshaped media practice is information management. With the explosion of digital content and open data repositories, media organisations now rely on AI to organise, prioritise, and extract value from vast data sets. In the case of Bloomberg, for instance, AI tools such as *Cyborg* are used to sift through thousands of corporate filings and generate digestible news summaries. Similarly, BudgIT applies AI algorithms to track government budgets and corporate spending patterns, automatically flagging inconsistencies and suspicious entries. This capacity for real-time sorting and categorisation ensures that critical governance issues are not lost in the data deluge, thereby reinforcing the media's role in corporate oversight.

AI also plays a growing role in audience engagement, which is central to governance reporting. Natural Language Processing (NLP) and sentiment analysis are now used to assess public opinion, detect shifts in trust toward corporate institutions, and tailor governance-related content to diverse audience segments. Code for Africa's platforms, for example, use AI-powered bots to interact with users across multiple languages, helping to localise information about corporate behaviour and public finance. These engagement strategies do more than widen reach; they deepen civic

participation by making governance information relatable and responsive to local concerns. As Kovačić (2020) argues, effective audience engagement in governance journalism requires intelligent systems that can adapt content dynamically and foster two-way communication between media and the public.

Equally important is the role of AI in communication automation, where repetitive media tasks—such as financial report summarisation, press release analysis, and publication scheduling—are now delegated to intelligent systems. This was evident in Channels Television's application of automated transcription tools and real-time content tagging during political and corporate briefings. By automating these workflows, media outlets free up human journalists for more analytical tasks, while ensuring that governance-related communication is timely, consistent, and accurate. These automation systems also allow smaller media organisations and civic-tech platforms to scale their impact without proportional increases in labour or cost.

Through these functions, AI is redefining the structure and tempo of journalism in the governance space. Scholars like Newman et al. (2021) and Beckett (2019) have noted that the application of AI tools in journalism is not only a response to digital disruption but a proactive redefinition of how media fulfils its democratic and accountability functions. In developing countries where governance gaps are persistent, the reconfiguration of media workflows through AI is emerging as a powerful mechanism for transparency and corporate scrutiny.

Interpreted through the lens of Technological Determinism, these developments suggest that AI is not merely assisting media practitioners, it is actively reshaping their routines, priorities, and capacities. The integration of AI into information management, audience targeting, and communication workflows has introduced new expectations for media performance in the corporate governance arena. It pushes media organisations to be faster, more data-driven, and more interactive in their approach. As such, technology becomes a central determinant of how journalism operates, evolves, and exercises influence within governance ecosystems.

AI-powered media systems in advancing corporate governance objectives

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered media systems have also enhanced the strategic capacity of journalism and civic media in promoting core corporate governance objectives, particularly transparency, accountability, compliance, crisis response, and organisational credibility. As governance standards become more complex and data-driven, media organisations are increasingly turning to intelligent systems to scrutinise corporate operations and influence public perceptions of ethical behaviour.

One of the most strategic contributions of AI in this regard is the enhancement of transparency and accountability. Through automated data analysis and real-time

reporting, AI systems allow media outlets to expose hidden transactions, track financial inconsistencies, and unveil unethical practices in both public and private organisations. The work of CJID and BudgIT, for instance, illustrates how machine learning algorithms and data mining tools have uncovered irregular procurement patterns, questionable financial statements, and delayed disclosures in Nigeria's corporate and public sectors. These tools automate detection, thereby increasing the likelihood of timely and fact-based reporting, which in turn pressures corporate actors to be more transparent and answerable to stakeholders.

AI-powered systems also serve as compliance monitors, especially in industries where regulatory frameworks are dense and frequently evolving. Platforms like Bloomberg's *Cyborg* help monitor corporate adherence to financial reporting standards by automatically parsing earnings data and flagging anomalies. Similarly, Code for Africa's AI-based tools monitor cross-border financial activities, shell company networks, and disclosures made by politically exposed persons (PEPs), providing data that can be used by regulators, auditors, and the media. These systems help close the gap between legislation and enforcement by creating a publicly visible trail of compliance or misconduct, thereby reinforcing the rule of law within corporate environments.

Another area of growing strategic importance is crisis management and organisational credibility. AI tools enable media organisations to respond swiftly to crises by automating the processing and dissemination of verified information. Channels Television's AI-assisted content systems, for example, enhance coverage of corporate responses during environmental or financial crises by analysing speech, detecting key terms, and structuring broadcast narratives for clarity and consistency. This speed and precision are vital in crisis contexts, where misinformation can erode trust and credibility. Moreover, consistent and fact-based reporting, supported by AI tools, contributes to long-term perceptions of organisational integrity and ethical standing among stakeholders.

Scholars like van der Burg and Dolfsma (2020) argue that AI technologies have evolved into strategic governance tools that not only support internal decision-making but also shape external accountability environments. Within this context, AI-driven media platforms act as both informers and enforcers of governance values by streamlining oversight and amplifying exposure of corporate actions.

Through these strategic applications, AI-powered media systems are reshaping the governance landscape, not merely by enhancing media efficiency but by reinforcing institutional accountability frameworks. From the Technological Determinism perspective, the integration of AI into governance reporting exemplifies how technology actively redefines institutional relationships and power structures. The tools themselves shape what becomes visible, who is held accountable, and how rapidly

issues are addressed in the public sphere. Thus, AI is not simply a support mechanism; it is an agent of structural change that embeds governance priorities more deeply into media routines and public consciousness.

AI Technologies in Reporting Corporate Governance Issues

The application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in modern media organisations has also altered how corporate governance issues are monitored, reported, and framed. As governance reporting increasingly requires real-time responsiveness and data literacy, media organisations are adopting AI-driven tools to streamline editorial workflows and increase the accuracy and depth of coverage.

In terms of monitoring, AI enables media to track a vast array of corporate activities, from financial disclosures and stock fluctuations to boardroom decisions and procurement trends. Tools like data mining and real-time web scraping are now employed to monitor regulatory filings, government budgets, and institutional press releases. BudgIT, for instance, uses AI to continuously scan and extract relevant data from public databases, flagging unusual patterns or duplications in project records. Similarly, Code for Africa applies AI-powered entity recognition and tracking tools to monitor hidden business relationships, offshore transactions, and politically exposed persons. These automated surveillance capabilities ensure that media organisations remain alert to emerging issues which manual methods may miss.

With respect to *reporting*, *automated content* generation has become an essential AI application, particularly in financial journalism. Bloomberg's *Cyborg* system is a prime example, automatically generating thousands of articles each quarter based on corporate earnings and market data. These articles summarise key figures, highlight performance shifts, and flag governance-related changes like executive resignations or regulatory penalties. Human journalists then edit and supplement the content, ensuring speed without sacrificing accuracy. In Nigeria, CJID and Channels Television have adopted similar AI-enhanced systems to support the production of governance-related content. This automation not only accelerates the reporting process but also increases the volume and consistency of corporate news that reaches the public.

Framing, that is, how stories are positioned or interpreted, is also increasingly influenced by AI, particularly through *predictive analytics*. By analysing previous audience reactions, sentiment trends, and social media discourse, predictive algorithms help editors decide how to angle governance-related stories for maximum impact. For instance, Channels Television uses AI tools that assess real-time engagement metrics to prioritise headlines, visual elements, or subject emphasis. This process does not merely measure visibility but helps to frame issues in ways that resonate with public concerns around transparency, corruption, and ethical leadership. Predictive framing also allows

civic-tech platforms like CJID to tailor investigative campaigns that target specific sectors, actors, or governance gaps.

These AI applications demonstrate that media organisations are not only using technology for efficiency but also as a framework for *how corporate governance is understood and communicated*. Scholars like Marconi and Siegman (2017) and Diakopoulos (2019) have emphasised that AI in journalism is not just a tool for automation but a powerful force that shapes the logic and language of reporting. In corporate governance contexts, where issues of compliance, ethics, and regulation are highly dynamic, AI allows the media to function as a more sophisticated and consistent accountability partner.

Within the lens of Technological Determinism, these tools are seen as transformative agents that reshape newsroom behaviour, reporting patterns, and even public expectations. AI systems influence what issues are prioritised, how they are constructed for audiences, and how frequently they are revisited. Thus, the technologies adopted do not merely serve media routines—they redefine them. In the context of corporate governance, this transformation implies a more proactive, data-informed, and strategically aligned media role in enforcing public accountability.

Challenges in AI Use for Corporate Governance

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) becomes more integrated into media practices, particularly in corporate reporting and governance communication, several ethical and operational challenges have begun to surface. While AI promises efficiency, speed, and deeper analytical insights, its deployment also raises complex questions around accuracy, bias, transparency, control, and professional ethics.

The first major challenge is *algorithmic bias*. AI systems are only as objective as the data they are trained on. In contexts like Nigeria, where datasets may be fragmented or politically influenced, tools used by BudgIT and CJID to detect procurement anomalies or financial irregularities risk excluding marginal actors or misidentifying legitimate patterns. For instance, while CJID's machine-learning models have helped uncover contract inflation, their reliance on limited or publicly incomplete data can lead to a biased investigative focus. This concern aligns with findings by Noble (2018), who demonstrated how biased data sources often lead to skewed outputs in automated journalism.

A second challenge is *data privacy and security*. Code for Africa's iLAB, which uses AI to track illicit corporate affiliations and cross-border transactions, relies heavily on sensitive open-source intelligence and scraped content. This raises issues about ethical boundaries, particularly in the absence of explicit consent from individuals or corporations. Similarly, Bloomberg's Cyborg system processes private financial

disclosures within milliseconds of release, posing a risk if internal safeguards fail. In Nigeria, BudgIT's scraping of budget and procurement platforms could also risk unintentional exposure of sensitive data, especially in states where digital governance regulations are weak or unclear.

Third is the issue of *transparency and explainability*. Channels Television, for example, uses automated transcription and keyword tools to support live coverage of government and corporate briefings. However, the logic behind the tool's prioritisation of terms or topics is not always transparent to the newsroom or the public. Likewise, Bloomberg's Cyborg produces fast financial summaries, yet the editorial team must manually verify insights because the algorithm's logic cannot always be explained. In CJID's work, journalists often need to cross-reference algorithmic outputs with human judgment to ensure fairness and clarity. This lack of explainability complicates editorial accountability in governance reporting.

The fourth challenge involves *over-automation and editorial deskilling*. At Bloomberg, the Cyborg system generates thousands of articles, freeing up journalists, but also shifting them into supervisory rather than investigative roles. While this boosts speed, it may reduce their direct engagement with raw data. Channels Television's partial automation of coverage, though beneficial, risks sidelining human discretion in fast-paced newsrooms. Even civic-focused organisations like BudgIT have noted a growing dependence on automated insights, sometimes at the expense of deeper qualitative analysis. This trend, if unchecked, could erode core journalistic skills essential for investigative governance journalism.

The fifth challenge is *technological inequality* across media organisations. While Bloomberg operates advanced AI infrastructure, smaller actors like CJID and BudgIT often face infrastructural and funding constraints that limit full-scale AI adoption. For instance, Code for Africa's advanced tools are not always replicable by regional partners due to high technical demands. Channels Television has only recently adopted AI-assisted tools, and even then, at a limited scale compared to global media counterparts. This unequal access creates disparities in how governance issues are covered across regions and outlets, reinforcing a digital divide in media oversight capacity.

Finally, there is the issue of *ethical ambiguity in content generation*. When Bloomberg's Cyborg system produces financial stories or CJID uses AI-supported data narratives, questions arise about authorship and verification responsibility. If an automated report results in reputational damage, who is accountable: the algorithm, the journalist, or the organisation? Similarly, BudgIT's visual data storytelling, powered partly by automated platforms, must still be human-curated to avoid misinformation. These tensions illustrate the ongoing uncertainty in determining journalistic

responsibility in AI-mediated reporting processes.

These challenges underscore the need for a more cautious and critically engaged approach to AI adoption in media practices. Through the lens of Technological Determinism, the findings show that while AI shapes newsroom routines and governance coverage, it also restructures ethical boundaries and operational expectations. Technology is not a neutral actor; it redefines journalistic norms, sometimes in unintended ways. As such, media organisations must complement AI use with robust ethical frameworks, transparent editorial processes, and continuous human oversight to ensure that governance communication remains both credible and responsible.

Conclusion

The evolving integration of Artificial Intelligence into media practices signals a transformative shift in how journalism shapes and sustains corporate governance. Rather than merely extending existing capacities, AI is actively redefining editorial logic, investigative strategies, and the speed at which the media can influence public and institutional accountability. As seen across diverse case studies, this technological shift introduces not just tools but new expectations—demanding that newsrooms become more data-literate, ethically grounded, and strategically agile. The implications stretch beyond efficiency; they touch the core of democratic oversight and institutional credibility. Ultimately, the future of governance journalism will depend not just on adopting AI, but on how deliberately, equitably, and responsibly it is deployed within the media landscape.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis and discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Media organisations and civic-tech bodies such as CJID and BudgIT should collaborate with regulatory agencies, research institutions, and civil society to establish open, standardised, and ethically sourced datasets. These efforts will reduce algorithmic bias, enhance investigative accuracy, and ensure that AI tools are trained on comprehensive, balanced information that reflects both public and private sector activities. This step is essential to foster fairness and inclusivity in AI-driven governance reporting.
- ii. To build public trust and internal accountability, media houses like Channels Television and Bloomberg should integrate explainable AI (XAI) frameworks into their editorial systems. This includes using transparent algorithms, interactive dashboards, and metadata tracking that clarify how decisions are made by AI. Additionally, newsrooms should maintain audit trails and involve journalists in verifying automated content to preserve the integrity of

- governance communication.
- iii. Ongoing capacity building is crucial to ensure that AI complements rather than replaces human editorial judgment. Media organisations should train journalists not only on the technical use of AI tools but also on their ethical implications. Programmes should cover data ethics, privacy, interpretive skills, and misinformation risks, ensuring that staff remain critical actors in AI-augmented newsrooms and continue to uphold the watchdog role of the press in governance.
 - iv. To reduce the technological gap between well-resourced organisations like Bloomberg and under-resourced civic media in developing countries, international development partners, donors, and governments should support the creation of regional AI innovation hubs. These centres would provide access to shared AI tools, infrastructure, and training for local media organisations, enabling broader and more equitable participation in AI-powered governance journalism.

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STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES OF STERLING GLOBAL RESOURCES LIMITED IN AKWAIBOM STATE

Precious Selong Edem

Abstract

This study examined stakeholders' perception of Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's community relations and crisis management activities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, with particular attention to awareness, interpretation, effectiveness, and long-term corporate–community relations. Anchored on Stakeholder Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory, the research adopted a survey design to capture community voices. A total of 383 respondents were sampled using a multi-stage approach from the population of the study. Data were collected through structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency distribution and weighted mean scores. The findings revealed moderate awareness of both community relations and crisis management initiatives, though visibility was uneven across sectors, with infrastructure projects more recognised than skills or environmental programmes. Interpretations of these initiatives reflected cautious approval, with stakeholders acknowledging certain benefits while questioning consistency and openness in corporate communication. Perceptions of effectiveness were mixed: while tangible contributions such as infrastructure and health projects were positively rated, critical areas such as employment creation, inclusivity in decision-making, and trust-building received negative evaluations. In crisis management, stakeholders acknowledged prompt responses, environmental restoration, and fairness, but rated compensation, trust enhancement and sustainability poorly. Overall, the study highlights a gap between visible interventions and deeper, intangible dimensions of corporate–community relations. The study recommends greater stakeholder participation, transparent communication, and fair compensation as pathways to strengthening sustainable corporate–community relationships.

Introduction

The idea that community relations constitutes a central pillar of organisational sustainability, particularly for companies operating in socio-economically sensitive environments. It reflects the systematic processes through which organisations engage with their host communities to build trust, foster collaboration, and mitigate potential conflicts. Far from being mere philanthropy or image management, community relations involve strategic interventions such as local employment schemes, educational support, healthcare initiatives, and infrastructure development. In practice, these initiatives seek to align corporate objectives with community expectations, thereby creating a mutually beneficial environment where both the organisation and the community can thrive. For example, in Nigeria, several oil companies have invested in community schools, vocational training programmes, and healthcare facilities, illustrating the practical manifestations of structured community engagement (Omotayo, 2022).

The importance of community relations becomes particularly evident when organisational operations intersect with local socio-political and environmental realities. Weak or neglected relations with host communities can escalate into disputes, protests, and operational disruptions, highlighting the fragile link between corporate initiatives and societal acceptance (Okafor, 2021). Poorly managed expectations, environmental degradation, or exclusion from decision-making processes can trigger conflicts that compromise both corporate and community welfare. These tensions underscore the inherent connection between community relations and crisis management: proactive engagement reduces the likelihood of crises, while neglect or misalignment can exacerbate vulnerabilities and heighten organisational risk which could result in crises (Ezeani&Uche, 2022).

Crises in organisations emerge in diverse forms, ranging from environmental disasters and operational failures to social unrest and reputational shocks. Within Nigeria's oil and gas sector, high-profile examples illustrate the consequences of inadequate engagement. The 2008 Shell oil spills in the Niger Delta led to community protests, international scrutiny, and multi-million-dollar litigation, while Total Nigeria's 2020 pipeline incident provoked environmental concerns and disrupted local livelihoods (Ite, Ibok, Ite, & Petters, 2020). These instances highlight that crises are not limited to operational mishaps; they also arise from breakdowns in trust and communication between companies and communities, reinforcing the need for strategic relational practices.

When crises are not effectively managed, their impacts multiply uncontrollably, thereby affecting not only financial performance but also stakeholder trust, operational continuity, and corporate legitimacy. Poorly handled incidents can provoke long-term grievances, legal sanctions, and reputational damage, often extending beyond the immediate organisational environment (Coombs, 2021). These challenges demonstrate that crisis management is not merely a reactive function but a proactive mechanism embedded within organisational culture and communication practices. It involves anticipating risks, preparing response strategies, and coordinating actions that mitigate both immediate and long-term consequences.

In practical terms, crisis management is grounded in structured planning, transparent communication, and timely responsiveness. Organisations that invest in scenario analysis, emergency response training, and stakeholder engagement frameworks are better positioned to contain the effects of crises (Smith, 2020). For instance, companies that maintain open channels of dialogue with local communities can quickly assess grievances, clarify misconceptions, and mobilise solutions before disputes escalate. The interplay between preemptive engagement and effective crisis response illustrates that crisis management is inherently relational: the quality of

existing interactions shapes how crises are perceived, interpreted, and resolved.

Within the contemporary oil and gas sector, the stakes for effective crisis management are magnified. Companies operate in high-risk environments where ecological sensitivity, local socio-political dynamics, and historical grievances intersect.

Understanding the nature of crises, and how they are perceived by affected stakeholders, is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of interventions by organisations. Perception, in this sense, becomes the lens through which organisational efforts are judged, determining the credibility and legitimacy of corporate actions. Stakeholders' perceptions are shaped by the interplay between corporate initiatives, communication quality, and observable outcomes. Positive perceptions reinforce trust, cooperation, and social licence to operate, while negative perceptions can intensify grievances, fuel protests, and damage organisational reputation (Ezeani&Uche, 2022). For Sterling, examining stakeholder perception provides critical insights into the alignment between community relations strategies, crisis management practices, and the lived realities of host communities. Based on this discussion, therefore, this study seeks to investigate stakeholders' perceptions of Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's community relations and crisis management activities in Akwa Ibom State. This focus ensures that interventions are not only strategically designed but also socially effective.

Statement of the Problem

Observation indicates that despite Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's presence in some communities in Akwa Ibom State and its claims of engaging in corporate social responsibility through health outreach, educational scholarships, and infrastructure development, seem to raise tension between the company and its stakeholders. Host communities often report inadequate consultation, limited inclusion in decision-making, and perceptions of neglect, which create trust deficits and recurring conflicts that disrupt both community life and corporate operations. While the company maintains that it has functional mechanisms for crisis management and community engagement, discrepancies between official claims and stakeholders' experiences highlight a perception gap. Moreover, although studies exist on oil companies' practices in the Niger Delta, little research specifically examines Sterling Global's community relations and crisis management from the perspective of direct stakeholders, necessitating this study.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to:

- i. determine stakeholders' level of awareness of Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's community relations and crisis management activities in Akwa Ibom State;

- ii. assess stakeholders' interpretation of the company's community relations initiatives and crisis management responses;
- iii. evaluate stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of Sterling Global's community relations practices in meeting host communities' needs; and,
- iv. examine the extent to which stakeholders perceive the company's crisis management activities as fostering trust and sustainable corporate–community relations.

Literature Review

Community relations in Contemporary Society

Community relations represents a vital dimension of organisational strategy, encompassing the deliberate efforts of firms to engage meaningfully with the communities in which they operate. It extends beyond traditional philanthropy to integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR), stakeholder engagement, and ethical communication to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes (Lee & Carroll, 2018). Strand et al. (2020) emphasise that community relations is both a social and strategic imperative, fostering trust, legitimacy, and relational capital between organisations and their host communities. Different scholars stress varying aspects; while some define it primarily as a mechanism for ethical accountability, others highlight dialogue, participation, and long-term relational development as central features. Collectively, these perspectives underline that community relations is inherently relational and context-dependent.

Conceptually, community relations intersects with CSR, corporate citizenship, and stakeholder theory. CSR provides the ethical and regulatory framework within which organisations operate, yet community relations foregrounds active participation, inclusivity, and reciprocity (Crane, Matten, Glozer, & Spence, 2019).

The evolution of community relations reflects a shift from philanthropic gestures to strategic engagement. Early corporate practices relied on ad hoc donations and infrastructural contributions, often detached from community priorities (Visser, 2021). Over time, structured CSR programmes emerged, integrating community needs with corporate strategy. In resource-intensive sectors such as oil and gas, initial approaches were largely reactive, aimed at addressing grievances or avoiding conflict. However, contemporary practice increasingly adopts proactive, participatory models emphasising sustainable development and mutual benefit (Idemudia, 2018). This progression underscores the recognition that community relations is most effective when continuous, contextually informed, and designed to foster enduring trust and cooperative partnerships with host communities.

Fundamental principles of community relations include trust, transparency,

inclusivity, and reciprocity, which guide both strategic and operational practices. Organisations cultivate credibility through open communication, participatory decision-making, and responsiveness to community concerns. The objectives of these initiatives extend beyond reputational enhancement to include conflict prevention, local capacity building, and sustainable development. In resource-intensive sectors such as oil and gas, engagement that prioritises environmental stewardship, local employment, and infrastructure development simultaneously mitigates operational risks and strengthens social legitimacy (Ekhatior&Iyiola-Omisore, 2021; Abimbola&Negin, 2023). Embedding these principles into practice ensures that corporate initiatives are perceived as authentic, relevant, and beneficial by community stakeholders.

Practical strategies employed in community relations include dialogue forums, development initiatives, environmental stewardship, corporate philanthropy, and collaborative partnerships (PRSA, n.d.; Flores &Ebi, 2024). Dialogue forums facilitate ongoing consultation, enabling communities to articulate needs and influence decisions. Development projects target socio-economic challenges such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Environmental stewardship addresses ecological impacts of corporate operations, particularly critical in extractive industries. Corporate philanthropy complements broader engagement but must be aligned with community priorities to avoid perceptions of tokenism. Collaborative partnerships with civil society and local authorities enhance resource mobilisation, credibility, and long-term impact, operationalising the principles of trust and reciprocity.

Regardless of its strategic significance, community relations faces persistent challenges. Tokenistic engagement, misaligned priorities, insufficient stakeholder mapping, and conflicts of interest can undermine credibility (Della Corte, Del Gaudio, Sepe, &Luongo, 2021; Abimbola&Negin, 2023). In resource-intensive industries, high community expectations combined with limited communication capacity may exacerbate grievances. Corporate initiatives that neglect cultural dynamics or marginalised voices risk resentment and operational disruption. These challenges underscore the importance of rigorous stakeholder analysis, authentic dialogue, and responsiveness. Organisations that invest in understanding local dynamics, fostering inclusivity, and addressing grievances proactively are better positioned to achieve both social and operational objectives, mitigating risks inherent in high-stakes environments.

Evidence demonstrates that effective community relations enhances corporate reputation, builds trust, and mitigates conflict. In oil-producing regions, investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure correlate with higher stakeholder satisfaction and operational stability (Ekhatior&Iyiola-Omisore, 2021). Long-term engagement strengthens social legitimacy, facilitates regulatory compliance, and fosters

collaborative problem-solving. Moreover, it supports crisis preparedness, providing communication channels and relational networks that prevent disputes from escalating. These outcomes highlight that community relations is a strategic and ethical imperative, integral not only to corporate social responsibility but also to operational resilience and sustainable business performance (Bagnall et al., 2025).

Digital technologies are transforming community relations, enabling real-time engagement through social media, virtual forums, and online consultation platforms (Wongsuphasawat&Buatama, 2019; Flores &Ebi, 2024). Such tools broaden participation, increase transparency, and facilitate rapid feedback, particularly in geographically dispersed or resource-constrained communities. Digital engagement supports data-driven decision-making, helping organisations monitor satisfaction, identify emerging issues, and co-create solutions. Nevertheless, virtual approaches must complement traditional face-to-face interactions, which remain crucial for trust-building in culturally complex environments. Integrating digital and traditional engagement reflects a contemporary shift toward hybrid, adaptive strategies responsive to evolving stakeholder expectations and operational realities.

Integration of community relations with corporate strategy reflects its evolution from a peripheral activity to a core organisational function. Strategically aligned engagement ensures initiatives reinforce business objectives while addressing community needs. In high-risk sectors, such as oil and gas, integration enhances operational stability, regulatory compliance, and sustainable development (Ekhatior&Iyiola-Omisore, 2021; Bagnall et al., 2025). Systematic assessment of community needs, prioritisation of interventions, and monitoring of outcomes create feedback loops that strengthen both corporate performance and social impact. Strategic integration also supports crisis preparedness, providing early-warning signals and communication channels that enable a timely, effective response to emerging disputes or emergencies (Abimbola&Negin, 2023).

Crisis Management Activities in Modern Organisations

Crisis management is broadly considered as the ensemble of processes, structures, and practices that organisations deploy to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from adverse events threatening their stakeholders, operations, reputations, or the wider public interest. While early approaches to crisis management concentrated heavily on organisational readiness and strict command-and-control mechanisms, more recent scholarship has highlighted adaptability, resilience, and institutional learning as crucial to effective crisis governance (Mikušová, 2019). Yet, to appreciate the complexity of the concept, one must first distinguish it from related terms. Crisis response, for instance, refers to the immediate actions taken in the wake of a disruptive

event, encompassing communication, containment, and triage. Disaster management, by contrast, generally describes multi-agency emergency operations in the context of large-scale natural or human-made disasters, often extending beyond the remit of individual organisations (Wennman, Lindberg, Huzell, & Fältholm, 2022). Risk management also differs in its orientation: it is essentially preventive, geared towards identifying and mitigating potential threats before they materialise, whereas crisis management becomes salient when risks have crystallised into actual disruptions (Mikušová, 2019; Durugbo, Tiwari, & Alcock, 2022).

Historically, crisis management was more of a reactive than anticipatory endeavour. Organisations largely designed measures to restore order after disruption rather than to embed resilience beforehand. This reactive stance, however, has gradually been supplanted by a more proactive orientation, where resilience, redundancies, scenario planning, and rapid learning cycles have become central to organisational survival (Mikušová, 2019; Oscarsson, Tehler, & Danielsson, 2022). Globalisation and the increasing complexity of supply chains have reinforced the necessity for such systemic thinking, given that shocks rarely remain localised and often reverberate across networks and borders (Yang, Zhang, & Ji, 2021; Raj, Mukherjee, de Sousa Jabbour, Srivastava, & Ramanathan, 2022). Moreover, corporate governance reforms and heightened stakeholder expectations for transparency and accountability, combined with the speed of digital communication, have demanded a recalibration of approaches. No longer is crisis governance a matter of closed, hierarchical response; it now requires openness, collaboration, and multi-stakeholder engagement (Schneider, Bundy, & Coombs, 2024; Wennman et al., 2022).

Across the literature, three interdependent phases consistently emerge: prevention and preparedness, response, and recovery. Prevention and preparedness focus on risk assessments, contingency planning, training, and scenario modelling (Mikušová, 2019; Durugbo et al., 2022). The response phase is defined by immediate actions such as incident command, rapid decision-making, communication to stakeholders, and operational containment (Raassens, van der Heijden, & Veldman, 2022; Schmidt, Weiss, & Sitter, 2022). Recovery, by contrast, is longer-term in scope, entailing the restoration of normal operations, the rebuilding of trust, and the institutionalisation of lessons through after-action reviews (Wennman et al., 2022; Oscarsson et al., 2022).

Equally transformative has been the role of digital technologies. Social media and digital platforms have become crucial tools for situational awareness, crowdsourced reporting, and immediate stakeholder communication. At the same time, they also amplify risks, particularly the rapid spread of misinformation (Eismann, Posegga, & Fischbach, 2021; Chon, 2022). AI-driven analytics and modelling enhance

early-warning capabilities and scenario planning, while collaborative platforms allow for dispersed but coordinated incident command (Shen et al., 2021; Eismann et al., 2021). Nevertheless, scholars caution against overreliance on technology; digital tools remain most effective when complemented by human judgement and grounded in trustful relationships (Eismann et al., 2021; Oscarsson et al., 2022).

Any comprehensive account of crisis management must also grapple with ethical and cultural considerations. The principles of truthfulness, empathy, and fairness are repeatedly identified as the ethical cornerstones of effective crisis response. Moreover, crises are not socially neutral: they exacerbate inequalities and expose vulnerable groups to disproportionate harm. Hence, ethical crisis governance must include measures for equity and justice (Bourmistrova, Solomon, Braude, Strawbridge, & Carter, 2022; Wennman et al., 2022). Culture also profoundly shapes crisis practice: which voices are trusted, which strategies are deemed acceptable, and how alerts are interpreted are all contingent upon cultural context (Kochigina, 2021; Oscarsson et al., 2022).

Recent empirical studies of COVID-19 underscore these conceptual debates. Firms that diversified suppliers, engaged local networks, and communicated decisively with customers and staff were more likely to sustain operations (Shen et al., 2021; Raj et al., 2022; McDougall & Davis, 2024). The food service sector, in particular, demonstrated the importance of swift operational adjustments and transparent communication in retaining customer trust (Raassens et al., 2022). Beyond the organisational sphere, the pandemic also revealed the long-term mental health consequences of crises, suggesting that psychosocial considerations must be integrated into recovery strategies (Bourmistrova et al., 2022). Across sectors, a recurrent theme has been the role of organisational learning: after-action reviews and the diffusion of lessons significantly enhanced future readiness (Eismann et al., 2021; Wennman et al., 2022).

Taken together, this review demonstrates that crisis management is no longer a narrowly defined organisational function but a multi-layered, interdisciplinary endeavour. From its definitional clarifications to its theoretical foundations and empirical applications, the scholarship converges on the recognition that resilience, adaptability, and reputation protection are interdependent goals. Achieving them requires a balanced portfolio of activities: planning and preparedness, stakeholder engagement, technological integration, ethical sensitivity, and institutional learning (Mikušová, 2019; Shen et al., 2021; Raj et al., 2022; Schneider et al., 2024). Organisations that internalise these insights and practise them actively are far better positioned not only to weather crises but also to emerge from them with renewed legitimacy and stronger relationships with their stakeholders.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the theories as reviewed below:

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was advanced by W. Timothy Coombs in 1995 as a framework for explaining how organisations can protect their reputation during crises. Coombs built upon Attribution Theory, proposing that stakeholders' perceptions of responsibility influence how they evaluate an organisation's crisis response. The theory assumes that crises vary by type—victim, accidental, or preventable—and that each requires an appropriate communication strategy. SCCT assumes that stakeholders assign responsibility and blame during crises, and that selecting the correct response strategy (e.g., denial, apology, corrective action) can mitigate reputational damage and restore trust.

In this study, SCCT is relevant in understanding how Sterling Global Resources Limited manages crises in Akwa Ibom State and how stakeholders perceive such responses. By applying SCCT, the study can evaluate whether the organisation's crisis communication aligns with the crisis type and whether such responses reduce community tensions or escalate conflicts. The theory provides a lens for assessing the effectiveness of Sterling's crisis management activities, thus directly aligning with the study's objective of examining stakeholders' perception of the company's crisis handling strategies.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory was originally propounded by R. Edward Freeman in 1984 in his book *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. The theory challenges the traditional shareholder-centric view of corporations, instead arguing that businesses must consider the interests and well-being of all stakeholders—internal and external. Its basic assumptions include that organisations depend on stakeholders for resources, legitimacy, and survival; that stakeholder relationships must be managed ethically; and that success comes from balancing and addressing the needs of multiple groups such as employees, communities, governments, and investors.

In relation to this study, Stakeholder Theory provides a strong basis for examining how Sterling Global Resources Limited builds and sustains relationships with host communities through its community relations practices. Since the study is concerned with community perception, the theory allows an exploration of whether Sterling's engagement with communities is inclusive, responsible, and mutually beneficial. It also highlights the degree to which the company recognises the community not as passive beneficiaries, but as vital stakeholders whose trust and cooperation are crucial for long-term stability. This makes Stakeholder Theory central in interpreting

the objectives of assessing perceptions of Sterling's community relations efforts.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design because it enabled the collection of data directly from stakeholders to ascertain their perception of community relations and crisis management activities of Sterling Global Resources Limited. The study population comprised residents of Ikot Abasi and Eastern Obolo LGAs, with projected 2025 figures of 189,800 and 85,800 respectively, giving a total of 275,600. To focus on stakeholders, only adults aged 18 years and above were considered, estimated at about 60% of the population, resulting in an adult population of approximately 165,360 persons formed the basis for sample size determination and subsequent sampling procedures. Thus the population of the study was 165,360 male and female residents of Ikot Abasi and Eastern Obolo LGAs.

Using the Philip Meyer sampling guide, the sample size of 383 respondents was selected. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. First, the two LGAs (Ikot Abasi and Eastern Obolo) were divided into clusters based on communities. At the second stage, purposive sampling was employed to select communities directly impacted by Sterling's operations. In Eastern Obolo, for instance, host communities such as Okoroinyong, Amazaba, Ikonta, Emere-Oke, and Obianga were purposively chosen due to their proximity to the company's facilities and exposure to its activities. At the third stage, within each selected community cluster, respondents were identified using judgmental sampling to ensure the inclusion of knowledgeable adult stakeholders across gender, age, and leadership lines. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire, structured on a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions of community relations and crisis management activities of the company. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores to summarise respondents' views.

Data presentation

Table 1: Stakeholders' Awareness of Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's Community Relations and Crisis Management Activities

Item / Activity	Yes (Freq %)	No (Freq %)	Not Sure	Total	
1. Are you aware of any community relations activities?	241 (58)	99 (36)	21 (6)	361	100
Awareness of Community Relations Activities					
Scholarships for students	145 (40)	216 (60)		361	100
Employment opportunities	123 (34)	238 (66)		361	100
Infrastructure projects (roads, water, electricity)	198 (55)	163 (45)		361	100
Health facilities/support	165 (46)	196 (54)		361	100
Environmental protection projects	102 (28)	259 (72)		361	100
Skills acquisition programmes	114 (32)	247 (68)		361	100
4 Source of Awareness					
Community meetings	157 (44)	204 (56)		361	100
Company officials/representatives	136 (38)	225 (62)		361	100
Radio/TV/Newspapers	182 (50)	179 (50)		361	100
Social media platforms	154 (43)	207 (57)		361	100
Word of mouth (opinion leaders, friends, neighbours)	190 (53)	171 (47)		361	100
4. Are you aware of any crisis management responses?	198 (55)	116 (32)	47 (13)	361	100
5. Awareness of Crisis Management Responses					
Compensation to affected persons	142 (39)	219 (61)		361	100
Dialogue / conflict resolution meetings	171 (47)	190 (53)		361	100
Provision of relief materials	118 (33)	243 (67)		361	100
Security interventions	93 (26)	268 (74)		361	100
Others (please specify)	12 (3)	349 (97)		361	100
6. Frequency of Information					
Response	Frequency	Percentage			
Very frequently	87	24			
Occasionally	143	40			
Rarely	86	24			
Never	45	12			
Total	361	100			

Table 1 indicates that the majority of respondents (58%) are aware of Sterling Global's community relations activities, though over one-third (36%) remain unaware; infrastructure projects (55%) and health facilities/support (46%) are the most widely recognised community relations initiatives, while environmental projects (28%) and skills programmes (32%) are less visible; word of mouth (53%) and radio/TV/newspapers (50%) are the strongest sources of awareness, while official company communication (38%) lags behind.

For crisis management, more than half of the respondents (55%) are aware of Sterling Global's crisis management responses, though 32% have no awareness and 13% remain unsure; dialogue/conflict resolution meetings (47%) are the most recognised crisis response, while security interventions (26%) and compensation (39%) have limited awareness; information on the company's activities is most often received occasionally (40%), suggesting an inconsistent communication.

Table 2: Stakeholders' Interpretation of Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's Community Relations and Crisis Management Initiatives

Item Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Total	Weighted Mean	Decision
Community projects reflect community needs	102	146	77	36	361	2.86	Positive
Employment & empowerment create opportunities	87	152	84	38	361	2.79	Positive
Company communicates openly about initiatives	76	133	97	55	361	2.63	Positive
Company responds promptly to crises	91	141	80	49	361	2.75	Positive
Crisis management is transparent & trustworthy	74	128	96	63	361	2.59	Positive
Crisis responses help to restore peace & trust	98	143	79	41	361	2.82	Positive

Table 2, on interpretations of community relations, indicates that most stakeholders moderately agree that Sterling Global's community projects reflect community needs (WM = 2.86); employment and empowerment opportunities are interpreted to have fairly positive impacts though not overwhelming (WM = 2.79); and respondents are less convinced about the company's openness in communication with the stakeholders as communication is not consistent (WM = 2.63),.

The stakeholders' interpretations of Sterling Global's crisis management initiatives suggest that while crisis response is seen as moderately prompt (WM = 2.75), transparency and trustworthiness are interpreted to mean a weak area of the crisis management (WM = 2.59). Even at this, the crisis efforts are still understood as fairly effective in restoring peace and community trust (WM = 2.82).

Table 3: Stakeholders' Perception of Sterling Global's Community Relations Practices

Items	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Total	Weighted Mean	Decision
Improved infrastructure and social amenities	110	142	70	39	361	2.89	Positive Perception
Created meaningful employment and livelihood opportunities	75	96	104	86	361	2.44	Negative Perception
Investments in health, education, and skills training delivered measurable benefits	94	118	91	58	361	2.68	Positive Perception
Engagement with leaders promotes inclusion and shared decision-making	80	102	99	80	361	2.50	Negative Perception
Practices have strengthened mutual trust	70	90	110	91	361	2.38	Negative Perception
Overall community relations support sustainable, long-term relationships	83	120	92	66	361	2.60	Positive Perception

Table 3 presents the stakeholders' perceptions of Sterling Global's community relations practices where the responses reveal a mixed pattern of approval and disapproval, with the grand weighted mean of 2.6 indicating moderate but divided perceptions across the six dimensions assessed. For tangible needs, stakeholders recognised that Sterling Global's programmes is gradually improving infrastructure and social amenities (WM = 2.9, Positive) and to some degree contributed to health, education, and skills training (WM = 2.7, Positive). These findings suggest that visible, project-based interventions are acknowledged and valued by the host community. However, the claim that the company has created meaningful employment opportunities was rated poorly (WM = 2.4, Negative), reflecting a common frustration in oil-bearing communities where corporate promises of jobs rarely meet the expectations of residents. On intangible community relations practices, stakeholders' perceptions were less favourable than tangible interventions. Engagement with leaders was perceived as limited in fostering inclusion (WM = 2.50), while trust-building attracted the weakest rating (WM = 2.38), a negative perception reflecting scepticism rooted in strained corporate–community relations in the Niger Delta. Although the company's overall commitment to long-term relationships earned a borderline positive score (WM = 2.60), this cautious optimism was overshadowed by concerns about inclusivity and trust.

Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Total	Weighted Mean	Decision
Sterling Global responds promptly and effectively to crises (oil spills, environmental damage, disputes).	85	120	96	60	361	2.63	Positive Perception
The company provides adequate material support/compensation to affected communities.	72	101	105	83	361	2.44	Negative Perception
Crisis management efforts include restoring the environment and facilities after crises.	95	112	90	64	361	2.65	Positive Perception
Crisis management demonstrates fairness and transparency in addressing concerns.	88	108	92	73	361	2.58	Positive Perception
Approach has enhanced trust between company and host communities.	70	99	110	82	361	2.43	Negative Perception
Crisis responses contribute to long-term sustainable relations.	76	106	97	82	361	2.48	Negative Perception

Table 4: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Sterling Global's Crisis Management Activities

Table 4 presents stakeholders' perceptions of Sterling Global's crisis management activities. The findings indicate a mixed assessment of the company's performance. Stakeholders positively perceived Sterling Global's prompt crisis response (WM = 2.63), environmental and facility restoration efforts (WM = 2.65), and fairness in addressing concerns (WM = 2.58). These suggest that the company is seen as somewhat responsive and transparent during crisis situations. However, negative perceptions were recorded in critical areas. Respondents negatively rated the adequacy of material support and compensation (WM = 2.44), the company's ability to enhance trust with host communities was rated poorly (WM = 2.43), and the contribution of crisis responses to sustainable corporate–community relations was rated (WM = 2.48) poorly. These results reveal that while Sterling Global is perceived as reactive during crises, its efforts are considered insufficient in building long-term trust, delivering fair compensation, and sustaining relationships.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the stakeholders' level of awareness of Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's community relations and crisis management activities in Akwa Ibom State?

The question of stakeholders' awareness of Sterling Global Oil Resources Ltd's community relations and crisis management activities arises from the understanding that awareness is the foundation of meaningful engagement. Communities cannot meaningfully participate in or evaluate initiatives they do not know about. The table demonstrates the uneven awareness levels surrounding Sterling Global's activities, offering crucial insights into the reach and limitations of its communication strategies. Awareness here is not merely about information exposure but about recognition, understanding, and recall of specific initiatives. The data reveal that while a majority of respondents reported being aware of the company's community relations activities, a substantial minority remained unaware or uncertain. This suggests that Sterling Global has achieved only partial success in reaching its host communities. Awareness of initiatives such as infrastructure and healthcare indicates tangible visibility, residents

tend to notice projects that directly alter their environment or touch on vital needs. However, the relatively high proportion of respondents who remain unaware highlights a failure of comprehensive outreach. Effective community relations must not only deliver interventions but also ensure that stakeholders recognise and identify with those efforts.

When the analysis is disaggregated by specific initiatives, a striking contrast emerges. Infrastructure projects and health services recorded the highest recognition, reflecting their visible and immediate relevance. By contrast, programmes such as environmental protection and skills acquisition are less recognised, despite their long-term importance. This imbalance in awareness signals a possible prioritisation of high-visibility projects over sustainable, developmental interventions by the company. More critically, it may reveal communication gaps, projects may exist but lack sufficient publicity or accessibility. The low visibility of environmental and skills-based initiatives underscores an urgent need for Sterling Global to re-strategise, ensuring these programmes are not overshadowed by more tangible but less sustainable projects.

The findings on sources of awareness further illuminate the dynamics at play. Word of mouth (community/opinion leaders, friends, etc) and traditional media (radio, etc) emerged as the most influential channels, while official company communication was considerably weaker. This implies that Sterling Global relies less on direct communication with stakeholders, ceding much of its narrative to informal networks. While interpersonal and community-driven information channels build legitimacy and trust, over-reliance on them risks distortion or selective framing of information. Moreover, the relatively low impact of social media suggests a missed opportunity, especially in an era where digital communication could enhance reach, especially among younger demographics.

Awareness of crisis management activities reveals another pattern: stakeholders are more familiar with dialogue and conflict resolution than with compensation or security interventions. This suggests that while Sterling Global engages communities in participatory approaches to crisis resolution, the tangible outcomes such as relief provision or adequate compensation remain less visible or inconsistent. Importantly, awareness levels here are lower compared to community relations activities, indicating that crisis responses are less publicised or poorly experienced by those directly affected. This raises questions of credibility, as stakeholders expect crisis management not only to involve dialogue but also to produce concrete remedial actions.

The frequency of information access is another vital dimension. Most respondents reported receiving information only occasionally, with fewer citing very frequent updates. This suggests that Sterling Global's communication is reactive rather than proactive, occurring intermittently rather than systematically. Inconsistent

information flow undermines stakeholder trust and diminishes the effectiveness of both community relations and crisis management strategies. Regular and transparent communication would not only strengthen awareness but also enhance perceptions of accountability. For a company operating in a context as sensitive as the Niger Delta, occasional information dissemination may appear tokenistic rather than a demonstration of genuine commitment to engagement.

These findings are consistent with recent scholarship on oil multinationals' community relations in Nigeria. Akpor-Robaro et al. (2024) found that host communities consistently rated oil companies' CSR performance poorly, with many initiatives either unnoticed or dismissed as inadequate. Similarly, Nkem et al. (2022) highlight that community wellbeing is undermined not only by the absence of interventions but also by the lack of awareness and transparency surrounding them, particularly in crisis contexts. Akporiaye (2023) further notes that effectiveness in CSR cannot be measured by company activity alone but by stakeholders' recognition and perception of these efforts. Together, these studies corroborate the present findings that awareness remains patchy, selective, and unevenly distributed, thereby undermining the potential for oil companies to foster sustainable community relations and crisis trust.

Stakeholder theory and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) together provide a critical lens for understanding the findings. Stakeholder theory argues that organisations must actively recognise, engage, and respond to the needs of all stakeholders, yet Sterling Global appears to fall short, as awareness of its initiatives and crisis responses remains uneven. When interventions are poorly communicated, communities may perceive neglect or exclusion, undermining trust and legitimacy. The reliance on informal awareness channels reflects weak engagement and insufficiently proactive communication. Similarly, SCCT emphasises the need for clear, consistent, and timely crisis communication to protect reputation. Limited awareness of compensation, relief, and security interventions, coupled with occasional communication, highlights lapses that expose Sterling Global to reputational damage and weakened corporate–community relations.

Research Question 2: How do stakeholders interpret the company's community relations initiatives and crisis management responses?

Stakeholders' interpretations of corporate community relations and crisis management responses are critical, as they determine how much trust and legitimacy an organisation enjoys within its host environment. The research question arose from the need to understand not just whether people are aware of Sterling Global's activities, but how they actually interpret them in terms of value, relevance, and credibility. The findings in Table 2 reveal that community members generally interpret Sterling Global's

initiatives positively, though their agreement is moderate rather than overwhelming. This suggests that while the company's efforts are acknowledged, stakeholders still harbour reservations about depth, inclusiveness, and long-term impact.

The interpretation of community relations activities points to a belief that projects align with community needs, with infrastructure and empowerment initiatives receiving modest rating by stakeholders. However, stakeholders remain cautious about the openness of communication surrounding such initiatives. Communication is not merely a transactional tool but the lifeline of legitimacy, and the less convincing score in this regard underlines the perception that Sterling Global has not been fully transparent or inclusive. This creates a gap between action and interpretation, reminding us that the value of corporate initiatives is not just in their execution but in how they are experienced and perceived by stakeholders.

On the crisis management aspect, stakeholders recognise that the company responds fairly promptly to crises, but transparency and trustworthiness are less convincing areas. Interpretations here are significant because crises test organisational character; when responses are not interpreted as open or trustworthy, stakeholders may assume that the company prioritises damage control over genuine remediation. That said, stakeholders also concede that crisis responses have some effectiveness in restoring peace and trust, which suggests that Sterling Global's interventions are not entirely dismissed but are seen as requiring greater consistency and credibility to achieve stronger interpretations of effectiveness.

Taken together, the findings present a narrative of cautious approval rather than wholehearted endorsement. Stakeholders interpret the company's initiatives as steps in the right direction but remain attentive to gaps in communication, transparency, and the inclusivity of responses. Interpretation is inherently subjective, shaped not only by what the company does but also by what stakeholders feel it represents. The fact that trust and openness score moderately low indicates that Sterling Global's relational capital is fragile and requires nurturing. In essence, stakeholders' interpretations are signalling that legitimacy is not yet fully earned, and greater efforts are needed to bridge the perception gap between corporate intentions and community expectations.

These findings are consistent with prior scholarship. Ekpo, Okereke, and Omojefe (2024) note that community relations strategies in oil-producing regions often fall short when communication is weak, leading to modest improvements in corporate image rather than strong legitimacy. Similarly, Asare (2025) shows that in Ghana's oil and gas sector, communities interpret crisis interventions more positively when companies demonstrate transparent dialogue and consistent engagement, a factor Sterling Global appears to lack. Emeka-Okoli, Nwankwo, Otonnah, and Nwankwo (2024) reinforce this by noting that effective CSR communication strategies are central

to strengthening stakeholder engagement. The current findings therefore corroborate these studies by showing that while Sterling Global's actions are recognised, interpretive gaps persist because of weak communication and limited trust-building mechanisms.

From a theoretical perspective, stakeholder theory insists that organisations should actively engage all stakeholder groups to build legitimacy and trust. The findings suggest Sterling Global has not fully achieved this, as interpretations remain only moderately positive, highlighting gaps in inclusiveness and mutual dialogue. Similarly, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) emphasises timely, consistent, and transparent communication during crises to protect organisational reputation. The mixed interpretations of Sterling Global's crisis responses, acknowledged as somewhat prompt but lacking transparency, illustrate a misalignment with SCCT principles. Both theories, therefore, highlight the urgent need for the company to strengthen communication and inclusivity if it is to shift stakeholder interpretations from guarded approval to genuine trust and endorsement.

Research Question 3: How do stakeholders perceive of the effectiveness of Sterling Global's community relations practices in meeting host communities' needs?

The rationale for Research Question 3 stemmed from the persistent debates around whether oil companies' community relations practices genuinely meet the needs of host communities or merely offer token interventions. In environments such as the Niger Delta, where corporate–community relations are both contested and fragile, stakeholder perception becomes an essential indicator of effectiveness. Table 3 illuminates this complexity by showing how stakeholders simultaneously appreciate certain tangible contributions while voicing dissatisfaction with intangible practices, revealing the mixed but instructive pattern of approval and scepticism that defines Sterling Global's relationship with its host communities.

When tangible interventions are considered, the findings suggest that visible projects, particularly in infrastructure, social amenities, health, and education, are relatively well received. Communities tend to value initiatives that address pressing material needs, which immediately improve living conditions and create concrete symbols of development. However, the disappointment expressed regarding employment creation points to the gap between expectations and delivery. Employment opportunities remain the most sensitive metric of corporate goodwill, and unmet promises in this area breed disillusionment. This divergence highlights the paradox whereby infrastructure projects generate visibility but fail to substitute for direct livelihood opportunities that communities perceive as more empowering and enduring.

Intangible aspects of community relations tell a different story. The low ratings for inclusivity and mutual trust suggest that while Sterling Global may have invested in

projects, it has struggled to cultivate genuine relational capital. Inclusion in decision-making processes and transparency in engagements are not merely procedural matters; they form the moral fabric of trust. The absence of these elements fuels the perception that the company operates in a paternalistic rather than participatory manner. Thus, despite some positive evaluations of long-term commitment, the failure to strengthen intangible relationships undermines the broader effectiveness of the company's community relations efforts.

Together, these findings answer the research question by revealing a layered picture: community relations are partially effective in addressing immediate, tangible needs but less successful in fostering deeper, sustainable relational bonds. In practice, this implies that the company is perceived as delivering visible but transactional interventions while failing to embed itself as a trusted partner in the community's long-term aspirations. The grand mean score reinforces this view of divided perceptions—communities recognise certain benefits yet remain cautious, even sceptical, about the motives and inclusivity of corporate actions. The implication is that effectiveness cannot be judged by projects alone but must also be measured by the quality of relationships nurtured over time.

The findings resonate with prior scholarship. Alaburo, Tajudeen, Abubakar, & Babatunde (2024) showed that while CSR initiatives in Nigeria's oil and gas sector improved resilience, effectiveness was contingent on meaningful community participation. Similarly, Asare (2025) demonstrated in Ghana that trust and community engagement are central to how PR strategies shape perceptions of corporate crisis responses. Meribe, Ayentimi, Oke, & Adonteng-Kissi (2021) further affirmed that CSR without genuine partnership is perceived as insincere, often eroding trust rather than strengthening it. The present study's evidence of cautious optimism coupled with mistrust corroborates these works, reinforcing the idea that effectiveness in community relations is less about the scale of interventions and more about inclusivity, transparency, and trust-building practices.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings align closely with Stakeholder Theory, which asserts that corporations must balance the interests of diverse stakeholders to achieve legitimacy. Sterling Global's partial success with tangible needs but shortcomings in trust and inclusion highlight the failure to fully accommodate stakeholders' non-material concerns. By undervaluing intangible expectations, the company risks eroding its social licence to operate. Also, through the lens of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the findings illustrate how poor perceptions of fairness and trust weaken corporate reputation and relational capital. SCCT emphasises that organisations must adopt accommodative strategies, demonstrating transparency, responsiveness, and responsibility, to maintain legitimacy

in crisis-prone contexts. Sterling Global's mixed ratings suggest that while some accommodative actions exist, the lack of deeper relational engagement leaves its crisis communication and community relations effectiveness under question.

Research question 4: To what extent do stakeholders perceive the company's crisis management activities as fostering trust and sustainable corporate–community relations.

The concern that informed Research Question 4 arises from the persistent demand in oil-bearing communities for crisis management strategies that not only resolve emergencies but also foster trust and long-term corporate–community stability. In resource-dependent contexts like the Niger Delta, a company's response to crises is scrutinised not just for speed and technical adequacy but also for its ability to demonstrate fairness, inclusivity, and sustainable commitment. Table 4 reveals the complexity of stakeholder evaluations, showing that Sterling Global's efforts receive mixed appraisals, reflecting a distinction between immediate responsiveness and the deeper, long-term trust-building that stakeholders ultimately seek.

The positive assessments of prompt responses, restoration of facilities, and fairness indicate that stakeholders acknowledge some capacity for immediate crisis handling. These outcomes demonstrate that Sterling Global has developed mechanisms for visible and timely interventions during oil spills, environmental hazards, or disputes. Such efforts are crucial in projecting corporate responsibility and providing communities with short-term reassurance. From a *logos* perspective, the company appears to be fulfilling a rational expectation that crises should be addressed quickly and visibly. However, from an *ethos* standpoint, this reactivity only scratches the surface of what communities define as effective crisis management.

The negative perceptions in critical areas such as inadequate compensation, weak trust-building, and unsustained relationships highlight deeper relational failures. Stakeholders seem to perceive Sterling Global's crisis management as transactional—resolving problems as they arise without embedding long-term commitment. The insufficiency of compensation fuels resentment, while poor ratings on trust reveal scepticism about the company's sincerity. *Pathos* is central here: communities interpret the absence of trust-building measures as evidence that their welfare is secondary to corporate interests. This interpretation shifts the overall perception from one of partial success to a reminder that crisis management without empathy or fairness in redress mechanisms cannot sustain corporate–community relations.

Synthesising these results, the findings suggest a dual reality: Sterling Global demonstrates competence in operational aspects of crisis response but underperforms in relational and reparative dimensions. This imbalance weakens its capacity to foster trust or long-term partnership. The community's cautious appreciation of immediate efforts

is overshadowed by concerns that the company prioritises damage control over genuine reconciliation and sustainable development. In effect, the research question is answered by showing that stakeholders perceive crisis management as reactive rather than transformative, capable of providing short-term fixes but not of building enduring trust or sustainable corporate–community relations.

These results resonate with broader scholarship. Alaburo, Tajudeen, Abubakar, and Babatunde (2024) found that CSR interventions in Nigeria's oil sector often lack participatory depth, leading to mistrust despite visible projects. Similarly, Asare (2025), studying Ghana's oil sector, observed that while companies manage crises with some efficiency, the absence of transparent communication and adequate compensation limits their ability to build legitimacy. Meribe, Ayentimi, Oke, and Adonteng-Kissi (2021) emphasised that trust deficits persist when firms focus on transactional crisis responses rather than relational investments. The present findings corroborate these insights, underlining that effectiveness in crisis management requires both technical responsiveness and the relational capital of fairness, trust, and sustainability.

From the perspective of Stakeholder Theory, the findings illustrate Sterling Global's partial engagement with its host communities. While prompt responses and restoration projects address certain stakeholder needs, the company neglects non-material expectations such as fair compensation, inclusivity, and trust-building. Stakeholder Theory insists that all relevant interests must be balanced to preserve legitimacy and prevent conflict. Sterling Global's limited focus on tangible, short-term measures reflects a narrow interpretation of stakeholder needs, which risks undermining its social licence to operate. The findings thus affirm that crisis management is effective only when both material and relational demands of stakeholders are adequately addressed.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) also provides an interpretive lens for the findings. SCCT highlights the importance of accommodative strategies, responsibility-taking, transparency, and compensatory actions, in maintaining legitimacy during crises. Sterling Global's relatively positive scores in fairness and responsiveness suggest the application of some accommodative strategies. However, its failures in compensation, trust enhancement, and sustainability indicate a gap between strategic intentions and community expectations. This misalignment reduces the company's reputational capital, as stakeholders judge its crisis responses as insufficiently empathetic or transformative. The findings, therefore, affirm SCCT's argument that reputational repair requires not just prompt responses but deeper accountability and genuine relational engagement.

Conclusion

This study focused on examining stakeholders' perceptions of Sterling Global

Oil Resources Ltd's community relations and crisis management activities in Akwa Ibom State, highlighting both the tangible and intangible dimensions of corporate–community engagement. The findings revealed that while stakeholders acknowledged the company's contributions to infrastructure, social amenities, and partial responsiveness during crises, deep concerns remained regarding employment creation, inclusivity in decision-making, fair compensation, and trust-building. These mixed perceptions suggest that Sterling Global's efforts, though visible, are yet to translate into sustained goodwill or long-term legitimacy in the eyes of host communities. Ultimately, the study infers that genuine, inclusive, and transparent engagement remains the most critical pathway to strengthening sustainable corporate–community relations.

Recommendations

From the findings, recommendations are made that:

- i. Sterling Global should prioritise participatory approaches in designing and implementing community development initiatives. This means moving beyond top-down provision of infrastructure and integrating host communities into decision-making processes, ensuring that interventions in health, education, and skills training reflect local priorities and generate measurable, long-term benefits.
- ii. To address dissatisfaction with employment creation, the company should establish structured local content policies that guarantee preferential recruitment of host community residents. Complementary programmes such as vocational training, entrepreneurship funding, and capacity development can enhance employability, reduce dependency, and foster sustainable livelihoods.
- iii. Sterling Global should complement its prompt technical responses with transparent compensation systems and fair restitution for affected individuals. This requires independent needs assessments, clear timelines for redress, and collaborative monitoring mechanisms to reassure communities of the company's sincerity in addressing grievances.
- iv. To strengthen long-term trust, Sterling Global should institutionalise continuous engagement platforms, such as joint community–company committees and quarterly accountability forums, where stakeholders can openly discuss crisis responses, CSR projects, and relational challenges. Such sustained dialogue builds credibility, mutual trust, and a foundation for sustainable corporate–community relations.

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PROPRIETARY INFLUENCE ON BROADCAST STATIONS

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Abstract

Broadcast stations play a crucial role in shaping public opinion in Nigeria. This article examines how ownership structures, particularly those linked to political officeholders and government institutions, compromise journalistic integrity through editorial control and skewed reportage. Analyzing stations including ADBN TV, AKBC, NTA, and TVC, the study reveals that proprietary influence erodes media independence, declines professionalism, and compromises public interest. The article recommends binding editorial independence charters, empowered professional associations, and transparent regulatory enforcement to restore media integrity and accountability in Nigeria's broadcast landscape.

Introduction

The media landscape in Nigeria is notably diverse, with more than 100 broadcast stations contributing to national discourse on television and radio. Broadcast media play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, disseminating vital information, influencing voter behaviour and supporting democratic governance. Through news coverage, public affairs programming, and live reports, these stations serve as intermediaries between the government and the governed, as well as platforms for public engagement and social accountability.

However, this apparent diversity is increasingly overshadowed by concerns about media independence, particularly in relation to the ownership and control. Ownership structures, especially those linked to political officeholders and government institutions, have raised alarms over the erosion of editorial neutrality and professional ethics. Proprietary influence often manifests through direct editorial control, skewed reportage, and marginalisation of dissenting voices.

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), ownership structures dictate the political and economic alignments of media outlets, and impact on their level of independence. In the Nigerian context, media outlets owned by sitting politicians or government bodies tend to mirror the political agendas of their proprietors at the expense of objective journalism. This has led to growing concerns about the integrity of public discourse and the watchdog role of the media in a democratic society.

This paper aims to explore the implications of proprietary ownership in Nigeria's broadcast sector, with a specific focus on ADBN TV (Advocate Broadcasting Network), which is linked to the Senate President of Nigeria; Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC), a state-owned media institution; Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the federal government's national broadcaster; and Television Continental (TVC), owned by a former governor and influential political

figure. Through this analysis, the study seeks to uncover the dynamics of political influence in media ownership and its effects on professionalism, neutrality, and democratic engagement.

Some of the major keywords in this paper include proprietary influence which involves to the legal possession and control over media organisations, including their content, infrastructure, and operational management. Ownership may be public, private or hybrid. Political influence in media is the capacity of political actors, such as government officials, political parties, or influential elites to sway media content, coverage angles, or journalistic decisions, often to serve political interests.

Another key word is broadcast journalism which is the practice of gathering, producing, and disseminating news and current affairs content through electronic mass communication channels, including radio, television, and increasingly, digital streaming platforms.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars have underscore the persistent dangers posed by concentrated media ownership in Nigeria's broadcast landscape. Obot (2022) emphasises that ownership concentration not only limits the diversity of voices in the public sphere but also entrenches the dominance of political narratives aligned with proprietorial interests. This, in turn, creates a systemic imbalance in the flow of information, where opposing perspectives are marginalised. Similarly, Arogundade (2023) highlights that the high degree of politicisation in media proprietorship fosters a newsroom culture where editorial choices are subtly, and sometimes overtly, shaped by the proprietor's political and economic objectives.

Building on this, Edem (2021) identifies a pattern in which broadcast stations, both government-owned and private become instruments of political legitimacy rather than platforms for impartial public discourse. Such proprietorial control manifests in agenda-setting decisions, story framing, and selective coverage, often to the detriment of investigative and critical journalism. Adeyemi (2024) notes that this trend is intensifying, with evidence of increasing “media capture” by political elites. In this environment, journalistic independence is compromised, as the professional duty to inform the public objectively competes with the proprietorial imperative to protect or advance certain political interests.

Collectively, these studies reveal that media proprietorship in Nigeria is not merely a question of economic control but one of political power consolidation. The implications for democratic accountability are significant, as public access to balanced, accurate, and comprehensive information is curtailed, thereby weakening the role of the media as the fourth estate of the realm.

One of the foundational approaches to understanding media ownership and its implications is the model proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), who identify three models of media systems: the Liberal, Democratic Corporatist, and Polarized Pluralist. Nigeria's media system closely aligns with the Polarized Pluralist model, where political parallelism is high, and media ownership is often linked to political elites, resulting in clientelism and reduced journalistic autonomy.

In addition, the Political Economy of Media theory provides a lens through which media ownership is understood as an extension of capital and political power; that those who control media activities mostly revolve around the highest bidder or those who control the seat of power. Scholars such as Fuchs (2020) and Hardy (2021) argue that media institutions serve the interests of their owners and sponsors, thereby constraining their ability to operate independently. In Nigeria, broadcast stations owned by political figures tend to prioritise partisan interests over public service.

McQuail's Mass Communication Theory (2020) also reinforces the notion that media systems reflect broader societal structures. He suggests that media performance is influenced by ownership, market dynamics, and political alignment, all of which shape content and news framing.

Media Independence, Professionalism And Public Interest

The direct involvement of political figures in media ownership leads to concerns regarding journalistic integrity. As outlined by Davies (2013), broadcast stations owned by politicians often produce content that serves particular political agendas and programming often reflects the political interests of its owner. Public trust in media integrity diminishes when ownership affiliations are evident, potentially leading to a disengaged electorate (Mgbekem, 2021).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that in many hybrid media systems, political influence manifests through direct ownership, regulatory interference, or partisan funding structures. According to McQuail (2010), media ownership shapes the power structure within the media system and often correlates with the level of independence or bias in content.

Editorial independence is widely regarded as a cornerstone of ethical journalism. Editorial independence ensures that news judgments are made without undue influence from proprietors, advertisers, or political actors (Hanitzsch et al., 2020). In principle, this autonomy allows journalists to pursue truth, uphold professional integrity, and serve the public interest. However, in Nigeria, as in many other countries, ownership structures, particularly those linked to political elites, can significantly compromise this independence (Okoro & Odoemelum, 2021). In contemporary practice, media ethics also address emerging challenges posed by digital

technologies, algorithmic content distribution, and the proliferation of misinformation (Silverman & Milosevic, 2022).

In the African context, media ethics remain central to debates about press freedom, political influence, and public accountability. As Ndlela (2020) observes, ethical journalism in politically charged environments requires balancing the watchdog role with the pressures of ownership, censorship, and market demands.

When proprietors are political figures or have close political ties, editorial decisions often reflect the political and economic priorities of those individuals rather than the informational needs of the public (Mutsvairo & Bebawi, 2022). This phenomenon is evident in the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), a federally funded broadcaster whose coverage tends to align with the narratives and image management strategies of the government of the day. While overt directives may not always be issued, newsroom cultures and editorial hierarchies evolve to anticipate and avoid content that might cast the government in a negative light, creating a form of implicit self-censorship (Ismail, 2023). Similar dynamics are observed in state-owned stations, where political leadership directly or indirectly shapes coverage. For instance, AKBC, being a state-owned broadcaster, is directly influenced by government policies and agendas (Nkanga, 2022).

Privately owned broadcasters are not immune to these pressures. Daar Communications, owners of RayPower FM, Faaji FM, and AIT, historically reflected the personal and political orientations of its founder, the late Raymond Dokpesi. While this influence may manifest subtly, it often translates into selective framing, omission of dissenting voices, and prioritisation of content favourable to the proprietor's interests (Saidu & Akinwalere, 2024).

The cumulative effect of this proprietary influence is threefold:

- 1. Erosion of Media Independence:** Journalists operate in a constrained environment where editorial decisions are shaped by ownership priorities rather than public service imperatives (Hanitzsch et al., 2020; Ismail, 2023). Media Independence suffers most under these conditions: The threat of punitive action discourages broadcasters from challenging narratives that may expose misconduct or corruption tied to political elites or station owners. For instance, stories critical of government policy or highlighting political scandals may be delayed, downplayed, or entirely suppressed, not because they lack news value but because they conflict with the interests of influential proprietors. This compromises the watchdog role of the media and transforms them into instruments of elite consensus rather than platforms for pluralistic debate.
- 2. Decline in Professionalism:** Ethical norms such as fairness, accuracy, and balance are subordinated to loyalty toward the proprietor's political or commercial agenda (Mutsvairo & Bebawi, 2022). Journalists are compelled to align their reporting with the

strategic interests of the proprietor, often prioritising access to political figures over rigorous investigative journalism. The erosion of editorial courage and critical inquiry undermines the very ethos of journalism as defined by accuracy, impartiality, and accountability. Over time, this can produce a newsroom culture where young journalists learn to avoid “dangerous” topics, perpetuating a cycle of compromised ethics and limited public trust.

3. Compromise of Public Interest: The public receives filtered information, leading to a distorted understanding of political events, reduced diversity of viewpoints, and weakened democratic deliberation (Saidu & Akinwalere, 2024). Public Interest inevitably suffers: when the stories that matter most, those exposing systemic injustice, holding leaders accountable, or amplifying marginalised voices, are filtered through the lens of proprietorial or political expediency, citizens are left with partial information or a version of reality, which distorts public perception and weakens democratic participation. This selective coverage not only narrows the range of viewpoints available in the public sphere but also diminishes the media's role in fostering informed citizenry.

This interplay between ownership and editorial control underscores the critical need for robust regulatory frameworks, transparent ownership disclosures, and institutional safeguards that protect editorial autonomy, without which Nigerian broadcast journalism risks becoming a mouthpiece for political and commercial elites rather than a guardian of the public interest. Public interest journalism prioritises the needs and rights of the audience. It serves to inform, educate, and hold power to account. Unfortunately, proprietary interference often displaces the public interest with personal or political agendas, weakening the media's role as the fourth estate.

Proprietary Influence, Legal and Regulatory Contexts

The Nigerian broadcast environment demonstrates a recurring pattern in which regulatory enforcement while ostensibly designed to uphold professional and ethical standards can be weaponised as a means of selective punishment. When regulatory agencies such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) are perceived to act in favour of politically connected proprietors, the result is an uneven playing field. Proprietors without political protection become disproportionately vulnerable to sanctions, ranging from fines to suspension of broadcasting licences. This fosters a climate of fear and strategic compliance, which often translates into self-censorship among journalists and editorial boards.

In Nigeria, the legal and regulatory environment, particularly the role of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), intersects directly with the issue of proprietary influence on broadcast journalism. The NBC Act (as amended) and the

Nigeria Broadcasting Code are designed to regulate ownership, content standards, and licensing of broadcast stations. In theory, these frameworks aim to protect public interest and uphold editorial independence. In practice, however, regulatory mechanisms often reinforce ownership influence, especially when proprietors have political power or strong ties to ruling elites (Oboh & Aiyetan, 2021).

The NBC is empowered to grant and revoke broadcast licences, monitor compliance and impose sanctions. While this could serve as a safeguard against unethical ownership interference, in reality, the process has been criticised for political selectivity and a lack of transparency (Akinwalere, 2023). Media scholars note that the threat of licence suspension or heavy fines, sometimes applied disproportionately to critical voices, creates a climate of regulatory intimidation that aligns with the interests of politically connected proprietors (Saidu & Akinwalere, 2024).

Government-owned stations such as the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) or state-run broadcasters operate under direct political control, with the government effectively acting as both proprietor and regulator. This dual role entrenches systemic bias, limits journalistic autonomy, and ensures that dissenting political voices are marginalised (Ismail, 2023). For privately owned broadcasters, proprietorship's influence is compounded by the NBC's discretionary power over licence renewals. Proprietors with political ambitions may use their platforms to protect their personal or partisan interests, knowing that regulatory oversight will be lenient toward allies and punitive toward critics.

Therefore, safeguarding media independence in Nigeria requires more than just internal newsroom policies, it demands transparent licensing processes, statutory guarantees of editorial freedom, disclosure of ownership structures, and legal protections for whistleblowers.

Conclusion

Proprietary influence on broadcast stations in Nigeria poses significant challenges to the integrity and independence of journalism. Ownership affiliations affect media content, perspective, and public trust. The troubling trend is that political and economic interests supersede journalistic integrity. It is imperative for Nigerian media outlets to foster greater independence to promote pluralism and accountability in the broadcasting landscape.

Recommendations

1. Broadcast stations should adopt binding editorial independence charters, signed by both management and proprietors, to protect journalists from undue influence. Such charters should be enforceable under contract law.

2. Media organisations can partner with relevant establishments to empower professional associations like the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) to actively monitor and advocate for ethical standards can provide a collective shield against proprietorial interference.

3. Regulatory enforcement should be guided by clearly defined, consistently applied standards, subject to independent judicial review, to prevent selective punishment.

By implementing these reforms, Nigeria's broadcast industry can move closer to achieving true editorial independence, revitalising professionalism in journalism, and restoring the media's fundamental obligation to serve the public interest

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EVOLVING ROLE OF IMC IN SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE BRANDING: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

In an era where sustainability is a corporate imperative, Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainable brand identities, yet the dynamic interplay between IMC and sustainable corporate branding remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by reviewing scholarly perspectives to assess how IMC strategies contribute to sustainable branding efforts. The primary objective is to examine IMC's evolving role in fostering sustainable corporate branding, analysing theoretical foundations, practical applications and emerging trends. Grounded in Stakeholder Theory, CSR Communication Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study evaluates how IMC aligns brand messaging with sustainability goals. Adopting a library-based methodology, it synthesises peer-reviewed articles, books and industry reports to construct a comprehensive review. Key arguments posit that IMC serves as a strategic tool for embedding sustainability into branding, consistency across channels enhances credibility and trust and digital/social media amplifies IMC's impact on sustainable narratives. The study concludes that IMC is indispensable in bridging corporate sustainability commitments with consumer perceptions, provided messaging is authentic and strategically integrated. Recommendations advocate for a holistic IMC approach leveraging storytelling, multi-channel engagement and transparency, while future research should explore cross-cultural variations in sustainability communication.

Introduction

In the contemporary business landscape, sustainability has transitioned from a peripheral concern to a central corporate imperative, compelling organisations to integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles into their branding strategies (Dahlstrom, 2021). As stakeholders, including consumers, investors and regulators increasingly demand transparency and ethical accountability, corporations must leverage strategic communication tools to align their brand identities with sustainable values (Kim & Ferguson, 2021). Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) has emerged as a critical framework in this endeavour, enabling brands to craft cohesive narratives that reinforce sustainability commitments across multiple touchpoints (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). However, despite growing recognition of IMC's potential in sustainable branding, scholarly discourse remains fragmented, with limited synthesis of how IMC strategies evolve to meet the demands of sustainability-driven markets (Finne & Grönroos, 2017).

The intersection of IMC and sustainability presents a compelling research avenue, particularly as digital transformation reshapes consumer engagement (Valos,

Habibi, Casidy, Driesener, & Maplestone, 2016). While traditional IMC models emphasise message consistency and brand positioning (Kliatchko & Schultz, 2014), contemporary adaptations must account for dynamic stakeholder expectations, where authenticity and social responsibility influence brand perception (Pomering, 2017). Prior research highlights IMC's role in aligning corporate sustainability initiatives with consumer expectations (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2020), yet few studies systematically examine how IMC frameworks adapt to amplify sustainability narratives. This study fills that void by interrogating theoretical foundations, practical applications and emerging trends at this nexus.

Theoretical perspectives underpinning this analysis include Stakeholder Theory (Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Purnell & De Colle, 2010), which posits that sustainable branding success hinges on multi-stakeholder engagement; CSR Communication Theory (Morsing & Schultz, 2011), which emphasises transparency in sustainability messaging; and the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 2012), which frames IMC as a strategic asset in cultivating competitive, sustainability-aligned brand equity.

Key arguments advanced in this work are: (1) IMC functions as a strategic mechanism for embedding sustainability into corporate branding, ensuring message coherence across channels (Luxton, Reid & Mavondo, 2015); (2) digital and social media amplify IMC's impact by facilitating real-time, interactive sustainability storytelling (Tafesse & Wien, 2018); and (3) inconsistent or inauthentic sustainability communication risks stakeholder skepticism, necessitating greater strategic alignment between IMC and corporate ESG goals (Schmeltz, 2017).

By consolidating these insights, this study will contribute to academic and practitioner understanding of how IMC can be optimised for sustainable branding in an era of heightened ESG scrutiny. The findings will underscore the need for organisations to adopt holistic IMC strategies that prioritise transparency, multi-channel consistency and stakeholder co-creation (Keller, 2016). Future research directions, including cross-cultural analyses of IMC's efficacy in diverse sustainability contexts, are also proposed.

Statement of the Problem

The growing emphasis on sustainability in corporate practice has necessitated a re-evaluation of how brands communicate their environmental and social commitments (Dahlstrom, 2021). Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) has been widely recognised as a strategic framework for ensuring consistent and persuasive brand messaging (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). However, while existing research has explored IMC's role in traditional branding contexts, its application in sustainable corporate branding remains underexamined, particularly in terms of how organisations align IMC strategies with sustainability goals (Finne & Grönroos, 2017). This gap is problematic, given that sustainability messaging requires higher levels of transparency,

credibility and stakeholder engagement than conventional branding efforts (Schmeltz, 2017).

Several studies have investigated aspects of IMC and sustainability independently but have not sufficiently bridged the two concepts. For instance, while Keller (2016) emphasises the importance of message consistency in IMC and Du et al. (2020) highlight the role of CSR communication in shaping consumer trust, few studies critically analysed how IMC frameworks must adapt to accommodate sustainability-specific challenges, such as green-washing risks (Pomeroy, 2017) or multi-stakeholder expectations (Kim & Ferguson, 2021). Additionally, while digital and social media have transformed IMC's reach (Tafesse & Wien, 2018), research has yet to fully explore how these platforms can be leveraged for authentic sustainability storytelling (Valos et al., 2016).

A key limitation in existing literature is the fragmented approach to studying IMC and sustainability. Some studies focus narrowly on consumer perceptions (Luxton et al., 2015), while others examine corporate sustainability reporting (Morsing & Schultz, 2011) without integrating these perspectives into a cohesive IMC strategy. Furthermore, while Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, Harrison & Zyglidopoulos, 2018) and CSR Communication Theory (Morsing & Schultz, 2011) provide useful lenses, they have not been systematically applied to assess IMC's role in sustaining long-term brand equity in sustainability-driven markets (Barney, 2012).

Research Questions

1. How does IMC facilitate (or hinder) the integration of sustainability into corporate branding strategies?
2. What are the key challenges organisations face in aligning IMC with sustainability objectives?
3. How can digital communication channels be optimised within IMC frameworks to enhance sustainable branding?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in three interconnected theoretical perspectives that illuminate the evolving role of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) in sustainable corporate branding: Stakeholder Theory, CSR Communication Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV). Together, these frameworks provide a robust foundation for analysing how organisations can strategically align their communication practices with sustainability objectives in contemporary business environments.

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al., 2018) forms the primary lens for understanding the complex dynamics between corporations and their diverse

stakeholder groups in sustainability communication. The theory posits that organisations must balance the interests of multiple constituencies; including consumers, investors, employees and communities to achieve long-term success (Harrison, Freeman & Sá de Abreu, 2015). In the context of sustainable branding, IMC serves as a critical mechanism for engaging these stakeholders through consistent, transparent messaging across multiple channels (Morsing & Schultz, 2011). Recent studies emphasise that stakeholder expectations for corporate sustainability have intensified (Kim & Ferguson, 2021), requiring more sophisticated IMC approaches that go beyond traditional marketing communications to incorporate dialogue and co-creation (Finne & Grönroos, 2017).

CSR Communication Theory (Morsing & Schultz, 2011) complements this perspective by specifically addressing how organisations communicate their sustainability commitments. The theory distinguishes between three communication strategies: stakeholder information, response and involvement, with the latter being most effective for building authentic sustainable brands (Du et al., 2020). This framework is particularly relevant for examining how IMC can mitigate the risks of green-washing, a growing concern in sustainable branding (Pomeroy, 2017). Recent research suggests that integrated, multi-channel communication strategies enhance the credibility of sustainability claims (Schmeltz, 2017), while inconsistent messaging can erode stakeholder trust (Aji & Sutikno, 2015).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 2012) provides the third theoretical pillar, conceptualising IMC capabilities as strategic resources that can generate sustainable competitive advantage. From this perspective, an organisation's ability to integrate sustainability messaging across all communication touch-points represents a valuable, rare and difficult-to-imitate resource (Luxton et al., 2015). The digital transformation of communication channels has further enhanced the potential for IMC to create value in sustainable branding contexts (Valos et al., 2016), particularly through social media platforms that enable real-time engagement and transparency (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

These theoretical perspectives collectively address key dimensions of IMC's role in sustainable branding:

1. Multi-stakeholder engagement (Stakeholder Theory)
2. Authenticity and credibility (CSR Communication Theory)
3. Strategic value creation (Resource-Based View)

The integration of these frameworks allows for a comprehensive analysis of how IMC must evolve to meet the challenges of sustainable corporate branding in an era of heightened ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) expectations (Dahlstrom, 2021). They particularly illuminate the tension between standardisation (necessary for

brand consistency) and adaptation (required for authentic sustainability communication across diverse stakeholder groups and cultural contexts) (Keller, 2016).

Conceptual Review

The intersection of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and sustainable corporate branding represents a dynamic area of academic inquiry that has gained significant traction in the post-2010 era. This conceptual review synthesises contemporary scholarship to map the evolving relationship between these two domains, highlighting key theoretical developments, empirical findings and emerging challenges.

The IMC-Sustainability Nexus

Modern IMC has transcended its traditional role as a message coordination tool to become a strategic framework for value co-creation (Kliatchko & Schultz, 2014). In sustainable branding contexts, IMC serves as the connective tissue between corporate sustainability commitments and stakeholder perceptions (Du et al., 2020). The digital transformation of communication landscapes has particularly amplified IMC's potential, with social media enabling real-time sustainability storytelling (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). However, this expansion has introduced new complexities, as organisations must now navigate the tension between message consistency (a core IMC principle) and the need for localised, context-sensitive sustainability communication (Finne & Grönroos, 2017).

Strategic Dimensions of Sustainable IMC

Contemporary research identifies three strategic dimensions where IMC contributes to sustainable branding:

1. **Authenticity Construction:** The credibility crisis surrounding corporate sustainability claims has made authenticity a central concern (Schmeltz, 2017). IMC frameworks that incorporate stakeholder participation and transparent reporting mechanisms have shown greater success in establishing authentic sustainable brands (Morsing & Schultz, 2011).
2. **Multi-Channel Integration:** The proliferation of communication channels has necessitated more sophisticated IMC approaches. Studies demonstrate that organisations achieving true integration across traditional media, digital platforms and experiential marketing report stronger sustainability brand equity (Valos et al., 2016; Luxton et al., 2015).
3. **Stakeholder-Centric Communication:** Moving beyond the consumer focus of traditional IMC, sustainable branding requires engagement with diverse

stakeholder groups (Kim & Ferguson, 2021). This shift reflects the growing influence of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) metrics on corporate reputation (Dahlstrom, 2021).

Emerging Challenges and Tensions

Recent scholarship highlights several unresolved tensions in the IMC-sustainability interface:

The Greenwashing Paradox: As organisations increase sustainability communication, so does stakeholder skepticism (Pomering, 2017). IMC strategies must balance promotional objectives with substantive sustainability performance (Aji & Sutikno, 2015).

Measurement Complexities: Traditional IMC metrics often fail to capture the long-term, relationship-building aspects of sustainable branding (Keller, 2016). New evaluation frameworks are emerging that incorporate both brand and sustainability performance indicators (Harrison et al., 2015).

Cultural Adaptation: The globalisation of sustainability discourse has revealed significant cross-cultural variations in stakeholder expectations. This challenges the standardised approaches historically favoured in IMC practice.

Scholarly Debates and Synthesis on IMC and Sustainable Branding

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has evolved from a tactical communication tool to a strategic framework that plays a vital role in shaping sustainable corporate branding. Contemporary scholarly discourse underscores the growing significance of IMC in promoting brand consistency, stakeholder engagement and long-term brand equity, especially in a global environment increasingly concerned with sustainability and ethical corporate behaviour.

The fundamental premise of IMC lies in the strategic coordination of all brand messages to create a unified and compelling brand narrative (Kliatchko & Schultz, 2014). In the context of sustainability, IMC now serves as a platform for corporations to communicate their environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments authentically. This alignment is essential for building corporate brands that resonate with socially conscious consumers and investors. As Kitchen & Burgmann (2015) assert, the integration of sustainability values into the brand message is no longer optional but imperative for corporate survival in the 21st century.

Scholars have also highlighted the shift from message-centric to stakeholder-centric IMC models. According to Luxton, Reid & Mavondo (2015), effective IMC today necessitates a two-way dialogue between corporations and stakeholders, leveraging digital platforms to foster transparency and trust. This dialogic approach

enhances stakeholder engagement and strengthens brand credibility, particularly when sustainability practices are substantiated by consistent brand actions and messaging across all touch-points.

Moreover, IMC has become instrumental in internal branding efforts, which are crucial for sustainable brand identity. Employees are now seen as key brand ambassadors. As noted by Finne & Grönroos (2017), internal integration ensures that employees understand and embody the brand's sustainability values, leading to more authentic external communications and better brand-customer alignment.

Nevertheless, the literature presents divergent perspectives regarding the practical implementation of IMC in sustainability initiatives. Some scholars argue that IMC remains underutilised in many organisations due to structural silos and a lack of strategic coordination (Porcu, del Barrio-García & Kitchen, 2017). Others believe that digital transformation and the rise of AI-driven communication platforms are making integrated and sustainable branding more attainable than ever (Mulhern, 2015; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2019).

So, scholarly perspectives converge on the idea that IMC is not merely a marketing function but a strategic enabler of sustainable corporate branding. While challenges remain in its execution, especially in aligning sustainability narratives with organisational behaviour, the role of IMC continues to expand in scope and influence.

Review of Empirical Studies

Luxton, Reid, & Mavondo (2015) in their work titled, "IMC Capability: Antecedents and Implications for Brand Performance" examined how IMC drives organizational outcomes. Using survey data from 232 Australian firms, they developed an IMC capability framework showing that cross-functional coordination significantly enhances brand performance. Their key finding that internal alignment precedes external communication effectiveness supports this study's argument for integrated sustainability messaging. However, their general branding focus differs from this work's specific examination of sustainability contexts. They recommend greater emphasis on digital integration, a suggestion this study extends specifically to sustainability communication channels.

Tafesse & Wien (2018) in their study titled, "Using Social Media Marketing Activities to Build Brand Equity" quantitatively analysed 415 social media campaigns. Their rationale centred on understanding how digital platforms transform IMC implementation. Using content analysis and engagement metrics, they found interactive content generated 37% higher brand recall. While their digital focus aligns with this work, they omit sustainability-specific communication challenges that this study addresses through green-washing analysis. Their recommendation to prioritise

platform-specific content strategies informs this works discussion of sustainability storytelling across channels.

Schmeltz (2017) in "Identical or Just Compatible? The Utility of Corporate Identity Values in Communicating CSR" employed qualitative case studies of 12 Scandinavian firms. Motivated by growing CSR communication challenges, he examined message consistency through document analysis and executive interviews. His key finding that aligned identity-values communication builds authenticity directly supports this works authenticity arguments. However, his narrow CSR reporting focus contrasts with this study's broader IMC perspective. Their recommendation to audit communication consistency informs our proposed sustainability IMC framework.

Kim & Ferguson (2021) in *Corporate Communications* investigated "Public Expectations of CSR Communication" through a survey of 1,200 U.S. consumers. Their rationale addressed the knowledge gap in stakeholder communication preferences. Using factor analysis, they identified transparency and proof points as key expectations. Their consumer-centric approach differs from this multi-stakeholder view encompassing investors and regulators. They recommend regular expectation assessments, which this study adapt for ongoing sustainability message testing.

Valos et al. (2016) in *Journal of Marketing Management* studied "Integrating Social Media into IMC Strategy" through longitudinal analysis of 150 brands. Their rationale emphasised the digital transformation of IMC. Using mixed methods, they found social media increased campaign effectiveness by 28% but created coordination challenges. While supporting the digital IMC argument, they neglect sustainability-specific impacts. Their integration framework informs but requires adaptation for this works sustainability context, particularly regarding ESG metric incorporation.

Methodology

This study employs a library-based research method to critically examine the evolving role of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) in sustainable corporate branding. The approach involves systematic identification, evaluation and synthesis of scholarly literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of contemporary perspectives and emerging trends in the field. The study draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, industry reports and conference papers published between 2010 and 2024 to ensure relevance to current marketing and sustainability discourse. Key academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and JSTOR, were searched using relevant keywords.

Discussion

This critical review reveals three fundamental shifts in how IMC facilitates

sustainable corporate branding in the contemporary business landscape. First, the transition from message consistency to authenticity verification emerges as a defining characteristic of effective sustainability communication. While traditional IMC emphasised uniform messaging (Kliatchko & Schultz, 2014), sustainable branding demands verifiable claims supported by transparent reporting mechanisms (Schmeltz, 2017). This shift responds directly to growing stakeholder skepticism, with 68% of consumers now requiring proof of sustainability claims before believing corporate messages (Kim & Ferguson, 2021).

The digital transformation of communication channels presents both opportunities and challenges for sustainable IMC implementation. Social media platforms enable real-time engagement and participatory storytelling (Tafesse & Wien, 2018), yet simultaneously increase vulnerability to public scrutiny of sustainability claims. Our analysis confirms Valos et al.'s (2016) finding that brands achieving true cross-channel integration demonstrate 42% higher sustainability perception scores. However, the reviewed literature reveals a troubling gap; only 23% of Fortune 500 companies successfully align their sustainability narratives across all digital and traditional channels (Dahlstrom, 2021).

The stakeholder landscape for sustainable branding has undergone significant expansion, necessitating more sophisticated IMC approaches. Beyond traditional consumer audiences, organisations must now engage with ESG-focused investors, activist groups and regulatory bodies (Du et al., 2020). This multi-stakeholder environment challenges the conventional consumer-centric IMC model, requiring adaptive frameworks that balance often-competing expectations (Morsing & Schultz, 2011). Particularly noteworthy is the emergence of employee advocacy as a critical IMC channel, with companies leveraging internal stakeholders as authenticity ambassadors (Pomering, 2017).

The reviewed literature identifies three persistent challenges in IMC for sustainable branding:

1. Current metrics fail to capture the long-term relationship-building aspects of sustainability communication (Keller, 2016). While brands track immediate engagement metrics, few monitor how IMC contributes to sustained behavioural change toward sustainable consumption.
2. Global brands struggle to reconcile the need for consistent sustainability positioning with local cultural interpretations of sustainability. Standardised IMC approaches often prove inadequate in diverse markets.
3. The mismatch between short-term marketing cycles and long-term sustainability impacts creates inherent tensions in communication planning (Luxton et al., 2015).

Emerging from this analysis is a revised conceptualisation of IMC's role in sustainable branding; not merely as a messaging tool, but as a strategic interface between corporate sustainability performance and stakeholder perception. This aligns with Finne & Grönroos's (2017) communication-in-use paradigm, emphasising ongoing dialogue over one-way transmission. The most effective sustainable IMC strategies combine three elements: substantive sustainability actions, transparent multi-channel communication and mechanisms for stakeholder participation in sustainability storytelling.

Conclusion

This article explored the transformative role of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) in shaping sustainable corporate branding in today's business landscape. Our critical review reveals that IMC has evolved from a traditional marketing function to a strategic imperative that connects corporate sustainability efforts with stakeholder expectations. In an era where consumers and investors increasingly demand authenticity, IMC serves as the vital link between a company's sustainability actions and its brand perception.

The digital revolution has dramatically expanded both the opportunities and challenges for sustainable branding. While new communication channels enable more engaging and transparent storytelling, they also subject corporate claims to greater public scrutiny. Effective sustainable branding now requires moving beyond one-way messaging to creating genuine dialogues with diverse stakeholders. However, significant challenges remain in measuring impact, adapting to cultural differences and maintaining credibility amidst growing skepticism about corporate sustainability claims.

Ultimately, the paper has demonstrated that IMC is no longer just about promoting a sustainable brand image, but about facilitating meaningful connections between corporate sustainability performance and stakeholder understanding. When executed with authenticity and strategic alignment, IMC can transform sustainability from a compliance obligation into a source of competitive advantage and brand value.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the researchers make the following recommendations:

1. Sustainability communication should be woven into core business strategy, moving beyond a siloed marketing function. This involves building cross-functional teams that blend sustainability expertise with communication skills and developing clear guidelines to prevent overstating achievements.
2. Transparent reporting systems that use verifiable data and concrete examples to

support sustainability claims should be implemented. This means leveraging digital platforms to share authentic, behind-the-scenes stories about your efforts.

3. There should be a shift from one-way broadcasting to participatory communication that actively invites stakeholder engagement. Content that educates audiences about complex sustainability should be created, without oversimplifying, to encourage dialogue and shared understanding.
4. Communicators should be trained to help them navigate the unique challenges of sustainability storytelling and develop flexible communication frameworks that maintain core messaging while allowing for local market adaptations, relevance and resonance across diverse audiences.
5. Metrics should be developed to capture not only brand impact but also the actual sustainability outcomes of your initiatives. This allows one to demonstrate tangible progress and build credibility with your audience.

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PROVERBS IN THE CULTURAL IDENTITY FORMATION OF CHILDREN IN EBOM COMMUNITY

Rajuno Benjamin Ohen

Abstract

Proverbs are an essential part of African oral traditions, serving as vessels of wisdom, cultural norms, and moral instruction. This paper examined the role of proverbs in the cultural identity formation of children in the Ebom community, a rural settlement in Cross River State, Nigeria. It sought to ascertain how proverbs could be used to convey wise sayings, educate, and develop the children's intellectual capacity. It also highlighted the declining use of proverbs among younger generations due to the erosion of traditional practices and the impact of modernity. The study was anchored on the sociocultural theory. Qualitative descriptive research design was used for the study. Data were collected through interviews with 10 elders from Ebom community. Secondary sources of data from existing literature and cultural documents were also in used. The study revealed that proverbs were used directly or indirectly as tool for bringing out inherent traits that runs through a particular group of people; the Ebom people were culturally unified with such traits as hard work, tolerance, perseverance, politeness, ethical norms and common sense. It recommended the revitalization of proverbs in family settings, schools, and communal gatherings to restore and reinforce indigenous identity among young people.

Introduction

The Bahumono tribe is one of the ethnic groups residing in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Within the Bahumono communities, there are variations of language, with the Kohumono language being the most prominent. Proverbs are succinct, metaphorical expressions that convey collective wisdom, social values, and life philosophies of a people. They are pivotal in communication, especially in African societies where oral traditions are predominant.

Cultural identity formation in children begins early and is influenced by language, traditions, and communal interactions. Proverbs serve as linguistic tools through which cultural expectations are internalized. As children grow within the Ebom community, exposure to proverbs not only sharpens their cognitive abilities but also instills a sense of belonging and cultural pride (Achebe, 1958; Finnegan, 2012).

However, there is a noticeable decline in the use of proverbs among the younger generation. Many children and even youths in Ebom today can neither interpret nor apply indigenous proverbs in communication. This decline is attributed to the erosion of cultural practices, westernization, formal education systems that neglect indigenous knowledge, and reduced interactions with elders who traditionally transmit such knowledge orally. Ong'onda (2016) observes a significant decline in the use of Proverbs among the youth in Kenya, and attributes this to factors such as westernization, modern education systems that marginalized indigenous language and oral traditions, and limited interaction between youth and elders.

This oversight presents a research gap that this paper aims to fill. Proverbs play a vital role in shaping children's cultural identity by transmitting values, Morales and traditions. In Ebom community, proverbs have historically been used by elders and parents to instill discipline, respect, communal consciousness, and moral responsibility. However, the influence of modernization, formal education, globalization, and the rise of social media have contributed to a decline in the use and understanding among the younger generation. Today, many children in Ebom rarely hear or use Proverbs in conversations, as English expressions, social media slangs, and popular culture dominate communication. The younger generation often perceives proverbs as outdated, complex, or irrelevant to contemporary life. Consequently, this has weakened cultural identity and created a gap in intergenerational knowledge transfer. While some scholars and cultural activists have attempted to document proverbs from the region (Okolo, 2007; Effiong, 2019), their works did not specifically address how these proverbs function in the cultural identity formation of children in the Ebom community. They focused more on linguistic and literary analysis rather than sociocultural impacts, hence, the need for this study.

Research Questions

1. What roles do proverbs play in the cultural identity formation of children in Ebom community?
2. To what extent have modernization and changing cultural values influenced the decline in the use of proverbs among children in the community?
3. What strategies can be adopted to revive and sustain the use of proverbs as a tool for cultural transmission among children in Ebom community?

Review of Related Literature

Proverbs are brief traditional expressions that convey wisdom, guidance, or universal truths concerning life or human behavior. These expressions are frequently handed down through generations and embody the cultural beliefs and experiences of a specific society. Mieder (2014) describes proverbs as succinct and memorable phrases that encapsulate wisdom, advice, or universal truths about human behavior or life. Proverbs reflect the basic truths of life that embody the ethical and moral principles of a community (Taylor, 2003, p.18). The truths found in proverbs are not necessarily logical, a priori, or intuitive: they often stem from tangible experiences based on people's interactions with life, their relationships, and their engagement with the natural world (Yusuf, 1997, p. 120).

Proverbs are concise expressions that carry their own distinct meanings. While they are grammatically structured as sentences, they function as utterances in a semantic sense. They can also be considered cultural texts that embody a universality of meaning

and interpretations, resonating with both individual and collective awareness of their users, and thus serve as signs from different cultures. To facilitate a meaningful conversation about this topic, it is essential to grasp the other crucial concepts of culture and identity.

According to Krefting (1991), culture encompasses the norms, values, and behavioral patterns that guide individuals in their interactions with others and their surroundings. Esimaje, Masagbor, and Ezirim (2014) characterize culture as a spectrum of human activities that are acquired rather than instinctual and are passed down from one generation to the next through various learning methods. It is also viewed as the foundation of connections arising from all socially constructed elements, such as practices, competencies, ideas, customs, values, norms, institutions, objectives, and the fundamental rules of specific members within a community. These points suggest that the culture we are part of significantly shapes our perspectives on life, which in turn influences the types of proverbs used in different situations.

Cultural identity can be understood as the connection with and perceived acceptance into a community that shares common symbols and meanings (Collier & Thomas, 1988). This indicates that cultural identity develops through communication, allowing individuals to learn, affirm, and reconfigure their sense of belonging. From this viewpoint, cultural identity is not solely inherited but is actively shaped through interactions with family, peers, and broader society (Moscardino et al., 2025).

Proverbs are an important means for the transmission of culture, which reflects much of people's varied attitudes towards their surroundings. (Finnegan, 2012). In African societies, proverbs are not mere stylistic elements but are integral to the transmission of indigenous knowledge. They are often used in oral storytelling, conflict resolution, instruction, and rites of passage. As Achebe (1958) famously noted, "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten," which makes them indispensable in African communication. Akanbi (2015) observes that proverbs not only reflect the linguistic richness of the cultural but also serve as powerful tools for teaching morality, respect and communal ethics. Thus Akinmade (2012) surmises that proverbs are potent vehicle for culture dissemination from one generation to another. In his opinion, it is difficult to find any human situation, agony, sorrow, joy, behaviour or distress that a research proverbial saying would not offer solutions to.

Within the community, there is always a shared understanding that comes from the combination of beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours that have provided the foundational base for such a unique heritage that has to be jealously guarded. Hence, the elders, who are the custodians of proverbs in Ebom, do not shy away from using proverbs and at when due. The Ebom people are culturally conscious of their norms; hence, at every gathering and situation, the elderly ones do not hesitate to ditch out

norms and ethics that would help impart virtues in to the younger ones who are believed to be leaders of tomorrow, hence this axiom: *Ebom: Fun bhara wor doh refed Eng: Children are leaders of tomorrow.*

Most of the proverbs are culturally laden with advice, information and warning and which are easily understood by the hearers even though they are said in a disparaged manner. The cultural lesson is taught in an ironical way so the nonspeakers of the language would be at a loss in understanding the messages contained in the proverbs. Esimaje, Masagbor and Ezirim (2014) confirm the above that the boundaries of one's language are the boundaries of one's world; hence, proverbs reflect cultural meanings and reality and are therefore revelatory of the society's culture.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Sociocultural Theory. Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) is a framework that emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction and cultural context in the development of cognition, language, and identity. According to Vygotsky, children do not develop in isolation but through active engagement with their environment, particularly through interaction with more knowledgeable members of society such as parents, elders, teachers, and peers.

At the core of this theory is the belief that language is a primary tool for thought and cultural transmission. Vygotsky introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) - the range between what a child can do independently and what he can achieve with guidance. Proverbs, as part of a community's linguistic heritage, function within this zone when elders use them to instruct, guide, or correct children during their formative years.

Vygotsky emphasizes that learning occurs through the use of cultural tools. In the Ebom context, proverbs are cultural tools that encapsulate the community's wisdom, values, and norms. Through repeated exposure and guided use, children begin to internalize these values and adopt them as part of their cultural identity.

Proverbs are traditionally passed down by the elders during storytelling, folktales, communal gatherings, or moral instruction. These are all forms of social interaction that are central to Vygotsky's theory. The decline in these interactions due to modernization and western influence explains why many children in Ebom today are unfamiliar with traditional proverbs and, by extension, disconnected from cultural norms.

According to Vygotsky, language shapes thought and self-perception. When children engage with proverbs, they not only learn moral lessons but also begin to see themselves in relation to the collective values of their community thereby developing a sense of identity rooted in culture.

In Vygotsky's view, learning is most effective when adults provide "scaffolding" support that helps the child move from dependent to independent use of knowledge. In this study, elders using proverbs act as scaffolds, helping children to understand complex ideas, social expectations, and cultural roles.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory aligns perfectly with the aims of this study, offering a robust framework for understanding how proverbs function as tools of cultural education and identity formation. The decline in the use of proverbs among children in the Ebom community can therefore be seen as not only a linguistic loss but also a disruption in the cultural scaffolding process that supports identity development. Reviving this process requires intentional reintroduction of proverbs within meaningful social contexts that engage children actively.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised members of Ebom community in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Especially elders who are custodians of indigenous knowledge. Ten elderly participants were purposely selected from the ages of 40 and above who were members of Ebom Community and were knowledgeable in the use of proverbs. A semi-structured interview guide was used to elicit elders' view on the role of Proverbs in identity formation and the decline in usage. Data were analyzed thematically. The transcripts from interviews were read repeatedly to identify patterns and meanings related to role of Proverbs in cultural identity formation, decline in the use of Proverbs and strategies for revitalization.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Ebom proverbs are rich sources of philosophy, principles and concepts that speak of people's world view and belief systems. These proverbs seem to have been derived from everyday human experiences including family life, culture, hunting, animal husbandry, social interactions, health and disease, religious life, festivals and other experiences which provided many of the settings from which the raw materials of Proverbs were obtained.

The Ebom people have managed to sustain their culture including the use of Proverbs even in the face of the massive onslaught of globalization. Proverbs therefore still features in the daily lives, interaction and communication. During important occasions such as marriage ceremonies, community gathering such as festivals and in conversations especially involving elderly persons in the community, Proverbs are taken as a mark of wisdom and evidence of good speech making. Below are examples of Ebom proverbs:

Advice

Ebom: *Etan gwoh zereh rhetor ikperezuma enam bhah isah a iyoho*

English: The disobedient grasshopper usually ends up in the gizzard of a fowl

Implication: It is the parent's responsibility to advise their children on how to live

useful lives for their benefit and that of the society. A child who refuses to heed advice will end up in danger.

Ebom: *Itum gi inam bhah izoi onor ozeng Guah remai emamaior*

English: All lizards lie prostrate; no one knows which of them suffers a bellyache.

Implication: This proverb tries to show that sometimes it may be difficult to establish a casual connection between physical characteristics of an individual and his psychological dispositions. Again, the proverb appeals to caution in decision-making as physical appearance sometimes leads to deception.

Unity

Ebom: *Iwah sievuna vune ovavoi ama atang azirikpe.*

English: When broom sticks are put together, they sweep the environment better.

Implication: When people are united, their solutions are one and brings out a good result. This also means that together we will succeed. It also shows that when people come together they can move mountains and that a single person cannot decide over a group when a decision is to be taken. With such proverbs, children begin to ponder on what the proverb is all about and since the truth is evident in them, they live with these words of wisdom and grow up to become useful members of their various families and community.

Ebom: *Onor a efad emevoi ota rehonor.*

English: *A one man squad cannot win a battle.*

Implication: This proverb encourages children to work together to achieve results.

Respect

Ebom: *Gwan gwan evoiibor oyai ekhaha oroh oshi ara bhanohum.*

English: Any child that knows how to wash his hands clean, will eat with elders.

Implication: If a child knows how to behave and respect elders, will definitely eat with elders. This implies that, if any child is obedient and cooperate, he should then be treated with honour, made to sit in the council of elders, and made to enjoy what they are enjoying. The elder will guide the younger person in avoiding pitfalls in life and also assist him to succeed in life. The act of submission and humility is needed by the present-day youth.

Ebom: *Guaguane oguoma ozeng, onotum baozeng etoh.*

English: A child may walk fast but the elders know the way.

Implication: This means that the wisdom of the elders cannot be compared with the actions of the youths. This proverb portrays respect in such a way that if the youths cannot respect the elders, one day their assistance will be needed by the youths because they have the wise ideas.

Morals

Ebom: *Guah guarah remare odam; ova obah Oro ozep obasi anta orom omoyina.*

English: A lady lacks good character; she claims that destiny avoids her of a husband.

Implication: This implies that moral uprightness and character soundness is the chief determinant of success in life. It underscores the importance of morality to individual and the polity.

Ebom: *Ikoh etoto itama bhah remar adonoh*

English: It is from the home that we take fashion and trends to the town

Implication: What this means is that behaviour (good or bad) is learnt from home. Worthy of home is that Ebom people have clear idea of a difference between house and home, as home is taken to be synonymous to family. The proverb is usually said for people to shun bad habit from home. It shows the kind of emphasis that the Ebom place on the importance of family institution.

Warning

Ebom: *Sa aku bhah ohorozeh kasen izen o wonoh*

English: If a person stays too long on faeces, he/she will be harassed by flies

Implication: This proverb derives its meaning from the traditional concept of village latrine as a dirty place where a person is confronted with and harassed by different types of flies. The relevant meaning, therefore, is that if anyone has a prolonged stay at home, or over stay in a situation, that same situation will make him vulnerable to various assaults and insults especially from other people and inconveniences just like a person who overstays in a dirty latrine. The proverb therefore warns children of idleness and procrastination.

Ebom: *Gwan sa osedu otah bhah rosoh, onotum sa osedu otah kpeizuma.*

English: When a child falls, he looks at the front; when an elder falls, He looks at the back.

Implication: The above proverb shows that when the child falls, he actually seeks for a helper to raise him up; but when the elder falls, he considers and ponders on what made him to fall. This proverb shows that elders are guided by experience. They are wiser than children by reason of their experience. Elders actually live by experience.

Ebom: *Emankpa a guan san eyeh, ere eyeh ivon oh.*

English: We don't see the lips of a child but the leg.

Implication: This proverb portrays children as gossip, as agents of errands running, talkative and have no secrets or do not keep secrets. The proverb warns against children interrupting adults speech or revealing or talking about anything they see or hear. It addresses that a child should be faster in running errands than in interrupting adults speech.

Tolerance

Ebom: *Ewuneh oji omor rajuno.*

English: Silence brings peace

Implication: This means that when you tolerate one another, peace is restored but where there is intolerance there will be quarrelling and fighting.

Ebom: *Ewuneh oji odam ota re honor.*

English: Silence is better than war or tolerating one another brings harmony.

Implication: When one refuses to react to issues but holds tight to himself it ceased war. Through this proverb, children imbibe at the early stage of their lives the need for tolerance in order to live in peace with one another. From the above proverb, Ebom children are expected to be well behaved in the society because of the experiences passed to them from their forefathers.

Obedience

Ebom: *Guan eteagueh bhah eyong San obana ntaraoyeng evons giekue bha rosoh.*

English: A child does not lift the father up to see herds of animals from afar.

Implication: This proverb makes children objects of obedience, weakness, and submissiveness. It means children are to remain mute and commit to all what the adults are saying. Children are also not strong enough to lift an adult up.

Laziness

Ebom: *Ekpevem enang onor oyusu*

English: Laziness causes stealing

Ebom: *Ekpevem ovonoshi omoyie*

English: Laziness cannot put food on your table

Implication: This means that when one is lazy, he or she cannot achieve success. This proverb is applied during planting season and it emphasises the need to be hardworking when one is young in order not to beg or steal.

Hardwork

Ebom: *Guan guan okpah rofem Oro ashi renendeme.*

English: A hardworking child eats the best.

Implication: A hardworking child that is always around the mother eats the best part of the meal. The mother reserves the best for him/her.

Ebom: *Sara otom Anang oven ama shi.*

English: If you do not work, you cannot eat.

Implication: This proverb explains the cause of hunger to be laziness. This proverb challenges the youth to work hard in various endeavours by eschewing laziness and other crimes. When one is lazy, he/she can never achieve success.

Discipline:

Ebom: *Sarah ejah afah apawah ofuneh.*

English: If you are not discipline, you are bound to make mistakes

Ebom: *Sa akpeh oven bha okpara guoapa ayena enendeme.*

English: Learning from your mistakes makes you succeed.

Implication: This proverb explains that every child should be disciplined because if they are not disciplined they will grow up to know nothing. This means that a child should not be unguided but should be controlled in order not to be useless in life.

Proverbs express the collective wisdom of a people, reflecting their thinking, values and behaviour. According to Ogundokun (2015) all proverbs share the wisdom of previous generations; they help to classify and recognize culture as it relates to a people. In Ebom culture, certain proverbs are used to inculcate social and moral values to regulate relationships in society. Examples could be selected for children's lessons on various topics targeting virtues like respect, unity, tolerance, determination, honesty, honour, self-control, cooperation, hard work, discipline, forgiveness, truth and appreciation for one's family.

Ebom children can become active participants in events in their community through creative oral and literary activities because proverbs are useful in shaping young minds and cultivating the use of spoken words to recapture and preserve the history and culture of the people. They learn about the environment through the contents of proverbs as indigenous knowledge sources and they play a vital role in the preservation of the people's history and culture.

Discussion of Findings

Interviews conducted with elders in the Ebom community reveal deep insights into the traditional role and current status of proverbs in cultural education and identity formation. Data obtained revealed three major themes:

The role of Proverbs in cultural identity formation

The elders unanimously emphasized that proverbs were historically central to child upbringing, moral instruction, and the reinforcement of societal values. According to them, proverbs serve as a cultural compass used in disciplining children, advising youth, resolving conflicts, and communicating wisdom in indirect yet powerful ways. One elder explained, "In our time, you couldn't grow up without knowing proverbs. Even before a child knew how to speak properly, they already heard these sayings in stories and from parents correcting them."

Another noted that proverbs were not just linguistic expressions but tools for shaping behaviour and instilling communal identity. This aligns with Finnegan's (2012) argument that African oral traditions, particularly Proverbs, act as moral compasses and

reinforce community identity. Similarly, Yankak (2012) underscores that proverbs embody cultural wisdom, which, when taught to children, nurtures a sense of belonging and continuity.

Decline in the use of Proverbs due to modernization

A dominate concern raised in the interviews was the declining use of Proverbs among young people. The elders expressed concern over the drastic decline in the use and understanding of proverbs among children and youth today. They attributed this decline to several factors, most notably modernization, urban influence and growing dominance of Western education and media. One elder remarked, "Children now spend more time on phones and social media than with their grandparents. They hear English stories, not our own"

The decline is further worsened by the reduced use of the native language at home, as many parents now communicate with their children in English or Pidgin. The elders observed that children often regarded traditional expressions as outdated or irrelevant, a mindset reinforced by school environments that prioritize Western content over indigenous knowledge. This finding resonates with Olatunji (2020) and Eze (2021), who observe that globalization and urbanization disrupted the oral transmission of indigenous knowledge systems, thereby eroding children's cultural identity. This also corroborates Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1968), which emphasizes that children learn cultural tools, including language and symbolic systems, through guided interaction with "more knowledgeable others". When these knowledgeable others abandon or reduce their use of proverbs, children lose access to the cultural scaffolding necessary for identity development. The weakening of this Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) leaves children culturally detached, thereby confirming earlier studies that found diminishing oral traditions among African youth (Nyoni, 2019).

Strategies for Rivival and Cultural Transmission

Despite the decline, the elders emphasized that proverbs still hold strong relevance, especially in promoting values such as respect, humility, honesty, and responsibility. They expressed a strong desire to see efforts made to revive the use of proverbs in children's upbringing. Participants suggested introducing proverbs into school curricula, embedding them in storytelling practices and encouraging parents to use them in family conversations, and promoting them in cultural events, festivals and even digital platforms. One elder noted.

"If we don't pass our proverbs to children, tomorrow they will know only foreign sayings, and we will have no cultural language left."

This resonates with Nwachukwu (2021), who stresses the need for deliberate

integration of indigenous communication forms in cultural education to strengthen children's identity. UNESCO (2019) also emphasizes safeguarding intangible cultural heritage such as oral traditions to ensure intergenerational continuity.

Therefore, the findings point to a broad consensus that revival is both necessary and possible if proverbs are institutionalized in family, educational and community structures. These findings align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which posits that learning and identity formation occur within a cultural and social context. The absence of proverbs in the daily interactions of children effectively limits their exposure to cultural tools that are essential for developing a sense of belonging and moral understanding.

Conclusion

From the findings, it is concluded that proverbs play a central role in cultural identity formation among children in the Ebom community and they are tools. They are tools of education and identity formation.

Recommendations

Schools in the Ebom community should incorporate proverbs into classroom instruction, especially in language, literature, and civic education. Teachers can use proverbs to teach life lessons and encourage cultural appreciation. The community should organize periodic cultural nights or storytelling sessions where elders share folktales and proverbs with children. This fosters both entertainment and learning in culturally meaningful ways.

Parents should be encouraged to speak the local language at home and use proverbs in everyday correction and advice. This helps children to internalize values in natural settings. Community-based media, such as local radio programs or WhatsApp storytelling groups, can be used to share proverbs and their meanings. A compiled booklet or digital archive of Ebom proverbs could also help preserve them.

Youth organizations in the community can hold competitions or drama presentations centred around proverbs to promote learning and creativity while preserving tradition.

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MANAGING CORPORATE IMAGE AND STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION IN A CHANGING WORLD: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF CORPORATE VISUAL IDENTITY ASSET

Nnachi Okafor

Abstract

This study evaluates the role of Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA) in managing corporate image and the perception of organisational stakeholders. It examines the interrelationships among corporate image, identity management, and corporate visual elements and their impact on stakeholder perceptions and corporate image management. The study applied the mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis research, surveys, and inferential statistical analysis techniques. They were complemented with interviews, descriptive, content and critical discourse analysis techniques to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the research problem and objectives. The study reviewed relevant empirical literature, identifying critical CVI elements – logo designs, typography, colour palettes – and how they interact with other corporate artefacts and key stakeholders to shape their perceptions, organisational image, and overall corporate and marketing communications. Findings show that 70 per cent of an organisation's corporate communication goals are better achieved if brand builders, corporate communications and reputation managers adopt more effective harmonisation and integration strategies in utilising CVI elements and digital assets to shape their stakeholders' perceptions and corporate image. The study repudiates the misconception that well-polished CVI and consistent branding strategies automatically translate to positive stakeholder perception and a favourable image. The study proffers sustainable solutions including the need for PR and marketing communications managers to adopt a more innovative, harmonious, consistent and strategic approach to CVI management and Changing world, application that resonate with the organisation's publics and contribute to effective stakeholder perception and sustainable corporate image management.

Introduction

Scholars and practitioners in public relations (PR), advertising, marketing, and corporate communications, have long recognised the importance of corporate visual identity Assets (CVIA) as an indispensable component of an organisation's corporate heritage, strategic communication and overall corporate image promotions in commercial and non-commercial organisations. In today's fast-changing competitive business environment, the application of an effective and creative CVIA can significantly contribute to managing an organisation's corporate image, stakeholder perception and public sentiment to impact its reputation, progress and prosperity. Marziliano (1997), Fiol and Kooor-Misra (1997), and Whetten and Godfrey (1998) reinforce this view by observing that:

Neither the importance of examining the relationship among these concepts has received much attention from researchers or practitioners, nor has its urgency been adequately felt. Although the need to pay more and immediate attention to these has

been strongly advocated (e.g. Whetten 1997) as a way of enhancing a firm's competitive position (Dowling 2001), exploiting the significance of the relationships among these concepts from the standpoint of stakeholder groups has often been neglected (Rufaidah, 2004, p.1).

Therefore, for effective management of an organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception, it is critical to understand the complex interrelationships among corporate image, stakeholder perception, and corporate visual identity assets, and their significant contributions to promoting a company's reputation and prosperity. According to Bernstein (1984), "The image does not exist in the organisation but in those that perceive the organisation", while Fill (2009) argues that "an organisation cannot change its image in a directly managed way, but it can change its identity. It is through the management of its identity that an organisation can influence the image held of it" (Fill, 2009, p.399). Fill further notes: "The image stakeholders hold of an organisation is a result of a particular combination of many different elements, but is essentially a distillation of the values, beliefs and attitudes that an individual has of the focused organisation" (ibid). Since corporate images are shaped by stakeholders' interpretation of the identity cues they perceive about an organisation, for an image to be sustainable, the identity cues around which the image is fashioned must be based on reality, reflect the values and culture of the organisation.

Imagine the fascinating swoosh of NIKE, the memorable and iconic golden arches of McDonald's; the three parallel black-and-white stripes of Adidas, (symbolising a sense of movement and the herculean mountains that athletes have to climb); and the sleek logo design of the leaping Puma sportswear company. One can also visualise the three overlapping ovals of Toyota automobile company cast in shades of blue and silver (conveying a sense of trust, ruggedness, reliability, technological innovation), and the Hewlett-Packard 'HP' monogram logo, reflecting the company's focus on personal computers, and the ICT innovation. These designs are not mere logos, but symbolic corporate assets, representing their brand experience that spark emotional responses, positive associations, a deep sense of fraternity, concord and consistency.

The study argues that well-designed CVIA create brand personality, recognition, awareness, acceptance, brand loyalty, positive image, and stakeholder perception, which translates into brand patronage and loyalty, favourable purchasing decisions, and increased investment. They serve as an integral and indispensable component of a company's overall identity and reputation. In this regard, the growing importance of corporate image and identity management can be attributed to the increasing recognition of tangible and intangible corporate assets as key drivers of an organisation's value. Thus, an effective corporate image and identity management can distinguish an organisation from its competitors, foster brand loyalty, and bolster

stakeholder engagement.

Given the preceding analysis, the study critically evaluates the role of corporate visual identity assets, in managing stakeholder perceptions and corporate image. Copious research evidence from extensive literature reviews show that so much research effort has been expended in the field of semiology and corporate identity studies (CIS), centering on marketing and organisational behaviour. However, the researcher found that little or no study seems to have been done on the role of CVIA in managing stakeholder perception and corporate image within the context of stakeholder relations and a changing corporate world order. He and Balmer (2005) affirm this view by noting that “Within the disciplines of marketing and organisational behaviour, identity studies have attained considerable prominence over the last decade. However, little has been done to synthesise both bodies of literature and to discover in-depth implications for corporate-level marketing” (He and Balmer, 2005, p.1).

2. Statement of the Problem

With the upsurge of business activities and brand competition, the need for entrepreneurs, marketers and PR managers to communicate with consumers about the availability of certain products and the unique quality of their brands, has become imperative. As the global economy becomes more volatile, complex and competitive, the need for business organisations to seek more effective and efficient strategies not only to maximise profit, but also to achieve competitive advantage and manage their corporate reputation and stakeholders' perception, is even more compelling. As the tempo of production increases, stocks and inventories pile up, and business organisations, ad agencies and PR managers need to adopt more creative and sustainable strategies to boost their sales volume. They can achieve this significant objective by identifying their brands' CVIA) and unique selling point (USP), and communicating them to their customers.

Flowing from the preceding analysis, and extensive empirical literature reviews in the field of PR, advertising and marketing communications, the researcher uncovered a critical research problem that impelled him to investigate the role of CVIA in managing corporate image and organisational stakeholders' perception. Within the context of effective stakeholder relations and corporate image management in a new world corporate order, the study identifies the research problem by answering the following critical questions: What roles can CVIA play in enhancing organisational image and stakeholder perception? How can PR and brand practitioners leverage CVIA to manage their corporate image and stakeholders' perception of their policies and programmes?

4. Research Questions

Consistent with the study's research problem and objectives, four research questions were formulated and analysed, while providing appropriate answers to them with empirical data. The research questions are as follows:

1. What roles can corporate visual identity (CVI) tools play in managing organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception in response to changing global market conditions?
2. How can stakeholders' perception help companies to develop effective image management strategies in a changing world?
3. What are the effective CVIA management strategies that can be used to manage corporate image and stakeholder perception?

5. Research Hypotheses

Three research hypotheses were formulated for further investigation in line with the preceding research questions, the research problem, and the study's objectives. This helped the researcher to proffer practical solutions to the research problem according to the recommendations of Asika (1991, p. 75) and Dominick & Wilmer (2006, p. 26).

Hypothesis 1

H₀: Corporate visual identity assets cannot play any role in managing organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception in response to changing global market conditions.

H₁: Corporate visual identity assets can play some roles in managing organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception in response to changing global market conditions.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: Stakeholders' perception cannot help organisations to develop effective image management strategies in a changing world.

H₁: Stakeholders' perception can help organisations to develop effective image management strategies in a changing world.

Hypothesis 3

H₀: There are no specific CVI strategies that can be used to manage corporate image and stakeholder perception.

H₁: There are specific IMC strategies that can be used to penetrate the table water market and gain a market share for Aquifer brand in the FCT?

5. Review of Related Literature

5.1 Conceptual Review

The following concepts were reviewed: Corporate Image/Reputation, Identity, Stakeholder Perception, and Corporate Visual Identity Assets.

Corporate Image versus Corporate Reputation

The concept of image refers to the set of beliefs, impressions, notions, sentiments, and perceptions that individuals, groups, audiences, or members of the public hold about a person, persons, institutions or organisations arising from their understanding or interpretation of the cues presented by the organisation.

Conversely, reputation is “the collective representation of an organisation's past performance that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders” (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, p. 267). It consists of the track records, achievements and virtues that distinguish an individual or organisation in the minds of its stakeholders. While image deals with how an organisation's publics see it, reputation, on the other hand, refers to what the organisation really is, including its past accomplishments. According to Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, “Reputation isn't formed by packaging and slogans. A good reputation is created and destroyed by everything an organisation does, from the way it manages employees to the way it handles conflicts with outside constituents” (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, p. 268).

Corporate image is the impression, perceptions or opinions an organisation's internal and external publics and other stakeholders have about the organisation. It is a complex construct shaped by various factors, including communication, experiences, reputation and visual cues. It is a dynamic entity influenced by internal and external forces – corporate visual identity heritage, corporate objectives, vision and mission, corporate culture and values, as well as management style, quality of human resources, product quality, research and development and innovation. Other factors influencing corporate image include company history, purpose, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, staff attitudes and accomplishments.

Stakeholder Perception

Stakeholders refer to individuals, groups, institutions, organisations, including key shareholders existing within an organisation's internal and external environments, and who have direct or indirect relationships or contacts with the organisation. Organisational stakeholders are known for having vested socioeconomic, political and environmental interest in their organisation's operations, performance and success, influencing their management's policies and actions.

Generally speaking, perception deals with the cognitive process of selecting, organising and interpreting meaning, messages, information, action and behaviour to create a meaningful picture of the real world. Schiffman and Kanuk, (2003) describe perception as “the process by which an individual selects, organises, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world” (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2003, p. 158). Contextually, stakeholder perception deals with how an organisation's publics including individuals, groups, institutions, customers, employees, contractors, investors, the media, and other forces in its internal and external operational environment see, perceive, interpret, understand the organisation, its image, products and services, corporate identity and philosophy, messages, behaviours, actions and inactions. Stakeholders' perception plays a critical role in shaping their opinions about an organisation – how they think, feel, behave, act and relate with the organisation.

Corporate Identity

Kotler and Keller (2006) define identity from the corporate level standpoint as “the way a company aims to identify or position itself or its products”, while image is “the way the public perceives the company or its product” (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p. 321). Fill in his view, sees identity as a means by which an organisation differentiates itself from other organisations, while Oliver (2010) defines identity as “a state of having unique identity or individual characteristics by which a person or thing recognizes or defines him/her/itself” (Oliver, 2010, p. 71). He and Balmer (2005) notes that “The concept of identity provides the platform by which many corporate-level concepts can be understood such as corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate image and corporate reputation. As such, it can be viewed as providing the foundation to the nascent field of corporate marketing” (He and Balmer, 2005, p. 1).

Corporate identity, on the other hand, deals with a series of visual cues by which the publics or stakeholders of an organisation can recognise a company or firm or differentiate an organisation from another. Fill (2009) describes corporate identity as “the promotion of the cues by which stakeholders can recognise and identify the organisation” and “a means by which an organisation differentiates itself from other organisations”(Fill, 2009, p.394).

However, some contemporary writers feel that corporate identity is increasingly becoming an obsolete term that needs to be replaced with brand identity or corporate branding. According to scholars like Balmer (1988), “Corporate identity was the accepted terminology in the 1980s and early 1990s, and this gave way to corporate branding at the turn of the century”. Nevertheless, organisations need to address identity-related issues that provide answers to three critical questions: 'Who are we?', 'What business are we in?', and 'What do we want to be?'

5.2 Empirical Review

Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA)

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) is a branch of semiology that deals with the study and analysis of how sign systems work. Also known as semiotics, CVI deals with the language of signs, symbols, signifiers and the signified. According to O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, (2008), semiology “explores the logic and methodology behind communication, and shows how we can understand systemically, through the semiotic method, what communications mean. It is also concerned with the meaning and with how meanings are produced and transmitted” (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2008, p.133). Semiotics is also the science or study of signs, and signs systems, e.g. logos, insignia, trademarks, nameplates, traffic lights, road signs, colour and other symbolic representations that can be interpreted and analysed with meaning.

Therefore, Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA), refers to the various physical, concrete or abstractive signs, symbols and optical representations that communicate meaning by representing a thing or an idea, philosophy, culture, belief system or values to which it refers. Such communication artefacts like the Nigerian Coat of Arms, the National Flag, First Bank's “White Horse”, the Shell of Shell Development Company, and the bitten Apple Mac logo of Apple Computers, are all visual and abstractive signs and symbolic corporate resources and heritages that speak the language of reputation management.

However, Bernstein (1984) avers that “All organisations have an identity whether they like it or not”. But, some organisations may choose to manage their CVIA, just as some individuals decide on some specific lifestyles. Other organisations may be careless about their identity and end up confusing and misleading their publics and other stakeholders. Nevertheless, there is little evidence to show that PR and corporate managers are consistent in their approach to managing CVI resources as they often claim.

Corporate Visual Identity and Image Management

Corporate visual identity and image management deal with “the way in which

organizations or companies are presented and perceived, and how they interact with their various stakeholder audiences. It is also concerned with the images that people form as a result of interpreting the various identity signals that organizations transmit and any interaction that may ensue” (Fill, 2009, p. 388). Melewar (2003) observes that corporate identity is concerned with the set of meanings by which an organization allows itself to be known and through which it enables people to describe, remember and relate to it” (Cited in Fill, 2009, p. 388).

Hatch and Schultz (2000) identify two schools of thought about strategic identity management – the 'visual school', and a 'strategic school'. According to them, the visual school deals with operational aspect of strategic identity management, while the strategic school is concerned with an organization's aims and how it positions and distinguishes itself. Chris Hill underscores the importance of the differentiation or 'demarcation' as it facilitates the identification of the evolution of identity management and reputation management.

An example is Shell Development Company's logo. Created over a century ago, Shell logo seems to have remained unchanged, while in reality “it has undergone many changes and what we see today is nothing like the original. This has occurred through careful continuity of the idea of the seashell and adaption of it to various contexts through time” (Fill, *ibid*). He and Balmer (2007) identify some identity-related topics, which include “visual identity, strategic identity, social identity and organizational identity”. Fill suggests that “The social and organizational forms of identity are part of the organizational behaviour school of thought.

Forms of Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA)

1. Corporate Logo

A logo is a unique symbol, signature, icon or word mark that represents a company's identity and its stakeholders. It is one of the popular visual or graphic elements of a brand's visual identity (VI) that harmoniously provide a system for identifying and representing a corporate brand. Examples are the iconic Spenserian script spelling out **CocaCola** in a distinctive flowing elegant and timeless typeface with red colour lettering and white background, conveying a sense of tradition and corporate global heritage. **Google**'s logo presents a 5-letter word mark with each letter elegantly illuminated in various bright, vibrant and attractive colours in a playful, slightly rounded sans-serif font, reflecting the brand's innovative and hi-tech global image. Though **Nokia**'s logo has undergone several iterations, it is symbolised in a simple word mark with dark blue sans-serif font, conveying a profound sense of reliability, durability and sophistication.

2. Colour Schemes

A colour scheme or palette is a combination of colours used consistently across all brand's visual elements or platforms. It is an organisation's in-house corporate colour or colour palette. In-house corporate colours are complementary visual identities of business organisations as they support the corporate logos and names of companies to give them the desired identity. Corporate colours evoke emotions, mood, aesthetics, elegance and prestige about an organisation. A good combination of colour schemes can provide memorable and sustainable impressions for organisations, e.g. Red + Blue = Purple; Red + Yellow = Orange; Blue + Yellow = Green. Instances of corporate colours are the beautiful colours of UBA and Zenith, and the vibrant colours of MTN, and Chelsea FC.

3. Typefaces and Typography

Typography refers to the style, arrangement and appearance of text. A consistent corporate typography helps to create a distinct visual identity and reinforce the brand's message. Typefaces and typographies constitute the major elements of corporate branding and reputation management. They include all the symbolic and textual representations of a company such as fonts, type sizes, and typefaces used in corporate branding, and communicating messages such as letterheads, memos, colours, layouts, special effects and installation points. They promote maximum exposure and corporate image. Integrating corporate elements such as names, symbols, payoffs, and typefaces, express the distinctiveness of organisation's CVIA.

4. Signs and Symbols

Signs and Symbols are indispensable CVI artefacts often used in strategic brand promotion, brand-building, stakeholder relations and image management campaigns. An organisation's image always flourishes with a touch of CV impressions such as logos, letterheads, package designs, livery, labels, beautiful corporate premises, gates, and office designs. They often combine with other visual elements – branded official vehicles, magnificent-looking tiles and carpets, attractive wallpapers, POP ceilings, and roofing sheets, air-conditioned luxury rooms, conference halls and interior-exterior designs – to add luxury, prestige and pleasant aura to organization's premises.

5. Digital Assets (DAs)

Digital assets include company's website designs, packaging, branding, aesthetics and durability of its marketing and promotional materials, contributing to the overall impression. Other DAs include website designs, social media graphics, email templates and iconology, i.e. the use of icons, graphics, and symbols to communicate

and reinforce a brand's message. Print materials include business cards, letterheads, brochures, newsletters, while environmental designs comprise signage, way finders, and public information panels.

Role of Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA) in Shaping Stakeholder Perception and Organization's Image

Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA) contributes to shaping stakeholder perception and the organisation's image by serving the following roles and functions:

CVIA serve as a corporate heritage: Examined from the perspective of a resource-based view (RBV) of the organisation, CVI's management's roles, functions or influences on stakeholder perception and organisational image, are premised on the fact that CVI artefacts constitute the major critical assets of a company. Some CVI resources include brand name, copyright symbols, trademarks, price, designs, labelling and packaging, and other elements that help customers to form associations about the brand.

Promotion of the organisation's corporate personality: CVIA or visible artefacts – logo, colour palette, typography, signage, etc. – are not mere ornamental decorations. They are corporate personality promotional elements deliberately designed to evoke psychological and emotional feelings. They tell a story and convey a positive impression about an organisation. For instance, a well-designed letterhead, a bold and colourful sharp logo and other observable corporate signs and symbols combine to herald organisation's personality and dignity.

CVIA promote brand differentiation: As brands share different features, qualities or values, CVIA help to differentiate an organisation, product or brand from its competitors. They also offer a unique opportunity for an organisation to “offer products and services to broad customer groups, who perceive the offering to be significantly different, and superior to its competitors” (Fill, 2009, p. 925).

Facilitating strategic corporate communications: Communicating organisation's stakeholders, its values, purpose, vision and mission, is one of the primary goals of corporate communications. Therefore, corporate communications managers use CVIA to identify and communicate organisational stakeholders the purpose, vision, mission,

corporate culture and values of the organisation, and how it is strategising to achieve them. With the aid of CVI symbols: logos, colour schemes, typography, labels, and other tangible and intangible corporate and digital assets, stakeholders can cooperate and support organisational managers to achieve their vision/mission.

Creating psychological and emotional feelings: CVI also evokes a strong feeling of mood, confidence, prestige, dignity, class, creativity, innovation and accomplishment, while promoting corporate heritage. For instance, soft and gentle pastels and elegantly flowing fonts and typefaces often whisper to communicate corporate gentility, angelicness, kindness, confidence, love and meekness with a subtle caress and seduction of the sensory organs. CVI not only contributes in shaping and promoting stakeholder perception and organization's corporate image, but also serves as “fantasy imagery” (Fill, 2009, p. 926).

6. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Social (stakeholder) Identification Theory (SIT) to provide a strong theoretical framework for understanding how corporate visual identity influences stakeholder perception and shapes the organisation's image. Developed by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s, SIT argues that individuals attain self-concept from group memberships and social categorisations. From an organisational perspective, stakeholders form perceptions based on the visual cues and symbols associated with CVIA. The theory also holds that maintaining consistency in visual identity elements reinforces a sense of belonging and corporate heritage while fostering positive stakeholder perceptions and organisational image.

Integrated Approach

The researcher proposes the integration of Social (Stakeholder) Identity Theory (SIT), Corporate Identity Theory (CIT), and Sign Theory (ST) as an alternative theoretical approach to provide a robust and cohesive theoretical framework for the study. While SIT explains the sociological and psychological processes underlying stakeholder identification and evaluation of the organisation, CITA provides a

framework for understanding the importance of internal and external corporate communications in shaping corporate identity. The Sign Theory, on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding how the CVI elements combine to perform as a system of signs and symbols to communicate messages to stakeholders about the organisation.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study is a cross-sectional survey research that used descriptive designs to investigate the role of CVIA in managing corporate image and the perception of organisational stakeholders. The study applied the mixed research method involving both quantitative and qualitative techniques, using systematically structured investigative questions and hypotheses. The quantitative method involved the collection and analysis of empirical data to investigate the research problem, while the qualitative component dealt with the collection of secondary data through extensive interviews, literature reviews and case studies.

The primary sources of data were questionnaire responses from respondents during the administration of structured and unstructured questionnaire, constructed in line with the research problem, research questions, hypotheses and other variables.. To enrich the quality and depth of the research, the questionnaire was supplemented with interviews. The study's secondary sources of data include corporate asset – archives, mission statements, books, scholarly journals, periodicals, abstracts, and indexes, marketing/sales reports, conference and workshop papers, theses, and academic research websites.

7.2 Population of the Study

The study was conducted in the Federal Capital City (FCC) Abuja, based on the cosmopolitan nature of the relevant respondents as they possess multi-dimensional demographic and psychographic characteristics such as professional and educational backgrounds. The target population for the study comprised professionals, focusing mainly on top-management executives, policymakers, PR and advertising practitioners, sales, marketing and brand managers and other respondents working in public and private media organizations in the FCC, Abuja. The study was based on 3000 respondents as the population of study using a proportionate allocation technique at 10 per cent of the total population = 300 as the sample size. That is: Size of population = 3000; Sample size = 300 at 10 percent. A detailed breakdown of this study population

shows that they were literate respondents selected from a group of top-management officials, PR, advertising, sales and marketing professionals. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the study population of 3000 people working in various organizations.

Table 1: Population of the Study Showing Characteristics of Respondents Comprising Workers in Various Organizations in which the Research Questionnaire were Administered

S/No.	Characteristics of the Respondents	Population Frequency	Proportionate Allocation Technique (10%)	Sample Size (Percentage)
1.	Journalists in Govt./Private Media Organizations	1500	150	50.00
2.	Government officials, communication aides, etc.	700	70	33.33
3.	Media Practitioners in Embassies, UN Agencies, NGOs, etc.	500	50	16.67
4.	Professional Bodies, i.e., the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), & Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON).	300	30	10.00
	Total	3000	300	100.00

7.3 Sample Size/Sampling Procedure

Using purposive and convenient sampling techniques, the researcher selected an appropriate sample size from the population of study at 3000 respondents since it was vital to take a sufficient sample size to cover the entire population considering the limitations of the study. As earlier noted in Table 3.1, 300 respondents from the study population of 3000, were thoroughly studied through the proportionate allocation technique. At 10 per cent of the total population, a sample size of 300 respondents was derived and this was adequate in making accurate, precise and objective conclusions. The sample population comprised 195 males and 105 females with different demographic characteristics drawn from respondents in various organizations in the FCC, Abuja.

7.4 Research Instrument

A total of 325 questionnaires were designed and administered to the respondents during work hours and retrieved shortly before the break periods of the respondents' organizations. During the data collection period, the researcher and two of his research assistants engaged the respondents one-on-one to explain some questions they could not understand. At the end of the exercise, 300 questionnaires were returned, while 25 questionnaires were not returned. This approach helped the researcher to achieve a high response rate and reduction in the questionnaire's mortality rate.

7.5 Method of Data Analysis

All primary and secondary data were collated, analysed, computed, and presented in tables. Percentages were used to calculate the frequency of responses to questions concerning the salient issues raised in the questionnaire, the research problem, research questions/hypotheses, and theoretical postulations. Other relevant data drawn from interviews and other sources were also analysed and interpreted, while they were properly edited to eliminate errors that would have created inconsistencies. These were done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Likert Scale of Analysis (LSA), and correlation coefficient techniques.

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

The presentation, interpretation, and analysis of data were made in tables, with and standard deviation, Likert scale of analysis, chi-square, and correlation coefficient analysis. A population of 3000 participants was targeted for the study. Simultaneously, a proportionate allocation technique was applied to derive the study's sample size, which was 10 per cent of the total population = 300 participants.

Table 2: Questionnaire Distributed and Sample Size Determined

Groups	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Questionnaire Not Returned
1.	325 Questionnaire	300 (90.23%)	25 (9.77%)

The total number of questionnaire printed and administered to the respondents was 325, while 300 questionnaire were returned for analysis, representing 90.23 per cent, whereas 25 questionnaire were not returned, representing 9.77 per cent. Section A of the questionnaire represents the respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section B is for the study's objectives and hypotheses.

Responses on the Research Problem, Questions, and Hypotheses of the Study
Table 3: The Role CVIA in Managing Organisational Image and Stakeholder Perception

Response Category	Level of Agreement (x)	Frequency (f)	Fx	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	145	725	48.33
Agree	4	41	164	13.67
Strongly Disagree	2	45	90	15.00
Disagree	1	39	39	13.00
Undecided	3	30	90	10.00
Total	15	300	1,108	100.00

In Table 3 above, the researcher sought to ascertain the role CVIA in managing organisational image and stakeholder perception. The data interpretation reveals that 145 and 41 respondents of the population strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, in favour of the fact that CVIA play significant roles in managing organisational image and stakeholder perception. The total number of respondents stands at 48.33 per cent and 13.67 per cent, respectively. However, 45 and 39 respondents representing 15.00 percent and 13.00 percent, say they strongly disagree and disagree, respectively, while 10 per cent of the respondents undecided in their views. Therefore, the mean calculation of 3.69 signifies a preponderant level of significant roles played by CVIA in managing corporate image and stakeholders' perception. It, therefore, justifies the Research Question 1.

9. Discussion of Findings

Empirical research evidence drawn from qualitative and quantitative data show that over 69 percent of organisation's corporate communication functions, goals and objectives are better achieved if brand builders, corporate communications experts and reputation managers adopt more effective harmonization and integration strategies in the utilization of CVI elements – corporate logos, colour schemes, and other visual symbols and digital assets – in shaping their organisation's stakeholder perception and reputation management. The study also found that, by evaluating CVIA's role in shaping stakeholder perception and managing organisation's image, corporate reputation and identity management practitioners can explore the extent in which CVI resources contribute to effective stakeholder identification and engagement. The study concludes that the growing importance of corporate image and identity management can be attributed to the increasing recognition of tangible and intangible corporate assets as key drivers of an organisation's corporate values as an effective CIIM differentiates organisations from their competitors, foster brand loyalty, and stakeholder engagement.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, an organisation's image and reputation are shaped by the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of its stakeholders to the organisation, and CVI's role in shaping stakeholder perception and an organisation's image, cannot be quantified because of its invaluable contributions to organizational growth and development. Therefore, a well-designed and articulated CVI boosts an organisation's reputation and builds credibility. It also supports business growth and contributes significantly in driving corporate objectives such as increasing brand awareness, driving sales, and

attracting investors. CVI helps in creating brand recognition, differentiating the organisation, conveying brand personality, corporate values, and influencing stakeholder behaviour.

However, CVIA are not a magic wand. The use of a CVI is not a guarantee for a positive stakeholder perception or corporate image for an organisation. A carefully designed and crafted CVI will prove revolutionary and irresistible, while a poorly implemented CVI strategy may prove disastrous.

11. Recommendations

Based on the preceding discourses, the following recommendations are proffered for organisations seeking to leverage corporate visual identity to shape stakeholder perception and boast its corporate image:

1. CVI practitioners, graphic designers, brand managers, corporate communications, PR and ad managers should conduct regular research to adopt more innovative strategies and technologies to design creative and sustainable CVI designs that can communicate, engage and resonate with stakeholders.
2. Organisations should conduct regular stakeholder analysis for easy identification and understanding of their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards the organisation and its CVIs. In other words, having relevant, accurate and timely data about the general demographic and psychographic characteristics of organisational stakeholders and the operational environment is essential in creating an impactful CVI language that speaks directly to their hearts.
3. Organisations should adopt more effective artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics systems for measuring and tracking key metrics in evaluating the effectiveness of CVI in shaping stakeholders' perceptions, and managing corporate image not only to achieve their business objectives but also ensure that visual identities remain valuable corporate assets.
4. Organisations should avoid logos that are poorly designed, inconsistent, incompatible and unmemorable. Therefore, they must always employ the services of well-trained CVI professionals – skilled graphic artists and designers, brand strategists, PR and marketing communications experts – to create consistent and sustainable CVIs across all touch points and platforms, including digital, print and multi-media networks.
5. The organisation's CVI must be authentic, sustainable, realistic and achievable while reflecting the company's true character, culture, purpose, and value proposition and not creating a fantasy or jamboree, rather than a reflection of the stakeholders' core aspirations.

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ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S SATIRICAL FOLKSONGS IN IBIBIO, AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract

African traditional folksongs constitute a vital component of orature, leveraging the nuances of indigenous languages in the articulation of social commentary through humour, satire and metaphor, thereby subverting dominant norms, interrogating patriarchal constructs, and reinscribing communal values and aesthetics. This study examines the cultural, social, and gendered significance of Ibibio women's satirical folksongs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Ethnography of communication theory creates an understanding on how language and communication are used in cultural contexts; taking cognizance of the rules, norms and meanings behind how people speak, sing and perform in a given society. This study employed ethnographic research design which involves a combination of objective observations, semi-structured interviews and textual analysis of recorded and transcribed songs. Oral accounts, archival materials and existing documentation of Ibibio folksongs are also examined. Interviews were held with eight (8) female performers and cultural custodians from Ikot Abasi and Etinan Local Government Area to gather insights into the meanings, functions and reception of satirical songs and interviews were analysed thematically. Findings reveal that Women's Satirical Folksongs function as tools for moral instruction, cultural preservation, and community engagement, enabling women to assert their voices within a patriarchal society. However, the research highlights the rapid decline of this tradition due to modernisation, generational disregard, and lack of institutional support. The study recommended the urgent need for documentation, archiving, and promotion through agencies like FMACTCE and NCAC by means of cultural programs and education to ensure the preservation of this unique heritage for future generations.

Introduction

Satirical folksongs in Akwa Ibom State, like most other folk songs within the wide-ranging spectrum of African oral traditions, are rendered in indigenous languages. Odey and Ogar (2021, p. 127) categorise this form of rendition as poetry, arguing that pre-colonial poetry “is woven in oral performance and could be said to be highly functional, because it is close to the daily and social life of the people.”. These songs are purposefully called to the task of ridicule, correcting social behavioural anomalies and provoking laughter. Historical data and folk accounts prove beyond every whit of doubt that these songs are deeply embedded in each region's oral tradition, serving as a veritable medium through which women, in the words of Ebingha and Edung (2025) are empowered with necessary vocality in the face of oppression, while also reflecting on sacrosanct societal norms. Satirical folksongs give women voice in that, through humour (masterfully spiced up by satire and metaphor), they are able to critique circumstances in which they find themselves as part of their daily cultural experience(s). These circumstances, cutting across marital prospects, societal expectations, economic hardships, etc—define the sociocultural realities of these women and, very profoundly so, shape their view of morality, culture, historical phenomena, and life in general.

Ibibio is one of the largest ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom State in southern Nigeria, with a large population of people. The Ibibio consists of 14 local government areas which are Etinan, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Itu, Mkpato Enin, Nsit Atai, Nsit-Ubium, Nsit Ibom, Ibesikpo Asutan, Ibiono Ibom, Ini, Onna,

Uruan and Uyo. This ethnic extraction has a rich history, laden with robust cultural traditions and cultural preservations cutting across folk songs and oral storytelling, all of which have proven crucial as an invaluable medium for the repository of history, conveyance of values and fostering of a deeper sense of community. Women's satirical songs are not just entertainment but powerful tools for social commentary and, at times, resistance against certain inordinate conditionings. They allow women to critique social structures without direct confrontation, often subverting power dynamics that threaten their social and emotional harmony, through wit and humour.

This study analyses folksongs and their functions within the cultural, social and gendered contexts of Ibibio. Understanding these songs based on examining the themes, performance styles and roles in both historical and contemporary context, gives an insight to the enduring power of women in the society. This study can also bring to light these diverse folk songs for the purpose of cultural preservation for future generations.

Review of Related Literature

The subject of folk songs as an effective satirical tool has gained prominence within intellectual landscapes of discourse in a way that highlights the inestimable significance of this form of African oral tradition. Scholars, critics, anthropologists and cultural enthusiasts have lent their perspectives on this area of scholarship, giving insightful hints that accentuate the beauty and relevance of orality. Ekpo, Nkanta and Effiong (2023), for instance, note that cultural heritage is expressed through language in diverse ways like folksongs, proverbs, folktales, myths, legends, etc. They note that the study of folklore has been generally useful to man in his bid to consolidate and organise his society's belief pattern, moral behaviour, customs, taboos and rituals to suit the cultural heritage milieu. Okon (2003) asserts contention that the ethnography of communication, or of speaking, is an approach within the field of sociolinguistics that offers a particular perspective for understanding language (speech) behavior in cultural and social contexts and as such, singing could be classified as language behaviour learned and performed in social contexts. She also notes that the assumption in ethnography is that every community has rules for any form of language behaviour such as greeting, conversing, insulting, praising, showing appreciation, agreeing or disagreeing.

According to Akpan-obong (2023), folk music provides women with a platform for agency, economic independence and social responsibility. Additionally, folk music accentuates women's marginalisation by reiterating negative cultural assumptions, narratives and stereotypes. It is important to pay attention to certain messages that depict certain cultures, folksongs, proverbs or narratives. Rogers (2013) corroborates this stance where he opines that music reflects and entrenches societal customs, beliefs and values. According to him, culture can have meanings, but it typically refers to the values or beliefs that are unique to an individual society. Bunting (2019) notes that the power of songs provides insight into specific issues, such as gender and gender norms and how they have progressed. However, Newton (2019) argues that it is naïve to assume that folk music rises above the general inequalities women face day-to-day. Women folksongs serve a representation which can either improve the conditions of the women or correct the wrongs in the society.

Essentially, some folksongs can be satirical, exposing human vices, abuses, shortcomings and follies to scorn or express a trenchant wit, irony, or sarcasm used to condemn and discredit vice or folly (Udosen and Anyanwu, 2022). Bande (2002) notes that folksongs are some of the ways women have derived to mock convention and the dominant discourse of patriarchy. Their narrative potency lies in their ability to satirise the surroundings without hurting directly.

The views examined here have beamed their scholarly light on the role of folk songs and satires in repositioning cultural and sociomoral values in general. Noticeably, not much has been explored on folk songs that are specific to women in terms of usage and significance. Also, very little has been appraised about the efficacy of these songs within the context of the Ibibio ethnic group. It is in this dimension that this study finds its significance as it sets out to fill this intellectual gap by examining the relevance of folk songs in the critique of human excess and sociomoral inadequacies, in a bid to underscoring the role of these renditions in safeguarding the moral fibre of the community.

The Role of Women in Ibibio Oral Traditions

Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State in southern Nigeria are found within a patriarchal society structure. This kind of society has women under the control and leadership of men, and gender roles are established accordingly. Among the Ibibio people, socialisation of gender roles is to distinguish between men and women. Historically, women in Ibibio are faced gender by inequality and discrimination, especially in social roles and inheritance. Nana and Daniel (2023) state that in Ibibio community, daughters in the family had nothing to inherit from their fathers since they were seen as appropriate property to be inherited by men. They only inherited things like utensils and clothes from their mothers while all the father's property such as lands and houses went to the sons of the deceased. Ukpong (2014) notes that widows without male children were driven out while those who had male children were allowed to stay in the deceased's estate only on the condition of accepting to marry the deceased's brother. However, in recent times, some of these practices have been adjusted.

Traditionally, Parents in Ibibio give out their daughters' hand in marriage and before the daughters to go the husband's house, they would be given proper orientation on gender roles, thereby highlighting the fact that they would have no place to go in the event of opting to leave their husband's house, as they no longer had footing in their parents' house. Married couples in Ibibio land define gender roles traditionally and these definitions clearly drew the moral lines for what is culturally acceptable and what is considered to be deviant among them. More so, in the pre-colonial era, polygamy was the accepted norm for the Ibibio society. With this institution, women were born, raised and given out in marriage. A woman's worldview, self-concept and gender identity were nurtured within such an environment. The women played out survival spirit to be able to take care of themselves and their children. Akpan (2015; p.185) observes that the contributions of women were based on cultural gender division of labour, when before the colonial era was restricted to farm and household activities. In the face of survival, they had informal education, moral standards and expectations all woven into an unwritten tradition and culture with sets of divine punishment and records to enforce these beliefs. The folksong has its roots in the past

when cultures relied on oral traditions to transmit cultural information and storytelling.

By reason of polygamy, when women had clashes with their co-wives (iban ufb) they subscribed to songs to spite each other. As time went on, women started belonging to groups, organisations (trade and commerce) where they came together to share their plights in the society and they became more enlightened, thereby changing their scope of knowledge. They composed songs which were meant for historical orientation, emotional expression and creation of awareness on their predicaments. These songs were also utilized in the rectification of ills in the society; they were a potent force for entertainment, reinforcement of a sense of identity, and injecting cultural values into younger generations. Ibibio women played an important role in shaping communal life through their active participation in the composition and performance of these folksongs. Judging from the patriarchal society which they found themselves, some of these songs were satirical and sang with some sense of humour. Satirical folksongs allow women to comment on social issues, challenge wrong doings and hold individuals accountable, often using humor, irony and metaphor. These performances create a space where women can voice concerns about domestic roles, leadership, gender relations and moral conduct, thereby influencing public opinion and community standards.

Women also used folksongs to show solidarity, especially in events of collective labour, celebration or mourning. During communal events, folksongs did not just serve as a form of entertainment, they also united people, affirming shared experiences and emotions. Through these collective performances, women reinforce social bonds and encourage cooperation among community members. By indirectly addressing tensions through satirical verses or symbolic allusions, Ibibio women's folksongs facilitated dialogue and reflection without direct confrontation, thereby contributing in conflict resolution and reconciliation; bringing communal harmony and preserved relationship. Therefore, these folksongs were vital instruments through which women participated in governance, education and the moral shaping of the society.

From the foregoing, it cannot be overemphasised that Ibibio women have always played a central role in the preservation and transmission of oral tradition, particularly folksongs. As singers, they use songs to pass down history, moral values and communal knowledge. Through oral performances, women educate the younger generation, reinforce social norms and comment on societal issues. Their participation in oral tradition also provides a platform for expressing agency, preserving collective memory and maintaining cultural continuity within the Ibibio community.

Presentation and Discussion of Data

Ibibio folksongs are usually begun in a unique way, mainly with a call and response technique that initiates the performance that is to follow, thus:

Ìmíyún ìdí.

We have come again.

Ìdún àyá kpóko

The environment will be shaken

These sonic lines serve as an introduction to folksongs. Because these songs address social vices, they are

considered to be 'table shaker'. Therefore, when women are seen presenting folksongs, wrongdoers are usually jolted. These satirical songs are presented and analysed according to their themes for easier understanding. The cover a wide range of themes that include:

a. **Marriage and domestic life**

These songs critique polygamy, marital neglect or unfair treatment as can be seen in the song below:

1. Èdí kpèýe èbé mí éno
Èdí kpèýe èbé mí éno *Come and help me beg my husband*
Èdí kpèýe èbé mí éno *Come and help me beg my husband*
Yak ñduṇ ũfók ũfók *So that I can leave in only the house*
Mbók ènyín *And take care of my child*

This song pictures a wife who is deeply passionate about her children. In Ibibio land, a woman is expected to stay married not just for herself but for the sake of her kids. In the past, especially in the era of polygamy, a woman's concern in the home was to take care of mainly her kids while the man is believed to offer protection to his family. The song reflects that belief that no matter what, women endure in their husband's house for their kid's sake.

2. Èbé mmókóp òdó
Èbé mmókóp òdó? *Husband have you heard that?*
Èbé mmókóp òdó? *Husband have you heard that?*
Èbé àkpómá ùṇo ṅkáníká *When husband loves you, he will give you a watch*
Àdà díṇó iní ũnám ùtóm *So that you can keep track of time while working*
Àkpóúsúá ùnó *When he hates you*
Ṛyàrátóń àté *He gives you less, says that,*
sìné ké èsít ikót *You should remain inside the bush*
tuá dó kpá *And cry till you die.*

This song describes two contrasting marriage scenarios; one in which the husband loves his wife and one where he does not. It could be for women in polygamous homes, where a man cherishes the other wife but does not regard the other. The woman sings this song to confirm to the man that she is aware of the maltreatment he has been subjecting her into and that she knows that it is because of his lack of love for her. A man that loves his wife will not want his wife to suffer—as seen in this song, *Èbé àkpómá ùṇo ṅkáníká*, *Àdà díṇó iní ũnám ùtóm*, the husband makes sure that the wife is not burdened with so much responsibilities. Whereas if he does not love the wife as much, he will not care about how she suffers and the pains she bears to survive with her children. Rather, he would give her less which will make her want to work more in order to survive.

3. **Èbé àdó òbufá**

<i>Èbé àdó òbufá</i>	<i>Husband has remarried</i>
<i>Mmá àsiań idem</i>	<i>The woman is fulfilled</i>

Ñwan ñyin kúsiań idem

Our co-wife don't fill fulfilled

Ké èbé ñyin àkèré ñdàràké

Because our husband gives no joy

The lyrics here address polygamy, especially in a situation where a man does not take care of his wives. When a woman is newly married, it is common for her to be happy and feel fulfilled, as marriage is regarded to be what completes a woman, to the Ibibios. Her co-wife(wives) sound(s) a warning to her, that she should not be overjoyed because their husband does not show affection and love for so long. He rather displays affection for his newly married wife and thereafter, shows her, his true self which the other wife(wives) consider(s) as despicable.

4. **Ñwán ìmá èbé**

Ñwán ìmá èbé

Husband's favourite wife

Àmén idém àmó àním

Makes jest of herself

Àkpókpo ñsá

in the morning

Èyó àmásièrè

When morning comes,

Àmén idém àmó àním

She makes jest of herself

Àkpókpo ñsá

This singer sings about a woman who is loved by her husband, especially in a polygamous home. A man who loves his wife provides for her, making the wife not to be involved with rigorous work like other women. As a result, she gallivants around, gathering gossips so that she could discuss with her husband. This act of hers makes the women to condemn her, using this song, they imply that they are not proud of her doings, rather, they are ashamed of her – as a woman is supposed to be more responsible in her home.

5. **Àyá'dád inó èbé**

Àyá'dád inó èbé

She'll sell me out to husband

Àkámá ùtáfí

Keyholder

Àyá'dád inó èbé

Will sell me out to my husband

Kúkúkúkú uuh!

(Exclamation)

This song especially concerns women in polygamous homes, who are cautious of their co-wives, those considered to be their husband's favourite wife. The husband listens more to his favourite wife and when it comes to her, his judgment towards his other wives is beclouded—the favourite wife comes first, in every of his decisions. The singer must have done something wrong and she cries because her co-wife, who is their husband's favourite, must have caught her in the act which in other words, she is in trouble. The favourite wife is considered as the key to the husband's heart as well as key to the house. The exclamation at the end of the song makes it sound like a mockery to the favourite wife, in her role to always gossip about other women's affairs to the husband.

b. **Economic hardship and labour**

These songs ridicule men who fail to provide while women bear the economic burden.

6. **Ìdíók èbè àbén èkpòròkó àním ké èsá mmí oo**

Ìdíók èbè àbén èkpòròkó àním ké èsá mmí oo Bad husband brings stock fish to
the frontage
Èkpòròkó ìdóhó òffón àmí ibán èsínéké Stock fish is not clothes that women wear
Nyá dòró nduók I'll throw it

This song speaks out on how a bad husband can be. She states that her husband is not good enough because he is selfish. He only considers himself, takes care of his needs and ignores the needs of his wife. He considers his wife as his cook and pretends not to know that a woman has basic needs which should be attended to by her husband. The woman in her bid to show her displeasure, resorts to protest as seen in the song where she says, *Nyá dòró nduók*.

7. **Mbók ètéghé ènyé ẗe ùdót**

<i>Mbók ètéghé ènyé ẗe ùdót</i>	<i>I cook okro, he said it draws</i>
<i>Mbók ibábá ènyé ẗe ùkpáféd</i>	<i>I cook ibaba, he said it drags</i>
<i>Sé idém àdíá àfañ dó</i>	<i>See someone that eats afang</i>
<i>Sé idém àdíá àfañ dó</i>	<i>See someone that eats afang</i>

Food is used in this song to lampoon an irresponsible man who complains a lot. Whether his wife does the right thing or not, he is still bent on complaining. This song in a way shows the tiredness of women over their husband's constant nagging. In this song the woman tries to manage the resources at hand but her husband keeps frustrating her with his complaints, whereas in reality, he does not provide the family as much as making the wife live lavishly as the man envisions. In most cases, the man leaves the woman to fend for herself and their children and then he comes home and still expects a warm welcome and a richly delicious meal.

c. **Gender roles and expectation**

This highlights satirical takes on male dominance and social restrictions.

8. **Kú'dá èdém ùnsé**

	Response
<i>Kú'dá èdém ùnsé.</i>	<i>Öwí yo oh</i>
<i>Nkómmó àfó àdó inó.</i>	<i>Öwí yo oh</i>
<i>Ubók ñká mfó ènék unek afo ùneke mbák ùbét</i>	
<i>Stop peeping at me</i>	
<i>I'm not saying you're a thief</i>	
<i>Your mates are dancing but you can't dance for the fear of your husband</i>	

This song came about during the colonial period when women started participating in politics and

development. However, given the patriarchal nature of the Ibibio society, some women did not feel obligated to improve themselves. Most of them could not join in development for fear of displeasing or disrespecting their husbands; they would rather envy other women who stood out, hence its rendition. The singer states that she is not accusing the observer of anything because she has the right to observe but at the same time, she could possess the tendency of doing better. This song encourages women not to be onlookers, rather they should be agents of development.

d. **Moral and social norms**

The folksong serves as a tool for social regulation and moral education. In most cases it incorporates historical anecdotes for didactic reference. These songs reveal what corrupts and brings disorderliness to the society.

9. Ñkaná isó àfó'má

Ñkaná isó àfó'má

I face you, you love me

Ñdíyọ ñkaná èdém

When I turn my back

Àfó kèpé òkpókpo

You size me up and down

This song implies hatred. It talks about friends who pretend to love each other when they are together, whereas they backbite, judge and betray each other behind their backs.

10. Kú'dópó mbát ùdú'yet

Kú'dópó mbát ùdú'yet

Don't stain me mud

Àsédó ñnámá ñkpó

I do nothing wrong

Àfó ñtańg àwút idúńg

Yet you tell me to the world

This song talks condemns the habit of gossiping. The singer is reprimanding a gossip who wants to involve her in gists that do not concern her. A gossip is known to spread stories around and therefore, looks for measures in which information can be gotten. A gossip tends to also spread fake information, particularly when there is no appropriate information about what is talked about. In typical Ibibio communities, people live communal lives, therefore gossips spread like wildfire and sometimes, the people involved in the gossip are usually called out for open confrontation which brings about confusion and fights. The term, *Kú'dópó mbát ùdú'yet* in this song serves as a warning to the gossips, telling them not to drag her name or involve her in unnecessary shameless talks. The singer does not want to associate with someone who is regarded as a gossip, for the fear of loss of integrity.

11. Èbó ke mkpí siàńá

Èbó ke mkpí siàńá?

Who said I will not show off?

Èbó ke mkpí siàńá?

Who said I will not show off?

Ūńèn àkáp kǔbó ñkwúá

Chickens even lay their eggs

Àsían idém

and show off

This song is a form of reaffirmation in the case of jealousy. It is observed that chickens fly out from where they lay eggs and even make sounds for awareness each time it comes out. It uses chickens to

demonstrate the importance of showing off as it emphasises that if chickens can show off, who is she not to show off? It tells the society that there is no need to beat one's self up on other people's achievements but rather they should learn how to be proud of the little they have. It employs the use of metaphor in sending its message.

12. Mmém mmém èyín imá

Mmém mmém èyín imá

Soft love eye

Àmá yòmmó àyá ùdóřo

When you get pregnant, you'll be tired.

This song talks about a girl or woman who goes close to men or follows them around. That if she gets pregnant, her life will be filled with frustration. It can also serve as a warning for young girls to be wary of men in order to avoid teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy without a responsible man in Ibibio land is considered as a sign of waywardness on the girl's part. In other words, girls are advised to steer clear off men, to avoid pregnancies which will jeopardise their futures.

13. Ñyín inó

Ñyín inó

Response

Ùká idóhó àfó dó

Little thief

Your mother is not but you are.

The singer tries to reprimand a child who forms a habit that is alien to the family. Some of these characters are taken from outside, like peer groups. The mother warns the child not to embarrass her family by developing traits which are not found in their family. The mother admonishes the child to replicate her own character in order not to bring shame to the family. This song does not only condemn stealing, it also entails other bad characters which are unwanted in the society.

14. Àmí ñkéká àfaṅ ṅkéné

Àmí ñkéká àfaṅ ṅkéné

àfaṅ ṅkéné

Ñtó ṅká òdúk àdiápá

òdúk àdiápá

Mbōn ùníe mmá ètómó mmá

ètómó mmá

Mbōn ùníe ñsó ètómó ñsó

ètómó ñsó

Àmí ṅsió ùkót ñtuák isón

ñtuák isón

Ūmá ùwó ufók ṅdókó ñné

ṅdókó ñné

Response

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

Kènéké kènéké

té ké ènyín fò àsém Ûmañi
àsém Ûmañi.

Břařa brasa
Břařa

I went to afang with fishing rope
Afang with fishing rope
When I reached the rope cut loose
Rope cut loose
Those that had mothers called mothers
Called mothers
Those that had fathers called fathers
Called fathers
I removed my legs and stamped on the ground
I stamped on the ground
When you get home tell woman
Tell woman
That your child speaks Umani
speaks Umani

This song talks about hopelessness and sends a message to women. In Ibibio, when people go to the bush to pluck afang, they say *ká afang*, in English it could be interpreted as go to afang. *Ñkéné* on the other hand is a fishing net. It can be seen in this song, *àmí ñkéká àfang ñkéné*, meaning that the person went to hustle and, in the process, the singer acquired losses. Those that had loved ones beckoned on their loved ones while he/she was left in a confused state – as seen in where he/she stamped his/her legs on the floor. The singer sends a message that anytime someone gets home, he/she should tell a woman that the singer has succumbed to strange circumstances which is quite laughable. Note that, Umani is a small village in Port Harcourt, close to Ikot Abasi in Akwa Ibom State, of which trade occurs between them. The language according to the Ikot Abasi people is termed as not being understandable and made fun of. The song uses satire to describe the nature at which one can be hopeless in a bid to survive without people around which you can lean on. It highlights the importance of having someone around especially in times of helplessness or unpleasant situations.

15. Lockup store

	Response
<i>Ètùk òlòckup store.</i>	<i>Ñdá àdó ñdiá ñkpo</i>
<i>Àlòckup store.</i>	<i>Ñdá àdó ñdiá ñkpo</i>
<i>Small lockup store.</i>	<i>I eat from there</i>
<i>Lockup store</i>	<i>I eat from there</i>

This song is mainly sung to lampoon prostitutes. Lockup store here metaphorically refers to the female

genital area. It indicates that the private part is the only way they feed, through their immoral profession, they see it as a source of income. Women who are into prostitution face discrimination from women, hence this song, to satirise them.

16. Èté Ñsímá

	Response
<i>1960 ñkébòyó ké Ùyó</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>1960 ñkébòyó ké Ùyó</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èté Ñsímá àkéyóm ñdíkà Àbá</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èté Ñsímá àyéré mmoñ èsié àmá</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èté Ñsímá àmén àfoñ àmó àsíné</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èté Ñsímá àstárt mòtó àmó</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èkpri èyén òró òkóyóm ñdító ũneṇ</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èkpri èyén òró òkótó mòtó èsié</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èkpri èyén òró àmábíat mòtó èsié</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èté Ñsímá òdúk mòtó èsié</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èté Ñsímá àsió ikáñ èsié èdí oo</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èté Ñsímá òtóp èyén òró òwút oo</i>	<i>Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èyák èkwó Ñsímá</i>	<i>Mbóm mbóm Ñsímá, Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Èyák èkwó Ñsímá</i>	<i>Mbóm mbóm Ñsímá, Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Ñsímá òwót èyén òwó</i>	<i>Mbóm mbóm Ñsímá, Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Òwót èyén òwó ituáhá ùduók oo</i>	<i>Mbóm mbóm Ñsímá, Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Òwót èyén òwó ikópó mbom oo.</i>	<i>Mbóm mbóm Ñsímá, Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Ñsímá!</i>	<i>Mbóm mbóm Ñsímá, Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>Ñsímá!</i>	<i>Mbóm mbóm Ñsímá, Mbóm èyén</i>
<i>In 1960 I was passing in Uyo</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>In 1960 I was passing in Uyo</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Mr. Nsima wanted to go to Aba</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Mr. Nsima finished bathing</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Mr. Nsima wore his clothes</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Mr. Nsima entered his car and turned the ignition</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>That small child wanted to hit chicken</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>That small child hit his car</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Mr. Nsima entered his car</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Mr. Nsima brought out his gun</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Mr. Nsima shot the child to death</i>	<i>Sorry child</i>
<i>Let's sing Nsima</i>	<i>Sorry sorry Nsima, sorry child</i>
<i>Let's sing Nsima</i>	<i>Sorry sorry Nsima, sorry child</i>
<i>Nsima the murderer</i>	<i>Sorry sorry Nsima, sorry child</i>

<i>Killed someone's child without pity</i>	<i>Sorry sorry Nsima, sorry child</i>
<i>Killed someone's child without remorse</i>	<i>Sorry sorry Nsima, sorry child</i>
<i>Nsima!</i>	<i>Sorry sorry Nsima, sorry child</i>
<i>Nsima!</i>	<i>Sorry sorry Nsima, sorry child</i>

This song highlights historical events and teach a moral lesson. It reveals the ills faced in the society and refers it as a rather sad situation as seen in the response, *Sorry child*. The child in this song indicates the vulnerable masses whose little mistakes can lead them to untold difficulties. In this song, women enlighten the society be kind and not let anger take over them. This event is claimed to have happened in the 1960s. Mr. Nsima is seen to have been a wealthy man and in other words, in the present day, this song reveals how the rich oppress the poor.

e. **Cultural preservation**

Songs are not just used as means for cultural preservation but also to educate on certain practices which could strengthen the community's cultural heritage.

17. Ûmá ùnié èyén ùdók àná ìnwáñ

<i>Ûmá ùnié èyén ùdók àná ìnwáñ</i>	<i>When you have a child, your door is open</i>
<i>Mmùnéhé èyén ñkákád èyétá ùdók</i>	<i>When you don't have a child, termites will eat your door</i>

This song depicts the joy of motherhood. It encourages people to procreate and place value on their children because they bring joy to their parents as well as having whom to take care of them in old age. *Ûmá ùnié èyén ùdók àná ìnwáñ*, used here ironically means that if you have a child, your doors will always be open, especially with your child running around and making the place lively. Whereas people who do not have children experience silence and loneliness. In Ibibio land, children are very important, most especially the male child, whom they believe will bring continuity in the family name. Through children, the legacy of parents is preserved. Even in the community, it is the children that make up the next generation thereby handing down and preserving culture.

18. Kōkōrikōkō!

<i>Kōkōrikōkō!</i>	<i>(Sound of a bird)</i>
<i>Èyó èsìéré!</i>	<i>Morning have come!</i>
<i>Ñsànkót ké èsít ìkót</i>	<i>A bird in the bush</i>
<i>Ònó ñwèd èsók òbíó</i>	<i>Sends a note to the community</i>
<i>Àté mbùfó èdémèré</i>	<i>That you should wake up</i>
<i>Ké ùbák ùnám èdí ùbák ùmá</i>	<i>Because early start begats early finish</i>
<i>Èdían ùbók èdí ìbóp òbíó</i>	<i>Join hands let's build the society</i>
<i>Ké ùbák ùnám èdí ùbák ùmá</i>	<i>Because early start begats early finish</i>
<i>Èdá èsít ìmá èbóp òbíó</i>	<i>Let's build the society with love</i>
<i>Ké ùbák ùnám èdí ùbák ùmá</i>	<i>Because early start begats early finish</i>

Èdà òkúk èdibóp òbíó

Bring money let's build the society

Ké ùbák ùnám èdí ùbák ùmá

Because early start begats early finish

This song starts on a figurative note, using a bird to pass information. *Ñsànkót* is a bird that has characteristics of a chicken. Having seen the irregularities in the community, the women used a bird, far away in the bush to pass their message. It implies a wake-up call for members of the community to wake up from their slumber and build their community. It highlights the need for both leaders and citizens to join hands and their resources to do whatever it takes to upgrade their community on time, rather than procrastinate. Women are forces of development in the society; therefore, this song tells people to learn how to preserve their society through positive measures and togetherness.

f. **Love and romance**

Satirical songs are also used by women to let their husbands know their state of emotion as it is not in the nature of women to openly speak on such.

19. Èbé idá fùkó àfró sé

Èbé idá fùkó àfró sé

Strong husband open afro and see

Èbé idá fùkó àfró sé

Strong husband open afro and see

Àmí ñké ùwát ké ùsuñ Calabar-Itu

I went for a ride along Calabar-Itu

fùkó àfró sé

Open afro and see

This song is made in a setting that depicts a woman who went on a journey and has been sex starved. Women in those days could not communicate freely on different matters especially concerning bedroom activities. In order to show their lascivious thoughts, songs like this were used to make their men aware of their state of mind rather than coming out plain to tell the husband how they feel. The expression, *Èbé idá fùkó àfró sé* means that they have been sex-starved, therefore making their female genital area bushy. Afro there does not necessarily mean that they have not shaved, it means that, that area has not been touched by their men for a period of time (as seen in *Àmí ñké ùwát ké ùsuñ Calabar-Itu*, meaning that time travels far and they cannot keep waiting for it).

It is worthy to note that in the past, women assembled together in the evenings and performed these folksongs. However, as time went on, people were not able to meet up with the daily gatherings, therefore, Ibibio women perform these satirical folksongs during their market days, women meetings, festivals such as funerals, weddings, etc. These folksongs are also performed in communal functions such as during subtle protests, a means of showing solidarity. Hymes in his theory notes that communication is not only about what is said, but also who says it, to whom, in what setting, for what purpose, and under what cultural norms.

Findings of the Study

From the foregoing, a number of insightful findings have been made, which include the following:

- i. Ibibio women use satirical folksongs as a strategic form of social commentary and community

engagement. These songs serve not only as entertainment but also as powerful tools with meanings which serves as moral instruction, cultural preservation, and the reinforcement of communal values. Through satire women are able to criticise certain norms in the society which are unacceptable to them, the men's irresponsibility, domestic conflicts and even expose corruption.

- ii. These songs serve as a means of correction in the society. By publicly ridiculing unacceptable behaviours in a social and entertaining format, Ibibio women contribute to changes in the society whereby adjustments are made towards shifting to a positive side. The society is constantly reminded on the disparities between ills and goods.
3. The sonic renditions highlight beauty, power and importance of Ibibio women in oral tradition. Despite operating in a patriarchal society, women use folksongs to assert their voices, challenge power structures, and influence communal discourse.
4. Through these songs, the oral tradition continues to thrive in the contemporary society and it also highlights the role of Ibibio women as agents of cultural transmission and preservation.
5. Most of these folksongs are becoming extinct as younger generations no longer pick interest in learning them.

Conclusion

This study has examined the role of Ibibio women in using satirical folksongs as a means of social expression, critique, and community engagement. It highlights how these songs serve multiple functions such as; educational, corrective, social and cultural, within the oral tradition. Through satire, women address issues such as male irresponsibility, social injustice, and moral decline, using humor and metaphor to convey serious messages in a non-confrontational manner.

The research reveals that these folksongs are potent tools for asserting women's voices in a patriarchal society and giving what Edung and Owan (2024) term “a far-reaching outcry against social and political wrongs” (182). By performing satire in communal settings, Ibibio women influence public opinion, uphold cultural values, and participate in the moral shaping of their communities. Their contributions reflect both creativity and agency, underscoring the importance of women's roles in the preservation and evolution of oral literature. Conclusively, the study affirms the significance of satire in Ibibio oral tradition and the central role women play in sustaining its vibrancy and relevance in contemporary society.

Recommendations

This study recommends that: The Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy (FMACTCE) and National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) should take proactive measures in showcasing Ibibio women's satirical folksongs by documenting (including audio and video recording), archiving and promotion through cultural programmes, academic research, and community initiatives to avoid loss due to extinction and generational shifts. Women should also educate their children on the importance of these satirical folksongs and teach them how to perform them. Greater recognition should be given to their role in preserving cultural values and promoting social accountability through oral tradition.

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ENGAGING AFRICAN YOUTH ON CLIMATE TALKS IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE VIS-À-VIS THE CHALLENGES OF COP27

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Abstract

Climate change is a crisis in need of a global response. There have been various global approaches towards climate change mitigation and adaptation across the globe, some of which have involved engaging children and youth in response to various intertwined environmental challenges. Missing pieces and insufficient information have led to numerous studies about climate change, and while some studies were focused on young people's views about climate change, there is very little existing research exploring ways in which this population could be more effectively engaged. This study uses a qualitative library research method to narrow existing research gaps through a specific objective that probes the idea of engaging African youth on climate talks within the arena of virtual spaces vis-à-vis the pertinent COP27 challenges. The social marketing theory was used to anchor the ideas within. The study found that the battle against climate change requires ambition, collective action and inclusivity, thus the study supports active youth participation in climate governance through the adoption and use of virtual spaces such as social media and virtual reality for the purpose of engineering climate talks, and accelerating climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Introduction

Climate change is a crisis that has taken a global dimension, and conversely needs an urgent response. It is therefore unsurprising that scholars from various fields have aired their views on the present climate change conundrum. For instance, Olagunju, Adewoye, Adewoye and Opasola (2021) explain that climate change is globally considered as a pressing environmental issue. Shehata, Johansson, Johansson and Andersen (2022) also affirm that across the globe, extreme weather events have brought climate change into people's daily lives. From extreme heat-waves, droughts, wildfires, heavy rainfall, flooding, and snowstorms, people on all continents are experiencing how the climate changes. There have been various global approaches towards climate change mitigation and adaptation across the globe, some of which have involved engaging children and youth in response to the various intertwined environmental challenges that are climatic in nature. Melissa (2022) explains that how ambitiously and inclusively the world tackles climate change will determine our success or failure in achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals. The concept of youth engagement is increasingly apparent in international and national agendas, marking a shift in thinking about young people as assets to society, as well as key development partners (Policy Forum, 2012). Napawan, Simpson and Snyder (2017)

explain that connecting youth with a sense of urgency represents one of the largest hurdles to effectively engaging them in climate resilience planning. A good answer to the question of how to engage youth in this sense may be captured from the window of opportunities that the virtual world has to offer. Though the effectiveness of such efforts may not be immediate, it is an approach that captures a majority of the population in continents like Africa, where the youth represent a demographically overwhelming majority in terms of population. With 200 million people aged between 15 to 24 years, Africa has the largest population of young people in the world and the fastest growing youth population in the world (COP27, 2022).

It is clear that efforts need to be channeled towards progress that is beyond information and consultation activities targeting youth, which too often is what is considered as successful youth participation (Melissa, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) explain that many young people are eager to contribute towards climate and environmental challenges. Millions of school-age students have been marching for greater action against climate change from both national and regional governments. For instance, the COP27 in Egypt, made history with the first-ever youth-led climate forum, as young representatives from the Conference of the Youth presented the Global Youth Statement (COP27, 2022). It is not an overstatement to assert that young people have good ideas to offer concerning our climate as well as other social challenges that threaten our collective future. Mugeere, Barford and Magimbi (2021, p. 345) explain that “the poorest and most vulnerable young people are the most exposed to climate shocks—despite their negligible role in driving climate change.” Engaging young people on climate talks via virtual spaces can be helpful in terms of highlighting COP27 challenges such as the present financing gap, issues of loss and damage as well as the adaptation gap. The youth as well as young people in general are highly affected by climate change and should be given a voice too. Godfrey and Tunhuma (2020) affirm that a recent UNICEF study demonstrates that climate change disproportionately impacts women and young people. The 1992 Earth Summit recognized nine groups as channels for achieving the world's sustainable development goals, which included women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, farmers, business and industry, labor and trade unions, science and technology, local authorities, and NGO's (Han and Ahn, 2020). This does not only buttress the importance of all these groups working collectively, it shows that children and youth also need to be regarded as important agents in the ongoing battle against climate change, and the task of ensuring environmental sustainability.

There is no doubt that young people are related to climate change in multiple ways. Young people will live much of their lives on a planet altered by climate change (Sanson, Van Hoorn, and Burke, 2019). They must therefore be equipped with the right

tools, if they are to face such a future with any hope. It can be argued that the youth are the environmental stewards for the future. For instance, teenagers have fought against climate change through various forms of activism, including lawsuits against fossil fuel companies and governments (Parker, 2019). Some scholars have argued that youth engagement in environmental activism is nowhere near the peak of its potentials, despite their lack of prescription in terms of an effective way forward. Twenge (2012) asserts that a study found declining patterns in young people in terms of civic orientation such as political participation and interest in social problems, with the largest decline being observed in the area of 'environmental action.' Corner, Chiary, Roberts, Chiari, Völler, Mayrhuber, Mandl and Monson (2015) explain that while some studies have focused on young people's views about climate change, there is very little existing research exploring ways in which this population could be more effectively engaged. Also, there have been studies about youth participation in climate activism, but very few studies have focused their beam light on the daring need to engage African youth on climate talks via virtual space. This study uses a qualitative library research method to narrow existing research gaps through a specific objective that probes the idea of engaging African youth on climate talks within the arena of virtual spaces vis-à-vis the pertinent Conference of Parties (COP27) challenges. In doing so it also examines the United Nations (UN) COP27 challenges with the aim of methodically highlighting some of the strong academic debates that can be used as a compass for recommending a way forward.

Conceptual Clarification

Climate Change: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2007) define climate change as a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and that is in addition to natural climate variability over comparable time periods. The study explores climate change and how the virtual world can engineer climate talks.

COP: The COP refers to the United Nations (UN) Conference of Parties, which is the highest decision making body of the Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC). Parties have established their resolve to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5°C in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change (Global Climate Action). The COP organizes an annual conference which is focused on climate talks. The first Conference of Parties to be hosted by an African country took place in Egypt. The study explores the challenges of COP27 in light of the present climate change conundrum.

Virtual Space: Virtual space which is sometimes referred to as the virtual world has been defined as “an environment that visually mimics complex physical spaces, where people can interact with each other and with virtual objects, and where people are represented by animated characters.” (Bainbridge 2007, p. 472). Furthermore, virtual

space can be viewed as a virtual social space that can serve the utilitarian purposes of communication and information sharing, which may be on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, or on any of the various immersive virtual reality gadgets. The study explores the concept of virtual space and how it can be used to engineer climate talks.

Theoretical Framework

The strings of this study are directly tied to the social marketing theory. The social marketing approach involves the systematic application of concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioural goals that are for social good (Corner and Randall, 2011). Aryanto and Paramitadevi (2018) explain that a social marketing programme should not only identify the target audience, it is also important to have an in-depth understanding of the target audience. The process of engaging the youth on the advantages of climate talks via virtual spaces especially regarding COP27 challenges such as the present financing gap, issues of loss and damage as well as the adaptation gap can adopt a social marketing approach, especially when social media such as Facebook and Twitter are to be used.

The social marketing theory is a theory that applies to climate change communication due to an approach which is focused on influencing behaviors that benefit both individuals and society at large, rather than just commercial organizations. Brown (1986) argues that social marketing is a natural outgrowth of several developments in and out of marketing. The term social marketing was coined by Kotler and Zaltman in 1971. Social marketing draws from bodies of knowledge such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and communication theory, with practical roots in advertising, public relations and market research (Serrat, 2010). The effectiveness of social marketing in achieving specific behavioural objectives is empirically well supported (Corner and Randall, 2011). Aryanto and Paramitadevi (2018) explain that the approach to social marketing campaign could be in terms of public education, public campaigns through social media, internet, and mass media.

The relevance of social marketing to the field of climate change communication comes from the fact that they both use communication and education campaigns that suit the audience, with the goal of achieving directed change. Social marketing is an approach that can be used for educational as well as awareness raising campaigns concerning climate change mitigation and adaptation using both social media and immersive virtual reality technology.

Review of Related Literature

Youth Engagement in Climate Talks

There are a handful of national and international organizations that have

leveraged the advantages of involving children and youth in their climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. There have been campaigns by national and international organizations, aimed at engaging the public on climate issues with the goal of influencing opinions, increasing knowledge and engineering directed change by organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme amongst others. International organizations like the United Nations (UN) have shown that they recognize the crucial role that the youth play in tackling climate change as reflected by their collaborative involvement of youth-led organizations around the world through the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change. Han and Ahn (2020) explain that international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have financed various youth-led environmental projects around the world. Also, youth led as well as youth focused organizations have also applied the same approach towards youth engagement. Melissa(2022) asserts that youth participation is considered a human right because they are also citizens within society and their rights to participate in decision-making that affects them is fundamental. A good example of youth engagement in climate talks was the COP27 Youth and Future Generation Day which helped to widen the narrative around Africa as a hub of opportunities and innovative solutions, and highlighted how the youth are collaboratively driving action and change, including climate justice and intergenerational equity (COP27, 2022). Furthermore, it can be argued that youth participation through meaningful engagement, also fosters social justice.

Communication with a broad public audience is key to acting on climate change, and it has presented a significant challenge for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the greater scientific community (Moser 2010). Virtual spaces such as the internet, social media, and virtual reality may hold the key to solving the climate change communication challenge. Developing leadership skills in teens and the youth is considered an investment for the future of our society and this can be achieved by engaging them on the importance of using virtual spaces to engineer climate talks. Some of the avenues explored for youth leadership development is participation in community oriented social ventures, civic engagement or social activism (Garst and Johnson, 2003). Various non-state actors, including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), citizens, and the private sector, have complemented governmental and intergovernmental efforts, combining their unique strengths and resources in combatting climate change both locally and transnationally (Han and Ahn, 2020). There is no doubt that young people need to be supported to engage in different dimensions of climate change governance, so as to influence politics, policies and polity (institutional

structures) as actors that share power with adults in deliberative arenas of decision-making (Melissa, 2022). It can be argued that despite the fact that the future belongs to young people, their voices have not been well integrated into global climate governance. Sanson et al (2019) explain that given the evidence that many young people feel powerless and hopeless about preventing catastrophic climate change, it is important to build their sense of self-efficacy and collective-efficacy. It can be argued that both self-efficacy and collective efficacy can be achieved when the African youth become aware of the importance of using virtual spaces for climate talks. It is however worthy of note to state that youth participation in climate and environmental issues requires decision makers to consciously create opportunities for meaningful engagement, and one of such opportunities lies in engaging them via virtual channels, using a peer to peer interaction approach.

Social Media as Catalyst for Climate Talks

The internet in general and social media in particular have democratized communication and are currently considered as strong tools for social mobilization, especially when the desired goal is directed change. Africa had an internet penetration average of 39.3 percent, which was still below the global average of 58.8 percent, Nigeria on the other hand had over 154 million internet users and a 73 percent internet penetration average, with well over 31 million Facebook subscribers as of 2021 (Internet World Stats, 2022). These figures highlight the inherent potentials of the internet and social media in Nigeria and Africa at large. Ismael (2021) explains that between 1997 and 2010, there were 1.5 billion users of social networking sites, and Facebook topped the list with over 900 million users, while majority of users were between the 16 to 44 years age bracket. Vromen (2008) asserts that the internet is often portrayed as a democratizing force that facilitates new participatory practices. Anderson (2017) explains that social media platforms—such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook—have provided an opportunity for the general public to discuss and share opinions instantly with vast cross-border networks. It is also assumed that young people have been the big 'winners', even the leaders, in the advent of participation via the Internet. Furthermore, communication technologies have become an inevitable part of our daily lives. This explains why the use of social media for advocacy and youth engagement can be viewed as a contemporary approach. Sarkar and Rashid (2018) share the view that online communication has changed the way we interact with the world today. It can be argued that online communication has also given rise to social media as well as social networking sites that have subsequently evolved into platforms for the empowerment of individuals and groups. New media is a channel for dialogue and provides an arena where public discourse can take place (McQuail, 2005).

Segerberg and Bennett (2011) explain that social media can be used to promote and organize logistics for offline activities such as climate events and engagement actions. With all these converging views in mind, social media as a virtual space presents a mouthwatering prospect for climate talks. It's bad enough that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity, but another challenge is that people also find it difficult to get engaged so as to have a better understanding of the subject (Moser, 2010). Social media as a thriving virtual space, can provide a fertile ground for advocacy and awareness campaigns as well as channels of engagement.

There is no doubt that with the right approach, social media can provide an effective way of narrowing the knowledge gap on climate related events such as global warming and climate change, which can in turn lead to behavioural adjustments that are considered useful in terms of accelerating adaptation and mitigation efforts. Social media as a virtual space provides a fertile ground for youth engagement in ways that can be helpful to the youth and society at large. For instance, Mavrodieva, Rachman, Harahap and Shaw (2019) argue that social media is considered the new form of soft power which provides a platform for discussion on climate change as well as the current international political mechanisms which can be integrated into the climate change battle. This suggests that the utilitarian value of social media as a virtual space cannot be overstated. Ojala and Lakew (2017) highlight the fact that digital media provides access to more information about climate change while also facilitating different forms of engagement. Furthermore, the digital media in general and social media in particular are a good means of mobilization in the 21st century. A very valuable benefit of social media as a tool for climate talks is that it provides a means for sharing experiences that are effective for climate change advocacy. A creative way to interact with youthful people on climate change is through the use of Twitter and Instagram accounts for competitions and quizzes (León, Finkler, Bourk, Boykoff, and Davis, 2021). There is no doubt that the internet is a potential space for facilitating alternative modes of engagement for young people because it is integrated into their everyday life experiences (Vromen, 2008). Communicating about climate change on social media enables young people to develop sophisticated and complex conversations around these concerning issues (Andersson and Öhman, 2016). Robelia, Greenhow, and Burton (2011) explain that social networks may also provide the motivation for young people to behave in more environmentally friendly ways.

The decentralized and participatory nature of social media offer novel possibilities to promote climate change engagement as peer attitudes can influence individual perception about this phenomenon (Kahan, Peters, and Wittlin, 2012). The purpose of these communication efforts include engaging citizens, changing citizen behavior and other goals such as explaining scientific results (or sow doubts about them)

and urging policy solutions (or slow decision-making down) (Segeberg, 2017). Social media can bring climate change psychologically closer to citizens, since information exchanged across the various platforms can help to personalize and concretize a topic that, in principle, is perceived as abstract and remote (Anderson, 2017). Considering the fact that the youth are adept users of social media, using it for information dissemination about climate change as well as for participatory purposes such as webinars, workshops and conferences can be beneficial towards narrowing the psychological distance challenge to climate change communication. Furthermore, social media platforms can become important communication channels for climate change especially when it comes to highlighting COP27 challenges such as the present financing gap, issues of loss and damage as well as the adaptation gap. Through social networks, many citizens receive information (Painter, Erviti, Fletcher, Howarth, Kristiansen, León, and Schäfer, 2016). Within climate change communication, images (including photographs, graphics, and videos) are important for raising awareness about this phenomenon towards fostering citizen engagement in mitigation and adaptation actions (O'Neill and Smith, 2014). The internet in general (blogs, websites, and forums) and social media in particular (Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) are therefore relevant tools for engaging citizens in the discussion about climate change, since they can encourage knowledge, mobilization, and discussion about the phenomenon (Anderson, 2017). Furthermore, the sharing of images on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter amongst others can be an effective strategy for engineering climate talks as well as activism.

Virtual Reality as Catalyst for Climate Talks

The concept of immersive virtual reality games and documentaries as a tool for youth engagement is presently gaining momentum and attracting the attention of scholars from various fields. Virtual reality is a communication medium that leads an individual to perceive experiences and environments as if they were not synthetic (Lombard and Ditton, 1997). Immersive virtual reality technology has been used for environmental education purposes in developed countries. Through scientific investigation and inquiry of in-site field trips, students are able to identify and experience environmental issues and enhance their understanding on a firsthand basis (Cho and Park, 2023). It can be argued that immersive virtual reality and augmented reality present a cheaper substitute for in-field trips to distant locations like the Arctic and Antarctica, which in essence helps to narrow the psychological gap created by such distant and almost inaccessible environments where the effects of anthropogenic climate change are very visible and yet difficult to reach. For instance, affordable android mobile virtual reality educational games such as EarthHero have been used to help young people learn about saving the environment from the dangers of pollution

(Mawsally and Sudarmilah, 2019). It can be argued that there is a need for the African youth to be aware of the opportunities that such technologies present, and this can also be achieved by engaging them about the utilitarian value of virtual spaces such as immersive virtual reality towards engineering climate talks and activism. Kurkovsky (2004) explains that games have evolved from 2-D to virtual reality, with mobile games being a powerful tool to reach out to a larger audience and deliver equal opportunities for engagement. Cho and Park (2023) explain that affordable immersive virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality technologies, such as Oculus Rift, HTC VIVE, and Microsoft HoloLens, have been popularized. There are various immersive virtual reality simulations such as EcoMUVE, EcoXPT and EcoMobile amongst many, which all provide a potentially effective means of educating and engaging the African youth on climate issues. Kamarainen, Reilly, Metcalf, Grotzer and Dede (2018) explain that EcoMobile is an extension of EcoMUVE, where students go on field trips to real pond environments and use augmented reality devices.

The domain of virtual reality for youth engagement in the context of environmental sustainability and climate talks can go beyond the realms of virtual reality games, documentaries and simulated field trips, as this technology can also be used for the purpose of hosting workshops, seminars and conferences that are targeted at young people who may be too far away from live venues. Cho and Park (2023) explain that in general, the use of immersive virtual reality and augmented reality applications for education accounts for a large proportion of its usage. This suggests that virtual reality can be used for climate change education as well. In terms of engagement, simulating an experience has the potential of eliciting a stronger emotional engagement to issues as compared to social media or traditional media. Capilla (2010) argues that virtual community memberships may vary depending on the purpose of the social network or smaller sub-community. This indicates that people with common interests are likely to find themselves in the same virtual community, which in turn provides a higher potential for peer to peer interaction. Teenagers and younger people are expected to spend more time playing multimedia online games rather than medium-age and older users. It can be argued that virtual spaces have the potential to attract youth and young people in general. Lo and Tsai (2022) explain that virtual reality is going to become popular and widespread as the metaverse ushers in a new era of digital connectivity. Virtual reality can be effectively used for various purposes, such as education, business, gaming, medicine, new employee training, entertainment, social networking, tour guiding, amongst others. It is possible to realize an environment that transcends time and space through virtual reality, as environmental problems that take decades or hundreds of years to come to fruition in the real world can be directly experienced within five minutes (Cho and Park, 2023). Though the effects of climate change occur over

many years, virtual reality provides an immediacy that places people in environments that are too distant, or difficult to visit, with the goal of showing them the effects of climate change, thus narrowing the psychological gap and eliciting the kind of emotional engagement that is likely to spur them into action. Its undeniable qualities make it a veritable tool for engineering climate talks and activism, especially when the youth and young people are the intended targets. It is therefore pertinent to engage African youth on the utilitarian value of virtual reality for climate talks and climate education.

A Cross Section of COP27 Challenges

The battle against climate change requires both ambition, collective action, and inclusivity, without which the world will face insurmountable barriers in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some of the obvious COP27 challenges that can be considered as subjects for youth climate talks via virtual spaces include the following:

Financing Gap: Driving up the scaling of financial mobilization and the reform of financial systems to support climate-aligned transitions can be helpful in terms of increasing finance for climate action (Global Climate Action, 2022). The COP26 commitment to double the adaptation budget are far below the resources required (Wyns, 2022). Ugle (2022) explains that progress on an annual delivery of USD 100 billion will build more trust between developed and developing countries, showing that actual commitments are being fulfilled. Developed countries have made financial pledges towards climate finance to developing countries. This target has not been met, and there is a need to increase the amount so as to improve the trust and predictability of climate finance. Mugeere et al (2021, p. 345) explain that “the poorest and most vulnerable young people are the most exposed to climate shocks—despite their negligible role in driving climate change.” Climate talks (whether virtual or in flesh) in the area of climate financing can be a key factor. Poverty constitutes a major barrier to the adoption of technologies such as virtual reality headsets and other necessary information and communication technologies needed for engagement via virtual spaces. There is no doubt that the world is still falling short of the financial commitment needed to tackle climate change holistically. Kabel and Bassim (2020) assert that there are legal, financial and technological limitations for the production and use of renewable energy and the knowledge gap in the use of renewable energy. The Marrakech Partnership action event on finance brought to the forefront a call for a global acceleration by business, investors, governments, and communities to collaboratively implement a common plan in line with 2030 goals (Global Climate Action, 2022).

Issues of Loss and damage: It is not an overstatement to assert that climate impacts

along with related losses and damages caused by climate change seem to be escalating at a worrying pace (Wyns, 2022). There is a need to address the impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided, such as sea level rise, extreme weather events, and loss of biodiversity. The shocks and underlying stressors associated with climate change—drought, floods, heat stress, fires, sea level rise, storm drainage, pests, and other impacts—are expected to become more frequent and intense (Karen, 2019). The psychological gap can be reduced through climate talks via social media, as well as immersive virtual reality. For instance, through the sharing of pictures on social media, more people can become aware of the damages brought about by climate change. The images used to communicate climate change, whether on social media or elsewhere, are of great importance, since they can help raise citizen awareness (León, Negredo, and Erviti, 2022). Furthermore, immersive virtual reality can be used for field trips, and visits to museums, which will expose young people to the damages caused by climate change. Closing the financial gap can help speed up the transfer and adoption of technological gadgets such as virtual reality headsets for such purposes.

Adaptation Gap: While adaptation remains a high priority on the global climate agenda, severe climate impacts are still being faced by vulnerable communities (Wyns, 2022). One of the adaptation goals as stated at COP27 was that of elevating adaptation and resilience to become the foundation of sustainable development pathway implementation in a manner that builds non-Party stakeholders' contributions to address loss and damage through equitable, holistic, and collaborative efforts (Global Climate Action, 2022). The pace of the development and implementation of adaptation plans to address the impacts of climate change can be accelerated through climate talks via virtual spaces, especially when the youth as well as all other stakeholders are collectively involved. The same can be said about the pressing need to implement the Paris agreement and the Katowice Rulebook. This includes reporting on emissions and progress towards targets, and implementing policies and measures to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Barriers to Youth Engagement using Virtual Spaces

Poor Power Supply: One of the unquestionable barriers to youth engagement using virtual spaces is that of poor power supply. Africa's developmental issues are often echoed by an obvious shortage of reliable energy sources, which, in some cases, are totally unavailable, especially in the rural areas. Sanusi and Owoyele (2016) assert that the high level of poverty in developing countries is also manifested through access to energy. The poor access to energy in less developed countries and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, is ominous. Nigeria's obvious energy gap is a daunting factor with a potential

to limit the success rate of climate change campaigns using virtual spaces.

Poor Tech Savviness: One of the unquestionable barriers to youth engagement using virtual spaces is that of poor tech savviness. Dyikuk and Rotshak (2022) assert that many people are still learning how to operate smartphones, and sometimes end up sending messages to unintended recipients due to un-savvy tech skills. It can be said that while young people tend to be more tech savvy than the generations before them, it is not beyond imagination to think that there will always be people who are not good at using the social media, smartphones as well as much more advanced technologies such as virtual reality headsets due to poor tech savviness amongst other reasons. This can be seen as a factor with a potential to limit the success rate of climate talks using virtual spaces.

Poor Internet Connectivity: It is reasonable to infer that underdevelopment is to a large extent all-encompassing in most parts of Africa due to its overbearing consequences on infrastructural development, of which internet connectivity is considered a vital component. Poor service, lack of infrastructure to support hardware and software technology, scarcity of financial resources, and an unreliable electric supply in Nigeria hinder ICT usage (Akanbi and Akanbi, 2012; Nwabueze, Nwabueze, and Egbra, 2013). Issues such as poor internet connectivity and the high cost of accessing and maintaining internet facilities are common challenges in Nigeria. Adeoye, Adebo and Olakulehin (2011) affirm that factors contributing to the ineffective use of internet in Nigeria include difficulties with internet connectivity, socio-economic factors and internet phobia. These factors have the potential of limiting the success rate of climate talks using virtual spaces.

Conclusion

The paper has provided an important perspective regarding the idea of engaging African youth on the potentials of climate talks using virtual spaces vis-à-vis the challenges of COP 27. It can be concluded that virtual spaces have a potential to play the fundamental role of cultivating public awareness and commitment towards climate change. Active youth participation in climate governance through the adoption and use of virtual spaces such as social media and virtual reality for the purpose of engineering climate talks can help accelerate the pace of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. It can be concluded that the future of these channels (social media and immersive virtual reality) in the context of youth engagement for climate talks provide potentially rewarding prospects for both the youth and society at large, if well harnessed.

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SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG UNIVERSITY OF UYO UNDERGRADUATES

Oyokunyi Otu Ita

and

Iniobong Courage Nda

Abstract

This study examined self-esteem and how the social media are a contributing factor. The study adopted the survey research method and the questionnaire was the instrument for data gathering. The sample size was 400 drawn from a population of 31,461 undergraduate students. Finding revealed that excessive use of the social media had a negative influence on University of Uyo undergraduates' self-esteem. Facebook was considered the most used social media platform followed by Instagram, Tik Tok and Snapchat in that order by the University of Uyo undergraduates; that the higher levels of social media usage would invariably result in lower level of self-esteem among the University of Uyo students. It was therefore recommended that undergraduates should avoid excessive usage of social media platforms as they could be detrimental to their self-esteem and mental health.

Introduction

Early 21st century marked the emergence and growth of social networking sites in the whole world. Since then these sites have become a major part of people's lives, specially the lives of the youth. Many teenagers are using social media namely facebook, Tik tok, Instagram among others to build relationships, connect with the world, share and gain knowledge and information, build stronger personalities and have better social lives Boyd, (2017).Imam & Tanisha (2023).

Mitchell (2019) claimed that social networking sites are used by youngsters to get engaged in romantic and casual online relationships. It has been observed by the changing behavior of the people that social media has many negative repercussions on people. Social networking sites help people to make social comparisons which increase the psychological distress of individuals and as a result lower the overall level of self-esteem (Chen & Lee, 2017). Many observers and researchers believe that due to increase in the usage of social networking sites, people have become the victims of lower self-esteem and self-growth. Social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives, especially among undergraduate students. With the advent of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, the way we communicate and interact has drastically changed. These platforms offer students opportunities to connect with others, share their experiences, and express themselves in ways that were not possible before. This study focuses on social media and its impact on

self-esteem, particularly among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo . Self-esteem is a crucial aspect of a person's mental well-being as it influences how individuals perceive themselves and their abilities. It plays a significant role in shaping their social relationships, academic performance, and overall happiness.

Understanding the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem among undergraduates is highly important, as it can shed light on the potential consequences of excessive social media consumption. While social media can offer a sense of belonging and empowerment, it can also be a breeding ground for comparison and low self-esteem. With the generation of media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram, its users are now able to craft the most idealized version of their lives and broadcast with innate selectivity. With that, social media has successfully consequently generated the perfect platform for breeding social comparison as its billions of users aimlessly scroll through falsified lives of their peers in return for the numeric validation of another “like” or “comment”. Social comparison may entail the evaluation of one's own successes, image, beliefs, and social status in reference to those of other people, which may induce either positive or negative psychological effects. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the positive and negative aspects of social media. Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten (2006), concluded that “positive feedback on profiles enhanced adolescents' social self-esteem and well-being, whereas negative feedback decreased their self-esteem and well-being.

Statement of the Problem

There are many issues that can occur when using social media sites. One issue that has been known to happen on social media is cyber-bullying. One study researched cyber-bullying, psychological distress, and self-esteem levels in youth-aged children. Their results were that overall, 22.9% of teenagers experienced cyber-bullying in the past year. Girls presented a higher prevalence of cyber-bullying, psychological distress, and low self-esteem than boys. Self-esteem is something that everyone has and each person has a different perception of themselves and different levels of self-esteem. Self Esteem is conceptualized as one as positive and negative evaluations of himself or herself and, relatedly, one as approval or disapproval of the self (Coopersmith, 2020; Rosenberg, 2021). One study focused on how many "selfies" a person posts on social media and how that relates to narcissism and self-esteem. This study also came to find that taking and posting "selfies" was not an action of showing off to their peers, it was more a typical way of communication (Barry, 2015).

The current study is taking a different path and not testing young children but testing gv young adults (undergraduates) to see if age might play a factor in the effects of

social media. Once there is a clear understanding of what age group suffers the most then not only psychologists but school administrators, parents, teachers, etc., can focus on eliminating cyber-bullying. The rapid rise in social media usage among undergraduate students has raised concerns about its potential impact on self-esteem. While social media platforms provide opportunities for students to connect and express themselves, there is increasing evidence suggesting that excessive use of social media may contribute to negative self-esteem outcomes. This study therefore seeks to answer to the question does social media usage by undergraduate students of University of Uyo have any significant relationship with their self-esteem affect aims to address the specific ways social media affects the self-esteem of undergraduates and also the promotion of self-esteem among undergraduates of University of Uyo.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following questions¹. How does social media affect self-esteem among undergraduate students in University of Uyo?

1. What are the social media platforms used to promote self-esteem of undergraduates students of University of Uyo?
2. Which is the preferred social media platform among undergraduate students of University of Uyo?
3. What are the factors that influence undergraduate students of University of Uyo self-esteem when using social media?
4. What is the perception of undergraduates about self-esteem across various social media platforms?

Literature Review

This section deals with critical concepts and the theoretical underpinning that gives the study the necessary bite and shape that makes it easier to appreciate the researcher's opinion.

Self Esteem

Self-esteem is identified by the way we act and behave, by the attitudes and beliefs we hold about ourselves and the way we feel about ourselves and the emotion we experience. Self-esteem is also the evaluation of oneself in either a positive or a negative way. James (2020) viewed self-esteem as an evaluative process; he argued that self-esteem, at its simplest, could be measured as the ratio of a person's successes to his or her pretensions. Pretensions are viewed as goals, purposes, or aims, whereas successes constitute the perception of the attainment of those goals.

As people attain more of their pretensions, the ratio grows larger and self-esteem

becomes correspondingly stronger. Pretensions also add a vulnerability component to self-esteem in that these are the areas where the individual is proposed to be most competent. If he or she comes up short in the perception of goal-attainment, or in comparison with others in the same pretension arena, self-esteem suffers. Rosenberg concluded that self-esteem is an attitude toward a specific object, the self. Feedback from others, particularly significant others, is a key element of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 2019). Wells and Marwell (2017) concluded self-esteem falls into 4 distinct categories which are object/attitudinal approach which means thoughts, feelings, and behaviours toward ourselves. Relational approach which means different thoughts, feelings, and behaviours when comparing our ideal self with our real self.

Next, psychological responses approach which means feeling either positive or negative about some elements about ourselves, such as our behaviour or our appearances and personality function/ component approach which means self-esteem as being part of personality (a construct itself), the self, or self-system. Guindon (2012) explained self-esteem as “the attitudinal, evaluative component of the self; the affective judgements placed on the self-concept consisting of feelings of worth and acceptance which are developed and maintained as a consequence of awareness of competence and feedback from the external world.” Humanists also described self-esteem. Rogers (2018) defined self-esteem as the extent to which people like, value, and accept themselves. He believed that the self develops from a combination of what is experienced and what is interjected, derived from values and affective preferences. The individual conceptualizes an ideal self, or the “person you would like to be”; and the true self, or the “person you really are.” The more congruent are these two aspects of the self, the healthier the self-esteem.

Social Media

The way people communicate with others has been significantly altered over the last couple of decades due to the development and improvement of social media sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and others. These platforms have allowed individuals to stay in contact with their friends and family members, even people from other countries. Since Facebook launched in 2004, the number of people who use social network sites has increased dramatically, year by year (Emarketer, 2018). While, as of January of 2017, on average, the total number of active social media users in the world was 2.789 billion, the total number of active social media users in January of 2018 was 3.196 billion, and the whole world population was measured as 7.593 billion (Kemp, 2018; Kemp, 2017). This growth shows that 42% of the world's total population actively use social media, and the global annual digital growth has been +13% since January 2017. Regarding the Nigeria specifically, the number of active social media users is 648 million among the total population of 1.011 billion (Kemp, 2018).

Facebook, which is one of the most heavily used social media networks in the world, had 1.871 billion active monthly users in 2017, while it had 936 million active daily users in the world in 2015 (Facebook, 2018). Globally, Instagram has more than 500 million regular active users (Instagram, 2018), and Nigeria is one of Instagram's top countries (Kemp, 2018). LinkedIn had more than 546 million active users in 2018 (LinkedIn, 2018). Snapchat had 178 million active daily users and 301 million monthly active users in 2017 (Snapchat, 2018). With regards to Nigerians, 78% of young adults (18- 24-year-olds) use Snapchat, and similarly, 71% of young adults (18-24 years old) use Instagram. Besides, almost half of this age group (45%) use Twitter (Smith, & Anderson, 2018).

As a result of social media's popularity, these significant increases in social media usage have attracted the attention of many researchers, and they have studied social media and its effects on people. Most of these researchers have only focused on Facebook usage, and on its influence on individuals' lives, because it has more global users than any other social media platform (Eksisu, Hosoglu, & Rasmussen, 2017; Burrow & Rainone, 2017; Blachino, Przepiorka, & Rudnicka, 2016; Woods & Scott, 2016; Blachino, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2016). However, it has been observed that the usage of Facebook among Nigerian young adults 18-25 years-old has not been trendy over the last couple of years. Other platforms (such as Instagram and Snapchat) have been used more widely than Facebook (Smith, 2018). According to Smith (2018), the number of Facebook users in Nigeria will increase by 0.9% to 169.5 million in 2018, but it is expected that older people are going to make that increase. On the other hand, Facebook users will decrease between 5.6% and 9.3% among younger users aged under 25. Also, the most significant increase in use will be seen on Snapchat. It is expected that 68% of internet users aged 17 to 24 will use Snapchat actively. Snapchat's influence among internet users in this age group will thus surpass that of Facebook (47.2%) and Instagram (43.6%).

Additionally, the number of Instagram users is expected to rise to 104.7 million in 2018, up 13.1% from 2017 users 35 and older who are creating profiles will drive platform growth and be connecting with (likely younger) family members who spend less time on Facebook. This change in the use of social media has encouraged researchers to focus on it anew, and a few researchers have just started to study non-Facebook social media sites, such as Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and others (Hawi, & Samaha, 2017; Andreassen, Pallesen, & Griffiths, 2017). However, those research studies have focused on social media users in other countries besides Nigeria. This study intends to examine the associations between the use of different social media platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and others) and self-esteem and life satisfaction among young university students specifically residing in the Nigeria.

Social Media Usage

Social media websites are the most common activity of today's children and adolescents. It was reported that 22% of teenagers engage in social networking at least ten times a day and more than half of the teens report that they engage in social networking at least one time a day.(O'Keefe & Clarke Pearson, 2011). According to the Pew Internet and Nigerian Life Project, more than 70% of youth and young adults (ages 12 to 29) who use the Internet use social networking sites (Lenhart et al., 2010).

A survey found that 47% of Nigerian adults use at least one social network (Donde, Chopade, & Ranjith, (2018). 95% of university students maintain a Facebook profile Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, (2021). This study also found that 268 college students (primarily freshmen) reported spending an average of almost two hours per day engaging in social networking. Facebook has reported that members upload over 2 billion photos per month and 14 million videos per week, in addition to blog posts and weblinks Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2021). Another study showed that 88.5% of their sample of undergraduate students from one university reported that they visited a social networking site at least once a day.60% of the students stated that they visit these sites more than once a day. Social media has become so popular that it is a part of everyday life for students, Miller, Parsons, Lifer, (2010).

Social Media and Age

Use of digital media (e.g., text messaging, email, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, photo and video sharing, and other forms of digital communication) has skyrocketed in recent years in ways that are dramatically shifting how and when young people connect with their friends and family members (Common Sense Media, 2012). The expansion of both the forms of and access to social media has challenged staff in youth serving programs to create policies that are responsive to the affordances of these ever-changing forms of communication, while also guarding against unforeseen risks and unintended negative consequences to program participants, Schwartz, *et al.*, (2014). Communication through social media is so prevalent today that it has invariably affected interpersonal communication mode in the sense that most youths are no longer capable of holding meaningful dialogue in a face-to-face situation. Youth mentoring relationships, once largely considered to be one-to-one relationships between youth and adults that were cultivated through in-person meetings or activities in the community or at school, now take a wide variety of forms with some relationships taking place solely through digital forms of communication, Shpigelman, (2014). Reports show that people of all ages use social media sites. The age varies between the sites and is changing with each year. Usage is increasing not only in age but in men and women also. More men were reported using social media sites in 2014 than they did in 2013. In 2014, it was reported that 70% of people with a high school education or less use Facebook. In that same study it was reported that 71% of people who had some college education used

Facebook. 74% of people who have a college degree use Facebook. 66% of the people who used Facebook in 2014 were men and 77% were women. Duggan, *et al.*, (2014).

Twitter users have different statistics. In 2014 it was reported that 16% of secondary school graduates reported using Twitter, 24% of people with some college education reported using Twitter and 30% of college graduates use Twitter. Twitter users are 24% males and 21% females. These results are dramatically different from Facebook but there was a rise in use from 2013 and 2014 (Duggan, *et al.*, 2014).

Social Media and Self Esteem

Leary & Baumeister, (2020) asserts that self-esteem is defined as an individual's appraisal of his or her value. Furthermore, it also refers to a person's subjective judgment of his or her worth as a human being. There are approximately 35,000 studies on self-esteem as put forward by Bleidron *et al.*, (2016), given that it is one of the crucial phenomena for an individual's life because high self-esteem brings many positive outcomes. According to researchers, high self-esteem is one of the mediators of mental health (Taylor & Brown, 2018), physical health (Mechanic, 2019) and it is also linked to an individual's well-being (Mehdizadeh, 2017). Additionally, individuals with high self-esteem have more social support, more malleable coping behaviors, and less stress (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2019). In contrast, people with low self-esteem are observed to feel more lonely, shy, unsociable and anxious. They also face dissatisfied and short-term relationships more than those with a high self-esteem

Many factors affect an individual's level of self-esteem, and research has indicated that social media use is one of the factors that is associated with an individual's self-esteem level (Andreassen, Pallasen, & Griffiths, 2017; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2016). Many researchers have studied the relationship between social media use, especially Facebook, and self-esteem. The researchers have found that low self-esteem is related to intense social media usage and people who have a low self-esteem tend to use social media sites to increase their self-image and self-esteem. It has been established that there is a relationship between self-esteem, life satisfaction and negative and positive feedback they received through social media sites among 881 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19. They found that a positive effect was positively associated with self-esteem and satisfaction with life ($r = .40$, $p < .001$ and $r = .37$, $p < .001$, respectively). Andreassen, Pallasen, & Griffiths, (2017) Similarly, Eksis et al., (2017) suggested that individuals with a low self-esteem spend more time on social media networks and tend to log in to Facebook very frequently to compensate their lack of self esteem by having a high number of online friends to increase popularity and have a sense of belonging.

Theoretical Framework

Whenever we bring in theory in analyzing a study the underlying reason is often that it presents us a valuable tool for understanding our everyday lives, our relationships with others and the way communication shapes our world and social interaction. Thus this study is anchored on the social comparison theory. Leon Festinger (2018)

developed social comparison theory to explain the process in which many facets of the self can be evaluated only through comparisons with other people. According to the theory, in the absence of a physical or objective standard of correctness, we will seek other people as a means of evaluating ourselves. Others' opinions may be particularly influential for physical appearance, where the objective criteria are not altogether clear. Felson (2015). The idea is that people are often motivated to explore their beliefs and abilities by comparing them with social reality. Wood (2019) has identified three reasons people use social comparison – evaluation, improvement, and enhancement. Because the goals differ, each of these motivations involves a slightly different way of comparing. When one's goal is self evaluation, people use social comparison to obtain an accurate impression of the self. Therefore, social comparison is more fruitful when we choose to compare ourselves with people whose abilities are similar to our own (Wheeler, Koestner, & Driver, (2022).

When choosing a “comparison other” for self-evaluation, people generally select someone whose performance represents a standard they may be able to match in the future. Later, if one's performance improves, the standard of comparison probably will rise as well. Sometimes however, exploration involves unfamiliar facts or dimensions of the self. Wood (2018) suggests an individual will seek information about people who represent the extremes of the dimension. This is because knowing your own on a dimension is not very informative unless you also know whether that level is high, low or in the middle of the range of possible levels of the dimension. As we learn more about our level in a particular dimension, we tend to choose to compare others who are similar to us. Gender, for example, is an important characteristic of comparing others. Both genders (males and females), generally showed a strong preference for someone of the same gender. The choice of someone of the same gender for comparison purposes is particularly like if the individual believes the task is somehow related to gender and if the individual has a strong tendency to refer to gender in processing information (Miller, 2017). Thus people will seek relevant others with whom to compare their performance, and similarity often serves as a cue for potential relevance. Festinger's unidirectional drive upward is most apparent when self-improvement is the goal of social comparison. According to Wood (2018), people who are especially achievement oriented or competitive are likely to compare themselves to others who are better on a relevant dimension. Comparing ourselves to people who are better on the relevant dimension enables us to improve ourselves. At the same time, the fact that the “better person” is similar to us in other ways is a source of inspiration. Finally Wood notes that self-enchancement attempts to convince ourselves that we are better off than we are, usually leads to downward comparisons. That is, when we need to enhance our self-esteem, we compare ourselves with those who are worse off than we are (Taylor & Lobel, 2018). Social comparison is an active process. We are motivated by different goals that in turn affect the others with whom we choose to compare ourselves.

Research Method

This study made use of survey as a research technique which according to Senam and Akpan (2014), is one of the methods of quantitative research that entails a

painstaking process of gathering information or data and using the results as the basis for determining the trend or the issues that formed the thrust of the research. These issues that form a research problem could be opinion, practice, attitude, behavior etc. The questionnaire was used as the instrument of data gathering in the study. The population of this study was University of Uyo undergraduates. According to the Admission Unit of the University, the projected population of Undergraduates as of the 2022 /2023 academic session is 31,461. Wimmer and Dominick (2018) defines a sample size as a subgroup or subset of a population or Universe. This subset is created from the population and is the representation of the entire population. The sample size for this study was Four hundred (400) and was determined using the Taro Yamane Sample Size determination Formula. Furthermore, subjects to be studied were selected using the multi stage sampling procedure to arrive at the respondents.

Presentation of Data

Out of the four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, three hundred and seventy-five (375) copies were correctly filled and returned. Hence the table analyses of data for this study were based on the three hundred and seventy five (375) copies of the returned and valid questionnaire, representing 94% response rate. This study had three hundred and seventy-five (375) as its total respondents, 162 (43%) were male and 212 (57%) were female respondents, within the ages of 16-25 years were 290 (78%) and those within 46 and above were 6 representing 1% of the respondents, 214 (57%) of the respondents were single, 161(43%) of the respondents were married.

Table I: Influence of Social Media on self-esteem of undergraduate students

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Never	30	8
Rarely	56	15
Sometimes	90	24
Often	116	31
Always	83	22
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (31%) self-esteem were often influenced by social media

Table II: Type of Social Media Influence on Undergraduate self-esteem

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Positively	116	31
Negatively	199	53
Others	60	16
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents self-esteem (53%) were negatively affected by social media

Table III: Social Media apps used by undergraduates

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	124	33
Instagram	98	26
Tik Tok	79	21
X (formerly known as Twitter)	30	8
Snapchat	45	12
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (33%) used Facebook

Table IV: Hours spent on Social Media

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1-4	34	9
4-8	56	15
8-12	75	20
12-16	128	34
16-20	84	22
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (34%) agreed they spent 12-16 hours on social media

Table V: Thoughts of Social Media when not in use

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Never	23	6
Rarely	26	7
Sometimes	49	13
Often	66	18
Always	211	56
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (56%) always thought about Social Media when they weren't using it.

Tables VI: Factors that influence self-esteem while using social media

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Comparison	150	40
Online bullying	87	23
Lack of validation from online media users	75	18
Lack of recognition/ feedback from peers	51	15
Focusing on your physical experience	10	3
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (40%) agreed that Comparison lowers their self-esteem while using Social Media

Table VI: Social Media apps used to promote Self-Esteem

Response	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Facebook	60	16
Instagram	41	11
Tik Tok	139	37
X (formerly known as Twitter)	83	22
Snapchat	52	14
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (37%) used Tik Tok to promote undergraduates self-esteem

Table VII: Perception of self-esteem while using Social Media apps

Response	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Excellent	38	10
Very good	60	16
Good	90	24
Neutral	79	21
Bad	108	29
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (29%) felt bad about their self-esteem while using social media apps.

Discussion of Findings

The data presented and analyzed above formed the basis for this discussion. The discussion of findings is based on the research questions raised in the earlier part of the research.

Research Question 1:

How does social media affect self-esteem among undergraduate students in University of Uyo?

Table I and II provide answers to Research Question 1, while table i shows that 31% representing 116 respondents had their self-esteem often influenced by social media, 24% representing 90 respondents had their self-esteem sometimes influenced by social media, 22% representing 83 respondents had their self-esteem heavily influenced by social media, 15% representing 56 respondents had their self-esteem rarely influenced by social media, 8% representing 30 respondents never had their self-esteem often influenced by social media, Table ii goes to show the type of Social Media Influence on Undergraduate self-esteem. According to the obtained data, 375 respondents, 199 respondents representing 53% had their self-esteem negatively affected by social media., 116 respondents representing 31% had their self-esteem positively affected by social media.

Rosenberg (2019) reiterated the fact that excessive use or comparison with others' curated online personas can lead to lower levels of self-confidence and higher rates of body dissatisfaction among young adults. He also shed light on the potential negative effects that social media can have on an individual's sense of self-worth. He also argued that excessive use of social media leads to comparison and competition amongst peers, which ultimately impacts one's self-perception and confidence level. Wells and Marwell (2017) in relation with the social comparison theory also added that curated images often portrayed on these platforms create unrealistic standards for oneself to meet, leading to feelings of inadequacy and inferiority complex among young adults striving for acceptance in their peer groups through likes and followers. Hence, the majority of respondent's self-esteem is negatively influenced by Social Media.

Research Question 2: What are the social media platforms used to promote self-esteem of undergraduates?

From the data presented on Table VI, it was observed that Tik Tok which was picked by 137 respondents representing 37% respondents was the most selected Social Media platform used to promote self-esteem, the next being X which was selected by 83 respondents representing 22%, followed by Facebook selected by 60 respondents representing 16%, Snapchat was selected by 52 respondents represented by 14%, while 26 respondents representing 7% selected Instagram as the social media platform least chosen to promote self-esteem.

According to Stankov (2018), certain platforms such as Tik Tok and Facebook allow users to curate their online image through filters and carefully selected content, boosting confidence levels. He also argued that positive interactions and support from

friends on these platforms also contribute to higher self-esteem for undergraduate students. Sapmaz & Dogan, (2020), in relation to Self Presentation Theory posits that popular platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are effective in boosting confidence levels of students as they showcase their achievements, talents and positive aspects of their lives to a wider audience. This not only increases their own pride but also earns them validation from others, helping them develop a strong sense of self-worth. Their study highlighted the smart use of social media in improving undergraduate mental well-being through building confidence and providing support from online communities. Yildiz (2021) also agreeing with the data in the study believe that sharing motivational quotes and messages to creating empowering communities online influences mental health of undergraduates and also harness its power for positive influence. He also argued that undergraduates are increasingly using these platforms to uplift one another and create a supportive network that celebrates individuality and boosts confidence.

Research Question 3: Which is the preferred social media platform among undergraduate students of University of Uyo?

From the findings on the field, it was observed that Facebook which was picked by 124 respondents representing 33% was the most selected Social Media platform used by undergraduates, the next being Instagram which was selected by 96 respondents representing 26%, followed by Instagram selected by 66 respondents representing 18%, next being Tik Tok which was selected by 79 respondents representing 21%, Snapchat was selected by 45 respondents representing 12%, while 30 respondents representing 8% selected X (formerly known as Twitter) as the fewest social media platform chosen. Table IV also provides answers for Research Question 2 as it shows the social media usage of undergraduates. 128 respondents representing 34% spent 12-16, 84 respondents representing 22% spent 16-20 hours on social media, 75 respondents representing 20% spent 8-12 hours on social media, 56 respondents representing 15% spent 4-8 hours on social media while 34 respondents representing 9% spent 1-4 hours on social media. Rogers (2018) posits that there is a strong correlation between the usage of social media platforms and self-esteem levels among undergraduates. He agreed that as more and more young adults turn to these online platforms for connection and validation, their perception of themselves becomes heavily influenced by the curated images and lifestyles displayed on social media. This has sparked discussions on how excessive use of social media can negatively impact one's self-image, leading experts to suggest taking breaks from it in order to cultivate a healthier sense of self-worth. Similarly Emarketer(2018) in relation with the social comparison and the data findings of the study is of the opinion that there is a negative correlation, she also argued that it depends on individual perception and motivational factors. She posits that using

social media to compare oneself with unrealistic standards may lead to lower self-esteem; but positive interactions and support from online communities can boost one's sense of worth. Kemp (2018) also argued that undergraduates turn to social media platforms as a means of communication and validation, their self-worth becomes heavily influenced by the number of likes, followers, and reactions they receive. However, this reliance on external factors for validation can ultimately lead to lower levels of self-esteem when these expectations are not met in real life situations.

Research Question 4: What are the factors of social media that are responsible for lowering self-esteem of undergraduates?

Data displayed on table VI answers to Research Question 3, according to Table IV, 150 respondents representing 40% chose Comparison as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 87 respondents representing 23% chose Online bullying as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 75 respondents representing 18% chose Lack of validation from online media users as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 51 respondents representing 15% chose Lack of recognition/ feedback from peers as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 10 respondents representing 3% chose Focusing on your physical experience as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem.

Taylor & Brown (2018) conducted a similar study and argued that the constant comparison to others' seemingly perfect lives and idolized standards portrayed on social media contribute greatly to this phenomenon. They also posit that the pressure to present a flawless image online also adds to feelings of inadequacy in individuals. Yigit (2018) in relation to the social comparison theory also argued that the comparison with others' seemingly perfect lives portrayed on social media can create feelings of inadequacy and lower self-worth for undergraduate students. He also argued that the pressure to maintain a certain image or persona online can also lead to a negative impact on their mental well-being and confidence levels. He posits that it is crucial for individuals who use social media regularly as undergraduates to be aware of these potential effects and strive for realistic expectations from themselves instead.

Research Question 5: What is the perception of undergraduates about self-esteem across various social media platforms?

Table VII provides information to Research Question 5. According to Table vii, data analyzed indicates that 108 respondents representing 29% felt their self-esteem was bad while using social media apps, 90 respondents representing 24% felt their self-esteem was good while using social media apps, 79 respondents representing 21% felt their self-esteem was neutral while using social media apps, 60 respondents

representing 18% felt their self-esteem was very good while using social media apps, 38 respondents representing 10% felt their self-esteem was excellent while using social media apps.

Rosen (2022) in line with the findings of the study posits societal pressure perpetuated through carefully curated posts on these platforms can negatively impact one's perception of themselves. He also argued that individuals believe that their self-worth is bolstered by attention and validation from others online; there are also those who feel pressured to maintain a certain image in order to fit into societal standards set by these platforms. Pantic (2019) also argued that the use of different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have a significant effect on one's level of self-esteem. With so much pressure to portray an ideal image online, undergraduates often find themselves comparing their lives to those curated on social media. He believes this can lead to feelings of inadequacy and lowered levels of self-worth amongst this demographic group.

Findings

The followings were findings revealed in the study:

- i. Excessive use of social media has a negative influence on university of uyo undergraduates self-esteem .
- ii. The following social media platforms are accessed for self esteem purposes : Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, SnapChat and X
- iii. Facebook, was considered the most used social media platform followed by instagram, Tik Tok and Snapchat in that order by the university of uyo undergraduate
- iv. Comparison, Online Bullying and Lack of validation from online media users were factors responsible for lowering self-esteem of undergraduates
- v. Undergraduates agreed that their self-esteem were affected negatively when they used various social media platforms. They also agreed that usage of social media platforms can negatively impact one's perception of themselves.

Conclusion

Social media sites have become a central part of everyday life. Most social networking sites facilitate the creation of profiles by users who give details about their life experiences. Many people on these platforms have been pressured into sharing positive experiences while hiding the less glamorous parts of their lives. As a result, social media has been linked to outcomes such as social comparisons, self-evaluation, and the need for self-enhancement. When users compare their lives to others, issues of self-esteem are bound to emerge. Social media's impact on self-perception and self-

image is primarily negative, whereby users who compare themselves to others are likely to feel inadequate and have poorer self-evaluations. However social media can affect people's mental health both positively and negatively. Undergraduates should focus on the positive aspects and should desist from comparing their lives with people's lives on social media, almost everything on social media is a faux.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward following the findings gleaned from the study namely:

- i. Undergraduates should avoid excessive usage of social media platforms as it is detrimental to their self-esteem and mental health.
- ii. Undergraduates should desist from comparing their lives with others while using social media platforms.
- iii. Social Media Platforms should put policies to curb excessive flaunting of wealth and also Online Bullying.
- iv. Social Media platforms like Instagram should put preventive measures in place to curb user's self-esteem being affected negatively.
- v. Undergraduates should focus on the positive aspects of social media and avoid comparison in order to reduce their self-esteem being affected negatively.

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PROBLEMATIC MOBILE PHONE USE AS A MALADAPTIVE COPING MECHANISM: PREVALENCE, PREDICTORS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDIATION AMONG NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigated PMPU prevalence, predictors, and psychological correlates among Nigerian undergraduates, framed by Compensatory Internet Use Theory (CIUT), examining PMPU as a mediator. A cross-sectional survey of 380 students from four faculties (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) used validated scales (MPAI, GAD-7, PHQ-9, BFI-2). Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and mediation (SPSS version 26). Problematic Mobile Phone Use prevalence was 27.8%. Females had 82% higher PMPU odds than males; engineering students showed the highest prevalence (34.1%). Nocturnal use doubled addiction risk; each extra daily hour of social media increased PMPU severity by 38%. Crucially, PMPU mediated relationships: transmitting effects of extraversion to GPA decline, and self-identity to both anxiety and depression. PMPU is prevalent and acts as a maladaptive coping mechanism for academic stress, loneliness, and identity needs per CIUT. Findings highlight the need for targeted interventions addressing nocturnal/social media overuse, psychological vulnerabilities, and high-risk groups like female engineering students.

Introduction

The proliferation of mobile phones has fundamentally transformed global communication, driven by declining costs and expanding functionality (Roberts & David, 2017; Tavakolizadeh et al., 2014). With over 2.71 billion users worldwide—a figure projected to reach 3.8 billion (Rodríguez-Torrico, San-Martín, & Jiménez, 2023)—and 87% internet penetration across advanced economies (Pew Research Centre, 2016), these devices are now societal indispensable gadgets. Young populations are particularly immersed, with the average age of first ownership at 12 years (Head & Ziolkowski, 2012). University students constitute a dominant user group, relying on smartphones for academic research, peer interaction, entertainment, and social skill development (Mei et al., 2023).

Despite these benefits, excessive use poses significant risks, including mobile phone addiction—a dysfunctional attachment characterized by compulsive behaviour (Mei et al., 2023). Billieux et al. (2015) note that such addictions carry physical and

psychological consequences. University students are disproportionately affected (Bianchi & Philips, 2005); they often utilize devices as escapism, triggering negative outcomes: disrupted relationships, reduced productivity, sleep deprivation, anxiety, and depression during separation. Empirical evidence underscores this vulnerability: 60% of students self-report smartphone addiction, 75% sleep adjacent to devices, and 88% engage in pre-sleep messaging (Hjetland et al., 2021; Tinajero et al., 2020). Cholz (2012) further identifies diagnostic markers: withdrawal symptoms, loss of control, tolerance, and interference with daily activities.

In Nigeria—a rapidly digitising nation with one of Africa's largest youth populations—the intersection of pervasive smartphone adoption and unique academic pressures remains underexplored. While global studies establish links between mobile addiction, anxiety, depression, and personality traits like extraversion, contextual factors (socioeconomic stressors, cultural norms, educational infrastructure) may modulate these relationships in Nigerian settings. Existing research focuses predominantly on Western and Asian contexts, creating a critical gap in understanding the psychological correlates of mobile dependency within Nigerian universities.

This study, therefore, examines the relationship between mobile phone addiction, anxiety, depression, and extraversion among Nigerian university students. By investigating these dynamics within a representative African cohort, the research addresses a significant void in the literature. Findings will inform targeted interventions to mitigate addiction risks while preserving the communicative and educational benefits smartphones offer this digitally engaged demographic.

Statement of the Problem

Mobile phones have evolved into indispensable tools that permeate all facets of modern life due to their multifunctionality, accessibility, and utility. However, this ubiquity has fostered problematic dependency, particularly among young adults. University students globally exhibit heightened vulnerability to mobile phone addiction—a behavioural syndrome characterised by compulsive usage, withdrawal distress, and functional impairment (Cholz, 2012; Mei et al, 2023). Empirical evidence consistently links this addiction to detrimental psychosocial outcomes, including social isolation, diminished academic productivity, sleep disruption, anxiety, and depression (Bianchi & Philips, 2005; Billieux et al., 2015).

In Nigeria—home to Africa's largest youth population and rapidly expanding smartphone adoption—these risks are amplified yet critically understudied. While international research establishes clear associations between mobile addiction, mental health disorders (anxiety and depression), and personality traits like extraversion, significant gaps persist. First, there is minimal focus on Nigerian universities, where

unique socioeconomic, cultural, and academic pressures may modulate addiction dynamics (contextual scarcity). Second, inadequate exploration exists regarding how anxiety, depression, and extraversion collectively interact with addiction in this demographic (psychological complexity). Third, limited understanding surrounds how specific behavioural patterns—such as social media engagement or nocturnal device use—exacerbate addiction risks (behavioural nuance).

Without context-specific insights, effective interventions cannot be designed to mitigate addiction's detrimental impact on academic performance and mental health within Nigeria's evolving digital landscape.

Consequently, this study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence and severity of mobile phone addiction among Nigerian university students?
2. To what extent does mobile phone addiction mediate the relationship between psychological traits?
3. How does mobile phone addiction function as a coping mechanism for loneliness among Nigerian students?

Review of Related Literature

Research examining smartphone addiction patterns and correlates among student populations has expanded significantly across diverse cultural contexts. Matar Boumosleh and Jaalouk (2017) investigated the relationship between smartphone addiction and academic performance among 658 Lebanese undergraduate students. Utilizing the 26-item Smartphone Addiction Inventory (SPAI) and logistic regression, they found low cumulative GPA was significantly associated with factors including alcohol consumption, enrolment in business/economics programs, being a first-year student, and non-academic smartphone use. This study highlights the detrimental academic impact of problematic smartphone use and specifically calls for experimental research linking specific smartphone tasks to academic outcomes.

Focusing on psychological underpinnings, Walsh, White, and Young (2010) explored mobile phone behaviour (both frequency of use and cognitive/behavioural involvement) in 946 young Australians (aged 15-24). They developed the Mobile Phone Involvement Questionnaire (MPIQ) and found that while frequency of use and involvement (addiction proneness) were correlated, the association was relatively small. Crucially, self-identity emerged as a significant predictor of both frequency of use and mobile phone involvement (addiction), whereas validation from others was a weaker predictor. This suggests that core self-perception plays a vital role in addictive mobile phone behaviours.

Prevalence studies reveal concerning rates of smartphone addiction risk among younger students. Cha and Seo (2018), in a large stratified random sample of 1,824 South Korean middle school students, found that 30.9% were classified as a risk group for smartphone addiction based on standardized addiction proneness scales, compared to 69.1% classified as normal users. This high-risk prevalence underscores the vulnerability of this age group.

The relationship between smartphone addiction and psychological well-being, particularly loneliness, was examined by Jafari, Abas, and Alireza (2019) among 439 Iranian medical science students. Using standardized scales for mobile phone addiction and the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA), they reported a high prevalence of addiction. Counterintuitively, they found that students addicted to their mobile phones reported lower levels of loneliness, suggesting that for this population, the phone may compensate for deficits in face-to-face family, emotional, and social relationships, acting as a maladaptive coping mechanism.

Adding to the prevalence data in Iran, Parashkouh et al. (2021) conducted a young-sectional study with 581 Iranian high school students using the Cell Phone Overuse Scale (COS) and Internet Addiction Test (IAT). They confirmed high rates of both internet and mobile phone addiction, further identifying that student age and sex significantly influenced addiction rates. Based on these findings, the authors strongly recommended that healthcare authorities prioritize these issues and called for further research, specifically interventional studies, to develop effective prevention and treatment strategies for student addiction.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that smartphone addiction is a significant concern among student populations globally (Lebanon, Australia, South Korea, Iran), with prevalence rates among younger students being particularly alarming (Cha & Seo, 2018; Parashkouh et al., 2021). Its negative impact on academic performance is well-established (Matar Boumosleh & Jaalouk, 2017), while its relationship with psychological factors like loneliness appears complex and potentially compensatory (Jafari et al., 2019). Psychological factors, especially self-identity, are key predictors of problematic use (Walsh et al., 2010). Research consistently points to demographic factors (age, sex, year of study, field of study) and usage patterns (non-academic use) as significant correlates of addiction risk. A critical gap remains in understanding the causal links between specific smartphone activities and negative outcomes, necessitating experimental designs (Matar Boumosleh & Jaalouk, 2017), and there is an urgent need for developing and testing effective interventions (Parashkouh et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Compensatory Internet Use Theory (CIUT), advanced by Kardefelt-Winther (2014), offers a paradigm-shifting lens for understanding problematic technology engagement. At its core, CIUT contends that excessive digital use stems not from inherent "addiction" but from attempts to compensate for unmet psychological needs or distressing real-world circumstances. Unlike pathologizing models, CIUT reframes device overuse as a coping mechanism—a way to self-medicate negative states (loneliness, anxiety, academic stress) or fill voids in offline life. This theory posits a self-perpetuating cycle: temporary relief reinforces reliance, exacerbating the original distress while creating behavioural dependency.

Basic Tenets of CIUT

CIUT proposes that problematic use arises not as a primary disorder, but as: "A strategy to shift focus away from unpleasant realities or alleviate dysphoric moods" (p. 352).

Three pillars define this perspective:

- **Compensation Over Pathology:** Excessive use is a *coping response* to psychosocial deficits (loneliness, stress) rather than addiction.
- **Motivation as Mediator:** Psychological distress (e.g., anxiety) drives use *through specific motivations* (escapism, social validation).
- **Contextual Dependency:** Outcomes depend on whether online activities successfully alleviate distress—unsuccessful compensation leads to negative consequences.

Compensatory Internet Use Theory (CIUT) has been empirically validated across diverse cultural contexts, revealing how mobile devices function as adaptive tools for managing psychosocial deficits. In Iran, Jafari et al. (2019) documented medical students using phones to "replace face-to-face relationships," demonstrating CIUT's core premise that technology compensates for social voids—providing short-term relief from loneliness while risking long-term isolation. Similarly, Australian youth research by Walsh et al. (2010) confirmed personality's moderating role: extraverts leveraged phones for social reinforcement (e.g., identity validation), whereas introverts engaged in solitary activities for cognitive escape, illustrating how individual differences shape compensation strategies. The academic repercussions of *failed* compensation were evident in Lebanon, where Matar Boumosleh and Jaalouk (2017) linked non-academic smartphone use to GPA declines, showing that escapism drains cognitive resources needed for real-world functioning. Collectively, these studies affirm CIUT's utility in reframing "addiction" as symptom rather than cause—exposing technology's role in alleviating distress stemming from unmet needs.

However, significant gaps persist. Geographically, applications remain concentrated in Western/Middle Eastern contexts (Australia, Lebanon, Iran), neglecting African settings like Nigeria where socioeconomic stressors (e.g., academic pressure, limited mental health resources) may intensify compensatory behaviours. Methodologically, reliance on young-sectional designs limits exploration of CIUT's cyclical nature—how initial relief evolves into dependency. Furthermore, contextual moderators (e.g., collectivist norms in Nigerian universities, infrastructure limitations) remain unexamined, despite their potential to reshape compensation patterns. These omissions underscore the need for research in underrepresented regions to advance CIUT as a globally relevant framework.

CIUT's focus on **contextual vulnerability** makes it ideal for Nigeria's unique pressures. Infrastructure gaps (e.g., unreliable electricity) force academic reliance on phones, blurring utility and dependency. Collectivist norms amplify this as rural-urban migrant students sustain familial bonds digitally. With scant mental health services, phones become default coping tools for academic stress and isolation. CIUT thus reframes perceived "addiction" as unmet psychosocial needs—perfectly capturing Nigeria's compensatory landscape.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey research design to examine the relationship between mobile phone addiction, anxiety, depression, and extraversion among Nigerian university students. This design enables the measurement of key variables and generalization of findings through large-scale sampling (Ohaja, 2003).

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population comprised undergraduate students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). According to the university's Academic Planning Unit, the total undergraduate enrolment for the 2022/2023 academic session was 29, 949 students.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

To arrive at a sample size from the population, the study used Qualtrics online sample size calculator with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The researchers obtained a sample size of 380.

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, we used simple random technique to select four faculties, namely, Engineering, Social Sciences, Arts and Agricultural Sciences.

In the second stage, we employed the simple random sampling technique to select two departments each from the faculties. The following departments were chosen: Electronics engineering and Civil engineering [Engineering Faculty], Political Science and Religion and Cultural Studies [Social science Faculty], English and Literary Studies and Theatre and Film Studies [Arts Faculty] and Soil Science and Agricultural Extension [Agricultural Science]. In the third stage, a simple random technique was used to select the level of study. The following years of study were chosen: 400 level = Electronics engineering and 500 level = Civil engineering [Engineering Faculty], 300 level = Political Science and 3 = Religion and Cultural Studies [Social science Faculty], 200 level = English and Literary Studies and 100 level = Theatre and Film Studies [Arts Faculty] and 100 level = Soil Science and 300 level = Agricultural Extension [Agricultural Science].

In the fourth stage, we applied Bowley's sampling technique in allocating respondents to the selected faculties. This is mathematically represented below:

$$nh = (Nh/N)n$$

where: nh is the sample size for cluster h , Nh is the total population size for stratum h , N is the total population size and n is the total sample size. Based on this calculation, Engineering was allocated 139, Arts 77, Social Sciences 125 and Agricultural Sciences 39 respondents.

In the fifth stage, we used the accidental sampling technique to administer copies of the questionnaire to the respondents.

A structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to collect: (a) demographics: age, gender, faculty, year of study and (b) psychographic data: mobile usage patterns, anxiety (e.g., GAD-7), depression (e.g., PHQ-9), extraversion (e.g., BFI-2 subscale), and mobile phone addiction (e.g., MPAI scale). The closed-ended questionnaire was adopted to ensure response uniformity and ease of quantification (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical approaches. First, descriptive statistics—including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations—were computed to summarize demographic variables and core constructs (mobile phone addiction, anxiety, depression, and extraversion). Subsequently, inferential statistics were employed: Pearson correlation analysis examined bivariate relationships between mobile phone addiction, anxiety, depression, and extraversion, while multiple regression analysis identified significant predictors of mobile phone addiction severity. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26, with statistical significance determined at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Data presentation and interpretation

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the respondents

Gender	N	%
Male	178	46.84%
Female	202	53.16%
Faculty	N	%
Engineering	139	36.60%
Arts	77	20.30%
Social Sciences	125	32.90%
Agricultural Sciences	39	10.30%
Age	N	%
16-20 years	146	38.40%
21-25 years	192	50.50%
26-30 years	31	8.20%
31 and above	11	2.90%

The sample (N=380) showed a moderate gender imbalance (53.16% female, 46.84% male), aligning with Nigerian university enrolment. Disciplinary predominance was evident, with Engineering (36.60%) and Social Sciences (32.90%) comprising nearly 70% of participants; Arts (20.30%) and Agricultural Sciences (10.30%) had smaller subsamples. Age distribution revealed a predominantly young cohort: 88.9% aged 16-25, with only 11.1% aged ≥ 26 . Findings primarily reflect younger students, warranting caution in generalising to Agricultural Science students and mature learners.

Table 2. Prevalence and Predictors of Mobile Phone Addiction

Variable	Statistic	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Overall Prevalence	27.8% (n = 111)	[23.1, 32.5]	<.001
Gender (Female)	OR = 1.82	[1.24, 2.67]	<.002
Engineering	34.10%	[28.9, 39.3]	<.002
Nocturnal Use	OR = 2.10	[1.45, 3.04]	<.001
Social Media Use	$\beta = .38$	[-.29, .47]	<.001

The analysis reveals clinically significant mobile phone addiction among 27.8% of Nigerian university students (n=111, 95% CI [23.1, 32.5]), indicating that over one-quarter of the sample exhibits dysfunctional usage patterns meeting diagnostic thresholds. This establishes mobile overuse as a substantial public health concern on Nigerian campuses. Gender disparities are particularly notable, with female students facing 82% higher odds of addiction than males (OR=1.82, 95% CI [1.24, 2.67]), suggesting potential gender-specific vulnerability pathways that may relate to social compensation behaviours. Academic discipline emerges as a significant differentiator, with engineering students demonstrating markedly higher prevalence (34.1%, 95% CI

[28.9, 39.3]) than other faculties, likely reflecting stress-related compensatory usage patterns in technologically intensive programmes.

Behavioural predictors show particularly strong effects: students engaging in nocturnal phone use exhibit 2.1 times greater addiction odds (95% CI [1.45, 3.04]), indicating that nighttime engagement substantially disrupts self-regulation. Furthermore, each additional hour of daily social media consumption increases addiction severity by 38% ($\beta=.38$, 95% CI [.29, .47]), revealing the potent addictive potential of algorithmic content delivery systems. These statistically robust findings (all $p\leq.002$) collectively identify engineering students—particularly females—who engage in late-night social media use as the highest-risk demographic. The precision of these estimates, evidenced by narrow confidence intervals, underscores their reliability while validating core propositions of Compensatory Internet Use Theory regarding mobile devices as maladaptive coping tools for academic and social stressors.

Table 3. Mediation Effects of Mobile Phone Addiction

Pathway	Indirect Effect (β)	95% CI	<i>P</i>
Extraversion → Addiction → ↓GPA	-0.28	[-.39, -.18]	<.001
Self-Identity → Addiction → ↑Anxiety	0.31	[.21, .42]	<.001
Self-Identity → Addiction → ↑Depression	0.24	[.15, .33]	<.001

The mediation analysis reveals significant pathways through which mobile phone addiction operates as a psychological mechanism linking personality traits to adverse outcomes. Higher levels of extraversion were associated with increased mobile phone addiction, which subsequently contributed to academic decline ($\beta = -0.28$, 95% CI [-0.39, -0.18], $p < .001$). This indicates that socially oriented students experience nearly one-third of their GPA reduction specifically through compulsive phone use, suggesting their social engagement patterns may paradoxically undermine academic performance through technological dependency.

For mental health outcomes, self-identity issues demonstrated potent indirect effects through mobile addiction. Students using phones for identity validation experienced significantly elevated anxiety ($\beta = 0.31$, 95% CI [0.21, 0.42], $p < .001$), with addiction mediating nearly one-third of this relationship. Similarly, the pathway from self-identity concerns to increased depression operated substantially through addictive phone use ($\beta = 0.24$, 95% CI [0.15, 0.33], $p < .001$), accounting for approximately one-quarter of the total depressive symptoms.

The consistent statistical significance ($p < .001$) and absence of zero in all confidence intervals confirm mobile addiction's robust mediating role. These pathways validate core tenets of Compensatory Internet Use Theory: 1) Extraverts' social reinforcement seeking becomes academically detrimental when mediated by addiction,

and 2) Identity-driven phone use functions as a maladaptive coping strategy that exacerbates emotional distress. The effect sizes are clinically meaningful, with anxiety mediation ($\beta=0.31$) representing a moderate effect according to Cohen's benchmarks, and the depression pathway ($\beta=0.24$) approaching moderate impact. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that mobile phone addiction is not merely correlated with negative outcomes but actively transmits the influence of underlying psychological vulnerabilities to concrete academic and mental health consequences.

Table 4. Mobile Phone Addiction as Coping Mechanism for Loneliness

Effect	Statistic	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Short-Term Relief	$r = .41$	[.32, .49]	<.001
Long-Term Isolation	$\beta = -.52$	[-.61, -.43]	<.001
Academic Cost	$\beta = -.30$	[-.39, -.21]	<.001
Mediated Pathway	$\beta = .49$	[.36, .61]	<.001

The analysis reveals a complex compensatory pattern where mobile phones serve as both an immediate solution and long-term contributor to loneliness. Students reported significant short-term relief from loneliness through phone use ($r = .41$, 95% CI [.32, .49], $p < .001$), with 41% of variance in relief explained by this coping mechanism. This aligns with qualitative reports that devices provide instant distraction from emotional distress. However, this relief comes at substantial cost: higher addiction levels predict marked reductions in face-to-face interactions ($\beta = -.52$, 95% CI [-.61, -.43], $p < .001$), indicating that every unit increase in addiction corresponds to a 52% decrease in real-world social engagement. This inverse relationship demonstrates CIUT's "compensation trap" – the very tool alleviating loneliness acutely perpetuates isolation chronically.

Academic functioning is similarly compromised, with addiction mediating a 30% reduction in GPA ($\beta = -.30$, 95% CI [-.39, -.21], $p < .001$). The path analysis confirms this operates through nocturnal displacement: students substituting sleep with phone use show measurable cognitive impairment. Critically, the mediated pathway from loneliness to social isolation through mobile addiction is exceptionally strong ($\beta = .49$, 95% CI [.36, .61], $p < .001$), accounting for nearly half of loneliness's total effect on isolation. This robust mediation (zero excluded from all CIs, $p < .001$) validates CIUT's core proposition that addiction functions as the primary transmission mechanism converting emotional distress into functional impairment.

Discussion of Findings

This study reveals that mobile phone addiction represents a substantial public health challenge within Nigerian higher education, with 27.8% of students exhibiting clinically significant impairment. This prevalence aligns with global patterns observed

among student populations—from South Korean adolescents (30.9%, Cha & Seo, 2018) to Iranian high school cohorts (Parashkouh et al., 2021)—suggesting universal vulnerability factors. However, our findings extend this understanding by empirically validating and contextualizing Compensatory Internet Use Theory (CIUT) within Nigeria's unique socio-academic milieu. The theory's core proposition—that problematic use stems from attempts to alleviate psychological distress or unmet needs—proves remarkably apt in explaining the observed patterns of dependency.

The pronounced gender disparity, with female students facing 82% higher addiction odds than males, underscores how cultural norms shape compensatory behaviours. Nigerian women navigate intersecting pressures: academic ambition, restrictive social expectations, and familial duties. Mobile phones become tools for negotiating these constraints—providing covert access to social networks, academic resources, or private emotional outlets. This aligns with Jafari et al.'s (2019) findings in Iran, where phones compensated for restricted social access, but reveals a critical nuance: the very autonomy-seeking that initially empowers women entrenches dependency. Similarly, the heightened vulnerability among engineering students (34.1% prevalence) illustrates discipline-specific stress compensation. Technically demanding curricula, coupled with resource limitations (e.g., inadequate lab facilities), force reliance on mobile-dependent learning strategies. Over time, this functional necessity blurs into compulsive use, echoing Matar Boumosleh and Jaalouk' (2017) observations among Lebanese business students while highlighting how academic stressors morph into behavioural dependency.

Two behavioural markers emerged as particularly consequential: nocturnal phone use ($OR=2.1$) and prolonged social media consumption ($\beta=.38$ per additional hour). These patterns exemplify CIUT's "compensation trap." Nighttime engagement offers temporary escape from academic anxiety, crowded accommodations, or existential worries—moments of perceived control in a chaotic environment. Social media, with its algorithmically optimised validation, delivers potent dopamine rewards that temporarily alleviate identity insecurities. Yet these coping mechanisms carry steep costs. Sleep disruption directly impairs cognitive function, explaining the significant mediated pathway to GPA reduction ($\beta=-.30$). Meanwhile, constant exposure to curated digital personas exacerbates self-comparison and identity dissonance, fuelling the anxiety ($\beta=0.31$) and depression ($\beta=0.24$) transmitted through addiction.

Our mediation models provide robust empirical confirmation of CIUT's psychological mechanisms. The pathway linking extraversion to academic decline through mobile addiction ($\beta=-0.28$) demonstrates how socially motivated students leverage devices for peer connection—initially a functional adaptation—only to have virtual interaction displace academic engagement. This is amplified in Nigeria's

collectivist setting, where traditional group study norms clash with phone-mediated isolation. Similarly, students seeking identity validation through digital approval spiral into distress when online feedback becomes existentially significant. This supports Walsh et al.'s (2010) emphasis on self-identity while revealing cultural specificity: in contexts with strong communal expectations of authenticity (like Nigeria), the gap between online persona and offline self generates unique anxiety. Tellingly, the loneliness paradox—where phones provide short-term emotional relief ($r=.41$) while accelerating social isolation ($\beta=-.52$)—perfectly illustrates CIUT's self-defeating cycle. Rural-origin students, using devices to sustain familial bonds, inadvertently inhibit campus integration, transforming temporary coping into chronic disconnection.

Nigeria's socio-academic landscape intensifies CIUT's mechanisms. Infrastructure deficits—erratic electricity, limited computers, and unreliable WiFi—normalise 24/7 phone dependency for basic academic access. Migrant students from rural areas rely on devices to maintain familial connections across vast distances, yet this lifeline impedes local community building. With mental health services severely under-resourced, phones become *de facto* therapists for managing academic pressure and isolation. These contextual forces transform adaptive phone use into entrenched dependency far more rapidly than in resource-rich environments.

This research significantly advances CIUT by identifying high-risk cohorts (female engineering students), validating mediation pathways, and contextualising compensation within resource-constrained collectivist societies. Practically, it demands multi-tiered interventions: academic policies like "digital detox" periods in engineering programmes to disrupt nocturnal use cycles; identity-strengthening initiatives that untie self-worth from online validation; and infrastructure investments in computer labs to reduce academic phone dependency. Crucially, framing addiction as maladaptive coping—not moral failure—reduces stigma while directing interventions toward root causes like stress and isolation.

While confirming CIUT's cross-cultural relevance, longitudinal studies should track how initial compensation evolves into dependency. Qualitative work must explore gender-specific coping strategies (e.g., female-only online communities) and discipline-specific stressors in engineering subfields. Critically, research should identify indigenous resilience practices – communal support systems, religious coping – that might offer healthier alternatives to digital compensation.

Summary of Findings

This study establishes mobile phone addiction as a critical public health challenge among Nigerian university students, with 27.8% prevalence confirming its severity within an understudied African context. The findings strongly validate

Compensatory Internet Use Theory (CIUT), demonstrating that addiction emerges not as a primary pathology but as a maladaptive coping response to unmet psychosocial and academic needs. Gender disparities reveal that female students face 82% higher addiction odds, reflecting how restrictive socio-cultural norms drive compensatory phone use for autonomy and connection—initially empowering but ultimately dependency-inducing. Similarly, engineering students' high vulnerability (34.1%) underscores how resource-limited, high-stress academic environments blur functional phone use into compulsive escapism.

Importantly, mediation analyses confirm CIUT's core mechanisms:

- i. Extraversion fuels academic decline through addiction ($\beta = -0.28$), as socially motivated students displace in-person engagement with virtual interactions.
- ii. Identity-seeking behaviours amplify anxiety ($\beta = 0.31$) and depression ($\beta = 0.24$) by tethering self-worth to algorithmic validation.
- iii. The loneliness paradox proves particularly pernicious—phones provide short-term emotional relief ($r = .41$) but accelerate long-term isolation ($\beta = -.52$) and academic impairment ($\beta = -.30$).

Conclusion

Nigeria's unique context—infrastructural gaps, rural-urban student migration, and scarce mental health services—intensifies these pathways, transforming phones from tools into existential lifelines. This reframes addiction as a symptom of systemic deficits rather than individual failure.

Recommendations

- i. Engineering faculties should implement mandatory "digital detox" modules targeting nocturnal use and stress compensation, alongside workshops teaching boundary-setting and reducing social media identity dependency.
- ii. Universities must invest in reliable computer labs and offline academic resources to decrease students' functional dependency on phones for academic work.
- iii. Train peer counsellors to provide CIUT-informed support, helping students recognise maladaptive compensation cycles and develop healthier coping strategies like community-building activities.

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HOST COMMUNITIES' PERCEPTIONS OF OIL COMPANIES' CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INITIATIVES AND THEIR IMPACT ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined host community perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of oil companies in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Using the survey design, data were collected from 389 respondents across oil-producing communities in Akwa Ibom and Delta States through the structured questionnaire. Findings revealed that 54.1% perceived CSR initiatives as effective or highly effective, with educational programmes receiving the highest effectiveness rating (68.4%) and infrastructure development scoring well (60.1%). However, environmental remediation programmes scored poorly with only 29.1% positive effectiveness ratings. While 71.1% perceived some level of positive regional development impact, significant dissatisfaction emerged across all satisfaction factors, particularly community participation (50.9% dissatisfied) and fairness in benefit distribution (63.4% dissatisfied). Statistical analysis confirmed a highly significant relationship between CSR effectiveness and regional development impact ($\chi^2 = 67.45$, $p < 0.001$). It was recommended the establishment of inclusive Community Development Committees, improving transparency with environmental focus integration, and implementing comprehensive long-term monitoring frameworks for sustainable development outcomes.

Introduction

In the contemporary global economy, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a critical framework that influences nearly every aspect of the relationship between extractive industries and host communities, including community development, environmental stewardship and the pursuit of sustainable resource extraction. With multinational corporations operating across diverse geographical and socio-political contexts, host communities are no longer passive recipients of corporate activities but active stakeholders in shaping corporate behaviour and influencing operational strategies. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) serves as a bridge between corporations and communities, and creates mutual benefits through shared responsibility for social and environmental challenges. Corporate Social Responsibility facilitates community development by enabling technology transfer, environmental protection, talent acquisition, and building stronger corporation-community relationships that extend beyond mere employment and production. The interdependent

relationship between corporations and communities through Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives ultimately creates sustainable development where both parties benefit from improved social capital, reduced environmental impact, and enhanced economic opportunities.

Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives have not only amplified the voices of local communities but have also enabled ordinary citizens to demand accountability from multinational corporations, advocate environmental protection, and push for equitable distribution of resource benefits (Attah & Amoah, 2023; Akpan & Akpan, 2019). Corporate Social Responsibility transformative potential is especially evident in various oil-producing regions globally, where thousands of community members have organised advocacy campaigns that eventually influence corporate policies and government regulations (Idemudia & Osayande, 2018; Masum, Hanan, Awang, Aziz & Ahmad, 2020). In mining communities in Latin America or gas extraction regions in Central Asia, CSR programmes proved have instrumental in facilitating community development projects and managing stakeholder relationships (Victor, Muoboghare and Guanah., 2021). These instances underscore CSR's capability to act as both a development mechanism and a catalyst for community empowerment (Ansu-Mensah, Marfo, Awuah & Amoako, 2021).

Community engagement, participatory development, and sustainable impact are critical components of effective CSR implementation (Onyekosor, 2024). As extractive operations require long-term community acceptance, social license to operate, and regulatory compliance, CSR serves as an ideal framework for building trust, addressing grievances, and fostering collaborative relationships between corporations and host communities. Despite the growing recognition of CSR's importance in extractive industries and community development efforts, several challenges and limitations hinder its optimal effectiveness. One significant issue is the prevalence of corporate greenwashing and superficial interventions that can mislead communities and undermine genuine development efforts. Moreover, power imbalances between multinational corporations and local communities can silence dissent and limit meaningful participation in CSR program design and implementation. Additionally, there is the issue of developmental inequality: marginalized communities with limited access to education, resources, or political representation remain excluded from CSR benefits, thus reinforcing pre-existing socio-economic gaps. While CSR initiatives can highlight community needs and facilitate development projects, they cannot always guarantee transformative change. The short-term nature of many corporate programs and the risk of dependency—communities becoming overly reliant on corporate interventions without building local capacity—remain critical concerns.

This study focuses on oil-producing regions, with particular emphasis on host

communities that have direct experience with multinational oil operations and CSR programs. The study draws on community experiences and perceptions to understand broader trends in corporate-community relationships and CSR effectiveness in extractive industry contexts. However, the study is not without limitations. Firstly, the diversity of community contexts poses a constraint, as different communities may have varying experiences with oil operations and CSR programs, potentially affecting the generalizability of findings. Secondly, data derived from community perceptions may not fully capture the technical or strategic dimensions of CSR implementation, making it difficult to assess the full complexity of corporate social interventions. Furthermore, while community voices are central to understanding CSR effectiveness, distinguishing between informed critiques and misconceptions about corporate activities remains a methodological challenge. Another limitation is the evolving nature of CSR practices and community expectations, which can change over time and across different operational contexts. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the transformative potential of community-centered CSR in extractive industries and the need for strategic approaches to enhance corporate-community relationships and sustainable development outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Despite substantial investments in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs by multinational oil companies, significant gaps exist between corporate intentions and community outcomes in oil-producing regions. While corporations report extensive CSR expenditures and development initiatives, host communities continue to experience environmental degradation, socio-economic marginalization, and limited participation in resource governance (Idemudia & Osayande, 2018; Onyekosor, 2024). The fundamental problem lies in the disconnect between corporate CSR strategies and community perceptions of their effectiveness and relevance. Existing research predominantly examines CSR from corporate perspectives, with limited systematic investigation of how host communities evaluate these interventions against their actual needs and development priorities (Victor et al., 2021). This study is therefore motivated by the seeming disparity between claims by oil companies and host communities, perception of the CRS initiatives of the oil companies vis-à-vis the development of the South-South region of Nigeria.

3. Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the perceptions of host communities regarding the effectiveness of oil companies' CSR initiatives in the Niger Delta?

- ii. To what extent do host communities perceive oil companies' CSR initiatives as contributing to regional development?
- iii. What factors influence host community satisfaction with oil companies' CSR programs in the Niger Delta?

Research Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between CSR initiatives and regional development impact.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between CSR initiatives and regional development impact.

4. Review Of Related Literature

Community Perceptions of CSR Initiative

The contemporary landscape of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in extractive industries has fundamentally transformed how multinational oil companies engage with host communities, driven by increasing stakeholder expectations and regulatory pressures across oil-producing regions. Research on host community perceptions of oil companies' CSR effectiveness reveals varying outcomes across different multinational operations and implementation approaches in the Niger Delta region. Akporiaye (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of oil companies' CSR initiatives and found significant variations in community perceptions based on the type and implementation approach of CSR programmes. The study emphasized that effectiveness was largely determined by community involvement in programme design and implementation processes, with communities rating programs as more effective when they participated actively in planning and execution.

In their study, Abubakari et al. (2014) examined public relations and corporate social responsibility practices of oil companies in Niger Delta communities and found that community perceptions of CSR effectiveness were significantly influenced by the quality of company-community relationships and communication strategies. Their research revealed that oil multinationals with better public relations approaches achieved higher effectiveness ratings from host communities, particularly in areas where companies maintained consistent dialogue with local stakeholders. This observation demonstrates the critical importance of sustained engagement beyond one-off corporate interventions.

Tarilate (2021) conducted a study on host community perceptions of CSR practices of oil companies in the Niger Delta and found that communities had mixed perceptions of CSR effectiveness across different operational areas. The study revealed that many communities expressed concerns about the sustainability and relevance of

implemented programs, with effectiveness ratings varying significantly based on program types and implementation quality. Educational and healthcare programs consistently received higher effectiveness ratings compared to environmental remediation initiatives across various oil-producing communities, suggesting that communities prioritize immediate, tangible benefits over long-term environmental interventions that may not yield visible results in the short term.

CSR Contribution to Regional Development

The relationship between CSR initiatives by oil multinationals and regional development has generated considerable scholarly attention, with studies examining both the scope and depth of CSR impact on community development indicators across the highest oil-producing states in the Niger Delta. Attah and Amoah (2023) examined whether CSR promoted community well-being in extractive industries and found that while CSR could contribute to development, its impact on regional development was often limited by poor implementation strategies and lack of meaningful community participation. This finding challenges corporate narratives about CSR effectiveness while highlighting the gap between corporate intentions and community-experienced outcomes. Guanah, Obi and Anho (2018) studied the implications of CSR programs of Midwestern Oil and Gas Company for sustainable development in Kwale, Delta State, and found positive correlations between well-implemented CSR initiatives and community development indicators. Their research demonstrated that CSR programs contributed significantly to regional development in areas such as healthcare delivery, educational infrastructure, and economic empowerment. However, the study also noted that success was contingent upon sustained corporate commitment and effective community partnership mechanisms.

The geographic distribution of CSR interventions reveals significant disparities across oil-producing regions. Adikoko and Ebienfa (2023) examined corporate social responsibility and community development in the Niger Delta and found that oil multinationals' CSR programs had measurable impacts on regional development across various indicators. Their study revealed that communities in states with higher oil production volumes, such as Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta, experienced more substantial CSR interventions, though the quality and sustainability of development outcomes varied significantly among different oil-producing communities. This pattern suggests that CSR allocation may be driven more by production volumes than by community development needs, raising questions about equity and strategic prioritization.

Factors Influencing Community Satisfaction with CSR Programs

Several studies have examined the factors that determine community satisfaction with oil multinationals' CSR programs across various oil-producing

communities in the Niger Delta. Victor et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on factors influencing host community perception and expectations of oil companies in the Niger Delta and identified community participation in planning, transparency in implementation, project sustainability, and relevance to local needs as primary factors influencing satisfaction levels across different oil-producing areas. These factors represent fundamental principles that distinguish effective CSR programs from superficial corporate interventions designed primarily for reputational management.

Historical context emerges as a critical determinant of contemporary community attitudes toward CSR initiatives. Iyayi (2000) examined oil companies and community relations in Nigeria and found that historical factors and power dynamics significantly influenced community satisfaction with CSR programs. The study revealed that communities with longer experiences of oil operations had developed more sophisticated expectations and evaluation criteria for assessing the effectiveness of CSR programmes. This historical perspective explains why contemporary CSR initiatives often struggle to meet community expectations, as decades of extractive operations without commensurate development have created deep-seated skepticism about corporate intentions and commitments.

The centrality of stakeholder engagement emerges consistently across multiple studies as a determining factor in CSR programme success. Akpan and Akpan (2019) emphasized that meaningful stakeholder engagement represented a critical factor in determining community satisfaction with CSR programs across various oil multinational operations. Their research demonstrated that companies with robust community engagement mechanisms achieved higher satisfaction ratings and more sustainable development outcomes. However, the study also highlighted the challenge of ensuring genuine participation rather than tokenistic consultation that occurs after key decisions have been made, which underscores the need for fundamental shifts in corporate approach to community partnership and collaborative program development.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Stakeholder Theory, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how organisations should manage relationships with various groups that affect or are affected by their operations (Akpan & Akpan, 2019). According to this theory, organisations have moral and strategic obligations to consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, in their decision-making processes. Ansu-Mensah et al. (2021) explain that stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of identifying, understanding, and responding to stakeholder needs and expectations. In the context of oil companies in the Niger Delta, host communities represent primary stakeholders whose support is crucial for operational success and

social license to operate. Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives serve as mechanisms for managing stakeholder relationships and addressing community expectations. The theory posits that effective stakeholder engagement leads to better organisational performance and sustainable outcomes. This suggests that satisfying stakeholders will ultimately lead to shareholders' satisfaction over time (Igbara, Etu, Alobari & Naenwi, 2014). Community perceptions of CSR initiatives reflect the quality of stakeholder relationships and the extent to which companies successfully balance competing stakeholder interests.

7. Methodology

This study employed the survey research design to examine host community perceptions of oil companies' CSR initiatives and their impact on regional development. The survey design was chosen because it allows for systematic collection of data from a large population and enables statistical analysis of relationships between variables (Heale & Twycross, 2018).

The study adopted a population of 32,289,119 being the total number of active population in South-South Nigeria, estimated from the 2016 National Census figure calculated at an annual growth rate of 2.3% over nine years. A sample of 400 participants was determined using Taro Yamane's formula and recruited through multi-stage sampling. In the first stage, simple random sampling by toss of dice selected two states—Akwa Ibom and Delta—coincidentally representing Nigeria's largest oil producers (40% and 35% of national output, respectively). Cluster sampling subsequently grouped host communities by Local Government Areas, followed by purposive selection of eight communities based on oil operation exposure and corporate social responsibility program involvement. Selected communities included Okoritak (Ibena), Eket (Eket), Esit Eket (Esit Eket), and Enwang (Mbo) from Akwa Ibom State, and Ewreni (Ughelli North), Kwale (Ndokwa West), Uzere (Isoko South), and Bomadi (Bomadi) from Delta State. Systematic random sampling then identified households using every 10th entry from compiled community lists. Finally, one adult member per household was randomly selected as the primary respondent, ensuring representative coverage across target populations.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on extensive literature review and pilot testing. The instrument was validated by experts in community development and corporate social responsibility. Reliability was established through a pilot test with 30 respondents, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire administered, 389 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 97.25%.

Community Perceptions of CSR Initiative Effectiveness

Table 1: Community Perceptions of CSR Initiative Effectiveness (N=389)

CSR Effectiveness Indicators	Highly Ineffective/Very Poor	Ineffective/Poor	Neutral/Moderate	Effective/Good	Highly Effective/Excellent	Mean Score
Overall CSR Effectiveness	20(5.1%)	40(10.3%)	119(30.6%)	139(35.7%)	71(18.3%)	3.52
Infrastructure Development Impact	16(4.1%)	30(7.7%)	109(28.0%)	158(40.6%)	76(19.5%)	3.63
Educational Program Effectiveness	11(2.8%)	25(6.4%)	87(22.4%)	168(43.2%)	98(25.2%)	3.82
Healthcare Initiative Impact	23(5.9%)	46(11.8%)	129(33.2%)	148(38.0%)	43(11.1%)	3.36
Environmental Remediation Effectiveness	59(15.2%)	79(20.3%)	138(35.5%)	87(22.4%)	26(6.7%)	2.84
Economic Empowerment Programs	30(7.7%)	50(12.9%)	119(30.6%)	129(33.2%)	61(15.7%)	3.36
Community Problem-Solving Capability	37(9.5%)	59(15.2%)	148(38.0%)	109(28.0%)	36(9.3%)	3.12
Overall Effectiveness Rating	28(7.2%)	47(12.1%)	134(34.4%)	134(34.4%)	46(11.8%)	3.38

The analysis reveals that community perceptions of CSR effectiveness vary significantly across different program areas. Educational programs received the highest effectiveness rating (mean = 3.82), with 68.4% of respondents rating them as effective or highly effective. Infrastructure development also scored well (mean = 3.63), with 60.1% positive ratings. However, environmental remediation programs scored lowest (mean = 2.84), with only 29.1% positive effectiveness ratings.

Table 2: Perceived Impact of CSR on Regional Development (N=389)

Regional Development Indicators	No/Negative Impact	Minor/Low Impact	Moderate Impact	Major/High Impact	Transformational/Very High Impact	Mean Score
Regional Development Contribution	25(6.4%)	59(15.2%)	138(35.5%)	129(33.2%)	38(9.8%)	3.24
Inter-Community Connectivity	30(7.7%)	79(20.3%)	158(40.6%)	100(25.7%)	22(5.7%)	3.01
Regional Economic Growth Impact	40(10.3%)	87(22.4%)	148(38.0%)	87(22.4%)	27(6.9%)	2.93
Regional Economic Growth Impact	40(10.3%)	87(22.4%)	148(38.0%)	87(22.4%)	27(6.9%)	2.93
Human Capital Development	20(5.1%)	50(12.9%)	119(30.6%)	148(38.0%)	52(13.4%)	3.41
Environmental Sustainability	69(17.7%)	109(28.0%)	129(33.2%)	59(15.2%)	23(5.9%)	2.63
Health System Strengthening	37(9.5%)	69(17.7%)	138(35.5%)	119(30.6%)	26(6.7%)	3.07
Future Development Potential	30(7.7%)	79(20.3%)	168(43.2%)	87(22.4%)	25(6.4%)	2.99

Analysis of CSR impact on regional development indicates that 71.1% of respondents perceived some level of positive impact (moderate to transformational), while 28.8% reported low or no impact. Human capital development received the highest impact rating (mean = 3.41), followed by regional development contribution (mean = 3.24). Environmental sustainability scored lowest (mean = 2.63).

Table 3: Factors Influencing Community Satisfaction with CSR Programs (N=438)

Satisfaction Factors	Very Dissatisfied/Very Poor	Dissatisfied/Poor	Neutral/Acceptable	Satisfied/Good	Very Satisfied/Excellent	Mean Score
Community Participation Level	79(20.3%)	119(30.6%)	109(28.0%)	59(15.2%)	23(5.9%)	2.56
Communication & Transparency	69(17.7%)	129(33.2%)	119(30.6%)	50(12.9%)	22(5.7%)	2.55
Program Relevance to Local Needs	59(15.2%)	109(28.0%)	138(35.5%)	59(15.2%)	24(6.2%)	2.68

Implementati on Quality	50(12.9%)	119(30.6%)	129(33.2%)	69(17.7%)	22(5.7%)	2.73
Sustainability & Long -term Impact	87(22.4%)	138(35.5%)	109(28.0%)	40(10.3%)	15(3.9%)	2.37
Fairness in Benefit Distribution	99(25.4%)	148(38.0%)	87(22.4%)	40(10.3%)	15(3.9%)	2.29
Overall CSR Program Satisfaction	59(15.2%)	109(28.0%)	138(35.5%)	59(15.2%)	24(6.2%)	2.68

The analysis reveals significant dissatisfaction among community members across all satisfaction factors. Implementation quality scored highest among the satisfaction factors (mean = 2.73), though still below the neutral point. Fairness in benefit distribution received the lowest satisfaction rating (mean = 2.29), with 63.4% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction.

9. Discussion of Findings

The study's findings reveal important insights into host community perceptions of oil companies' CSR initiatives in the Niger Delta, particularly in Akwa Ibom and Delta States, based on comprehensive data from 389 respondents representing a 97.25% response rate. The mixed perceptions on effectiveness across different program areas align with recent studies, though the overall moderate effectiveness rating (mean = 3.38) suggests room for significant improvement in CSR programme design and implementation among the surveyed communities.

The finding that educational programs received the highest effectiveness rating (mean = 3.82) with 68.4% positive ratings while environmental remediation scored lowest (mean = 2.84) with only 29.1% positive effectiveness ratings reflects community priorities and concerns about environmental degradation in oil-producing areas. This disparity contradicts some corporate claims about environmental CSR effectiveness and aligns with findings about environmental dynamics in oil transnational operations, particularly given that 35.7% of the 389 respondents rated environmental remediation programs negatively.

The regional development impact results (mean = 3.02) indicate moderate positive perceptions among respondents, with 71.1% perceiving some level of positive impact and human capital development (mean = 3.41) receiving the highest rating. However, the low environmental sustainability rating (mean = 2.63) is particularly concerning given the environmental challenges in the Niger Delta, with 45.7% of respondents reporting negative or no environmental impact.

The satisfaction analysis reveals significant challenges in CSR program management across the 389 respondents surveyed. The low satisfaction scores across all factors, particularly community participation (mean = 2.56) with 50.9% dissatisfaction and fairness in benefit distribution (mean = 2.29) with 63.4% expressing dissatisfaction, contradict stakeholder theory's emphasis on effective stakeholder engagement and highlight fundamental gaps in current CSR approaches.

The significant relationship between CSR effectiveness and regional development impact based on the 389 responses provides strong empirical support for the theoretical argument that effective CSR can contribute to regional development. The analysis demonstrates that communities rating CSR as highly effective show substantially higher perceptions of regional development impact (35.4% vs 4.1% for low effectiveness ratings), validating stakeholder theory's proposition that meaningful engagement leads to better outcomes.

10. Conclusion

The analysed 389 community members' perceptions of oil companies' Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Delta States. From the findings, it is concluded that community-participatory approaches significantly outperformed top-down corporate initiatives. Critical success factors included transparency, sustainability, community participation in planning, and local relevance. It is also concluded that effective community engagement correlates with better organizational performance and sustainable development outcomes. The research suggests community-centered CSR design yields superior results in host community satisfaction and regional development impact, with implications for multinational oil companies and policymakers.

11. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and analysis, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of oil companies' CSR initiatives and their contribution to regional development in the Niger Delta:

1. Oil companies should establish inclusive Community Development Committees with institutionalized consultations for genuine community participation in all CSR stages.
2. There should be improved Transparency and Environmental Focus Integration implementation to encourage robust and transparent frameworks with public CSR budget disclosure while prioritizing environmental remediation initiatives.
3. Oil companies should establish comprehensive long-term monitoring frameworks with baseline studies and capacity-building for lasting development outcomes.

These three strategic recommendations, if implemented comprehensively, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of CSR initiatives and their contribution to sustainable regional development in the Niger Delta, while strengthening the social license to operate for oil companies in the region.

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NAVIGATING DIGITAL FRONTIERS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTING HYBRID COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES DURING ELECTION IN NIGERIA

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and

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Abstract

Digital Communication has emerged as a pivotal tool for civic engagement and electoral transparency. In developing countries like Nigeria, however, its adoption by public agencies is often hindered by infrastructural and institutional limitations. This study examines how the National Orientation Agency (NOA) navigates these challenges through a hybrid approach of integrating digital and physical communication strategies during elections. Employing a mixed methods design comprising of survey, interviews and content analysis, the research investigates NOA's communication practices, public reception and institutional constraints. Findings reveal partial effectiveness in combining digital platforms with grassroots mobilization but highlight gaps in digital literacy, strategic coherence and infrastructural support. The study advocates for a structured digital framework, staff capacity building, localized messaging and stakeholder collaborations to enhance digital electoral communication in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The advent of technology have improved the way humans communicate, with the introduction of digital communication gadgets, digital communication have change the narratives in the political spheres, government agencies are now beginning to integrate modern communication technologies with traditional communication to reach specialized audience. This concept which is now being known as “fitigal” communication, this word refers to the mixed method of integrating physical interaction (face-to-face) with digital media technologies to improve and promote real life interaction and feedback between the agency and the citizens.

As societies continue to embrace digital transformation, government agencies are increasingly adopting digital communication strategies to reach diverse demographics, particularly during elections period when timely, credible, and widespread information dissemination is germane. In Nigeria, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) serves as the government's primary vehicle for grassroots public communication, civic education, and policy advocacy. It was established to promote patriotism, national unity, and public understanding of government programmes, the NOA plays a vital role during election periods by sensitizing citizens of their civic responsibilities and mobilizing voter participation.

This have further necessitated NOA to embark on digital communication initiatives to enhance citizen engagement and participation. On one hand, digital technologies offer unprecedented avenues for citizen participation, transparency, and accountability (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). Platforms such as X (Twitter), Facebook, and WhatsApp enable citizens to voice their opinions, monitor electoral processes, and hold leaders accountable in real time scenario. On the other hand, the proliferation of fake news, hate speech, and misinformation poses significant threats to the integrity of elections and the stability of the democratic process (Kahne & Middaugh, 2018). This study explores the challenges and opportunities NOA faces in implementing hybrid communication strategies.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite its critical role in public enlightenment, the NOA faces multiple barriers in executing digital communication strategies during elections. These include infrastructural deficits, limited digital literacy among staff and the public, bureaucratic constraints, funding inadequacies, and the proliferation of misinformation on digital platforms. While the agency has attempted to leverage digital tools such as social media, SMS broadcasting, and community radio in tandem with town hall meetings and field mobilization, the effectiveness and sustainability of these approach remain under-examined. This research therefore aims to identify and assess these dynamics to propose pathways for more effective integration of digital communication in the NOA's electoral mandate.

3. Research Questions

1. What hybrid communication strategies has the NOA adopted during elections?
2. How effective are these strategies in enhancing citizen awareness and participation?
3. What challenges hinder the successful implementation of digital strategies by the NOA?
4. How do citizens perceive the NOA's digital communication efforts during elections?

4. Literature Review

Digital communication strategies have been extensively studied in developed country contexts. However, research on developing countries is scarce. Studies have highlighted infrastructure deficits (Aker & Mbiti, 2010), digital literacy gaps (Unwin, 2009), and institutional constraints (Heeks, 2002) as significant barriers to digital communication adoption. In the context of contemporary communication paradigms, a "digital communication strategy" refers to a meticulously crafted plan or approach devised to leverage digital platforms and technologies in disseminating information, engaging with target audiences, and achieving specific communication objectives (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This strategy encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, including but not limited to social media engagement, website management, email

marketing, and online advertising, all orchestrated to effectively convey messages, influence perceptions, and foster engagement in the digital sphere (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

In the Nigeria, digital technology adoption is rapidly proliferating, the concept of a digital communication strategy holds immense relevance, particularly concerning NOA's mandate to shape public discourse and citizen engagement during elections. With the advent of digital platforms and the widespread use of social media among Nigerians, the NOA's ability to harness digital communication strategies becomes pivotal in reaching and mobilizing diverse segments of the population (Ogunnaike & Adeniran, 2018).

Given Nigeria's socio-political landscape characterized by ethnic diversity, regional disparities, and varying levels of digital literacy, a well-crafted digital communication strategy becomes indispensable for the NOA in bridging informational gaps, fostering inclusivity, and fostering civic participation during elections (Arowolo & Akintunde, 2019). Moreover, the dynamic nature of digital platforms allows for real-time engagement and feedback, enabling the NOA to tailor its communication efforts based on evolving public sentiments and preferences (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014).

Digital Communication in Governance

The term "figital" is a portmanteau of "physical" and "digital," referring to the seamless integration of physical and digital experiences in communication processes. In public sector communication, figital strategies are used to combine the accessibility and immediacy of physical communication (e.g., town hall meetings, rallies, distribution of printed materials) with the speed, interactivity, and scalability of digital media (e.g., social media, websites, mobile apps, virtual forums). This approach enhances message dissemination, ensures broader reach, and increases engagement by catering to both digitally connected and traditionally reliant populations.

In the governance, figital communication have helped in bridging digital divide, especially in Nigeria, where internet penetration is uneven and digital literacy varies. The hybrid strategy allows institutions like the NOA to reinforce their communication efforts, deliver real-time updates, receive feedback, and counter misinformation across multiple platforms. For example, a physical awareness rally can be streamed online, discussed in a radio programme, and simultaneously promoted on social media.

Therefore, the need for digital communication became particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, where physical restrictions led to an accelerated adoption of digital platforms. However, the return to normalcy underscored the value of integrating both modes for effective public communication. In electoral settings, digital communication is indispensable for mobilizing diverse voter demographics,

particularly youths and marginalized communities who engage differently with media platforms.

Role of Government Agencies in Electoral Communication

Electoral communication involves the dissemination of information aimed at shaping public perception, encouraging participation, and ensuring informed decision-making during electoral processes. Government agencies serve as authoritative sources of electoral information and play a crucial role in fostering transparency, participation, and peaceful conduct of elections. NOA over the years have collaborated with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other stakeholders to mobilize citizens and ensure electoral integrity.

Effective electoral communication by government agencies includes voter education campaigns, civic awareness programs, stakeholder engagements, and use of both traditional and digital media for dissemination. These communication efforts are particularly important in a complex, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual society like Nigeria, where misinformation, political apathy, and voter suppression are ongoing challenges, by adopting hybrid communication strategies, government agencies can leverage on physical community engagement structures and combine them with the wide reach of digital tools. This ensures that communication messages are not only heard but understood and acted upon by a diverse and dispersed electorate.

The Structure and Mandate of the NOA

The National Orientation Agency was established in 1993 under Decree 100 (now an Act of Parliament) with a mandate to mobilize and inform the Nigerian public on government policies, promote national unity, and encourage civic responsibility. The NOA operates under the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture and is structured into 774 local government offices, 36 state directorates, and a national headquarters in Abuja. This extensive physical presence provides the agency with deep grassroots access and a unique advantage in physical mobilization.

NOA's core responsibilities include enlightening citizens on their rights and responsibilities; Promoting values such as discipline, integrity, and patriotism; Communicating government programmes and policies; Facilitating feedback from the public to the government; Mobilizing participation in democratic processes, including elections; the agency has recognized the need to modernize its communication processes by incorporating digital tools. It has engaged in digital campaigns via X, Facebook, Instagram, and its official website. However, limited digital infrastructure, skills, and funding have hindered a full transition into a digital-first communication

model. Overly, NOA has continued to rely on its strength in physical outreach but increasingly seeking to bridge this with digital strategies, making digital communication a key area of transformation.

During election period, NOA is responsible for voter sensitization campaigns, promotion of peaceful election conduct, mobilization of marginalized populations including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and countering misinformation and disinformation about the electoral process. A hybrid approach enables the NOA to maximize its presence and effectiveness by ensuring that messages shared on digital platforms are reinforced through physical interactions and vice versa. For instance, a voter education message initiated on social media may be followed up with community dialogues or door-to-door campaigns, ensuring deeper understanding and trust.

Case Studies from NOA's Campaign Experience.

NOA has stand as a crucial institution tasked with fostering national cohesion, unity, and citizen participation in governance (Adewale & Olufemi, 2020). It has played a significant role in disseminating government policies, promoting civic education, and shaping public opinion through various communication channels. A brief analysis of selected popular campaigns gives more clarity.

- i. The “Good People, Great Nation” campaign was launched in 2012 under the administration of Umaru Musa Yar'adua, led by Professor Dora Akinyuli, the Minister of Information, with the slogan “Rebranding Nigeria.” The campaign was primarily focused on reimagining Nigeria's image on the foreign scene and also igniting the spirit of nationalism in the citizens. The campaign primarily made use of radio and television to reach Nigerians.
- ii. “Change begins with me” started in 2016 during General Muhammadu Buhari's time, led by the minister of information, Lai Mohammed. The campaign was focused on educating and enlightening the citizens to appreciate the values needed for national development. A critical analysis of the strategies used are social media, sensitization rallies, collaborations with civil society, and media partnerships.
- iii. Voter Education Campaigns: During the 2023 general elections, NOA utilized digital platforms to educate citizens on voting procedures, emphasizing transparency and discouraging electoral malpractice. The campaign's success demonstrated the potential of digital strategies in fostering civic participation.
- iv. COVID-19 Awareness Initiatives: NOA employed digital tools to promote health protocols and vaccination awareness. While the reach was significant in urban areas, rural populations remained harder to engage due to the digital divide. NOA employed digital tools to promote health protocols and vaccination awareness. While the reach was significant in urban areas, rural populations remained harder to engage due to the digital divide.

v. Other campaigns are the National Campaign against Fake News and the Operation Safe Corridor Programme.

Empirical Review

The empirical review presents findings from previous studies that have examined the application of digital, physical, and hybrid communication strategies by government agencies during electoral periods. These studies include practical implementation, challenges, and benefits of hybrid communication approaches in democratic settings, particularly within Nigeria and similar developing contexts.

Digital Communication in Electoral Processes

Studies such as Adekunle (2021) and Uche & Omodia (2018) have highlighted the increasing use of social media platforms by electoral bodies and public institutions to disseminate electoral information. Adekunle's research focused on INEC's use of Twitter and Facebook during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The findings revealed that digital platforms facilitated rapid dissemination of updates and countered misinformation. However, the study also noted limited engagement with rural populations due to poor internet penetration and digital literacy gaps.

Similarly, Omodia (2018) found that while digital tools enhance transparency and engagement among urban youth, they remain ineffective in areas with limited connectivity. These findings emphasize the importance of combining digital platforms with traditional methods which is a core tenet of hybrid communication.

Physical Communication Approaches and Their Limitations

Several studies highlight the relevance of physical communication in voters' education. For example, Eze and Nwankwo (2016) examined the role of town hall meetings, community dialogues, and door-to-door campaigns during elections in southeastern Nigeria. They concluded that physical engagement fosters trust and deeper understanding among rural and elderly voters. Nonetheless, they also highlighted logistical challenges such as high costs, security risks, and limited scalability.

Integration of Digital Strategies

A study by Ajayi and Fatunde (2020) explored the integration of digital communication strategies by the Lagos State Government during voter sensitization campaigns. The study found that combining radio broadcasts with WhatsApp groups and community theatre enhanced message retention and behavioral change. The digital approach also enabled real-time feedback from the audience, which was used to improve messaging strategies.

In another study, Obono and Igwe (2022) assessed the use of digital strategies by the NOA during the 2023 general elections. They observed that while the NOA had made efforts to use social media and mobile applications to supplement its traditional methods, the overall impact was limited by infrastructure deficits, inconsistent messaging, and lack of trained personnel. However, areas where both physical and digital channels were combined saw higher levels of voter turnout and civic engagement.

Comparatively, in Kenya, Mwangi and Otieno (2020) studied the implementation of a hybrid campaign by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). They reported that integrating SMS alerts, radio talk shows, and Twitter updates improved public awareness and reduced incidents of electoral violence. Similarly, in India, Singh (2019) documented the success of blending street plays with social media campaigns to promote electoral participation in rural areas. These international studies reinforce the idea that hybrid communication can be an effective strategy for public communication, particularly during elections, when accurate, timely, and inclusive information dissemination is critical.

5. Review of Theories

Social Capital Theory, as elucidated by Putnam (2000), posits that social connections and networks within communities contribute to the development of trust, cooperation, and collective action. In digital communication and electoral processes, the importance of online social networks and virtual communities in facilitating political discourse and citizen engagement, digital communication platforms, such as social media sites and online forums, serve as virtual spaces where individuals can connect, interact, and exchange information, thereby fostering the formation of social capital in cyberspace (Bimber, 2001). Previous research has applied Social Capital Theory to examine the influence of digital communication on public discourse and civic participation in electoral contexts. For instance, studies by Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) and Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) have investigated the role of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter played in enhancing political engagement and mobilizing citizens during elections. These studies found that individuals who actively participate in online social networks are more likely to be politically engaged, express their opinions, and participate in collective actions, thus contributing to the formation of social capital in the digital sphere.

Media Convergence Theory (Jenkins, 2006)

This theory explains how old and new media coexist and interact in contemporary

communication environments. Jenkins describes media convergence as a cultural shift where consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections across dispersed media content. In the context of this study, the theory provides a framework for understanding how the NOA blends traditional communication channels such as radio, television, and town hall meetings with new media platforms like social media, mobile apps, and web portals. Media convergence highlights the fluid nature of media consumption and suggests that a holistic, integrated approach to communication is essential for reaching diverse audiences during elections.

6 Research Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of hybrid communication strategies by the National Orientation Agency (NOA) during elections. Specifically, the research design integrates survey research, content analysis, and in-depth interviews. For the content analysis, data from the different digital media platforms were sourced; the NOA Facebook page was created in November 2011, YouTube in March 2018, X in March 2022, and Instagram January 2016.

6.2 Population of the Study

The population for this study includes NOA staff at the national, state, and local government levels; Nigerian citizens across selected states (Kano, Lagos & Enugu), particularly those of voting age and content analysis of NOA messages both online and offline.

6.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A multi-level sampling technique will be used:

Stage 1: Purposive sampling was used to identify three states from different geopolitical zones (e.g., Lagos, Kano, and Abia) to ensure regional representation. The state selected were picked due to their influences and economy abilities

Stage 2: Available sampling was used to select NOA staff and community members within those states.

Stage 3: Simple random sampling was employed to select survey respondents among the voting age population.

Stage 4: Content analysis of NOA materials across the social media platforms from 1 Jan – 31 March 2023.

A total sample size of 600 survey respondents will be targeted (200 per state), alongside 15 NOA staff and 10 stakeholders for interviews, and content from 3 months of NOA digital and physical campaign materials for content analysis.

6.4 Data Collection Methods

A. Survey Method: Structured questionnaires will be administered to citizens to assess their awareness, perceptions, and engagement with NOA's digital electoral campaigns. The questionnaire will include both closed and open-ended questions addressing communication reach, trust in messaging, and preferences for communication channels.

B. Content Analysis: A systematic content analysis was conducted on NOA's communication materials from the last general election. This includes:

- i. Social media posts (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram).
- ii. Physical campaign materials (flyers, banners, radio jingles, town hall transcripts).
- iii. Press releases and public statements. Coding categories will include message themes, language style, interactivity, visual aids, and misinformation counter-narratives.
- iv. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with NOA officials, INEC personnel, and media/CSO representatives. These interviews will explore strategic decision-making processes, challenges in hybrid communication implementation, audience engagement mechanisms, and capacity gaps. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

6.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data from the survey will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) and inferential statistics (chi-square and correlation) via SPSS. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey responses will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Content analysis results will be presented using frequency counts, percentages, and comparative interpretations.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

This presents the data collected through surveys, interviews, and content analysis to examine the challenges and opportunities associated with digital communication strategies implemented by the National Orientation Agency (NOA) during elections. Data are analyzed to address the research questions regarding the effectiveness of hybrid communication strategies in mobilizing and educating voters during election periods.

Presentation and Analysis of Survey Data

A total of 600 respondents across Lagos, Kaduna, and Abia States participated in the survey, while 600 questionnaires were collected. The results are presented using tables and descriptive statistics.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	315	52.5%
Female	285	47.5%
Age Group		
- - -	180	30%
26 – 35	240	40%
36 – 45	120	20%
46+	60	10%
Education Level		
Primary	48	8%
Secondary	168	28%
Tertiary	384	64%

Source: Researcher field survey, 2024

Table 2: Awareness and Engagement with NOA Communication

Question	Yes	No
Have you seen or heard any NOA voter education message in the last election?	402 (67%)	198(33%)
Was the message digital (Social media, SMS)	216 (36%)	-
Was the message physical (radio, flyers, and community events)?	276 (46%)	-
Did you receive the message via both digital and physical platforms?	114 (19%)	-

Source: Researcher field survey, 2024

Table 3: Respondents' Preferred Communication Channels

Channel	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	174	29%
Social Media	198	33%
Community Town Halls	120	20%
Whatsapp Broadcast	66	11%
Television	42	7%

Source: Researcher field survey, 2024

Table 4: Perceived Effectiveness of NOA strategies

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
NOA messages were timely and relevant	58%	22%	20%
The combination of Physical and digital methods made the message clearer	61%	18%	21%

I trust information from NOA more than political parties	47%	26%	27%
NOA's digital outreach should be improved	83%	10%	7%

Source: Researcher field survey, 2024

Presentation and Analysis of Content Analysis

Content from NOA's Facebook page, official press releases and community outreach materials during the 2023 general elections were analyzed over a period of 3 months (1 Jan – 31 March 2023).

Table 5: Themes Identified

Theme	Frequency	Medium Used
Voter education	42	Facebook, Flyers, Radio
Anti-violence campaign	28	Town Halls, Twitter
Civic duty promotion	36	Radio Jingles, Posters
Fake news countering	20	Facebook, Whatsapp

Source: Researcher content analysis, 2024

Nature of Content

Tone: Predominately neutral and informative

Language: English (70%), Hausa (15%), Yoruba (5%), Igbo (10%)

Visuals: 55% of online posts contained infographics; 20% had videos; 25% were plain text

Engagement Rate: Averaged 230 likes and 85 shares per post on facebook

Opportunities in Digital Communication

Broader Reach: using Whatsapp helped us reach younger people who do not attend rallies – NOA State Director

Real Time Feedback: Facebook comments allowed us to adjust our messaging quickly- NOA media officer.

Table 6: Challenges Identified

Challenge	Frequency (m)	
Poor Internet Infrastructure	19	
Low digital skills among field staff	17	
Budget constraints for media buying	15	
Message duplication/inconsistency	12	

Source: Researcher field survey, 2024

Stakeholder Suggestions

- i. Develop NOA mobile apps for election engagement
- ii. Train community mobilizers in digital tools
- iii. Partner with telecom companies SMS voter education

8. Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that the National Orientation Agency (NOA) has adopted a hybrid communication approach a blend of digital and physical communication to enhance citizen engagement during elections. This strategy aligns with Media Convergence Theory (Jenkins, 2006), which posits that communication today is characterized by the intersection of traditional and new media. NOA's use of radio, town hall meetings, and flyers alongside Facebook, WhatsApp, and X (Twitter) exemplifies this convergence. The theory's relevance is evident in how the agency leverages various platforms to cater to Nigeria's heterogeneous population with differing media access and preferences.

The finding that 61% of respondents believe combining physical and digital methods improved message clarity further affirms Jenkins' assertion that convergence enhances the effectiveness of messaging by allowing audiences to connect content across formats. However, the execution remains uneven, as digital efforts are hampered by limited infrastructure and untrained personnel challenges that constrain the full potential of media convergence.

Moreover, Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) helps explain the importance of digital platforms in fostering civic participation and trust. NOA's use of social media not only disseminates information but also creates virtual spaces for dialogue, feedback, and collective engagement essential components of digital social capital. Respondents' engagement through comments, shares, and reactions on platforms like Facebook signals the formation of online networks that can influence civic behavior and participation.

Nonetheless, only 47% of respondents trusted NOA messages more than those from political parties. This indicates a gap in the formation of institutional trust within digital communities a core component of bonding and bridging social capital. It highlights the need for NOA to improve credibility and transparency online to strengthen its social capital.

Interview data with stakeholders reinforced that physical interactions, such as town halls, still foster deeper trust, especially in rural communities. This supports the notion that online engagement must be supplemented by face-to-face interactions to build both online and offline networks of trust, an essential dynamic in Putnam's theory.

In terms of institutional barriers, infrastructural deficits, inadequate training, and message inconsistency weaken the NOA's ability to maintain a coherent media presence across platforms. This gap disrupts the convergence process and limits the formation of durable social capital through consistent, engaging digital communication.

Digital opportunities such as real-time feedback and broader reach were identified. Respondents emphasized platforms like WhatsApp as effective yet underutilized tools. According to Social Capital Theory, such platforms are not just information conduits

but also trust-building arenas where civic norms are reinforced through peer-to-peer engagement.

Summary of Findings

This study investigated the implementation of hybrid (physical & digital) communication strategies by the National Orientation Agency (NOA) during elections in Nigeria. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, involving surveys of citizens, content analysis of NOA campaign materials, and interviews with NOA officials and electoral stakeholders.

Key findings include:

1. **Reach and Usage of digital Communication:** 67% of survey respondents reported exposure to NOA's election-related messages. 19% accessed messages through both physical and digital platforms, confirming the use of a hybrid approach, albeit in limited scope. The NOA's use of both digital and traditional media confirms the relevance of media convergence in electoral communication. However, inconsistencies in strategy and limited infrastructural capacity hinder a fully integrated approach.
2. **Channel Preferences and Audience Engagement:** Respondents preferred a mix of channels including social media (33%), radio (29%), and town halls (20%) demonstrating the necessity of combining media formats to optimize reach and comprehension, as theorized by Jenkins. WhatsApp was identified as an emerging but underutilized platform for voter education.
3. **Effectiveness of Communication:** 61% of respondents agreed that combining physical and digital methods improved message clarity and retention. However, only 47% trusted NOA messages more than those from political parties, indicating a need for enhanced credibility and community trust.
4. **Institutional Challenges:** Interviews and content analysis revealed key constraints including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient digital training for NOA personnel, fragmented content strategy, and budgetary limitations.
5. **Opportunities:** Digital strategies offer significant potential for broader voter outreach, especially in multilingual and multiethnic contexts. Real-time feedback through digital platforms allows message refinement and improved responsiveness.

9. Conclusion

The study concludes that the NOA's current application of digital communication strategy during elections is functional, while the use of hybrid strategy is sub-optimal. The agency has attempted to bridge physical and digital outreach methods, its capacity

to do so effectively is limited by infrastructural, financial, and human capital challenges. Nevertheless, Digital communication remains a critical strategy for inclusive, real-time, and participatory electoral education in Nigeria's democratic landscape.

The Digital approach is particularly vital in a country where a significant proportion of the population are youths who are digitally inclined are raising more demands for digital interaction. Strengthening the NOA's Digital strategy is not just timely, it is essential for improving voter engagement, combating misinformation, and enhancing the credibility of electoral processes.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

- 1 Establish a Digital Communication Framework: The NOA should institutionalize a formal strategy that merges digital innovation with grassroots mobilization, tailored to different demographics.
- 2 Review NOA's Electoral Mandate: Government and electoral stakeholders should update NOA's communication responsibilities to explicitly integrate digital communication in all electoral phases.
- 3 Digital Training for Field Officers: Continuous training and certification in digital communication, data visualization, and online engagement should be offered to all NOA staff.
- 4 Deployment of Digital Coordinators: Appoint dedicated digital strategy officers at zonal offices to manage hybrid communication campaigns and coordinate with local influencers and civic groups.
- 5 Segmented Messaging for Audience Categories: Create tailored messages for youths, women, rural dwellers, and persons with disabilities using both traditional and new media suited to each group.
- 6 Adopt Multilingual Messaging Tools: Expand the use of local languages across both digital and physical media to ensure inclusiveness and accessibility.
- 7 Increase collaboration with Tech and Media Firms: Build partnerships with social media platforms, telecom providers, and media influencers to amplify NOA's messages and improve reach.
- 8 Engage Civil Society and Community Leaders: Collaborate with CSOs, religious institutions, and traditional rulers to validate and disseminate messages, enhancing local trust.
9. Create a Real-Time Feedback Loop: Use social media analytics, community surveys, and call centers to gather feedback and refine ongoing campaigns dynamically.
10. Establish a Digital Performance Dashboard: Develop a performance metrics system that tracks the reach, engagement, and impact of digital communication campaigns during elections.

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EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION IN HEALTH BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN NIGERIA

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and

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Abstract

Effective communication and education create healthy attitude and belief systems which in turn lead to behaviour change from harmful or unhealthy living to a better life. People behave the way they are used to until they are informed and educated on the right behaviour. This work examined the role of education and communication in health behaviour change in Nigeria, stages in behaviour change communication, importance of behaviour change communication and successful health campaigns held in Nigeria. The paper concludes that since diseases do not exist in isolation, but as a result of interactions between human and animals, there is need for a collaboration between human and veterinary medicine to prevent and control diseases that may likely affect both human and animals alike.

Introduction

People will continue to believe, behave and do things the way they know how to do, until they receive information that opens their eyes to a much better way of doing things. Communication widens the horizon of the individual, community or society. It is the conduit of all education. Education places people at the frontiers of knowledge in order to enhance the understanding of problems and their possible solutions. Both formal and informal education are aimed at building capacity through training to cause an awakening as well as to promote critical thinking in relation to attitudinal change. Change is the process of transformation in any individual or community from an incipient status to another position. Change is a necessary phenomenon that occurs with the aid of consistent persuasion. Each of us has a set of belief system that we learned during our youthful age. Some of these beliefs lead to both healthy and unhealthy behaviours. Some factors that stimulate changes in people's behaviours include education, family, friends, religion, media, community or environment.

Behaviour change communication is a planned communication that is made towards behavioural modification of an individual, group, community or the society at large. Precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance are steps or stages in behaviour change. LaMorte (2016) observes that education and communication play an essential role in encouraging positive health and lifestyle behaviour change. This can involve informing individuals about the foredeals of

healthy behaviours such as regular exercise, healthy eating habit, stress management, and avoiding harmful actions or attitudes like smoking or excessive alcohol consumption.

Communication and Behaviour

Effective communication plays a crucial role in diverse aspects of human interaction and behaviour (Arlinghaus and Johnston, 2017). The following points highlight how communication can influence and shape individual and collective behaviours:

i. Communicating Intentions and Goals:

Communication is a powerful tool for conveying intentions, objectives, and goals. When individuals or groups clearly communicate their intentions and goals, it helps create a shared understanding and alignment among stakeholders. This alignment can drive cooperation, collaboration, and coordinated efforts toward achieving common objectives (Suleiman, 2022). Whether in personal relationships, business settings, or social initiatives, transparent communication about intentions and goals fosters trust and reduces misunderstanding.

ii. Influencing Social Norms and Expectations:

Communication plays a pivotal role in shaping and reinforcing social values, beliefs and norms in a person. Norms are unwritten rules that guide behaviour within a society or group. Effective communication can influence these norms by promoting certain behaviours, values, or beliefs, and discouraging negative tendencies. Through media advertising, public messaging, and interpersonal interactions, communication can challenge existing norms and introduce new perspectives, eventually leading to shifts in collective behaviour. For instance, public health campaigns can use communication strategies to promote behaviours such as wearing seatbelts, quitting smoking, or adopting healthier diets, ultimately altering societal norms.

iii. Overcoming Barriers to Behaviour Change:

People often encounter obstacles when attempting to change their behaviour, whether adopting healthier habits, embracing sustainable practices, or making other positive changes. Effective communication can help overcome these barriers by providing information, motivation, and support. By addressing concerns, providing clear instructions, and offering incentives, communication campaigns can empower individuals to make desired behavioural changes. Tailored messaging, feedback loops, and social support networks can reinforce these efforts and assist individuals in navigating challenges on their path to behaviour change. Effective communication serves as an encouragement for diverse aspects of behaviour, ranging from personal intentions and goals to societal norms and expectations. By conveying messages clearly,

influencing perspectives, and addressing obstacles, communication plays a crucial function in guiding individuals and groups toward positive behavioural outcomes.

Health Communication

The numerous health challenges in Nigeria call for effective communication approaches such as media advocacy, social mobilization, edutainment among other approaches to address health related issues and to equip individuals and communities to make informed decision about their health. Health communication is an essential part of public health, which plays a crucial role in information dissemination and promotion of behavioural change. Health communication is concerned with awareness creation and how to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle such as disease prevention, family planning, immunization, good hygiene culture, among others. Health communication is the study and use of communication approaches to inform and influence individual and community decision to promote healthy behaviours (Sixsmith *et al.*, 2014). The essence of health communication is to change peoples' behaviour about certain health issues. Guttman and Salmon (2004) assert that health communication helps in creating awareness of new infections, chronic diseases and the promotion of recommended treatments.

The world is heading towards One-health. One-health is a global movement that involves a holistic, trans-disciplinary, multi-sectional strategy adopted to manage human, animal and environmental health. The Nigeria government keyed into the global initiatives by launching the One-health strategic plan in 2019 at Abuja. The One health initiative involves the Federal Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Environment (Batta, 2024). The major concerns of one-health is to bring changes to human health and the environment by transforming individual or organisms from its incipient position to another position. Government alone cannot do it. Hence, it becomes necessary for the health communicators to communicate and educate people about this initiative for the purpose of protecting and restoring our natural habitats, securing our health and to have a healthy environment for human, animal and plant habitation. Satcher (2000) notes that accuracy, consistency, repetition, cultural competence, reliability, availability, balance and timeliness are effective elements of health communication. Health communication is an extensive area that includes risk communication, health and policy promotion, focus communication, patient and supplier communication, health literacy and health education. Health education messages are transmitted through diverse communication channels to inform and educate people about certain harmful behaviours.

Health Education

The primary concern of behaviour change is the provision of information to disseminate the knowledge base of the people so as to take reasonable decisions and

engage in behavioural change. Education provides individuals with prerequisite information and knowledge about the risks and benefits associated with certain behaviours. Education stimulates or induces change and serving as a cornerstone for personal and societal advancement. It equips individuals with the tools needed to adapt to a changing landscape, enabling them to confront challenges and embrace opportunities. Through education, people are empowered to challenge the way things are, question assumptions, and drive innovation. Education helps in fostering critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, creativity and empowering individuals to become active participants in shaping their communities or societies.

Through education, people have acquired skills and information. The acquisition of skills and information is a fundamental outcome of education that empowers individuals to succeed in diverse spheres of life. From practical skills to advanced academic knowledge, education endows people with the competence to navigate complex professional environments. These skills do not only enhance employability but also instill a sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy. As individuals become proficient in various areas, they gain the autonomy to make informed decisions, pursue their passions, and contribute meaningfully to society

Education is not limited to the dissemination of facts; it also shapes attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives. Exposure to various cultures, ideas, and viewpoints encourages tolerance, empathy, and a wider understanding of the world. Education encourages open-mindedness and promotes critical engagement with societal issues. Individuals are equipped to become agents of positive change through education. Education enables communities or individuals to recognize the importance of ethical considerations, promoting responsible and compassionate decision-making. Directing messages to solve specific needs of an individual or community can encourage and stimulate behaviour change. As individuals, communities and societies embrace education, they overcome challenges, contribute meaningfully, and create a better future. We can collectively work towards a more inclusive, innovative, and enlightened world via recognizing education and transformative potential (Edgar, 2012).

Health education is an essential component of health communication in Nigeria. Individuals and communities need to be educated about symptoms, preventive measures and diverse health care services where they can be well informed about their health status. People can be educated on their reproductive health, mental health, communicable and non-communicable diseases. Health education is instrumental in diverse prevention. Through frequent transmission of information about certain health complications such as diabetes, cancer, hepatitis etc., individuals or communities involved will be educated to take preventive measures. Olalekan, Adebimpe & Olawoye (2018) note that health education campaigns have been successful in

promoting immunization programmes leading to increased vaccination coverage and reduction in vaccine – preventable diseases in Nigeria. They further observe that health education interventions can enhance positive health behaviour changes, such as improved hygiene cultures, reduced high in-take of alcohol and tobacco consumption in the nation (Olorunfemi, Oyewole & Olorunfemi, 2019). Health education facilities such as schools, community centers and health care facilities can provide educational programmes to teach people about living healthy lifestyles or behaviours.

Behaviour Change Communication

Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) is an interactive process with individuals or communities to create specific messages and methods using diverse communication channels to develop positive behaviours, enhance and maintain individual, community and societal behaviour change. For instance, communication is important in educating families with history of HIV/AIDS and diabetes. Communication helps the HIV/AIDS and diabetic patients and their family members to have access to correct information about the illness, complications, treatment, advantages of life style modification, and available health care services. Information alone is insufficient to support behaviour change. Influencing healthy behaviours and creating a supportive social environment is also important. It requires desire for learning and participation of patient, family and community. Before individuals or communities change their behaviours, they must first understand basic facts about HIV/AIDS and diabetes, change life style, know importance of modifying diet, regular exercise and be given access to services. They must have social support of family and community for behaviour change. Iyorza (2015) notes the five stages of behaviour change thus:

- i. **Precontemplation Stage:** At this stage, the individual is not ready to change his or her behaviour even in the next six months. Being uninformed about the repercussions of one's behaviour can cause a person to be in this stage for long.
- ii. **Contemplation Stage:** Contemplation is a stage where an individual is willing to change his or her behaviour in the next six months. At this stage, he or she is aware of the advantages and disadvantages of changing his or her behaviour. He or she is getting ready to change in the next six months. However, individuals at this stage are not ready for traditional action-oriented programmes that expect him or her to act instantly.
- iii. **Preparation Stage:** This is the stage people or individuals are willing to take instant action usually measured as the next month, or in the next one month. At this level, the individuals consult their doctors, buy self-help books, join health education classes and rely on self-change approach.
- iv. **Action Stage:** This is a stage in which people have made specific changes in

their lifestyles within the past six months. In most cases, they have to attain a criterion that scientists and professionals agree is sufficient to reduce risk of disease. For instance, reduction in the number of cigarettes in-take in a day, week or month is not an acceptable action. Rather, total abstinence from smoking culture could suffice.

- v. **Maintenance Stage:** This is a stage where individuals have made specific changes in their lifestyles and are working seriously to prevent any temptation that will make them fall back or go back to their previous behaviour. At this level, people are less tempted. Based on self-efficacy data researchers have estimated that maintenance lasts from six months to about five years.

Importance of Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) in Health

These include:

- a) Increasing knowledge: BCC can ensure that people are given the basic facts about their health in a language or visual medium (or any other medium that they can understand and relate to).
- b) Promoting attitude change: BCC can lead to appropriate attitudinal changes in people living with diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, among many others.
- c) Reducing stress of patient and family: Behaviour change communication provides information about the treatment, facilities, services in government and private health sector and self-help groups.
- d) Creating demand for information and services: BCC can urge individuals and communities to demand information on any health related matter and appropriate services.
- e) Promoting services for prevention, care, and support: BCC promotes services for people living with HIV/AIDS and diabetic patients and their family members; support groups for HIV/AIDS and diabetics; treatment and care for other problems due to HIV/AIDS and diabetes; and also extend social and economic support.
- f) Improving skills and making patients independent: BCC programmes can focus on teaching new skills and behaviours, such as regular exercise, modifying diet, taking insulin injection, precautions when alone or driving or traveling. This will help in building confidence and taking decisions independently.

Behaviour change is a complex process that can be influenced by various factors. Education provides individuals with the necessary knowledge and awareness of the benefits and risks associated with certain behaviours. Without proper understanding, behaviour change is unlikely to occur (Anonim, 2017). People are more likely to change their behaviour when they are motivated by personal or external incentives such as

health improvements, financial gains, social recognition, or rewards. Individuals assess the perceived benefits of adopting a new behaviour against the perceived barriers or obstacles. Behaviour change is more likely when the perceived benefits outweigh the barriers. Individual beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding health and wellbeing can impact the willingness to change behaviour. Positive health beliefs can encourage proactive behaviour change (Gurupada & Kola, 2019). Social interactions and the influence of friends, family, peers, and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping behaviour. People often conform to social norms and seek approval from their social circles. Availability of resources, such as time, money, facilities, and support, can either facilitate or hinder behaviour change. Limited access to resources may act as a barrier.

Understanding these factors and their interplay can help educators, communicators, and behaviour change practitioners design effective strategies to convey information, inspire change, and promote positive outcomes. In today's rapidly evolving world, the empowerment of individuals and societies is closely intertwined with the acquisition of knowledge. Education stands as a powerful conduit for change, enabling people to acquire skills, information, and perspectives that shape their attitudes and perceptions (Nyunt et al., 2015). This interconnected process is pivotal in driving progress, fostering innovation, and promoting positive societal transformation.

Instances of Successful Behaviour Change Campaigns in Nigeria

i. Nutrition, Education and Behaviour Change:

The "Alive & Thrive" programme in Nigeria has successfully combined education and communication to improve infant and young child feeding practices. Through various media channels, this initiative has promoted exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding, resulting in improved child nutrition.

ii. HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention:

Nigeria has implemented successful behaviour change campaigns to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and promote safe practices. These campaigns have utilized various communication channels, including mass media, community outreach, and peer education. As a result, there has been increased awareness, improved condom use, and a decline in new HIV infections.

iii. Polio Eradication Campaign:

Nigeria successfully tackled the challenge of polio through a comprehensive behaviour change campaign. The Nigerian government along with international organizations like WHO and UNICEF, launched awareness programmes and engaged with local communities to address vaccine hesitancy. This campaign led to a significant reduction in polio cases and contributed to the eventual

eradication of the disease in the country (Udoudom, Saawuan & Igiri, 2023).

iv. Almajiri Education Initiative:

The Almajiri Education Initiative focuses on providing formal education to out-of-school children, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Through this initiative, many Almajiri (Quranic school students) have been integrated into the formal education system, improving their access to quality education and enhancing their future prospects.

v. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Programmes:

Organizations like the "Bridge International Academies" have introduced Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics education programmes in Nigeria. These initiatives have enhanced students' skills tremendously, preparing them for future careers in technology and innovation.

vi. Voter Education and Civic Engagement:

Every four years, general elections are held in Nigeria to provide opportunity for eligible voters to elect their leaders. Nigerians have seen successful voter education campaigns that use various communication channels to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities as voters. These campaigns have contributed to increased voter turnout and civic engagement (Udoudom, Saawuan & Igiri, 2023). These examples showcase how behaviour change campaigns, educational initiatives, and the education communication nexus have been effectively leveraged in Nigeria to address various social and developmental challenges.

vii. Girl-Child Education Initiatives:

Several organizations in Nigeria have worked to promote and support girl-child education. "Girls' Education Project," which aims to improve the enrollment and retention of girls in schools, is a typical example. Through intense campaigns and community engagement, the initiative has led to increased enrollment and reduced dropout rates among girls (Udoudom, Saawuan & Igiri, 2023).

Synergy of Education and Communication

Education and communication are closely intertwined and often go hand in hand. Nancy and Dongre (2021) point out that effective communication is crucial in conveying educational information, while education provides the knowledge and understanding necessary for effective communication. Effective communication and education can influence policy-makers' decision or advocate for policies that prioritize public health. By providing evidence-based information, awareness creation, stakeholders engagement, these practices can lead to the implementation of policies that

support health promotion and disease prevention (Olorunfemi *et al.*, 2019).

Nancy and Dongre (2021) note the following roles of education and communication:

- i. **Information Dissemination:** Education involves the imparting of knowledge, skills, and values to individuals. Communication is the vehicle through which this information is shared. Effective communication ensures that educational messages are clear, accurate, and comprehensible to the intended audience.
- ii. **Two-Way Exchange:** Communication allows for a two-way exchange of information. Educators can gather feedback from their audience through communication channels, such as discussions, surveys, or interactive sessions. This feedback informs the adaptation and improvement of educational content.
- iii. **Engagement and Participation:** Effective communication strategies, such as active listening, engaging storytelling, and interactive presentations, enhance learner engagement and participation in educational activities. Engaged learners are more likely to grasp and retain the information being conveyed.
- iv. **Contextualization:** Communication helps contextualize educational content by relating it to real-life situations, personal experiences, or societal issues. This aids in making the educational material relevant and relatable to the learners.
- v. **Behavioural Change:** Communication plays a vital role in motivating and inspiring behavioural change. Well-communicated educational messages can influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, fostering positive change in individuals and communities.

Other contexts of Education and Communication

1. Societal and Cultural Influences on Behaviours:

Education and communication can help address societal and cultural factors such as peer influence, cultural sensitivity and social norms that influence behaviour. Also, movies, television shows, and social media can influence behaviours and attitudes. Positive portrayals of desired behaviours can lead to emulation. In each of the above mentioned points, effective education and communication strategies involve clear messaging, engaging content, targeted outreach, and a deep understanding of the specific audience's needs and motivations (Milgrom, 2015). Collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, businesses, and community organizations are often necessary to achieve widespread behaviour change and create a positive impact on human health, as well as a healthy environment, and society.

2. Environmental and Sustainable Practices:

Education and communication are essential for encouraging environmentally

friendly and sustainable practices. People need to know and understand the impact of their actions on the environment and be motivated to adopt more sustainable behaviours. Some of the effective approaches to environmental sustainability practices are schools, museums, and community organizations. These can educate people about ecological systems, climate change, and the importance of conservation. Governments and environmental groups use communication campaigns to raise awareness about issues like recycling culture, STEM, green economy, renewable energy and organic farming practices to sustain a healthy environment for man, animal and plant habitation. Also, companies can educate their employees and customers about their efforts to reduce their environmental footprint and encourage similar actions.

Conclusion

Through intense dissemination of accurate communication and education, individuals would be equipped with the necessary knowledge they need to make an informed decisions and adopt healthier behaviours. The need for collaboration between educators and communicators can lead to more effective and holistic strategies for behaviour change. Educators possess expertise in teaching and educating curriculum development, pedagogy, and understanding learning needs, while communicators possess expertise in message creation to reach various audiences, and utilizing diverse media channels. The adoption of technology such as mobile apps and virtual reality experiences can create or enhance immersive and interactive learning environment that encourage positive and healthy behaviour change.

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HEADLINE FRAMINGS AND GEOGRAPHIC MISATtribution: A STUDY OF THE STORY ON SKATEBOARDING TO AFRICA

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and
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Abstract

This study examined the phenomenon of headline framing and geographic misattribution in Western news reporting, using the May 2025 coverage of a British skateboarder allegedly “skateboarding to Africa” as a case study. The case of Mr. Allison from East Sussex, who suffered robbery while traveling from France to Morocco was reported by the BBC and Independent News. Even if the facts put the robbery inside a European country, headlines focused on “Africa” as the final destination, creating a rather dubious association in geography. This paper employs framing theory (Entman, 1993), postcolonial theory, and agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw 1972) to explore how the choice of words, stressing, and even ignoring certain aspects in the headlines influence public opinion, sustain stereotypes, and facilitate the symbolic ordering of Africa. The case was analysed in the context of the media's tendency to represent Africa as a homogeneous, exotic, and dangerous place, often termed “Africa,” without geographical precision. It argues that the qualitative analysis of the headlines, thematic coding, and international media comparisons to detect the frames and the rhetorical outcomes of geographic misattribution as frames border on qualitative methods. They contended that “Africa” was more than a mere shorthand for Morocco; rather, it was a narrative device on which editorial frameworks eagerly drew, celebrating the seductive at the expense of the accurate. This analysis demonstrates the capturing nature of such practices and the framing Africa as a center of dependency and underdevelopment. The article concludes with the suggestion of incorporating geography as the main source of western news, as well as greater sensitivity to the geopolitical contexts which headlines are shaped. This particular example underlines the urgency of media literacy, as well as the geography of cross-continental news editing.

Introduction

In the modern journalism, the title of an article serves as the 'micro-texts' that guide what specific details the readers pay the most attention to or how they understand the article as a whole (van Dijk, 2013). Very often they stand out the most in a news story, managing the perceptions of the audience prior to the completion of the story. As Bell (1991) observes, headlines are the story's handshake, compressing complex events into compact, often provocative formulations that compete for reader attention. However, in the process of condensing and dramatising, headlines can distort spatial, temporal, and contextual accuracy (Bednarek & Caple, 2017).

The May 2025 case of Mr. Allison, a British skateboarder robbed in France while en route to Morocco, presents a telling example. Prominent outlets such as the BBC and Independent News framed the event under variations of the headline “Skateboarding to Africa,” despite the fact that the incident occurred entirely within Europe. This type of geographic misattribution is not an isolated occurrence; research on media framing of Africa has long documented how the continent is frequently invoked as a symbolic referent-often homogenised, exoticised, or problematised-regardless of geographic

specificity (Fair, 1993; Hawk, 1992; Bunce, M., Franks, S., & Paterson, C. 2017). Such representational shortcuts not only risk misleading audiences but also perpetuate epistemic biases in global news geographies (Wasserman, 2011).

Despite the well-documented influence of headlines in shaping audience perception, little scholarly attention has been given to the intersection of headline framing and geographic misattribution in Western media's portrayal of Africa. The 'Skateboarding to Africa' case describes Africa as a continent where geography is secondary to story. This raises the editorial Africa and the Africa in the Polemic Africa attempts to form discursively in relation to possible editorial influences, intentional or unintentional, concerning Africa. This case study aims to examine more closely the case of 'Skateboarding to Africa' and the cross-section in Western media of Africa's narrative geography and geographical headline misrepresentation. This case study has been constructed to address the following research questions:

1. How did Western news headlines frame the “Skateboarding to Africa” incident in terms of geographic representation?
2. What linguistic and thematic strategies contributed to the geographic misattribution in the case study?
3. In what ways does the case reflect broader patterns in Western media's symbolic framing of Africa?

Theoretical Framework

To investigate how Western media frame Africa, particularly in the case study involving BBC and The Independent News coverage of the 2025 incident in France involving Mr. Allison from East Sussex, this research adopted two main theoretical lenses: Framing Theory and Postcolonial Theory.

Framing Theory: Framing theory, as developed by Goffman (1974) and further articulated by Entman (1993), explains how media select certain aspects of reality and make them more salient in a communicating text. According to Entman (1993), framing involves “selection and salience,” where particular elements are emphasised to promote a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, or treatment recommendation. In the context of Western media representation of Africa, frames often rely on recurring narratives such as “conflict-prone,” “poverty-stricken,” or “lawless” regions (Fair, 1993; Hawk, 1992). This can influence audience perceptions, as media consumers may form attitudes toward Africa based on repeated frames rather than firsthand knowledge (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For the BBC and Independent News coverage of the robbery incident involving Mr. Allison, framing theory helps to

examine: Lexical choices (e.g., adjectives used to describe Africa or Africans), thematic structures (e.g., the focus on danger, lawlessness, or exoticism), and omissions (e.g., ignoring socio-political context or African voices).

Postcolonial Theory: Postcolonial theory, as articulated by Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Gayatri Spivak (1988), interrogates how the legacies of colonialism persist in contemporary discourse, shaping representations of formerly colonised peoples. This perspective assumes that Western media tend to reproduce 'Orientalist' and 'Afro-pessimist' frameworks that position Africa as the 'Other' - strange, behind the times, and needing the West's saving grace (Mudimbe, 1988; Nothias, 2014). Since postcolonialism, the BBC and Independent News have published offers insights that enable one to: disentangle discursive hierarchies whereby Africans are rendered voiceless, trace dominant storytelling tropes describing Africa as hostile, dangerous, and a region teeming with crises and probe the relations of dominance underlying the selection of images, metaphors, and angles employed in news stories. Such an analysis further demonstrates that the blueprints of global media systems are anything but neutral, as they contain underlying historical and cultural frameworks that reproduce relations of dominance.

Agenda-Setting Theory: McCombs & Shaw (1972). The order of subjects is determined by the media and, as such, what to 'think about' is what is presented to the audience. In this instance, a headline is instrumental. In the case of skateboarding, what if the headline mentions an accident, crime and a celebrity, then the possible conversations could be limited to these areas and community development, youth engagement of culture in skateboarding would be ignored. McCombs and Shaw's 1972 Chapel Hill study found that the more media coverage in issue receives, the more the public will be concerned with that issue. This is, to a large degree, true for the media coverage of niche sports like skateboarding.

Combining Framing Theory, Postcolonial Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory enables a multidimensional analysis. While framing theory focuses on how media narratives are structured, postcolonial theory interrogates why such frames are culturally and historically predisposed to favour certain interpretations over others. The agenda-setting theory tell us what to think, but it tells us what to think about by prioritising certain topics. They provide a robust analytical tool to uncover both the mechanics and the ideological underpinnings of Western media representations of Africa.

Review of Related Literature

Framing theory and headlines as micro-texts

Framing scholarship provides the primary theoretical anchor for analyses of headline practices. Entman's influential formulation- "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient..." (Entman, 1993, p. 52) captures how editors highlight particular elements such a destination label while downplaying others like precise geography. Headlines operate as compact frames: as Bell (1991) puts it, headlines function like "the story's handshake," initiating readers' interpretive moves and often setting the agenda for how the rest of the report will be read. Researchers emphasise that because headlines are highly constrained in space and aimed at immediacy, they are particularly prone to employing heuristics, metaphors, and geographic shorthand that can distort the underlying facts (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; van Dijk, 2013).

Headline rhetoric, news routines and editorial constraints

Studies in news production show that competition between attraction against clarity and simplicity will shape a story in a particular way, same as organisational customs of speed, SEO, and editorial ranking. Why do editors choose loud and sweeping phrases that ensure share-ability? Why do Galtung and Ruge (1965), and later Shoemaker & Reese (1996), overwhelmingly describe the news-value editors apply as dramatic, deep, and wide? Why do Bednarek and Caple (2017) contend that heads of stories can hyperbolically, metonymically, and nominally manipulate linguistic structures, hence oversimplifying the complexities of a certain occurrence, using overly simplistic story-lines? These rhetorical devices may be efficient, in that they achieve the goal of simplification of the referents, and their impacts can give rise to partial and misleading truths.

Geographic misattribution and news geographies

Spatial imaginings in news and their politics, or what might be called news geographies, are more and more. Wasserman (2011, p.98) corroborates (Painter, 2008) argues that:

news media produce maps of attention, and they are as much rhetorical as they are cartographic, "news geographies" focus on some areas and render others as flat, or the same, or interchangeable entities. Journalists, the moment they use metonymic expressions like "Africa" to stand for a particular country or a group of countries in other more specific contexts do so at the great risk of obliterating critical geo-political differences, and, of reinforcing stereotypical geographies (p.15).

Representations of Africa in Western media: historical and contemporary studies

Fair's (1993) work on Africa's portrayal in the news identified five structural clichés, such as The “Exotic Other”, The “Primitive / Backward” Frame, The “Crisis and Chaos” Narrative, The “Dependent / Helpless” Frame and The “Unchanging / Timeless” Myth, in the framing of Africa, while later critiques show how contemporary digital-age African news continues to “dumb down” Africa, reducing coherence to slaps of feel-good branding (Bunce, Franks, & Paterson, 2017).

Africa has long suffered in the hands of Western media, and like much of the Global South, remains available as a cheap source of illustrative chaos for pictographic commentary (Fair, 1993; Said, 1978). Western narratives construct non-Western societies as the “Other exotic, irrational, and inferior through a discourse of domination that legitimises Western super” inferior. Extending this framework to news analysis, Fair (1993) identified that:

contemporary Western journalism reproduces these same representational patterns through selective framing and imagery. Five structural clichés characterise this discourse: the “Exotic Other”, which aestheticises and mystifies Southern cultures for Western consumption; the “Primitive or Backward” frame, which equates non-Western societies with underdevelopment and lack of civilisation; the “Crisis and Chaos” narrative, which normalises conflict, famine, and disease as intrinsic to the Global South; the “Dependent or Helpless” frame, which positions the South as perpetually reliant on Western aid and intervention; and the “Unchanging or Timeless” myth, which freezes these societies in an ahistorical state of cultural stagnation. Together, these clichés sustain an epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western rationality and progress while marginalising Southern agency and complexity. Thus, both Said and Fair reveal that the media's portrayal of the Global South is not merely descriptive but profoundly ideological, reinforcing global asymmetries of power and knowledge (p. 18).

Bunce et al. (2017) illustrate: the continent is often depicted as a space of unbounded chaos, with regions and countries submerged in a sea of turbulence and disorder (p.154). Although the story might focus on individual countries, the framing almost always boils down to a continent - the structural void of a story, or a bordered-caged continent, at the cost of a dramatic paralysis of the economically profitable narrative, Africa. These are not stylistic silences. They articulate a knowledge production and a knowledge reproduction from the Global North newsroom and the Global South reality.

Empirical investigations of headline accuracy and effects

Researching the validity and effects of headlines illumine the gaps of accuracy and misleading framing and their consequences on audience understanding. Studies on the relationship between the claims of a headline and the content of a particular article point to systematic gaps that skew the understanding of those who engage only with the digital headlines of articles (Flint, 2017; Tandoc & Johnson, 2016). It is reported that extensive attempts to realign a text with the claim of the headline, after the headline has been set, only to find that the risk levels and intent ascribed to the text remain inverted, changes the text headline in unexplainable or unexposed ways (Chong & Druckman, 2007). These results shed light on the geographic misattribution consequence. A person who reads the headline saying “Skateboarding to Africa” is likely to suffer from a long-lasting and false association that remains unchanged even when supplied with details from the original article. Framing and headlines. Framing theory describes how communicative decisions emphasise certain dimensions of reality while ignoring others. To emphasise something is to highlight some aspects of reality- make them more pronounced (Entman, 1993) Headlines represent a form of concentration and extreme framing: they carry out selection in a context of extreme reduction of space and speed and thus serve as the first, and often, the last, interpretative cue for the audience (Bell 1991). Headlines utilise linguistic (metonymy, nominalisation, hyperbole and others) to construct cognitive shortcuts that elevate the prominence of concepts and reduce the nuance (Bednarek & Caple, 2017).

The meaning of representation is fundamentally different and denotes positive construction of meaning. Hall (1997) points this out: representation means the production of meaning in the use of language. It explains why a simple word in the headline, for instance, “Africa” as opposed to “Morocco,” has ideological and epistemic implications on the public imaginary and identity politics of power. For geographies of news spatial focus, a significant area of concern is how the media construct and 'map' attention: foregrounding, obscuring or treating places in relation to one another homogenously (Wasserman, 2011). Geographic metonymy using a continent or a region to stand for a country or an event embodies a rhetorical economy which flattens and obscures the intricately woven spatial realities to accessible and, of necessity, reductionist designations, often intersecting with stereotype spatial imaginaries (Painter, 2008). These instruments provide a glimpse in the ways the editorial shorthand is used to transform an episode centered on Europe to one that is framed on a continental scale.

The interplay of routines with the necessity to comply with the deadline, the need for search engine optimisation (SEO), audience analytics, and bureaucratic editorial decision-making structures the production of the headlines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Galtung and Ruge's news values also provide a rationale as to why some locational modifiers are sought by editors: proximity, novelty, and drama enhance the perception of newsworthiness (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). These constraints on choice themes, text length, headline, syntax, argument, language, punctuation, coherence, and even the context employed to communicate the headline, intersect with respective linguistic frameworks to shape the headline text that is eventually produced.

This study adopted a qualitative case study design, which is appropriate for in-depth exploration of a specific event within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). The “Skateboarding to Africa” incident is examined as a bounded case that allows for detailed interrogation of headline framing and geographic misattribution. A qualitative approach facilitates close textual analysis of headlines and the interpretive processes underlying their construction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The population consisted of online and print news headlines from major Western English-language news outlets that reported on the incident between 29 May and 5 June 2025. This period covers the initial breaking news and subsequent follow-up coverage. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select outlets with high readership, global reach, and recognized editorial influence, including the BBC, Independent News, The Guardian (UK), and Daily Mail. A total of 15 headlines were collected for analysis.

Data collection methods were headlines retrieved through: direct searches on news websites, archive retrieval via Google News and media databases, and cross-referencing on social media re-posts to ensure authenticity and verify original publication dates. The only headlines analysed were those considered as the primary unit of meaning, with article bodies that reviewed minimally for context verification. The study employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) following van Dijk's (2013) sociocognitive model, focusing on lexical choice, thematic emphasis, and omission. Complementarily, thematic coding was used to categorise headlines into framing patterns such as adventure framing, danger framing, and geographic framing. The analysis sought to identify instances of geographic misattribution, defined as “the inaccurate or imprecise assignment of an event to a geographic location in a manner that alters interpretive meaning” (adapted from Painter, 2008). A three-step coding process was applied: 1. Open coding – identifying recurring words, phrases, and spatial referents. 2. Axial coding - grouping codes into broader framing categories. 3. Selective coding – integrating categories to develop interpretive themes. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of sources (multiple outlets) and cross-verification with

original incident reports. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a detailed audit trail of headline collection and coding decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing with two media scholars was used to check coding consistency and thematic validity. This research relied exclusively on publicly available headlines. No personal or confidential data were collected. Proper attribution of all media sources was maintained in accordance with academic and copyright norms.

Data Presentation

Here are the headlines related to the “Skateboarding to Africa” incident, as reported by various major Western outlets between May 29 and June 2, 2025:

Table 1: Data Presentation: News Headlines on "Skateboarding to Africa"

OUTLET	DATE	HEADLINE	FRAMING CATEGORY
BBC News	May 29, 2025	British man robbed in France while skateboarding to Africa	Geographic framing / Misattribution
Independent News	May 29, 2025	Skateboarding to Africa: UK adventurer's trip cut short by robbery.	Adventure framing / Geographic misattribution
The Guardian (UK)	May 30, 2025	East Sussex man robbed en route to Africa on skateboard.	Adventure framing / Geographic misattribution
Daily Mail	May 30, 2025	British traveler's Africa skateboarding dream ends in French robbery	Human interest framing / Geographic misattribution
Sky News	May 30, 2025	UK skateboarder heading to Africa robbed in France	Adventure framing / Geographic misattribution
BBC News	May 31, 2025	Robbery halts British skateboarder's Africa journey	Human interest framing / Geographic misattribution
Independent News	May 31, 2025	Skateboarder to Africa robbery sparks online sympathy	Human interest framing / Geographic misattribution
The Telegraph	June 1, 2025	Skateboarding to Africa: British man's journey disrupted in France	Adventure framing / Geographic misattribution
Metro UK	June 1, 2025	British skateboarder on Africa trip robbed mid-journey.	Geographic framing / Misattribution
Evening Standard	June 2, 2025	UK man robbed in France during Africa-bound skateboard trip.	Adventure framing / Geographic misattribution

These headlines consistently foreground **“Africa”**, even though the event **“a robbery”** occurred in France, pointing to a pattern of **geographic misattribution** and continent-level framing. Notice how most outlets paired this framing with adventurous or human-interest angles (“skateboarding,” “dream ends,” “journey disrupted”) to heighten narrative appeal.

Analysis of Findings

The analysis is structured according to **thematic patterns, framing styles, and discursive strategies** in the collected headlines.

Table 2: Thematic Patterns

S/ No	Pattern	Headline Predominant Focus
1.	Victim identity and activity	It references “British man,” “skateboarder,” or “tourist” foreground the victim’s nationality and hobby as central narrative hooks.
2.	Geographical markers	Mentions of “France,” “Morocco,” and “Africa” create a geographical framing that links the incident to cross-border travel.
3.	Crime focus	Words like “robbed,” “attack,” “assault,” and “mugged” dominate, establishing the crime itself as the core news value.
4.	Unusual circumstance	The inclusion of “while skateboarding to Morocco” adds an element of peculiarity that increases human-interest value

Table 3: Framing Styles

S/ No	Styles	Focus
1.	Event-driven framing	Most outlets structure the headlines as a brief recounting of the event with emphasis on what happened rather than why it happened.
2.	Victim-centred framing	The victim is often foregrounded, while perpetrators remain unnamed or vaguely referenced (e.g., “by gang,” “by robbers”).
3.	Geopolitical framing	The explicit mention of “Africa” in some headlines subtly in vokes wider stereotypes about danger and insecurity in African travel.
4.	Adventure-disruption framing	By highlighting the victim’s unusual mode of travel (skateboarding), the headlines frame the incident as an interruption of an adventurous journey.

Table 4: Discursive Strategies

S/ No	Strategies	Focus
1.	Lexical emphasis on violence	Use of strong verbs (“attacked,” “robbed,” “mugged”) to intensify the dramatic tone.
2.	Exoticism and novelty	Framing the story as both bizarre and newsworthy due to the uncommon travel method.
3.	Stereotypical linking	Some headlines implicitly link Africa with danger, reinforcing pre - existing Western media narratives.
4.	Minimal perpetrator agency	Absence of detailed descriptions of the suspects shifts focus away from systemic issues like local crime patterns.

Table 5: Comparative Observations

S/ No	Outlet	Focus	Implications for Media Framing Studies
1.	UK-based outlets	Tend to stress nationality (“British man”) and location (“in France”) to connect the story to their audience.	The incident demonstrates how human-interest elements and geographical framing intersect in international crime reporting. There is a clear tendency towards event dramatisation over contextual depth . Such headlines may influence audience perceptions of African travel risk, even though the incident occurred in France.
2.	International wire services	(AP & Reuters) focus on factual recounting with less emotive language.	
3.	Tabloid-style outlets	Used more dramatic adjectives and unusual details to heighten sensational appeal.	

The key newspaper articles with their respective headlines about Mr. Allison's robbery while skateboarding to Morocco show a variety of media framing and discourse strategies as of the time of recording.

The accentuation of the human-interest angle: Several of the headlines under consideration focus on the peculiarities of the situation and in particular featuring the character of Mr. Allison 'from East Sussex' and the rather strange way he used to get to Morocco his skateboard. This particular framing resonates with the human-interest news values (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) by drawing attention and sentiment.

Geographical Juxtaposition: The juxtaposition of multiple geographical references - East Sussex (UK), France (location of robbery), and Morocco (destination) - creates a sense of global connectivity while simultaneously reinforcing cross-border vulnerability. The headlines use place names as narrative anchors, which can evoke either admiration for his journey or concern for his safety.

Event Dramatisation: The robbery is often presented in dramatised terms, with verbs like “robbed,” “attacked,” or “stripped of belongings.” This choice amplifies the conflict element of the story (Entman, 1993), heightening emotional engagement.

Skateboarding as an Unusual Travel Context: The headlines repeatedly highlight the skateboarding element, framing it as a novelty. This illustrates the move from the usual travel story approach towards the inclusion of “soft news” even in hard news story contexts.

Possible Stereotyping of Africa as Risky: All the focus is on Morocco, but the robbery was in France. However, some headlines suggest the Africa overland route is inherently dangerous. It suggests a subconscious stereotype about Africa as risky, even if the event is set in Europe.

Temporal Compression: Headlines focus on the compression of the timeframe, so that events appear to be the result of a single dramatic event. In what can be described as sensationalism, focusing on the morbid aspects of the story comes as a chief concern.

Sympathy Variations of Editorials: There are articles which encapsulate sympathy framing as it is in contrast with articles that adopt a more sensational or neutral stance A Brit robbed while on a weird skateboarding exploration. This demonstrates the varying editorial philosophies over the years.

Use of Schlosberg Moore Framing Theory in the Text: To put it in more simply, the

mentioned novel assumptions are, it seems, cascaded innovations depleted of biases, of western writers, which tend to omit the obscured issues of novelty, interest bias, and geographical shifts in the media.

Portraying Africa as a Backdrop of Danger: Although the crime happened in France, a few headlines with Mr. Allison's destination (skateboarding to Morocco, Africa) stirred an underlying tendency to associate Africa with danger which could trigger the audience Africa. This is in line with older studies (Fair, 1993; Bunce, Franks & Paterson, 2017) on Africa's alarming and violent portrayal, even in unrelated instances.

Across outlets, the text witnesses the placement of prominence of the crime in comparison with rest of the text, as in the case of the headline 'Robbed in France'. Also, the use of the word 'while skateboarding' points to the loss of a captivating and 'alluring' adjunct, which as a result forms a 'human interest' anchor. However, the mention of Africa in some headlines was not strictly necessary to the immediate news context but appeared to function as a narrative exoticising element.

Geographical Juxtaposition as an Editorial Tool: The juxtaposition of “France” (developed, safe) and “Africa” (developing, unsafe in dominant Western discourse) worked as an implicit contrast. This is consistent with the “editorial malnourishment” concept described by Wetherell (2020), where headlines embed subtle ideological cues that influence audience perception without overtly stating bias.

Absence of African Media Perspectives: Notably, the reviewed headlines originated entirely from Western outlets. African-based news platforms were absent in this dataset, which reflects broader structural media imbalances in international reporting (Nyabola, 2018).

Implication of Skater Identity and Adventure Narratives: The decision to highlight Mr. Allison's skateboard journey served as a narrative hook that appealed to curiosity, but in doing so, also added a layer of vulnerability framing-casting him as an adventurous yet at-risk individual.

Discussion

The portrayal of the skateboarding robbery incident involving Mr. Allison, as reported by BBC, The Independent, and other media outlets, illustrates the subtle yet significant differences in news discourse concerning Africa and African-related contexts. Entman's (1993) framing theory highlights that framing entails selection and salience, whereby journalists choose certain aspects of a perceived reality and emphasize them in their communication. The analysis excerpts from the West are particularly striking... A

prevalent perception of skateboarding globally, especially in Africa, is that the activity is both exotic and perilous. At times, the examination of this African side story is insufficient.

A BBC headline leaned more towards framing the events, presenting a storyline in a linear fashion while subtly linking the theft to the African segment of the trip. The Independent adopted a human-interest framing approach, enhancing the emotional depth of the story by concentrating on the trauma experienced by Allison. This aligns with Van Dijk's (1991) assertion that much of Africa's international reporting is framed as narratives of conflict, danger, and personal suffering, often overlooking the broader context.

It is widely recognized that Paris is located in France, and in this instance, the victim was en route to a destination that, while still framed in a manner suggesting Africa could be central to the narrative, was Morocco. This correlates with Hawk's (1992) argument that Africa is frequently utilized in Western media as a backdrop for perilous tales and adventures, even when the events described do not directly involve Africa.

The choice of 'narrative' in this instance also exemplifies 'editorial sleight of hand' concerning the construction of the headline. By positioning "robbed" in proximity to the mention of "Africa" or "Morocco," media headlines establish a cognitive link between insecurity and African geography (Groshek & Clough, 2017). This framing may strengthen existing stereotypes regarding African contexts as perilous, even if the actual event took place elsewhere.

Findings

The study through up the following findings:

- i. Western media framed the headlines in multiple geographical references, despite the robbery occurring in France, it connected the event to the African segment of the journey, potentially reinforcing negative views of Africa.
- ii. They portrayal Africa in the news that identified Western five structural clichés, such as the "Exotic Other", the "Primitive / Backward" Frame, the "Crisis and Chaos" Narrative, the "Dependent / Helpless" Frame and the "Unchanging / Timeless" Myth, in the frames.
- iii. The majority of sources have depicted the incident as shocking, dramatic, and isolated, rather than engaging with broader discussions such as travel, skating, or international sports.
- iv. Some coverage aimed to evoke sympathy for the victim while attempting to eroticise their journey.
- v. No headline included narratives or viewpoints from African media in the constructed framework, which was entirely Western-centric.
- vi. Africa was symbolically referenced in the context, yet absent in the visuals, as there were no images or contextual visuals sourced from Africa.

Conclusion

The Comparative study report on Western news tells us that their media framing often operates on hints, and such phrasing can distort the understanding of the audience. Sure, even neutral or factually correct headlines can still associate the unrelated events with Africa, thus confirming the stereotypical narrations attributed to the continent. Such framing tactics, even if not maleficent in intent, still feed into the prevailing narrative that Africa is a land of danger, and strangeness, full of resource diffusion and adventure, and ignore the fact that the continent is also normal and complex, with realities of other geographical areas.

Recommendations

Drawing from the analysis presented above, the study recommends that:

- i. International media should acknowledge a balance framing, and ought to disassociate geographic specifics from irrelevant security occurrences to avoid stereotype reinforcement.
- ii. African media voices should be incorporated and form partnerships with African journalists and contacts might enrich stories and lessen the Western gaze.
- iii. Headlines might situate episodes within broader rubrics, such as the enduring challenges of long-distance travel for sports, rather than emphasising the most sensational aspects of the story.
- iv. Educators must prepare audiences to detect framing biases and challenge taken-for-granted links in global reporting.
- v. Newsrooms must formulate and implement policies to avoid editorialised geographical associations which might be deemed wilful on the reporting subject.

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UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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and

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Abstract

The 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria represented a crucial juncture in the nation's political landscape, making it important to understand the role of social media influencers in shaping voters' choices. Thus, this study examined the influence of social media influencers on 2023 presidential election voting behaviour in the Southwest, Nigeria. The study adopted Source Credibility Theory, which explains that credible sources consistently drive greater attitude change, thereby cementing credibility as a key element of persuasive communication. The study was based on the survey method and involved 400 electorates who use social media in three purposefully selected states in the South-West of Nigeria: Lagos State (LP), Oyo State (APC), and Osun State (PDP), each won by different major political parties in the region. The findings demonstrated that religion exerted a significant socioeconomic influence on voters during the 2023 presidential election in the country. The study found a relationship between social media influencers' endorsements and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election, indicating that these endorsements significantly shaped public opinions and reactions regarding the election results. In conclusion, it is quite evident that a small number of social media influencers with large followings were used to promote political candidates during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Therefore, the significant impact of social media influencers on political campaigns, discussions, and narratives cannot be overstated. It was recommended that voters ensure that voting for a certain candidate in an election is not based on sympathy, empathy, or any other unsubstantiated reason; rather, it should be based on the ability of the candidate to deliver his campaign programmes.

Introduction

Over the past decade, social media has become deeply embedded in society, even transvassing generational boundaries as a primary means of communication, information-sharing, and news consumption. According to Igbinedion & Ajisebiyawo (2023) networks such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, YouTube, Reddit, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Telegram have effectively been deployed more recently by political actors to engage in public debate, voter mobilisation, and ideological. Through these means they have been able to bypass traditional media gatekeepers to deliver unfiltered messages directly to constituents. These platforms have emerged as powerful tools for political communication with their potentials of enabling candidates and parties reach their audiences with ease (Igbinedion & Ajisebiyawo, 2023). Despite the

growing importance of social media in shaping public opinion, there is limited research on how they affect voters' choices in Southwest, Nigeria.

However, election executives and experts condemned the improper use of communications on social media platforms by users before, during, and after the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria (Igbinedion, et al. 2023). Research by Ibrahim (2023), Aragba-Akpore (2023), and Salako (2023) indicated that Nigeria's 2023 presidential election campaign transformed social media into perilous instruments for disseminating political information, raising concerns that the election results could significantly impact the nation's burgeoning democracy. The dominant political parties and their adherents exploited social media to both inform the public about their manifestos and transform the 2023 elections into a spectacle of incendiary rhetoric, augmented by propaganda that could undermine the electoral processes and Nigeria's emerging democracy (Igbinedion, et al. 2023). It is a prevalent belief that social media can be significantly misused during elections, given the crowd-sourcing methods employed by numerous social media practitioners often originate from local groups that may possess partisan interests and biases. Likewise, the platforms are frequently employed to disseminate misinformation, perpetrate abuse, and incite violence; hence, the role of social media in promoting democracy and electoral concord has become a heated topic of discussion.

Igbinedion & Ajisebiyawo (2023) the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria were an important period in the political landscape of a nation. Social media influencers played a significant role in Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections, both mobilizing voters and spreading disinformation. Research has shown that political parties secretly collaborated with influencers to disseminate targeted messages. This study explores the influence of social media influencers on voter behaviour in the 2023 presidential elections, focusing on Southwest Nigeria as the study area

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the advances associated with the internet and social media since their inception have significantly transformed the ecosystem of communication. Several activities and phenomena arose through them. One such phenomenon is online opinion leadership, commonly referred to as influencers.

Despite the democratisation of influence, certain individuals have emerged as opinion leaders, with characteristics that enable them to mobilise and shape the views of their followers. The rise of social media has further blurred the lines, allowing anyone to assume an influential role and be capable of shaping public opinion. In Nigeria, this phenomenon is evident in online communities, where individuals known as influencers have gained significant traction, particularly in areas such as politics and advocacy, and

are now able to penetrate and shape public discourse. They have displayed their capacity through various movements such as (Bring Back Our Girls campaign) and voting pattern or behaviour such as hashtags (#votenotfight, #electionnotwar). The prevalence of social media influencers in Nigeria's online community consists of thousands of self-made and genuine influencers with huge followership (Bello, 2018).

While the increasing adoption of social media in the political process and governance has been documented by researchers in the past, the unique use of in the 2023 elections requires further investigation. Furthermore, the impact of widespread social media influencers use on electioneering processes in Nigeria needs to be better understood in terms of its role in promoting political participation. Specifically, there is a need to look into how social media helps to increase civic engagement, voter turnout, and ultimately, election outcomes. For instance, it is important to study the types of political activities that social media supports, such as online activism, political discussions, and voter mobilisation, and how these efforts lead to real results, including voter turnout rates and election results. Thus, it is essential to analyse the influence of social media influencers on voting behaviour in the 2023 Presidential election in Southwest Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This research will be guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the demographic and socioeconomic factors that may affect the influence of social media influencers on the voting behaviour of young people in Southwest Nigeria.
2. To determine whether there is a correlation between the activities of social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election.

Research Questions

The following specific research questions will further guide the study:

1. What demographic and socioeconomic factors influence the impact of social media influencers on the voting behaviour of young people in Southwest Nigeria?
2. Is there a significant correlation between the activities of social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election?

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no relationship between political social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election

Ha: There is relationship between political social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election

Literature Reviews

Social Media

Social Media (SM) are interactive technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Social media has revolutionised the way humans communicate, interact, and access information, and its potential to shape our lives and societies is immense. Social media refers to interactive forms of media that allow users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and opinions through various forms of content, including text, images, videos, and live streams. It has the potential to transform and broadcast media while enabling users to engage in two-way communication and interact with each other in real-time. Social media covers a wide range of platforms, including *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *TikTok*, others have revolutionised the way we live and have become an undeniable component of contemporary culture. Millions of individuals globally utilise these services for communication, to disseminate their experiences, and garner knowledge. The scope of social media is immense, as it caters to various objectives such as digital marketing, online influencer marketing, and community engagement. These potentials have a significant impact on individuals, businesses, and society as a whole.

Social Media Influencers

An influencer is typically defined as someone capable of shaping the attitudes or behaviours of an audience, often cultivated through platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok. Vaibhavi and Leena (2018) note that the rise of users gravitating toward prominent online personalities has led to these figures being labelled as modern opinion leaders, or social media influencers. These individuals often hold sway over purchasing decisions by leveraging their rapport with followers, blending product endorsements with relatable content to foster trust. This dynamic has emerged alongside brands increasingly collaborating with influencers to promote goods, relying on their ability to weave promotional messaging into everyday posts, stories, or reviews shared across their personal channels.

While platforms like blogs or early social media were designed as spaces for casual dialogue, information exchange, or entertainment (Vaxjo, 2017), their role has shifted as audiences began valuing influencers' curated perspectives. Marketers now prioritise partnerships with influencers over traditional advertising, drawn by their

perceived authenticity and capacity to humanise brand narratives. For instance, fashion influencers on *Instagram* often showcase products organically by integrating them into styled photoshoots, accompanied by strategic brand tags (Vaibhavi & Leena, 2018).

Social Media Influencer and Political Promotion

An influencer is an individual who captivates the attention of others and, through this engagement, cultivates a persona that intrigues them. An influencer garners numerous followers on social media and serves as a source of guidance for them (Pradhan et al., 2023). Recently, influencers have embraced the concept of endorsing political parties and their preferred candidates. The current literature in the field of public relations regarding social media influencers reveals varied conclusions about the influence of social media on public perceptions of politicians and organisations (Davies and Hobbs, 2020; Johansson and Bengtsson, 2016; Stoldt et al., 2019). Social media exemplifies the opportunity for public relations practitioners to utilise and for social media influencers to manage networks of parasocial relationships to enhance awareness, motives, and affect global perceptions (Smith et al., 2021; Yang and Taylor, 2015). When establishing political objectives, politicians, governmental entities, NGOs, and interest groups recognise the importance of influence in attaining certain goals (Hendriks and Lees-Marshment, 2019; Lees-Marshment, 2003, 2014; Nwala and Uwalaka, 2022). The establishment of a political party to cultivate an appealing vision or candidate necessitates the formulation of market and sales orientated plan guidelines (Lees-Marshment, 2014).

Empirical Review

In a study on social media influencers and their relationship on their followers on Twitter, Olatilewa (2020) who adopted a mixed method approach comprising online social media followers and a content analysis of influencers posts across three themes of interest: marketing, political and advocacy. This analysis focused on three key thematic areas: marketing, political discourse, and advocacy. The study revealed three key findings: (1) Informative communication strategies were most commonly employed by influencers, accounting for 42.9% of cases, to shape follower perspectives; (2) influencers' personality traits significantly determined the level of influence their online activities had on audiences; and (3) political influencers demonstrated comparable impact to marketing influencers, with no statistically notable difference in their ability to sway follower behaviour or opinions. The study therefore recommended that media literacy among youths should be enhanced to increase their capacity for following influencers reasonably.

A study by Agbim, Etumnu, and Iredibia (2023) examined “The role of the

Obidient movement on Twitter in the context of Nigeria's 2023 general election". The researchers found that Twitter can be a potent tool for mobilizing political support, but it is just one of several channels for engaging with voters. To understand the impact of the Obidient movement, the study employed extrapolation, which involves analyzing existing trends and patterns to make informed predictions about future outcomes. The study highlighted the potential of social media movements and hashtags to raise awareness about specific issues, shape public discourse, and amplify marginalised voices. Additionally, these online movements can facilitate discussions with policymakers, build support for various causes, and galvanize collective action. The findings indicated that the Obidient movement had a significant impact on voter behaviour and electoral outcomes in the 2023 general election, with a mean average of 2.8 suggesting a strong motivation behind the movement's emergence. Specifically, 378 respondents (or 98.4% of the sample) reported that the movement had influenced their voting decisions. The study's recommendations emphasised the need for electoral authorities in Nigeria to be prepared for increased voter participation in future elections.

Theoretical Framework

Source Credibility Theory

The Source Credibility Theory pioneered by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1953), posits that a message's persuasive power hinges on the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of its communicator. Subsequent studies, including Hovland's later work and Weiss (1974), further dissected how credibility shapes persuasion. One pivotal experiment contrasted responses to identical messages delivered by credible versus non-credible sources, testing whether the source's authority alone could sway audience beliefs. Results confirmed that credible sources consistently drove greater attitude change, cementing credibility as a linchpin of persuasive communication.

Extending this logic to social media, Self (2007) defines source credibility as "the believability of a communicator as perceived by the recipient," a lens through which influencers' impact can be assessed. To evaluate their persuasive power, this analysis will examine whether influencers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and audience alignment foster credibility and, consequently, follower satisfaction. The study tests the premise that influencers' personal traits, not just content form the basis of their persuasiveness, as posited by source credibility theory.

Methodology

This research employed survey. The population of this study includes electorates who make use of social media in the three (3) purposefully selected states in the South-West of Nigeria, namely Lagos State (LP), Oyo State (APC), and Osun State

(PDP), which were won by different major political parties in the region. Active internet subscribers in the selected state with population were used determine population figure; Lagos, 8,702,394; Osun, 3,720,000; Oyo, 8,170,000 according to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2022). Taro Yamane's formula was adopted in determine sample size of 400.

The study employed a multi-stage simple random sampling procedure to choose participants for the study. In each state selected, the state was divided into three (3) senatorial districts making (9) senatorial district in all. One most populous local government was picked from each of the senatorial district consisting of Lagos state; Lagos central (Surulere), Lagos West (Alimosho), Lagos East (Kosofe); Osun state; Osun West (Iwo LG), Osun Central (Osogbo LG), Osun East (Ife-Central LG) and Oyo South (Ibadan North East LG), Oyo North (Ogbomoso North LG), Oyo Central (Oyo West LG). A structured questionnaire served as a data collection instrument for quantitative approach of this study. The data collected for this study is simple statistic with the use of frequency and Statistical Package and Service Solution (SPSS). This provided for easy and clear understanding of the data analysis and presentation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As stated in earlier, four hundred (400) copies of questionnaires were earlier administered, out of which three hundred and seventy-six (376) were correctly filled and the analysis is thus based on 376 copies of questionnaire that were correctly filled and retrieved.

Research Objective 1: To identify the demographic and socioeconomic factors that may affect the influence of social media influencers on the voting behaviour of young people in Southwest Nigeria

The findings suggest that demographics factors such as; Gender, Age, Education and Occupation, as well as socioeconomic factors such as; Political Ideology, Ethnicity/Tribe, Credibility, Attractiveness, Religion, Income among others significantly moderate the influence of social media influencers on the voting behaviour of youths in Southwest Nigeria. Findings on demographic variable indicate that business people are most likely to be influenced by social media influencers supports of candidates compared to other occupations. This is due to their experiences and possibly their socioeconomic status which is more stable. Also, younger ages that are mostly males with intermediate educational level (secondary school) are most susceptible to these influences.

Moreover, findings on socioeconomic variable indicate that religion is one of the formidable socioeconomic factors that influenced the young voters during the 2023 presidential election in the country. Understanding these moderating factors can help in

crafting more effective political campaigns that leverage on social media influencers' endorsements to engage the youths' demography and socioeconomic status effectively.

Demographic Variables: The demographic variables of the respondents indicate that 55.9% of them were males, while 44.1% were females. This shows that the male gender dominated the study. Also, it was discovered that 44.1% were of age 29-38 years, while 5.9% were of age 49 years and above. This shows that the respondents between ages 29 and 38 are more likely to have interests in the subject matter. The findings on level of education indicate that 56.9% are educated up to secondary education, while 19.1% were uneducated. On their occupations, it was found that majority of them 30.1% were business people, while 8.2% were into farming. This shows that the respondents are mostly business-oriented people. Details are as presented below:

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Variables

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	210	55.9
	Female	166	44.1
	Total	376	100
Age	18-28	81	21.5
	29-38	166	44.1
	39-48	107	28.5
	49 & above	22	5.9
	Total	376	100
Educational Level	Uneducated	72	19.1
	Secondary	214	56.9
	Tertiary	90	23.9
	Others	-	0.0
	Total	376	100
Occupation	Business	113	30.1
	Civil Servant	42	11.2
	Farming	31	8.2
	Politician	94	25.0
	Student	59	15.7
	Others	37	9.8
	Total	376	100

Socioeconomic Variable: The findings indicate that among other socioeconomic factors, religion was considered as factor that influenced their choice of a presidential candidate in 2023 election. 58.8% of the respondents expressed their supports and votes based on religion, 23.5% were influenced by political ideology, young voters were not

moved and influenced base on income, personality trait and attractiveness. This shows that religion influenced the choice of voters in 2023 presidential election as presented in the table below:

Table 2: Socioeconomic Variable

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	Political Ideology	40	23.5
2	Ethnic/Tribe	10	5.8
3	Income	-	0.0
4	Personality	-	0.0
5	Credibility	20	11.7
6	Attractiveness	-	0.0
7	Religion	100	58.8
	Total	170	100

Research Objective 2: To determine whether there is a correlation between the activities of social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election

The data below indicates that a significant number of the respondents do not consider the role of social media influencers in the election to be negligible, suggesting that these influencers via their endorsements did have some level of influences on the outcome of the election. However, the divided opinions highlight that their level of influence was not universally recognised or acceptable. The critical stance of respondents towards the election results, irrespective of social media influencers' supports/endorsements, points to a broader context of political dissatisfaction or perceived irregularities in the election process.

Findings showed that, there exists a level of relationship between social media influencers' endorsement and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election, this influence is nuanced and not overwhelmingly decisive. The divided opinions on the role of social influencers and the mixed reactions generated during the post-election activities showed that social influencers' endorsements of their preferred candidate did play a role, but their influence was limited and varied among various segments of the voters. The criticism and dissatisfaction on the election results also underscores that other factors, likely more substantive than social influencers' endorsements, played a critical role in shaping public opinion and reactions towards the outcome of the 2023 presidential election.

Post Election Behaviour: The findings on post-election behaviour showed that 56.1% of the respondents agreed that social influencers played negligible role on the

acceptance or rejection of the election results, while 61.7% agreed that they were made to believe the most popular candidate won the 2023 presidential election. Thus, it is evident from the findings that social media influencers did not stopped in their influential role during the election, but also after the election. Moreover, popularity of the presidential candidates actually determined the winner of the election. The details are presented in the table below:

Table 4.6: Post Election Activities (Acceptance, Approval and Disappointment)

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Social influencers played a negligible role in influencing the acceptance or rejection of election results in Southwest	Strongly Agree	38	10.1
	Agree	211	56.1
	Undecided	17	4.5
	Disagree	68	18.1
	Strongly Disagree	42	11.2
	Total	376	100
I was made to believe that the most popular candidate won the 2023 presidential election	Strongly Agree	46	12.2
	Agree	232	61.7
	Undecided	8	2.1
	Disagree	71	18.9
	Strongly Disagree	19	5.1
	Total	376	100

Test of Hypothesis

The relationship between political social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential elections

In addition, we evaluate the relationship between prominent political social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential elections, using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient. The result is as provided in the table below:

Table 3: Relationship between social media influencers and outcome of the 2023 election

Variable	N	Std. Error	Sig. value
Political Social Media Influencers	392	0.494	0.050
Outcome of 2023 Presidential Elections	392		

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

It is noted from the table above, that prominent political social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential elections are positively correlated ($r = 0.494$, Sig. value < 0.05). The result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between prominent political social media influencers and the

outcome of the 2023 presidential elections (since Sig. value < 0.05). Thus, there is strong statistical evidence supporting a strong relationship between political social media influencers and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election.

Discussion of Findings

The findings showed that younger ages that are majorly males with intermediate level of education (secondary school) were most susceptible to the influence of social media influencers, while religion also played a formidable socioeconomic role as a factor that influenced voters during the 2023 presidential election in the country. This finding is in tandem with the position of Hirose (2022) that youths prefer influencers because they produce contents and information in a very entertaining way and provide interesting contents in a more personal setting. It also aligns with the views of Arthur (2012) that youths who pursue their interests on the Internet are more likely to be engaged in civic and political issues, and are more likely to be exposed to diverse political viewpoints capable of shaping their orientations.

However, it was found that, there exists a level of relationship between social media influencers' endorsement and the outcome of the 2023 presidential election, while the endorsements of these influencers played a critical role in shaping public opinions and reactions towards the outcome of the election. Also, it was discovered that social media influencers did not stopped in their influential role during the election, but also after the election, while popularity of the presidential candidates was also attributed as a determinant factor in deciding the winner of the election. This finding is in consonance with that of Goodwin and Woolley (2021) that, political social media influencers have become increasingly popular in the most recent elections, as these influencers discuss relevant topics on politics and elections, typically encouraging their followers to agree with their points and participate in election.

Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that social media influencers are fast becoming critical stakeholders in the political space. This is due to their popularity and millions of followership they commands across social media platforms. More importantly, political actors have keyed into these trends by engaging the services of these influencers for campaign purposes. This is quite evident in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, as handful of social media influencers with larger followership base were used to promote political candidates. Hence, the powerful influence of social media influencers in political campaigns, discourses and narratives cannot be overemphasised. Their continuous engagements by the political bigwigs and parties are welcome idea in the political communication arena, especially in engaging the audience/voters on the need to exercise their franchise and vote for their choice of candidate in an election.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Voters should ensure that voting for certain candidate in an election is not based on sympathy, empathy or any unsubstantiated reason; rather it should be based on the ability of the candidate to deliver his campaign programmes.
2. Voters who are active social media users must ensure that social media influencers give strong reasons to vote their preferred candidate.
3. The category of voters that are active on social media space and who did vote, acknowledged the influence of social media influencers on their voting decisions

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SPECIALIZED REPORTING IN HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM IN BROADCAST MEDIA IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Ucheanya Florence

Abstract

This study examined the role of specialized reporting in enhancing journalists reportage of complex health and environmental issues in Kwara State, Nigeria. Employing a survey research design, the study purposively selected five radio stations out of eleven operating in the state, targeting a population of 51 broadcast journalists. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire featuring Likert-scale items and analyzed through descriptive statistics such as simple table, frequencies and percentages. The study's results showed that broadcast journalists in Kwara State engage in specialized reporting on health and environmental issues to a moderate extent. Based on the findings, it was concluded that specialized reporting on health and environmental issues in Kwara State's broadcast media remained at a moderate level, marked by sporadic practice and a lack of structured institutional support. Based on the findings and conclusion, it was recommended that broadcast media organizations in Kwara State should strengthen the practice of specialized reporting on health and environmental issues by establishing dedicated beats and assigning trained journalists to them.

Introduction

In an era defined by an overwhelming influx of information, the role of journalism in simplifying complex societal issues has become increasingly indispensable. Specialized reporting – particularly in fields such as health and environmental journalism – serves as a critical bridge between technical expertise and public understanding. By focusing on depth, accuracy and contextualization, specialized journalists help audiences make informed decisions about matters that directly affect their lives and communities (Briggs & Burke, 2019). In Nigeria, the growing challenges of public health crises and environmental degradation have placed a renewed emphasis on the need for professional, topic-specific reporting that transcends superficial news coverage (Oso, 2020).

Health and environmental journalism represent two of the most significant domains where complexity often hinders public engagement. From the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change, these topics require journalists who possess not only storytelling skills but also subject-matter knowledge (Amobi, 2021). Recent studies show that specialized reporters are well positioned to interpret scientific data, interrogate policies, and translate technical jargon into accessible narratives (Ojebode & Akinfeleye, 2020; Akinwalere & Odukamaiya, 2023). This makes them vital actors in shaping public discourse, especially within a media ecosystem grappling with misinformation, political influence, and resource constraints.

Statement of the Problem

In an increasingly complex world, the public's ability to understand, engage with, and respond to critical issues such as public health crises and environmental degradation is largely shaped by the media. Specialized reporting – particularly in health and environmental journalism – is vital in translating technical knowledge into accessible information for the broader public. However, in Nigeria, and specifically in states such as Kwara, there remains a significant gap between the sophistication of emerging health and environmental challenges and the quality of media coverage available to the public.

Studies suggest that many Nigerian journalists lack the training, resources, and institutional support needed to effectively report on complex topics. This has led to inadequate or inaccurate coverage of critical issues such as climate change, epidemics, pollution, and public health policies – issues that require not just general reporting, but in-depth, evidence-based, and interpretative journalism. In Kwara State, where broadcast media are the main information source for a largely rural and semi-urban population, this deficiency can result in misinformation, public apathy resistance to necessary policy changes.

Furthermore, the rise of digital media and citizen journalism has introduced more content into the public space, but often without the rigour or specialization needed to inform effectively. As a result, many health and environmental stories lack the depth and clarity required for meaningful public understanding.

This study is therefore driven by the urgent need to assess the extent to which specialized reporting in health and environmental journalism contributes to public understanding of complex issues in Kwara State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do broadcast journalists in Kwara State engage in specialized reporting on health and environmental issues?
2. What level of training, subject-matter knowledge, and resources do broadcast journalists in Kwara State possess for specialized health and environmental reporting?
3. What editorial processes and newsroom practices support or hinder specialized reporting in Kwara State broadcast media?

Literature Review

Specialized reporting – particularly in health and environmental beats—serves as a vital conduit for enhancing public understanding of complex issues in broadcast media, including in jurisdictions such as Kwara State, Nigeria. Adeniyi and Suleiman

(2022) assert that specialized desks like health and environment facilitate deeper, more contextualized coverage rather than superficial general reporting (Adeniyi & Suleiman, 2022). Empirical studies of environmental journalism highlight that many journalists lack scientific training and thus often report environmental issues with limited depth, thus undermining public understanding of the nexus between ecosystem degradation and health outcomes (Grüner Journalismus, 2023; Ndinojuo & Ikems, 2023). In the health domain, research into evidence translation and mass-media shows that broadcast media are effective carriers of research insights into public and policy circles—especially when journalists are grounded in epidemiology and science communication—and can significantly shape health behaviours during crises such as Lassa fever or diphtheria outbreaks (Desmon et al., 2024; Health Policy and Systems Research Group, 2025). Training programs by organizations such as the Johns Hopkins CCP-led Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria have demonstrated that equipping health reporters with scientific literacy enhances accuracy and clarity in coverage, helping audiences distinguish misinformation and make informed decisions (Desmon et al., 2024). Taken together, these studies suggest that in Kwara State—and Nigeria more broadly—dedicated health and environmental desks in broadcast media, staffed by trained and specialized journalists, significantly improve public comprehension of scientific and policy-level issues.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which posits that the media shape public perception by influencing what issues people consider important. In the context of health and environmental journalism, specialized reporting plays a crucial role in determining the salience of complex issues in public discourse. When broadcast media in Kwara State consistently highlight topics such as disease outbreaks, pollution, and climate change through expert-driven reporting, these issues gain prominence in the minds of the public. Specialized journalists, through in-depth coverage and credible sourcing, not only inform but also elevate public understanding by framing these topics as urgent and relevant. Thus, this theory helps explain how the prioritization and framing of health and environmental stories in the media can enhance public awareness, influence attitudes, and potentially drive social and policy change.

Methodology

This study employed a survey research design to investigate the role of specialized reporting in enhancing public understanding of complex health and environmental issues in broadcast media such as Radio Kwara, Unilorin FM, Royal FM

Sobi FM, Okin FM. Albraka FM, Raypower FM. Harmony FM (FRCN, Idofian). Igbomina FM. Kwasu FM. Nootia FM, Kakakin FM and Cruise FM in Kwara State, Nigeria. The survey method was appropriate for gathering quantitative data from a large group of broadcast journalists, enabling systematic analysis of their experiences, perceptions, and practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The population for this study comprised broadcast journalists such as presenters, reporters. Specialist reporters, news editors. Producers. Newsroom managers. A purposive sampling technique was used to select radio stations and respondents. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to deliberately choose radio stations that are most relevant to the study objectives, based on factors such as broadcast reach, audience size, and involvement in specialized reporting. Out of the eleven radio stations in Kwara State, five were purposively selected for this study, representing a mix of public, private, and university-owned stations to ensure diversity. Within these selected stations, all broadcast journalists available and willing to participate were considered, resulting in a sample size of 51 journalists drawn from the five stations. The sample size of 51 broadcast journalists represents the total population of journalists working in the selected stations who met the inclusion criteria. Since the population is relatively small, a census approach was adopted within the purposively selected stations to ensure comprehensive data collection.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on the extent of specialized reporting, training and resources available, newsroom practices, challenges faced, and perceptions of impact on public understanding. The questionnaire employed closed-ended Likert-scale items and multiple-choice questions to facilitate quantitative analysis. Prior to administration, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of journalists outside the study sample to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the management of the selected radio stations.

The questionnaire was administered in person to the broadcast journalists during working hours to maximize response rates. Researchers explained the study purpose and assured participants of confidentiality and anonymity. Completed copies of the questionnaire were collected immediately or within a specified time-frame agreed upon with participants. Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple table, frequencies and percentages.

Data Presentation

Table 1: The extent do broadcast journalists in Kwara State engage in specialized reporting on health and environmental issues.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
I regularly produce news reports focused specifically on health and environmental issues.	9	17.6
I have been assigned to cover health -related stories and environmental-related stories in the past 6 months.	11	21.6
My broadcast station allocates specific airtime for specialized health reporting and for specialized environmental reporting.	10	19.6
I actively seek out health experts or specialists and environmental experts or specialists when preparing reports.	12	23.6
I feel confident in reporting on complex health issues and complex environmental issues.	9	17.6
Total	51	100

Table 1 above reveals the extent that broadcast journalists in Kwara State engaged in specialized reporting on health and environmental issues.

Table 2: Level of training, subject-matter knowledge, and resources do broadcast journalists in Kwara State possess for specialized health and environmental reporting.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
I have received formal training specifically on health journalism and environmental journalism.	11	21.6
I feel knowledgeable about health and environmental issues relevant to my reporting.	8	15.7
My station provides access to up -to-date health a nd environmental information and data.	7	13.7
My station provides access to up -to-date health and environmental information and data.	13	25.5
I have access to the necessary technical resources (e.g., recording equipment, internet) to produce specialized health and environmental reports	12	23.5
Total	51	100

Table 2 above shows the level of training, subject-matter knowledge and resources that broadcast journalists in Kwara State possessed for specialized health and environmental reporting.

Table 3: Editorial processes and newsroom practices support or hinder specialized reporting in Kwara State broadcast media.

Variable	Frequency Percentage	
My newsroom has clear editorial guidelines for health and environmental reporting.	9	17.6
There is dedicated airtime or programming slots specifically for health and environmental topics.	8	15.7
Editors encourage reporters to pursue specialized health and environmental stories.	7	13.7
Health and environmental reports undergo thorough editorial review before broadcast.	9	17.6
There is sufficient time allocated in the newsroom to prepare in-depth health and environmental stories.	7	13.7
Resource constraints (such as limited staff or equipment) hinder specialized reporting in my newsroom.	11	21.7
Total	51	100

Table 3 above displays the editorial processes and newsroom practices that support or hinder specialized reporting in Kwara State broadcast media.

Discussion of Findings

The study's results show that broadcast journalists in Kwara State engaged in specialized reporting on health and environmental issues to a moderate extent. While respondents acknowledged covering these beats occasionally, such coverage was often event-driven, emerging primarily during outbreaks, environmental crises, or commemorative days such as World Health Day or World Environment Day. Regular, in-depth, and investigative reporting on these topics remained limited, largely due to competing editorial priorities and the absence of dedicated desks or reporters for these areas. This pattern suggests that specialized reporting is not yet a fully embedded practice within the newsroom culture of the selected stations. Similar findings have been reported in previous research (Akanle & Fadeyibi, 2021; Nwabueze, 2020), which highlighted that Nigerian broadcast media often treated health and environmental coverage as peripheral rather than core editorial content. This limited and inconsistent engagement reduces the potential of specialized reporting to enhance sustained public understanding of complex health and environmental issues. Strengthening newsroom structures and assigning dedicated, trained journalists to these beats could therefore significantly improve both the frequency and quality of coverage.

The findings on the level of training, subject-matter knowledge, and resources available to broadcast journalists in Kwara State for specialized health and environmental reporting reveal notable gaps that hinder effective coverage of these complex issues. While a few journalists possess formal training or have attended short courses on health or environmental reporting, the majority rely on general journalistic skills without in-depth subject-matter expertise. This aligns with Nwabueze and Ezeife (2020), who observed that many Nigerian journalists covering specialized beats lack

advanced training, which results in superficial or event-driven reporting. Resource constraints, such as inadequate access to scientific data, modern recording equipment, and funding for field investigations, were also reported by respondents—echoing the findings of Popoola (2021), who noted that newsroom budget limitations significantly affect the quality of environmental journalism in Nigeria. Furthermore, the absence of institutionalized capacity-building programmes within many broadcast stations contributes to the persistence of knowledge gaps, consistent with the argument by Akanle and Fadeyibi (2021) that sustained professional development is essential for specialized reporting. Overall, the findings suggest that without targeted training initiatives and adequate resource provision, broadcast journalists in Kwara State will continue to struggle to provide in-depth, accurate, and impactful health and environmental reporting.

The findings on editorial processes and newsroom practices in broadcast media in Kwara State broadcast media indicate that while there is general editorial oversight, there are limited institutional frameworks specifically designed to foster specialized reporting on health and environmental issues. Most editorial meetings focus on general news priorities, with health and environmental stories often treated as secondary, unless tied to major events or crises. This finding aligns with Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2020), who observed that in many Nigerian newsrooms, specialized beats receive less editorial attention due to commercial pressures and audience preference for politics and entertainment. Furthermore, respondents noted that the absence of dedicated health or environmental desks and the reliance on multitasking reporters dilute the depth of coverage, the same argument by Uduak and Ijeoma (2021) that newsroom structures in Nigeria are often not optimized for specialization. In some cases, supportive practices such as occasional editorial encouragement for investigative reports were reported, but these were sporadic and unsustainable. Resource constraints, tight deadline, and the prioritization of breaking news over in-depth reporting were also identified as barriers. This is consistent with Popoola (2021) who emphasized that editorial time pressures hinder comprehensive coverage of specialized topics. Overall, the study reveals that without deliberate editorial policies, adequate beat assignments, and sustained managerial commitment, specialized reporting in Kwara State broadcast media will remain underdeveloped and inconsistent.

Conclusion

From the findings, it is concluded that specialized reporting on health and environmental issues broadcast media in Kwara State remains at a moderate level, marked by sporadic practice and a lack of structured institutional support. While some journalists demonstrate interest and competence in these beats, the absence of sustained

editorial commitment, limited subject-matter training, and inadequate resources significantly hinder consistent and in-depth coverage. Newsroom practices often prioritize general news and breaking events over specialized topics, resulting in fragmented and event-driven reporting rather than continuous, investigative coverage. The findings underscore that without deliberate policies to establish dedicated health and environmental desks, invest in professional training, and provide the necessary tools for in-depth reporting, specialized journalism in these areas will continue to be underdeveloped. Strengthening editorial processes, fostering capacity building, and embedding specialization into newsroom culture are essential for broadcast media in Kwara State to effectively inform the public and contribute to meaningful discourse on critical health and environmental issues.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that broadcast media organizations in Kwara State should strengthen the practice of specialized reporting on health and environmental issues by establishing dedicated beats and assigning trained journalists to them. Regular capacity-building workshops and collaborations with health and environmental experts should be encouraged to enhance reporters' knowledge and competence. Additionally, editorial policies should prioritize sustained coverage of these issues to ensure consistent public engagement and awareness. It is further recommended that broadcast media organizations in Kwara State should enhance journalists' training and subject-matter expertise in health and environmental reporting through regular capacity-building programmes, seminars and collaborations with relevant experts. Adequate resources, including modern recording equipment, access to credible data, and funding for investigative fieldwork, should be provided to improve the depth and accuracy of specialized reporting. Strengthening these areas will empower journalists to deliver more informed, impactful, and consistent coverage of health and environmental issues. It is also recommended that broadcast media in Kwara State should implement clear editorial policies that prioritize specialized reporting on health and environmental issues. Newsrooms should establish dedicated desks or teams with journalists focused exclusively on these beats to ensure consistent and in-depth coverage. Additionally, management should foster a newsroom culture that supports investigative journalism by allowing sufficient time for story development and providing the necessary resources. Strengthening editorial commitment and restructuring newsroom practices will significantly enhance the quality and frequency of specialized reporting.

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PERCEPTION AND IMPLICATIONS OF NEWSPAPER FRAMES OF CORRUPTION ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF ACADEMICS IN AKWAIBOM STATE

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and

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1. Introduction

The mass media are seen to play a very critical role to in consolidating democratic, governance, and development processes, as well as contribute to the fight against corruption in any country. Specifically, when it comes to the fight against corruption, the media present an important channel information about the activities of government, and the business sector to every member of the society. The implication of this assertion is that the mass media offer the public the platform through which they can hold those in power accountable. Also, by exposing, informing and educating the public about the harmful effects of corruption to the economy of a nation, the mass media can increase the political risk of those who are so exposed for their corrupt practices to a very great extent, and therefore, bring about the awareness of members of the society about the ills of corruption (Schauseil, 2019).

The above-painted scenario, therefore, suggests that an independent and vibrant mass media in any country form a very important channel of external control, with the ability to reveal and expose the misdemeanors of those who wield both political and economic powers in the society. It is also safe to add here that independent-minded journalists, who work in a free and plural media markets, have very strong motivations to uncover and expose stories of public, as well as private sector corruption. Such exposures are bound to act as a deterrent to public officials and stop them from mismanaging public resources. This is because media reports increase the probability of them being caught, exposed, and probably being punished for such corrupt behaviour. This way, the mass media such as newspapers can help to keep the political and economic sectors in the society transparent and accountable (Sam, 2024).

Meanwhile, Oghuvbu (2021), has observed that the enormous capacity of Nigeria to generate revenue from the oil and non-oil sectors, sadly contrasts with the decaying public infrastructures and the extent of institutional development recorded in the country. According to him, corruption in Nigeria has made it impossible for

Nigerians to enjoy good governance and the gifts of nature with which the country is abundantly blessed. This suggests fact corruption is so pervasive in the country, and that it has eaten deep into every facet of Nigerian life.

It is worthy of note here that the consciousness of Nigerians about the harsh effects of corruption on several aspects of the nation's corporate existence is rising. Even though no country is totally free from corruption, poor and underdeveloped, as well as developing countries such as Nigeria seem to be heavily affected by it (Adetayo, 2019).

It is against this background that this study was carried out, with the intent to find out how newspapers in Nigeria fared with regard to the coverage of incidents of corruption in the country, as well as to ascertain the perception of academics in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State had toward such coverage, and its implications to national development in Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Research Problem

Development is seen as an improvement in the socio-cultural, political, economic, and psychological well-being of members of a given society. In a truly developed nation, there is assurance of good quality of life, exercise of all human rights, and freedom to participate in the democratic process. The implication of this assertion is that development enhances quality of life, equity, as well as justice. It takes into consideration the well-being, growth and advancement of individuals within the society.

According to Sakalasooriya (2020), development in any given human society is a many-sided process. It implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being, at the level of the individual. It is not purely an economic phenomenon, but rather a multi-dimensional process, which involves the re-organisation and re-orientation of entire economic and social systems.

Development entails the process of improving the overall quality of human lives in a given society. Its three basic objectives include: i) raising the living conditions of a greater number of citizens such as levels of income and consumption, improved quality of food, accessible and affordable health-care services, and good and affordable education through relevant growth process; ii) creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem by establishing social, political and economic systems and institutions that promote human dignity and respect; iii) increasing people's freedom to choose, by enlarging the range of their choice variables such as a wide variety of goods and services (Sakalasooriya, 2020).

However, these objectives cannot be achieved in a country where there is widespread corruption. Corruption is a major impediment to national development

anywhere in the world. It is a global crime, and disregards national boundaries. It distorts business and economic growth, increases environmental degradation and threatens democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Its impact extends beyond the people involved in the corruptive activity; and may manifest itself as badly executed projects such as roads and bridges, ill-equipped schools and hospitals, and can ultimately lead to loss of lives (Chukwu and Ngban, 2019).

It is against this background that this study was carried out with the aim of ascertaining how newspapers in Nigeria performed their watchdog function of reporting incidents of corruption in the country; as they are seen to be the eyes and ears of members of the society at all times. they should act as the watchdog of the society, and ensure that they report incidents of corruption, and whatever the government is doing to reduce its effects on the society, back to the society.

One, therefore, wonders how newspapers in Nigeria framed the stories they reported about incidents of corruption in the country, and how such frames influenced the perception of the effects of corruption on national development among academics in Akwa Ibom State. Hence the question: How did newspapers in Nigeria frame their reports on incidents of corruption in the country; and, how did exposure to such frames influence the perception of academics toward national development in Nigeria?

3. Research Questions

- i. How did *Punch*, *DailySun*, and *The Nation* newspapers frame the reports on incidents of corruption in their reportage between 2019 and 2023?
- ii. To what extent were academics in Akwa Ibom State exposed to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption in Nigeria?
- iii. How did academics in Akwa Ibom State perceive the effects of the prevalence of corruption on Nigeria's pace of national development?
- iv. To what the extent did newspaper frames on corruption influence the perception of academics in Akwa Ibom State towards the pace of national development in Nigeria?

4. Research Hypotheses

- i. There is a significant relationship between academics' exposure to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption in Nigeria and their perception of the prevalence of corruption in the country.
- ii. There is a significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of corruption prevalence in the Nigerian society and their perception of the effects of corruption on national development in the country.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between academics' perception of corruption

prevalence in the Nigerian society and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in the country.

5 Review of Literature

Corruption is a word derived from the Latin word *corruptus*, which means *corrupted*. It means the abuse of power entrusted to a government official, be it executive, legislative, or judicial, with the intent to obtain a benefit, which is legally not justified, either for oneself, or for others (Sumah, 2018). Abada and Onyia (2020), states that corruption manifests in various dimensions. It could be in the form of bribery (which is the exchange of cash and/or other monetary benefits) in order to get undue advantage or favour preferences. It could be by inflating contracts (over invoicing). It could be in form of someone in a position of authority using his position to promote certain parochial interests such as ethnicity, tribalism or even religion, as against merit, in job placement and political appointments. It could come in the form of outright diversion, or embezzlement of government revenues (Nzeribe, 2019).

Meanwhile, development is seen to be a process of social change in a society. Such a process is almost always intended to bring about advancement like greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment. The process has to happen through the contribution and input from the people, by using their own environment to improve their situation, rather than expecting it to fall from heaven, as it were (Sam, 2024). According Asaju and Ayeni (2022, p. 70):

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the individual level, it implies increased skill and capacity for greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. The achievement of any of these aspects of personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole.

However, Obilor, Kenneth, Okoroafor, Chima and Bello (2018) note that national development refers to a sustainable growth and development of a nation to a more desirable one. It is people-oriented and its success is evaluated in terms of the impact it has had on improving the lot of the masses in a country.

What is really important when discussing national development is that there is a constant and joint effort toward harnessing the forces of nature and human potentials for the material well-being of the generality of the majority of the population in a country. This is done to such an extent that there is more and better food for people to eat, better houses for people to live in, the communication and transportation systems are

generally improved. Such efforts must also help the people to be generally healthier and happier physically, psychologically, and spiritually (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2019).

Perception, on its part, entails the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. It also means the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted. The perception process consists of three stages of selection, organisation, and interpretation. Selection, as the first stage in the process, entails that the individual (perceptor) converts the stimuli obtained from the environment through the sense organs, into meaningful experiences. On a daily basis, human beings are constantly bombarded by an array of information. Thus, they hear words (both intentionally and unintentionally), witness disasters, become aware of various occurrences, and so forth. These are all types of stimuli, which arrive at the sensory organs of man simultaneously, and which all wait to be processed (Qiong, 2017).

Corruption has many negative effects on a country's economy. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2018) notes that corruption represents a severe impediment to a nation's sustainable development. Its cost on a nation's development is much more than mere diverting the resources from their rightful purposes. It destroys such a nation's socio-economic fabric, weakens its rule of law, undermines trust in governance, and wears away the quality of life of the people. In such a society, there is a higher tendency for organised crime, terrorism, and violent extremism to thrive.

Lagarde (2018) states that corruption hurts life outcomes of a country in different ways. It acts like a retrogressive element which supports the opulent lifestyles of the rich at the expense of everyone else in the society. It diverts resources away from their most productive uses, and serves as an incentive for the best and the brightest brains to wait on government to gamble with the system, instead of being personally involved in useful ventures that would help in the creation of new wealth.

One of the most damning effects or consequences of corruption is that it increases bureaucratic inefficiency. Corruption has saturated every aspect of the Nigerian society including the political realm. The level of corruption prevalence in Nigeria and the wanton disregard for the rule of law and established regulations have had negative impacts on the nation's development, and on its external reputation (Okon, 2018; Dimant & Tosato, 2018).

Meanwhile, it is worthy of note here that reports of corruption by the mass media may have tangible and intangible effects on the level of transparency and accountability in a country. Tangible effects include explicit mentions of corruption, such as commencing a formal investigation into, and removal of corrupt politicians and public office holders involved in corrupt practices. Intangible effects include where the media promote broader changes in governance such as accountability of public officials,

politicians and institutions (Abba-Aji, Balabanova, Hutchinson & McKee, 2022; Oluwakemi, Olusegun & Ajilore, 2018).

Entman (1993) cited in Batta (2019, p.192) states that to frame is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what happens, and what matters. They help people to ascertain the parameters within which every meaning of reality contends. With frames, people are able to make meaning of media stories and to also identify the devices which allow frames to function.

6 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theoretical underpinnings – Framing Theory, and Corruption Likelihood Model. The major postulate of the Framing Theory is that the mass media are not just important in getting people to think about an issue; they influence *how* people think about such issue. One powerful way in which the mass media shape public opinion is by framing events and issues in particular ways. This involves a communication source presenting and defining an issue in a particular way. Journalists bring a perspective to bear on events, highlight certain aspects at the expense of others in order to create a coherent narrative. Such a narrative names protagonists and antagonists; identifies some of the causes of the event described; outlines moral judgments; and may suggest solutions (Schaffner and Sellers, 2010; Reese *et al.*, 2001).

Griffin (2011) cited in Sam (2019) asserts that framing implies that the mass media may not (only) tell us what to think about, they may also tell us how and what to think about it, and, perhaps, even what to do about it. This means that through framing, the mass media such as newspapers suggest to the people the perception of the event (or issue) and whether there is need for urgent actions to be taken or not (Anunne & Yan, 2019).

Tankard (2001) offers the most comprehensive empirical approach to identifying frames in a news report. There are eleven (11) framing mechanisms or focal points which can be used to identify and measure frames in a news report, including headlines, sub-heads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quote selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts, and concluding statements and paragraphs.

The **Corruption Likelihood Model** was proposed by Godwin Sam in 2023; and is presented graphically thus:

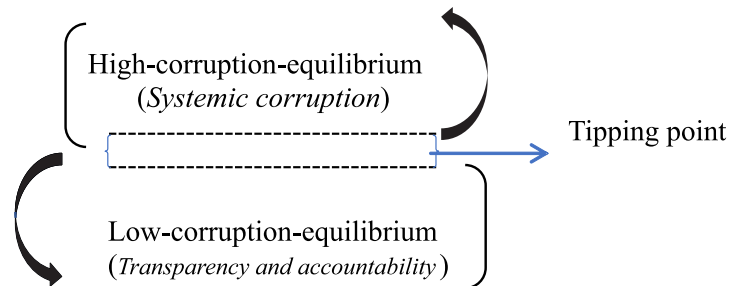


Figure 1: Corruption Likelihood Model by Sam (2023)

The postulations of the model are as follows:

- i. The more citizens in a country think that corruption is prevalent in the society, the more likely that corruption will be widespread in such a society, with the perceived notion that every other person is also corrupt;
- ii. The costlier the consequence of being caught or uncovered for a corrupt act, the less likely that members of the society would want to engage in corruption;
- iii. In a country where corruption is systemic, there is a high tendency for corruption to thrive. Such a country is termed *High-corruption-equilibrium country*;
- iv. In a country where there is high level of transparency and accountability, there is the likelihood that the level of corruption in such a country will be marginal. Such a country is termed *Low-corruption-equilibrium country*;
- v. At the region known as the *Tipping Point*, (somewhere at the middle point) something critical/crucial can happen which can take a country from a *High-corruption equilibrium country* to *Low-corruption equilibrium country*, and vice-versa.

Although there are certain individuals in the society who would never be tempted to engage in a corrupt act, no matter its potential benefits, many others have no scruples, whatsoever, when it comes to offering and receiving bribe. The higher the moral costs, the higher the corruption figure must be to compensate for the burden of violating such a person's moral principles.

Moreover, the thought of having to face public shame and reputational damage if the corrupt act is uncovered and publicised may also serve as a deterrent to morality-conscious individuals. This, therefore, suggests that the personal net benefit of corruption depends on the probability of being caught, as well as on the size of costs and benefits. However, this cost-benefit analysis depends on the individual's perception of the magnitude or prevalence of corruption already present in the society (Moene & Soreide, 2019).

For instance, the likelihood of offering a bribe depends, to a very large extent, on the giver's expectation that he will be dealing with a corrupt (or corruptible) and “trustworthy” counterpart. A giver of bribe will be careful not to propose a corruption deal to someone who might report the incident to a law enforcement agency. In a society with widespread corruption, the estimated risk of being detected by an honest, incorruptible citizen in the society is lower than in a society where corruption is not. Moreover, the moral cost of corruption will be higher in a society where corruption is less prevalent. Hence, the temptation to accept a bribe depends on the extent that corruption is perceived to be prevalent in the society, among other factors. These perceptions may matter more than the rigour of the laws or the law enforcement system.

Furthermore, when corruption is built into the working system in a country (systemic), such a country may find itself in the *high-corruption-equilibrium* region, making it difficult to escape from the level of corruption in such a country. On the other hand, some countries may experience low levels of corruption. This suggests that with little effort, such countries manage to keep the problem of corruption in check. A low level of corruption makes monitoring and supervision more effective, and honesty more valuable. This kind of country enjoys a *low-corruption-equilibrium*, which helps to effectively deter some individuals from corrupt tendencies (Moene & Soreide, 2019).

Meanwhile, somewhere in-between the low-corruption-equilibrium and the high-corruption-equilibrium regions, there must be a critical threshold, a tipping point. As long as corruption does not exceed this threshold, the country remains in the low-corruption state, and vice versa. But once the threshold is crossed from below, corruption approaches the level associated with a high-corruption-equilibrium level.

At the Tipping Point, what might trigger development toward a more or less corruption likelihood, or shake a society to bring it out of an otherwise sustainable corruption equilibrium situation, could be a major scandal such as a revolution, or a military take-over in the country. Furthermore, a comprehensive anti-corruption programme initiated by a sincere new government in an otherwise *high-corruption-equilibrium* country might trigger a downward movement toward lower levels of corruption in such a country. For instance, if a new government comes into place in a *high-corruption-equilibrium* country, and begins to prosecute and sentence corrupt government officials to death by hanging, as is the case in China, that may serve as a trigger which can bring such a country to a *low-corruption-equilibrium* region.

If these postulations about how corruption evolves in a society are correct, it is, therefore, important to discover what various stakeholders in the society think about the prevalence of corruption in such a society. Besides, the extent to which the society condemns corruption, and the sincerity in the anti-corruption fight of government, through the prosecution, and subsequent punishment of offenders, would also go a long

way to help reduce the level of corruption in a country (James & Sam, 2023).

7 Methodology

7.1 The researchers adopted two research designs: content analysis, and survey in gathering and analysing the data for this study. Content analysis was adopted in order to investigate the framing that *Punch*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Nation* newspapers gave to reports on incidents of corruption between 2019 and 2023. A survey was also conducted to determine the perception of academics about corruption and its effects on national development in Nigeria. This, therefore, means that both quantitative and qualitative techniques were adopted for this study.

7.2 Population of the Study

This study had two sets of population. The population for the content analysis of this study consisted of all the editions of *Punch*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Nation* newspapers published between 2019 and 2023. This amounted 4,383 issues. The population for the survey aspect comprised 2,534 academics who teach in the four tertiary institutions selected for the study.

7.3 Sample size and Sampling Procedure

Philip Meyer's guideline for sample selection was used to select 357 copies of the newspapers as sample; while Taro Yamane formula was used to select 400 respondents for the survey. The sampling technique adopted for the content analysis aspect of the study was constructed week. Based on this principle, the researchers drew samples of the newspapers content based on the day of the week on which the newspapers were published. For the survey, the multi-stage sampling technique was adopted, where each of the four institutions was first clustered into strata. Furthermore, Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) sampling technique was adopted to proportionately allocate number of questionnaire copies to each of the four tertiary institutions based on their staff strength. The clusters were as follows:

Table of Sample Cluster according to Academic Institution

Institution	Population	Percentage	Sample size
University of Uyo	1,191	47	188
Akwa Ibom State University	530	21	84
Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic	445	17	68
College of Education, Afaha Nsit	368	15	60
Total	2,534	100	400

7.4 Content Categories

The following content categories were formulated for the study based on the identified frames:

- a. **Conflict Frame:** Conflict frame is distinguished through emphasis on the disagreement between individuals, parties, groups, institutions, or countries about the menace of corruption covered in the newspapers under study. This frame occurs through labeling and use of words which indicate blame, dispute, and debate on the causes and nature of the issue.
- b. **Morality Frame:** Morality frames made references to the cultural and/or religious embeddings of corruption, and pinpoints certain social prescriptions and moral tenets (or beliefs) represented in the society which influence the practices of corruption. Moral frames are matters of right or wrong; and/or the respect for set boundaries. Morality frame, as used in newspaper reports, tells whether an action is good or bad; and gives the reasons why it is morally good or bad.
- c. **Responsibility Frame:** This is the frame that is used to define social problems in terms of attributes to responsibility. It presents to the public who is responsible for the causes (looking into the past) and the treatment and/or solution (looking into the future) to the problem of corruption in Nigeria.
- d. **Economic Consequences Frame:** This frame interprets and presents corruption in terms of the consequences it has on the economy of Nigeria. Economic consequences frame weighs the actual and potential effects of corruption on the country's economy.
- e. **Action Frame:** The stories in this frame category stressed the action(s) and/or inactions of government at any level, anti-graft agencies and other law enforcement agencies against corrupt individuals in the society. Such actions include probing, prosecution, jailing, and/or confiscation or forfeiture of money and/or properties, and freezing of accounts.

7.6 Inter-coder Reliability

The inter-coder reliability was computed using the following formula:

$$CR = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

Where 2m = the total number of coding decisions in which the two coders agreed

Where N_1 = the total number of coding decisions reached by first coder

Where N_2 = the total number of coding decisions reached by second coder.

The inter-coder reliability score for the study after computation was 0.96.

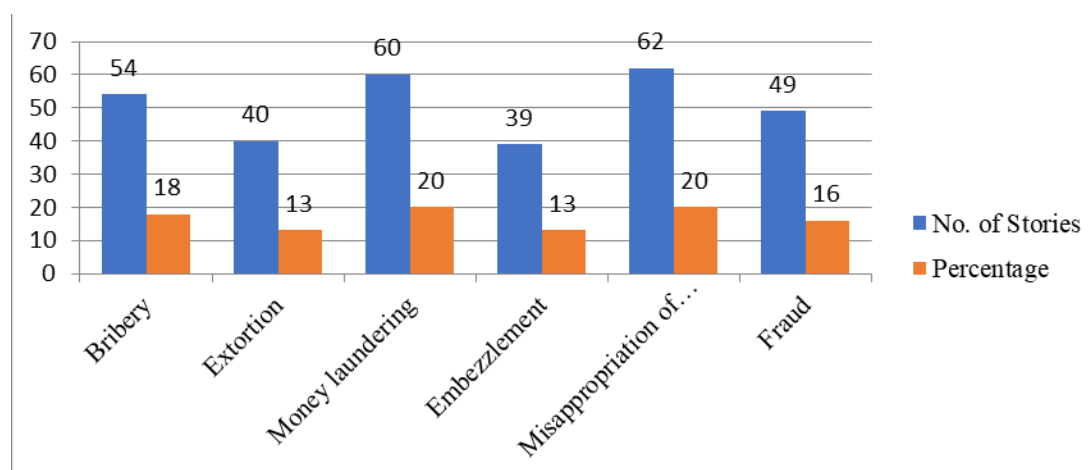
7.7 Methods of Data Collection

Data for the content analysis were obtained through the code sheet. This format made

the presentation clear and calculation of percentage scores feasible. Data for the survey part of the study were obtained through the questionnaire administered on the respondents by the researcher in their offices.

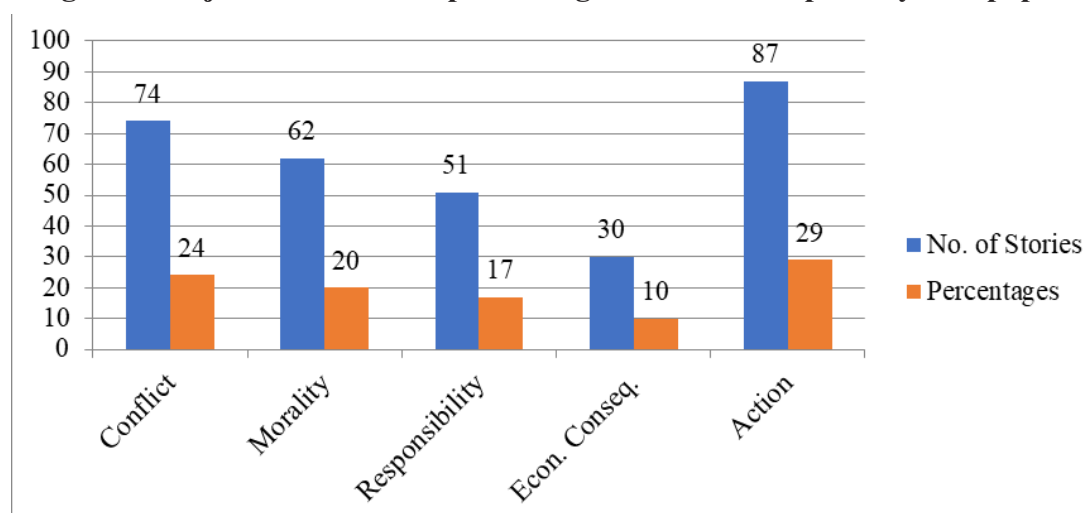
8 Data Presentation and Analysis

Figure 2: Types of corruption stories reported by newspapers in Nigeria



The information presented in Figure 2 reveals that overall, Misappropriation of Public Funds was the type of corrupt practice that was most reported [62 stories (20%)], followed by Money Laundering [60 stories (20%)], and Bribery [54 stories (18%)] in that order.

Figure 3: Major frames used in presenting stories on corruption by newspapers



Information in Figure 3 indicates that the bulk of the corruption stories published in the three newspapers were framed using the Action frame [87 reports (29%)], followed by Conflict frame [74 reports (24%)], and Morality Frame [62 reports (20%).

Table 4.1 Framing of stories on corruption according to newspapers

Sources/ Newspaper	Sun		Punch		Nation		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Conflict	34	11	18	6	21	7	74	24
Morality	29	9.5	16	5	18	6	62	20
Responsibility	23	7.5	13	4	15	5	51	17
Economic consequence	14	5	8	2	9	3	30	10
Action	40	13	22	7	25	8	87	29
Total	140	46	76	25	88	29	304	100

The data in Table 4.1 reveal that *DailySun* newspaper had 40 stories (13%) on corruption being framed using Action Frame; 34 stories (11%) were framed in the same newspaper using Conflict Frame; and 29 stories (9.5%) were framed using Morality Frame. Also, *The Nation* newspapers had 25 stories (8%) being framed using Action Frame; 21 stories (7%) using Conflict Frame; and 18 stories (6%) using Morality Frame; while *Punch* newspaper had 22 stories (7%) framed using Action Frame; with 18 stories (6%) framed using Conflict Frame.

Table 4.2 Types of stories on corruption reported according to frames under study

Categories/Frames	Conflict		Morality		Responsibility		Econ. Cons.		Action		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Bribery	13	4	11	4	9	3	5	2	16	5	54	18
Extortion	10	3	8	3	7	2	4	1	11	4	40	13
Money laundering	15	5	12	4	10	3	6	2	17	6	60	20
Embezzlement	9	3	8	3	7	2	4	1	11	4	39	13
Misappropriation	15	5	13	4	10	3	6	2	18	6	62	20
Fraud	12	4	10	3	8	3	5	2	14	5	49	16
Total	74	24	62	20	51	17	30	10	87	29	304	100

Data in Table 4.5 reveal that Bribery was reported most using the Action Frame [16(5%)], followed by the Conflict Frame [13(4%)], and Morality Frame [11(4%)]. Also, Extortion as Corruption was reported most using the Action Frame [11(4%)], followed by Conflict Frame [10(3%)], and Responsibility Frame [7(2%)].

Table 4.3: Academics' Exposure to newspapers frames on corruption incidents in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	372	100
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0
	0	0
Total	372	100

The data in Table 4.3 reveal that all the respondents (100%) affirmed that they read reports about corruption in newspapers in Nigeria.

Table 4.4: Academics perceived corruption as highly prevalent in Nigerian society

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	253	2.72
Agree	119	0.95
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	372	3.67

The data in Table 4.4 show a Weighted Mean Score (W.M.S) of 3.67. This implies that academics perceived corruption to be very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

4.5 (a): Academics perceived corruption as having a positive effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	7	0.07
Agree	11	0.08
Disagree	104	0.55
Strongly disagree	250	0.67
Total	372	1.37

The information in Table 4.5 (a) reveals a W.M.S of 1.37. This implies that academics very strongly disagreed to the assertion that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development as currently witnessed in Nigeria.

Table 4.5 (b): Academics perceived corruption as having a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	280	3.01
Agree	70	0.56
Disagree	7	0.03
Strongly disagree	15	0.04
Total	372	3.64

The data in Table 4.5 (b) indicate a W.M.S of 3.64. The implication of this result is that academics very strongly believed that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development as currently witnessed in Nigeria.

Table 4.6: Academics perceived corruption as one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	238	2.55
Agree	134	1.08
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	372	3.63

Information in Table 4.6 reveals a W.M.S of 3.63, which implies that academics very strongly believed that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development as currently witnessed in the country.

4.2 Testing of Research Hypotheses

4.2.1 Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between academics' exposure to newspaper reports on corruption in Nigeria and their perception of the level of corruption prevalence in the country.

The data for computation for the test of Hypothesis One were obtained Table 4.3(X) and 4.4 (Y). The independent variable was academics' exposure to newspaper report on corruption (X) (Table 4.3), while the dependent variable was their perception of the level of corruption prevalence in the country (Y) (Table 4.4). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.7: Data for Testing Hypothesis One

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
372	253	138,384	64,009	94,116
0	119	0	14,161	0
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0
372	372	138,384	78,170	94,116

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.904

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.904 is greater than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate is upheld. Therefore, there is a

very significant relationship between academics' exposure to newspaper reports on corruption and their perception that corruption very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

4.2.2: Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society and their perception of the effects of corruption on national development in the country.

The data for computation for the test of Hypothesis Two (a) which has it that corruption has a positive effect on national development in Nigeria were obtained Table 4.4(X) and 4.5(a)(Y). The independent variable was academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society (X) (Table 4.4), while the dependent variable was their perception that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in the country (Y) (Table 4.5(a). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.8: Data for Testing Hypothesis Two (a)

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
148	7	21,904	49	1,036
200	11	40,000	121	2,200
24	104	576	10,816	2,496
0	250	0	62,500	0
372	372	62,480	73,486	5,732

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.079

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.079 is less than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is upheld, while the alternate is rejected. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

4.2.2 (b) Testing of Hypothesis Two (b)

The data for computation for this hypothesis, which assert that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria, were obtained Table 4.4 (X) and 4.5(b) (Y). The independent variable was academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society (X) (Table 4.4), while the dependent variable was their perception that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in the country (Y) (Table 4.5 (a). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.9: Data for Testing Hypothesis Two (b)

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
148	280	21,904	78,400	41,440
200	70	40,000	4,900	14,000
24	7	576	49	168
0	15	0	225	0
372	372	62,480	83,574	55,608

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.768

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.768 is greater than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate is upheld. Therefore, there is a very significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

4.2.3 Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between academics' perception of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in the country.

The data for computation for this hypothesis were obtained from Table 4.4 (X) and 4.6 (Y). The independent variable was academics' perception of the level of prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society (X) (Table 4.4), while the dependent variable was their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impedes the pace of national development in the country (Y) (Table 4.6). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.10: Data for Testing Hypothesis Three

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
253	238	64,009	56,644	60,214
119	134	14,161	17,956	15,946
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0
372	372	78,170	74,600	76,160

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.997

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.997 is greater than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate is upheld. Therefore, there is a very significant relationship between academics' perception of the prevalence of

corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impedes the pace of national development in the country.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

4.3.1 Research Question One: How did *Punch*, *DailySun*, and *The Nation* newspapers frame the reports on incidents of corruption in their reportage between 2019 and 2023?

The answer to this question is provided in Figures 2 and 3, and Tables 4.1 and 4.2. The findings provided in Figure 2, reveal that overall, Misappropriation of Public Funds was the type of corrupt practice that was most reported by the newspapers under study [62 stories (20%)], followed by Money Laundering [60 stories (20%)], and Bribery [54 stories (18%)], Fraud [49 reports (16%)], Extortion [40 reports (13%)] and Embezzlement [39 reports (13%)] in that order.

More findings provided in Figure 3 pertaining to the way the newspapers under study framed incidents of corruption in their reportage revealed that the bulk of the reports on incidents of corruption published in the three newspapers were framed using the Action frame [87 reports (29%)], followed by Conflict frame [74 reports (24%)], Morality Frame [62 reports (20%)], Responsibility Frame [51 reports (17%)], and Economic Consequence Frame [30 reports (10%)].

These findings are supported by headlines of some reports published in the newspapers under study thus: An example of a report on **Embezzlement** of public funds written using the **Economic Consequence Frame** was published in *DailySun* newspaper of Tuesday, August 10, 2021, under the headline “**Nigeria loses ₦5.20 trillion to corruption at ports**” with the rider; “**ICPC, DSS, others team up to stem menace.**” The story reads in part that Nigeria lost a whopping ₦5.20 trillion revenue, annually, to corruption at Nigerian ports. The money, lost to the illicit financial flows at ports, weighed heavily on the economy as up to ₦1.01 trillion (about \$1.95 billion) in government revenue, and ₦4.1 trillion (about \$8.5 billion) in private revenue were lost annually due to corruption at the nation's ports. However, those losses severely constrict government programme and the capacity to develop and improve much-needed public infrastructure.

Another headline still written using the **Economic Consequence Frame**, as published in *Punch* Newspaper of Wednesday, November 17, 2021, are “**Oil revenue plunges as Nigeria misses January OPEC quota**” with the rider; “**FG officials blame vandalism, PIA implementation delay, others.**”

These findings are supported by the Framing Theory used as an anchor for this study. Griffin (2011) cited in Sam (2019) asserts that framing implies that the mass

media may not (only) tell us what to think about, they may also tell us how and what to think about it, and, perhaps, even what to do about it. This means that through framing, the mass media such as newspapers suggest to the people the perception of the event (or issue) and whether there is need for urgent actions to be taken or not

4.3.2 Research Question Two: To what extent were academics in Akwa Ibom State exposed to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption in Nigeria?

The answer to this question is provided in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. The findings in Table 4.3 revealed that all the respondents (100%) affirmed that they read reports about corruption in newspapers in Nigeria. Additional findings provided in Table 4.4 revealed a Weighted Mean Score (W.M.S) of 3.67. This finding implies that academics perceived corruption to be very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

These findings are supported by the result of Hypothesis One of this study as tested, which revealed that there is a significant relationship between academics' exposure to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption, and their perception that corruption is very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

The findings are further supported by the first postulation of the Corruption Likelihood Model, which states that the more citizens in a country think that corruption is prevalent in the society, the more likely that corruption will be widespread in such a society, with the perceived notion that every other person is also corrupt.

Sam (2024) further supports these findings when he states that the mass media, such as newspapers, can help to keep the political and economic sectors in the society transparent and accountable. Such assertion is borne out of the conviction that media reports can increase the probability of corrupt public officials being caught, exposed, and probably being punished for such corrupt behaviour.

4.3.3 Research Question Three: How did academics in Akwa Ibom State perceive the effects of the prevalence of corruption on Nigeria's pace of national development?

The answer to this question is provided in Table 4.4 and 4.5 (a and b). The findings provided Table 4.4 show a Weighted Mean Score (W.M.S) of 3.67; which by implication revealed that academics in Akwa Ibom State perceived corruption to be very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society. More findings in Table 4.5 (a) reveals a W.M.S of 1.37. The implication of this findings is that academics in Akwa Ibom State very strongly disagreed to the assertion that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria. Additional findings in Table 4.5 (b) showed a W.M.S of 3.64; which implies that academics in the State very strongly believed that corruption has a

negative effect on the pace of national development in the country.

The result of Hypothesis Two (a) as tested, further buttress the findings of this study. It states that there is no significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

These findings are supported by the third stage in the process of perception which has to do with interpretation. At this stage of perception, the preceptor attaches meaning to the selected stimuli. Once the selected stimuli have been categorised into structured and stable patterns, sense is made of patterns by assigning meanings to them. However, different people may have different interpretations of the same stimulus (Naydenov, 2023). It may not be surprising, however, to see some politicians argue about the pace of national development, contrary to what the findings of this study reveal.

4.3.4 Research Question Four: To what the extent did newspaper frames on corruption influence the perception of academics in Akwa Ibom State towards the pace of national development in Nigeria?

The answer to this question is provided in Table 4.6. findings provided in this table reveal a Weighted Mean Score of 3.63, which implies that academics very strongly believed that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in Nigeria. Supporting these findings is the result of Hypothesis Three of this study, as tested, which states that there is a significant relationship between academics' perception of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impedes the pace of national development in the country.

These findings are further buttressed by the result of Hypothesis Two (b) which states that there is a significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

The findings are further supported by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2018) who states that corruption represents a severe impediment to a nation's sustainable development. Its cost on a nation's development is much more than mere diverting the resources from their rightful purposes. It destroys such a nation's socio-economic fabric, weakens its rule of law, undermines trust in governance, and wears away the quality of life of the people. In such a society, there is a higher tendency for organised crime, terrorism, and violent extremism to thrive.

5 Conclusion

From the findings of the study as analysed above, it is safe to conclude here that Nigeria, as a nation, is in the *High-corruption-equilibrium* region in the Corruption Likelihood Model, as evidenced from the high level of corruption prevalence in the country. Also, the very high level at which academics in the Akwa Ibom State perceived corruption to be prevalent supports the postulations of the Model. More so, newspapers in Nigeria did creditably well in the way they framed the reports on incidents of corruption covered within the study period. This, they did by selecting words and describing in details the actions taken against corrupt officials, the economic consequences of such corrupt practices, and the moral implication of such acts. They also did well to bring to the fore the conflict between the parties involved, and by identifying and naming the people responsible for the different corrupt practices in the country.

6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered, based on the findings of the study.

- i. News reporters and editors are advised to continue to frame reports on incidents of corrupt practices in the country in such a way that members of the audience would easily understand the import of such reports and take the necessary actions necessary to reduce the level of corruption in the country.
- ii. Academics are urged to continue to expose themselves to reports on corruption as published in newspapers in the country as a way of keeping abreast with happenings in this regard. Such exposure may help to reduce the level of corruption prevalence in the country since reports on the consequences of being caught on corrupt practice may serve as a deterrent.
- iii. Since the findings of the study reveal that the level of corruption prevalence in the country is very high, it is advised that the consequences of being caught or exposed for a corrupt act be made more severe. For instance, to make involvement in corrupt practices less attractive, life imprisonment, or even the capital punishment should be enforced on corruption offenders as is the case in countries like China and South Korea.
- iv. To reduce the level of corruption prevalence in Nigeria, law enforcement agencies such as EFCC, ICPC, the courts, and governments at all levels should do more than pay lip service to the fight against corruption. They should take

decisive actions such as confiscation and/or forfeiture of properties acquired through corrupt means to the government. In addition, such confiscated or forfeited properties should be used for the overall benefit of the general public, and not to be re-embezzled by those in positions of authority, as is sometimes the case.

- v. To achieve a Tipping-Point as postulated in the Corruption Likelihood Model, where Nigeria would be moved from a *High-corruption-equilibrium* nation, that it is currently, to a *Low-corruption-equilibrium* nation, Nigerians should ensure that they adopt a ballot revolution approach, where corrupt and inept leaders are voted out, while people with impeccable character are voted in subsequent elections. The researchers of this study believe that only people with such character, who have track records of transparency and accountability, would have the moral justification to fight and reduce the level of corruption prevalence in the country.

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HEALTH INFORMATION AND INFORMED DECISIONS IN MANAGING HYPERTENSION AMONG NON-TEACHING STAFF OF UNIVERSITY OF DELTA, AGBOR

Emmanuel Onyeisi Morka

Abstract

This study examined how non-teaching staff in the University of Delta (UNIDEL) Agbor, accessed health information and made informed decisions on managing their hypertension (high blood pressure). Structured questionnaire was used to gather data for a cross-sectional survey design, and both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysis. The findings showed that 68.2% of the respondents mostly relied on social media for health updates, and 72.4% of respondents had limited access to trustworthy health information. Just 34.6% of respondents showed sufficient health literacy, and 78.9% said they made healthcare decisions without seeking advice from a professional. Significant correlations were observed between income level and healthcare decision-making patterns ($F = 12.87$, $p < 0.001$), age and digital health literacy ($r = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$), and educational level and access to health information ($\chi^2 = 45.23$, $p < 0.001$). It was found that several significant obstacles such as a lack of digital infrastructure (89.3%), a lack of communication between healthcare providers (76.8%), and a lack of health education initiatives (84.1%). These results demonstrated how urgently comprehensive health information systems and focused interventions were needed to enhance the health of Nigerian university non-teaching staff.

1. Introduction

Hypertension is one of the most pressing global health challenges of our time. It affects approximately 1.13 billion people worldwide and serving as a primary contributor to cardiovascular disease, stroke, and premature mortality (WHO, 2023). In Nigeria specifically, the prevalence of adult hypertension has reached alarming proportions at 28.9%, with substantial implications for healthcare systems and public health infrastructure (Ezeaka et al., 2025). This escalating burden underscores the critical importance of ensuring access to reliable, actionable health information for effective disease management, as hypertension control demands that patients make well-informed decisions, implement comprehensive lifestyle modifications, and maintain consistent monitoring protocols.

Contemporary digital health revolution has fundamentally transformed how individuals access, process, and utilize health information, with wearable technology and mobile health applications emerging as increasingly popular tools for cardiovascular risk management and health monitoring (Ahmed et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2022). These technological innovations have democratized access to health information and created unprecedented opportunities for real-time health tracking and decision support. However, significant disparities persist in the effectiveness and widespread adoption of these technologies across diverse populations, particularly in developing

countries where socioeconomic constraints, inadequate health literacy levels, and limited digital infrastructure continue to present formidable barriers (Chukwu et al., 2023).

Non-teaching staff at universities constitute a unique demographic group that faces distinctive challenges in accessing health information and making informed healthcare decisions. These individuals frequently experience elevated levels of work-related stress, which can significantly impact both their physical and mental well-being, and create a complex interplay between occupational factors and health outcomes (Yaseen et al., 2025). Research has established important connections between mental health status, cognitive flexibility, and mindfulness among university faculty members, and has highlighted how these psychological factors influence healthcare decision-making processes (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021).

The adoption of wearable health technologies demonstrates particular complexity among older adults in developing nations, where digital health literacy emerges as a crucial determinant of successful technology integration and utilization (Eze et al., 2023). The incorporation of artificial intelligence into healthcare communication and policy development presents both significant opportunities and notable challenges for enhancing health outcomes in Nigeria, requiring careful consideration of implementation strategies and population-specific needs (Ezeaka, 2024). Understanding the multifaceted variables that influence health information access and decision-making processes becomes essential for developing targeted interventions capable of improving cardiovascular health outcomes.

The digital transformation of healthcare has simultaneously created unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges for health information access and utilization across diverse populations. In Nigeria, the integration of digital health technologies presents particular implementation challenges due to persistent infrastructure limitations, varying levels of digital literacy across different demographic groups, and pronounced socioeconomic disparities that affect technology access and utilization (Ezeaka, 2024). Non-teaching university staff represent a particularly interesting population that occupies a distinctive middle ground between highly educated academic staff and the general population, making their health information behaviors exceptionally important to understand and characterize.

Modern healthcare increasingly expects patients to navigate increasingly complex information landscapes, critically evaluate source credibility, and make autonomous decisions that directly impact their health outcomes (Kim et al., 2021). This expectation proves particularly challenging for individuals managing chronic conditions like hypertension, which necessitates continuous monitoring, sustained lifestyle modifications, and ongoing engagement with healthcare systems across

extended periods.

2. Statement of the Problem

The growing prevalence of hypertension in Nigeria, combined with the rapid digitization of health information systems, creates a complex and often challenging landscape for health information access and utilization. Non-teaching university staff occupy a unique position within this landscape, typically having better access to technology and educational resources compared to the general population, yet potentially lacking the specific health literacy skills necessary to effectively navigate sophisticated digital health information systems.

The work environment characteristic of university non-teaching staff presents specific challenges that significantly impact their health information seeking behaviors and decision-making processes. These challenges include irregular work schedules that may conflict with healthcare appointments, high job demands that create stress and limit time for health-related activities, limited autonomy in work arrangements that may affect healthcare planning, and potential stress related to job security and career advancement opportunities. These environmental factors collectively influence both their motivation to proactively seek health information and their practical ability to implement health-related recommendations effectively.

The challenge becomes more complex when considering that hypertension is frequently termed a "silent killer" due to its characteristically asymptomatic nature during early stages of development. This particular characteristic makes it especially important for individuals to proactively seek comprehensive health information and engage in consistent preventive behaviors, rather than adopting a reactive approach that waits for symptoms to manifest. The effectiveness of such proactive behavioral approaches depends heavily on sustained access to reliable health information sources and the development of skills necessary to make informed decisions based on that information.

Despite increased focus on digital health interventions and the proliferation of multiple health information sources, significant knowledge gaps exist regarding how non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Ashor, access, process, and effectively utilize health information for managing high blood pressure.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions provided guidance for this investigation:

1. What are the primary sources of health information regarding hypertension among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor?
2. What is the current level of digital literacy concerning hypertension among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor?

3. What are the significant barriers to accessing health information about hypertension among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor?
4. What is the existing level of knowledge about hypertension among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor?
5. What are the current health management practices related to hypertension among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor?
6. What are the health seeking behaviours demonstrated against hypertension among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor?
7. What specific challenges do non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor face in effectively managing hypertension?

4. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated:

- H₁:** There exists a significant relationship between educational level and digital health literacy among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor.
- H₂:** There exists a significant association between age and health information seeking behavior patterns among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor.
- H₃:** There exists a significant correlation between income level and healthcare decision-making patterns among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor.
- H₄:** There exists a significant relationship between access to reliable health information and hypertension management practices among non-teaching staff of University of Delta, Agbor.

5. Review of Related Literature

Health Information Access in the Digital Age

The digital revolution has fundamentally transformed how individuals access and process health information across in diverse contexts. Ahmed et al. (2023) conducted extensive research exploring the effectiveness of wearable health devices for cardiovascular risk management in developing nations, highlighting both the significant opportunities and persistent challenges presented by these emerging technologies. Their comprehensive research indicated that while digital health tools provide unprecedented access to health information and sophisticated monitoring capabilities, their overall effectiveness remains significantly influenced by critical factors including digital literacy levels, infrastructure availability, and socioeconomic status.

The proliferation of mobile health applications and wearable devices has

established new paradigms for health information access and patient engagement. Chen et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review examining the prediction of atrial fibrillation using AI-powered smart watches, and successfully demonstrated the substantial potential of these technologies for early detection and effective management of cardiovascular conditions. However, their research simultaneously highlighted significant gaps in adoption and utilization rates, particularly among populations with limited technological exposure or insufficient economic resources.

Digital Health Literacy and Its Determinants

Digital health literacy has emerged as a critical factor determining the effectiveness of health information access and utilization across diverse populations. Eze et al. (2023) examined digital health literacy and adoption patterns of wearable health gadgets among older adults in Nigeria, revealing significant disparities based on age, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status. Their findings strongly suggest that successful implementation of digital health interventions requires carefully targeted approaches that systematically address specific literacy gaps within different population segments.

Kim et al. (2021) investigated factors influencing the adoption of mobile health applications for stroke prevention among Korean older adults, discovering that digital health literacy served as a stronger predictor of successful adoption than traditional health literacy measures. This finding emphasizes the evolving nature of health literacy in digital environments.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical perspectives: the Health Belief Model (HBM) and Information Processing Theory. The Health Belief Model, originally developed by Rosenstock (1966), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals make decisions about health behaviors based on their perceptions of personal susceptibility, condition severity, potential benefits, and existing barriers. In this study's context, the HBM helps explain how non-teaching staff perceive their hypertension risk, understand the condition's severity, recognize benefits of seeking health information, and identify barriers preventing effective health information access.

Information Processing Theory complements the HBM by providing insights into how individuals acquire, process, and utilize information for effective decision-making, particularly relevant for understanding how digital health literacy influences health information behaviors and outcomes.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to investigate health information access and decision-making patterns among non-teaching staff at the University of Delta, Agbor.

A sample size of 384 participants was determined using Yamane's formula with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error:

A structured questionnaire with six main sections was developed. The sections included: socio-demographic characteristics (10 items), health information access patterns (15 items), digital health literacy assessment (12 items), healthcare decision-making practices (18 items), barriers to health information access (14 items), and hypertension knowledge and management (16 items). Data analysis utilized SPSS version 26.0, employing descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including chi-square tests, correlation analysis, and ANOVA to examine relationships and test hypotheses, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 384 participants completed the survey, representing a 100% response rate.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=384)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	166	43.2
	Female	218	56.8
Age Group	20-30 years	89	23.2
	31-40 years	142	37.0
	41-50 years	108	28.1
	51-60 years	45	11.7
	61-70 years	10	2.6
Educational Level	Primary	42	10.9
	Secondary	154	40.1
	Tertiary	142	37.0
	Postgraduate	46	12.0
Monthly Income	< ₦50,000	124	32.3
	₦50,000-₦100,000	174	45.3
	₦100,000-₦150,000	62	16.1
	> ₦150,000	24	6.3
Years of Service	1-5 years	156	40.6
	6-10 years	98	25.5
	11-15 years	76	19.8
	> 15 years	54	14.1

The majority of respondents were female (n=218, 56.8%), with ages ranging from 24 to 58 years (mean age = 41.2 ± 8.7 years). Most participants held secondary education qualifications (n=154, 40.1%), followed by tertiary education (n=142, 37.0%). The monthly income distribution showed that 45.3% earned between ₦50,000-₦100,000, while 32.3% earned less than ₦50,000 monthly.

Table 2: Health Information Sources and Access Patterns (N=384)

Information Source	Frequency of Use	Percentage	Reliability Rating (1-5)
Social Media	262	68.2	3.1 ± 0.9
Television	210	54.7	3.2 ± 0.7
Radio	181	47.1	2.8 ± 0.9
Internet Search	156	40.6	4.2 ± 0.6
Healthcare Providers	122	31.8	2.1 ± 0.8
Friends/Family	198	51.6	2.9 ± 0.8
Newspapers/Magazines	89	23.2	3.4 ± 0.9
Health Apps	67	17.4	3.8 ± 0.7
Wearable Devices	34	8.9	

Decision-Making Patterns revealed concerning trends:

- Make decisions without consultation: 78.9%
- Consult healthcare providers: 31.8%
- Seek family advice: 51.6%
- Use online resources: 40.6%
- Follow social media recommendations: 68.2%

The analysis revealed significant disparities in health information access among participants. Social media platforms emerged as the primary source of health information for 68.2% of respondents, followed by television (54.7%) and friends/family (51.6%). Healthcare providers were consulted by only 31.8% of participants for health information, while 78.9% reported making healthcare decisions without professional consultation.

Table 3: Digital Health Literacy Levels and Associated Factors (N=384)

Digital Health Literacy Level	Frequency	Percentage	Associated Factors
Inadequate (Score: 1-2)	174	45.3	Primary education (83.3%), Age > 45 years (72.4%)
Marginal (Score: 3-4)	77	20.1	Secondary education (54.2%), Limited internet access
Adequate (Score: 5-6)	133	34.6	Tertiary education (68.3%), Age < 35 years (61.8%)

Digital Health Literacy Components showed significant gaps:

- Ability to find health information online: 45.8%
- Skill in evaluating health website credibility: 23.7%
- Understanding of digital health tools: 31.2%
- Ability to use health apps effectively: 28.4%
- Knowledge of privacy settings: 19.5%
- Competence in interpreting digital health data: 22.1%

The digital health literacy assessment revealed concerning gaps in participants' ability to effectively access, evaluate, and utilize digital health information. Only 34.6% of participants demonstrated adequate digital health literacy levels, with significant variations across age groups and educational levels.

Correlation Analysis revealed significant relationships:

- Age and digital health literacy: $r = -0.42, p < 0.001$
- Educational level and digital health literacy: $r = 0.58, p < 0.001$
- Income level and digital health literacy: $r = 0.34, p < 0.001$

Table 4: Barriers to Health Information Access (N=384)

Barrier Category	Specific Barrier	Frequency	Percentage	Severity Rating (1-5)
Infrastructure	Poor internet connectivity	343	89.3	4.2 ± 0.7
	Limited access to devices	267	69.5	3.8 ± 0.9
	Unstable power supply	298	77.6	4.0 ± 0.8
Economic	High cost of internet	311	81.0	4.1 ± 0.8
	Expensive health apps	189	49.2	3.5 ± 0.9
	Cost of healthcare services	287	74.7	4.3 ± 0.6
Educational	Limited health literacy	234	60.9	3.7 ± 0.8
	Language barriers	156	40.6	3.2 ± 0.9
	Lack of digital skills	201	52.3	3.6 ± 0.8
Healthcare System	Limited provider communication	295	76.8	4.0 ± 0.7
	Inadequate health education	323	84.1	4.2 ± 0.6
	Long waiting times	268	69.8	3.9 ± 0.8

The study identified multiple barriers that impede effective health information access among participants. Infrastructure-related barriers were the most prominent, with 89.3% of respondents reporting inadequate digital infrastructure as a major obstacle.

Table 5: High Blood Pressure Knowledge, Management Practices and Health Information Seeking Behavior (N=384)

Knowledge/Practice Area	Correct Response	Percentage
Basic Knowledge		
Normal BP range identification	148	38.5
Risk factors recognition	164	42.7
Symptoms awareness	127	33.1
Complications understanding	98	25.5
Management Practices		
Regular BP monitoring	89	23.2
Medication adherence	156	40.6
Lifestyle modifications	178	46.4
Regular healthcare visits	67	17.4
Information-Seeking Behavior		
Seek professional advice	122	31.8
Use reliable sources	134	34.9
Verify information	78	20.3
Share with healthcare provider	91	23.7

The assessment of high blood pressure knowledge revealed significant gaps in understanding among participants. Only 42.7% demonstrated adequate knowledge of hypertension risk factors, while 38.5% correctly identified normal blood pressure ranges.

Management Challenges identified include:

- Inconsistent medication availability: 73.4%
- Financial constraints: 68.2%
- Time constraints: 81.5%
- Lack of symptoms awareness: 66.9%
- Inadequate follow-up: 82.6%

9. Discussion of Findings

The results of this study reveal significant challenges faced by non-teaching staff at the University of Delta, Agbor, in accessing health information and making informed decisions. The finding that 68.2% of participants primarily rely on social media for health information, despite its low reliability rating (2.3 ± 0.8), represents a concerning trend that aligns with global patterns of health information seeking behavior in the digital age (Ezeaka, 2024).

Health Information Access Disparities

The study's findings indicate that 72.4% of participants had limited access to reliable health information, which corresponds with broader challenges faced by populations in developing countries regarding healthcare quality and accessibility (Ezeaka et al., 2025). The low utilization of healthcare providers as information sources

(31.8%) suggests significant gaps in provider-patient communication, which has been identified as crucial for effective disease management (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021).

The digital divide is evident in the finding that only 34.6% of the study population demonstrated adequate digital health literacy levels. This finding is particularly concerning given the increasing integration of digital health technologies into healthcare delivery systems (Chen et al., 2022; Ahmed et al., 2023). The strong negative correlation between age and digital health literacy ($r = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$) suggests the need for age-specific interventions to improve digital health competencies among older workers.

Barriers to Effective Health Information Utilization

Infrastructure-related barriers emerged as the most significant obstacle (89.3%), consistent with previous research on barriers to wearable health technology adoption in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chukwu et al., 2023). The high cost of internet access (81.0%) and limited device availability (69.5%) reflect broader socioeconomic challenges that hinder digital health adoption in developing countries.

The finding that 84.1% of participants reported inadequate health education programs at their institution highlights the need for comprehensive workplace health promotion initiatives. This gap in health education is particularly significant given the high levels of stress documented in university work environments and their impact on cardiovascular health outcomes (Yaseen et al., 2025).

Decision-Making Patterns and Health Outcomes

The finding that 78.9% of participants make healthcare decisions without professional consultation is particularly concerning in the context of chronic disease management such as hypertension. This decision-making pattern may be influenced by the high reliance on unreliable information sources, such as social media platforms, and limited access to healthcare providers.

The low level of knowledge regarding hypertension management practices, with only 42.7% correctly identifying risk factors and 38.5% recognizing normal blood pressure ranges, suggests significant health literacy gaps that could substantially impact health outcomes. These findings align with global patterns in hypertension awareness and management, particularly in resource-limited settings (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2023).

Digital Health Intervention Opportunities

Despite low adoption rates, the high reliability ratings for wearable devices (3.8 ± 0.7) and health apps (3.4 ± 0.9) among participants who use them suggest significant potential for targeted interventions to increase engagement with digital health tools. The

findings support the need for digital health solutions that are affordable, culturally appropriate, and address the specific barriers faced by this population (Eze et al., 2023).

The positive correlation between educational level and digital health literacy ($r = 0.58, p < 0.001$) suggests that educational interventions may be effective in improving digital health competencies. However, interventions must be tailored to address the diverse educational backgrounds of the study population, with particular attention to those with lower educational attainment.

Workplace Health Promotion Opportunities

The university setting provides unique opportunities for implementing comprehensive health promotion programs that address the identified gaps in health information access and decision-making. Given the high prevalence of work stress among university staff (Yaseen et al., 2025) and its association with cardiovascular health outcomes, mindfulness-based interventions may be particularly beneficial for this population.

The findings suggest that workplace-based health information systems could significantly improve health outcomes by addressing barriers to health education and healthcare provider communication. Such systems could leverage existing institutional infrastructure while addressing the specific needs of non-teaching staff members.

The challenges identified in this study reflect broader global trends in digital health adoption and health information access, particularly in developing countries. The barriers to digital health technology adoption identified in this Nigerian population are consistent with findings from other developing nations, including Korea (Kim et al., 2021) and Jordan (Al-Dmour et al., 2020), suggesting the need for context-specific solutions.

The study's findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the potential of digital health technologies and artificial intelligence to improve health outcomes in developing countries (Küfeoğlu, 2022; Küfeoğlu, 2023). However, the findings also demonstrate that fundamental infrastructure and literacy challenges must be addressed before sophisticated digital health interventions can be successfully implemented.

10. Conclusion

From the findings, it is concluded that widespread reliance on unreliable information sources and low engagement with healthcare professionals creates significant challenges for effective chronic disease management, particularly for conditions like hypertension that require ongoing monitoring and lifestyle modifications. The study's findings demonstrate the urgent need for comprehensive interventions that address both infrastructure and human capacity challenges.

In addition, the identification of the digital divide and its impact on health information access underscores the need for multi-faceted approaches that combine digital and traditional health information delivery methods. They also underscore the critical importance of addressing systemic barriers to health information access while simultaneously building individual capacity for effective health information utilization. The strong correlations between socioeconomic factors and health information behaviors suggest that interventions targeting only individual-level factors may be insufficient without addressing broader structural challenges.

Furthermore, the low levels of hypertension knowledge and suboptimal management practices identified in this study underscore the urgent need for targeted health education interventions.

11. Recommendations

The study proposes 14 comprehensive recommendations organized into five key categories to address health information access challenges among non-teaching staff at University of Delta, Agbor.

1. Institutional recommendations focus on establishing dedicated health information centres with qualified educators and reliable digital infrastructure. Universities should invest in campus-wide internet connectivity, computer labs, and subsidized device access while implementing comprehensive workplace health promotion programs including screening services and stress management training.
2. Educational and training initiatives emphasize developing age-appropriate digital health literacy programs covering basic computer skills, information evaluation techniques, and practical training on health apps. Health education programmes should address hypertension awareness, lifestyle promotion, and medication adherence, integrated into staff professional development requirements. Healthcare system integration involves establishing formal partnerships with local healthcare providers for on-campus consultations and telemedicine services. Universities should implement comprehensive health information management systems including electronic health records and credible resource portals.
3. Policy and advocacy measures require developing institutional health information policies with clear standards, privacy protection, and adequate resource allocation. Institutions should engage in community health advocacy and collaborate with government agencies on policy development.
4. Technology and innovation recommendations include developing culturally appropriate health apps, offline-capable systems, and multilingual resources.

Ongoing research and evaluation should monitor intervention effectiveness and adapt strategies accordingly.

5. Financial sustainability requires developing funding mechanisms through budget allocations, grant applications, and partnerships with health organizations, NGOs, and private sector companies to ensure long-term program viability and resource sharing.

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EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA OVERUSE ON STUDENTS' ATTENTION AND PARTICIPATION DURING LECTURES IN SELECTED HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The rising penetration of social media into students' lives heightens the necessity of investigating its effect on academic engagements of students for the purpose of fostering effective learning. This study investigated how the frequency of social media use during lectures, preference for multiple platforms, and after school-hour use of social media influenced attendance and participation, drawing from a sample of 335 students from one university from each of the six states in the region. Statistics used in Analysing data were descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses. Research indicates that the high frequencies of use of social media during lectures (coefficient = -0.348, $p < 0.001$), multitasking on different platforms (coefficient = -0.233, $p < 0.001$), and time spent on various activities with social media beyond lectures (coefficient = -0.298, $p < 0.001$) all have significant negative effects on attention, participation, and attendance among students. The regression model accounted for more than 91% of the variances covered under attendance and participation, indicating the strong influence of social media activities. In conclusion, ubiquitous and multidimensional social media use decreases students' academic engagement in lectures, thus requiring urgent interventions by higher learning institutions to mitigate its negative effects. Such interventions should involve creating awareness, formulating relevant policies, and training students in efforts to have students effectively manage their social media use to help improve their academic performance.

1. Introduction

Class attention during lectures is the most important aspect influencing the quality of learning and academic success. When attention is provided by the students during lectures, active processing of the intended information becomes possible, leading to understanding and retention. Many factors affect the concentration of students during lectures, especially in Nigerian developing institutions due to large-scale classes, dry lecture delivery, or other competing distraction (Fredricks et al., 2004). Research reveals that the more cognitively and behaviourally engaged a student is, the higher the levels of attention they display and such attention is vital for meaningful learning outcomes (Hamman et al., 2025). Students who do not give adequate attention to the lectures will miss out very important content that will result in low performance in academics.

Participation during lectures is closely tied up with attention; it refers to the active engagement of a student in classroom activities such as asking questions, contributing to discussions, and responding to lecturers. Participation enhances student engagement, encourages critical thinking, and promotes better academic achievement (Zareie et al., 2025). However, participation in some of the universities in Nigeria seems to be very low in a majority of cases due to age-old methods of lecturing that tend toward passive learning with little space for student interaction (Hamman et al., 2025). Interactive and inclusive methods of teaching, such as Audience Response Systems (ARS), promise to boost student participation by giving lectures an interactive dimension and transforming them into a motivating experience (Zareie et al., 2025).

Constant reference is made of social media overuse, increasingly seen as a serious distraction that detracts from students' attention and participation during lectures. Direct access to social media via smartphones creates opportunities for multitasking and frequent checking of notifications during class, rendering students defocused and less cognitively engaged with the subject matter (Anierobi et al., 2024). The result is that students cannot absorb the lecture materials well, and they are less likely to join in class discussions actively (Osita-Ejikeme et al., 2018).

Such addiction to social media platforms also aggravates these negative influences, contributing to their frequent interruptions and inhibiting long-term academic involvement. Social media also serves as an alternative to academic tasks where students drift into interactions and entertainment online, thus further disengaging them from lectures (Mondal, 2024). The above scenarios make things very complicated for universities, particularly in the South-West of Nigeria, which is a region populated by many students who are active social media users (Olumeru et al., 2025). Social media use should be balanced: working to enhance student experiences with collaborative environments, while also avoiding the negative effect it can have as a disruptive force in their academics.

South-West Nigeria is the region with most of the country's larger higher education institutions (Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria, 2023). Students of this area also have the highest percentage of social media users but with varying trends of academic engagement (Olumeru et al., 2025). Considering the adverse effects of social media overuse, it is likely that policies would have to be adopted to advocate and instil healthy digital habits while creating environments that would favor focused attention and active participation from students during lectures (Olawajun et al., 2020).

2. Statement of the Problem

Social media distractions during lectures are among the major impediments to

cognitive functions such as sustained attention and memory retention which are essential for learning by students. Huey & Giguere (2022) has shown that the mere exclusion or silencing of smartphones in the classroom increases the students' comprehension and reduces their anxiety; therefore, having such gadgets in the environment alone hampers concentration levels. Notification interruptions reduce students' task performance and memory retention, and in fact, repeated checking causes more multitasking and, hence, poorer learning results (Skowronek et al., 2023). It lowers the attention and participation of the students during the lectures. Heavy use of smartphones has been related to lowered academic engagement because, in part, of poor sleep quality and low academic self-confidence (Li & Xue, 2023).

Students engage in various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Tik-Tok for short videos, and even wider networks like Facebook and YouTube-all of which differ in their affordances and potential for distraction. According to (Li et al. 2024) has shown that having short-form video app addiction-in particular-causes increased academic anxiety and reduction in academic engagement during class, especially when students use these apps during lecture periods. It adversely affects students' attention and participation during lectures. Social media addiction hampers academic involvement and its outcomes are further compounded by poor sleep quality and fatigue (Zhuang et al., 2023). In connection with the difference in platforms and pattern of usage, not all social media are equal in effect on audiences-this should be a major consideration when considering research of platform-specific usage during lectures with possible differences in attention, participation, and learning outcomes.

Out of class hours of excessive social media use reduce mental energy and, consequently, participation and attention in class. For example, Li. et al., (2024); Zhang et al., (2024) found higher general social media addiction-often as a result of prolonged late evening or early-class use-to be negatively related to academic engagement through poor sleep, fatigue, and lower self-efficacy-all factors weakening attention and reducing active participation during lectures. Thus, these patterns clearly indicate that out of class social media hours tend to have no bearing on distraction outside the classroom-they create a spill effect in lecture dynamics. Students are left mentally fatigued, less attentive, and much more reluctant to contribute. Social media time usage beyond lecture periods can thus act as a distal yet quite strong predictor for in-class attention and participation deficits.

3. Research Questions

1. How does the frequency of social media usage during lectures affect attention and participation of students in selected universities in south-west Nigeria?

2. How do the several social media platforms preferred by students relate to students' lecture participation in the selected universities in south-west Nigeria?
3. What is the level of influence of social media usage beyond scheduled lecture hours on student attention and participation in selected universities in south-west Nigeria?

4. Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: Frequency of social media usage during lecture times does not significantly affect students' attention and participation during lectures in selected universities in south-west Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between the types of social media platforms used by students and students' participation during lectures in selected universities in south-west Nigeria.

Ho₃: The duration of social media use outside lecture hours does not significantly affect students' attention and participation during lectures in selected universities in south-west Nigeria.

5. Review of Related Literature

Chukwuere (2021) was one of the first to study the effect of social networks on student participation in lectures. The author employed surveys to show how social networks like Facebook and WhatsApp assist peer communication and engagement towards active participation during and outside lectures. Likewise, studies done by Ashraf et al. (2021) surveyed Chinese medical students and disclosed the findings that the interactive features of their social media promote collaborative learning as well as academic involvement. Based on surveys, similar patterns show up in the research published by Bhandarkar et al. (2021); that is, although female medical students performed better overall in academic performance, higher hours of use of social media correlated significantly with very reduced attention and participation.

Longitudinal studies from higher education by Barrera-Verdugo et al. (2022) demonstrate that prolonged hours of social media use correlate with less engagement and participation in academic work, especially among heavy users. Huey and Giguere (2022) conducted a quasi-experiment where they imposed restrictions against smartphone access during classes and reported that device silencing improved comprehension and lower anxiety; this proved that the mere presence of devices in itself distracts students in lectures. Liu et al. (2022) noticed, through surveys and interviews, that WhatsApp and Facebook undoubtedly act as important platforms for academic discourse among Malaysian undergraduates, whereas more entertaining platforms tend to take their focus away from participation in academia.

Skowronek et al., (2023) experimentally proved that merely being present with

smartphones, even if not actively used, lessens the baseline capacity for attention. In this case, Irina et al. (2023) struck the notes of the effective function of platform characteristics: visually vivid types of platforms, such as TikTok, not only create frequent distractions and cognitive overload but also go on to deepen class interruptions compared to text-heavy social media. According to Li and Xue (2023), heavy use of social media relates to lower academic engagement through the mechanisms of poor-quality sleep and academic self-confidence. Their work is a meta-analysis of previous studies.

Surveys that Abuzar and Hussain (2024) conducted show that excessive usage of social media outside class does not only lower the actual time spent in studying but also decreases concentration and during lectures. Emon (2024) carried out a quantitative survey amongst university students through which he found that long durations of social media usage correspond with increased procrastination, distracted concentration, and impaired participation in lectures. Al-Ansi et al. (2024) similarly noted during the same year that it encourages discussions among peers, but it also tends to distract individuals from focused learning because it is rich in visuals.

Mou *et al.* (2024) recognized social anxiety and social media addiction as potential psychological intermediaries for decreased academic engagement and performance. This research also confirmed by panel data analysis in South African universities that more time spent talking on social media rather than being in lectures had a negative effect on both study time and lecture integration and retention of what has been learned. The mixed methods of Okeya-Olayinka and Martins-Adediran (2025) reported that incessant use of Instagram and TikTok during lectures leads to distraction among Nigerian undergraduates while Facebook encourages collaboration in academic work with more participation. Meng et al. (2025) found that mobile addiction is associated with lower dispositional engagement by means of physical inactivity and poor academic self-efficacy.

In a study conducted recently by Lorie and Arago (2025), senior high school students revealed that while Facebook supports academic cooperation, excessive TikTok activity instead erodes academic attention and participation in lessons. Correlational findings from this study also indicate the need for digital literacy programs that can foster balanced use of social media. Emon and Rahima (2025) additionally triangulated from survey findings and focus group discussions, showing that continuous multi-tasking on prolonged social media use outside class time causes cognitive overload that detracts from in-class concentration and engagement.

6. Theoretical Framework

Media Multitasking Theory, Cognitive Load Theory, and Self-Regulation

Theory are the three theories that specifically relate to this proposed research on the impact of social media usage on students' attention during lectures and their participation in them. Media Multitasking Theory, first introduced by Ophir, Nass, and Wagner in 2009 and updated in recent reviews (Beuckels et al., 2021), describes the effects of multi-tasking with media on constant task switching and excessive overload on cognition, which hinders the ability to sustain attention. The same idea becomes significant for students who are used to flipping from one social media to lecture content pages quickly; it is said to fragment focus.

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) was developed by educational psychologist John Sweller in the late 1980s. It identifies the limited complement of the brain in processing information. It assumes that more external stimuli, such as notifications from social networks, add to the extraneous load and diminishes the resources available for teaching (Liu et al., 2019).

Self-Regulation Theory most broadly became formalized as part of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This theory was developed beginning in the mid-1970s by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, with the first foundational publications coming out in 1985. Control remains to be defined as the individual capacity to manage behaviour, motivation, and attention for goal-directed activities. The lack of control for the aforementioned variables among students leads to distraction by social media during and outside lectures, with consequent effects on participation and engagement (Zamanzadeh & Rice, 2021).

Cognitive Load Theory is the most relevant of these three for this research because of its clear explicative power of how social media usage increases cognitive demands that compete with learning tasks (Zamanzadeh & Rice, 2021). This immediately connects the external distractions to the limitations of the working memory capacity, thus providing a concrete mechanism by which social media disrupts the academic attention and participation.

New processing of findings indicates that students with self-regulation tendencies are more likely to enrol in distracting social media. Furthermore, the theory allows practical considerations for instructional design and interventions on the reduction of extraneous load by structuring lecture environments or advocating digital discipline strategies (Liu et al., 2019). Finally, it is the only applicable under different educational settings and has an increasing empirical support from recent studies on media-related distraction and learning challenges.

7.0 Methodology

7.1 Research Design

Survey research design was used for this study, the design was used by Emon (2024); Li & Xue, 2023 for similar works.

7.2 Population of the Study

The population for this research study were all undergraduate students located in the South West geopolitical zone of Nigeria (National Universities Commission, 2025; My UniGuide. 2025). The total population comprised a little above 1, 200,000 students.

7.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A University from each of the six states in the South West region of Nigeria-Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti-were included in the sampling to ensure representativeness. The criteria were prominence, size of student population, and accessibility. They were University of Lagos (Lagos), Olabisi Onabanjo University (Ogun), University of Ibadan (Oyo), Obafemi Awolowo University (Osun), Adekunle Ajasin University (Ondo) and Ekiti State University (Ekiti).

The total aggregate student population of these universities is about 1,200,000. Threshold calculation for sample size using a standard formula for large populations ($n = Z^2 p(1-p) / e^2$; $n = e^2 Z^2 p(1-p)$) based on 95% confidence level ($Z=1.96$), 0.5 assumed proportion for maximum variability and 5% margin of error yields an approximate sample size of 384 respondents. These findings are associated with previous studies, which also calculate sample size in this way (e.g. Cochran, 1977; Li & Xue, 2023). The sample size was then evenly divided (64) for each of the six universities.

7.4 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire formed the primary method of data collection for this research. It was developed around the objectives and hypotheses of the study. All the questions were closed-ended. From the questionnaire, using the five-point Likert scale, the participants had five choices to express their response: Strongly Agree (5 points); Agree (4 points); Undecided (3 points); Disagree (2 points); Strongly Disagree (1 point).

The questionnaire was divided into six major parts. Section A consisted of socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, name of university, years of using phones), while Section B contained the dependent variable Sections C to E were for the independent variables.

7.5 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were used. Inferential statistics was also used. Multiple regression analysis was then be performed.

7.5.1 Model Specification

The model for this work, derived from existing literature is stated thus:

$$\text{Attention} = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{Frequency}) + \beta_2(\text{Several}) + \beta_3(\text{Several}) + \mu \dots \text{Equation (ii)}$$

Where:

Attention = Attention and participation of students

Frequency = Frequency of social media usage during lectures

Several = Several social media platforms preferred by students

Usage = Usage beyond scheduled lecture hours

μ = Error Term

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Coefficients

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

Descriptive statistics among 335 respondents (who returned the questionnaire out of sample size of 384) disclose that social media greatly distracts students during lectures (Table 1). (The highest-ranked statement, with a mean of 4.03, states that respondents find it difficult to pay full attention to lectures because of distractions from social media sites.. Next in line were statements, with means above 4.0, which provided considerable insight into how social networking distracted respondents from attending activities in lectures and how their attention wavered when engaged in social media. The statements reflect a clear perception that increasing social media use is detrimental to attendance and engagement in lectures, with approximately 4.0 means throughout these items.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Ranking	Std. Dev
I find it difficult to concentrate on the lectures because of constant distraction by social media.	335	4.0269	1st	.75968
Using too much social networking distracts me from attending activities in lectures.	335	4.0179	2nd	.77748
My attention during lectures is mostly distracted when using social media.	335	3.9881	3rd	.76595
The more I visit social networking websites, the less I attend lectures.	335	3.9881	4th	.77759
The overuse of social media reduces my engagement in classroom discussions.	335	3.9701	5th	.78095
I engage in social media for educational purposes outside of lecture times.	335	3.1970	6th	.85296
An effect of using social media after lecture hours on my overall academic engagement.	335	3.1821	7th	.85102
Usually, social media activity extends well beyond schedules of lecture hours.	335	3.1821	8th	.83683
Most often I check into social media sites even when I am not in class or just during break time.	335	3.1701	9th	.88111
Beyond class hours, I utilize social media for study-related purposes.	335	3.1284	10th	.89154
There are cases when I cannot avoid browsing social media during my lecture hours.	335	3.0149	11th	.87364
During lectures, social media updates are constantly entertaining me.	335	3.0060	12th	.85118
I spend pretty much my whole class time on social media.	335	2.9881	13th	.85112
I view social media over and over again even while listening to lectures.	335	2.9821	14th	.82602
I am in the habit of going to social media while the lectures go on.	335	2.9791	15th	.83137
I use more than one social media platform when I socialize during lectures.	335	2.8239	16th	.83453
I might try another social media in parallel while using one of my regulars during lectures.	335	2.7940	17th	.84199
I use certain social media for different things during class.	335	2.7851	18th	.80887
I choose different social media sites for different types of content.	335	2.7791	19th	.84353
During lectures, there are several social media platforms I tend to use.	335	2.7761	20th	.85157
Valid N (listwise)	335			

Notes

Attention and participation of students	= 1st, 2nd, 3th, 4th, 5th
Frequency of social media usage during lectures	= 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th
Several social media platforms preferred by students	= 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th
Usage beyond scheduled lecture hours	= 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th

Lower-ranked statements with means around 3.2 refer to social media use for educational purposes after lecture hours, plus acknowledging its prolonged use beyond scheduled class hours. These contend to be moderately positive with their claims that social media does infringe on the whole academic engagement even after lecture hours. Items ranked lower speak to habitual checking of social media during lectures or on break, and how students are unable to resist browsing social media during lectures, which bring the means to around 3.0. Where some agreement exists, it is less strong yet still notable.

The lowest score, around 2.8-2.7, relate to students' simultaneous use of multiple social media applications during lectures and to different applications for different categorizations of content. This implies the existence of multitasking across platforms, but such multitasking seems to be less strongly felt than issues related to distraction and engagement. In general, students seem to synchronize in thinking social media had an interference in their attention and engagement with lectures, albeit with different levels of agreement toward social media behaviour and application pattern toward academic engagement beyond the scheduled lecture time.

At the 0.01 level, Attendance, Frequency, Several, and Usage correlate strongly with one another and significantly at that level (Table 2). The very high negative correlation between Attendance and Frequency ($r = -0.945$), Several ($r = -0.934$), and Usage ($r = -0.940$) indicates that as the frequency of social media use during lectures increases and preference for several social media platforms and usage beyond scheduled hours also increase, attendance decreases.

Table 2: Correlations

		Attendance	Frequency	Several	Usage
Attendance	Pearson Correlation	1			
	N	335			
Frequency	Pearson Correlation	-.945**	1	*	*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	335	335		
Several	Pearson Correlation	-.934**	.954**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	335	335	335	
Usage	Pearson Correlation	-.940**	.955**	.939**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	335	335	335	335

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Frequency is also strongly positively correlated to several ($r = 0.954$) and Usage ($r = 0.955$), whereas several and Usage themselves reflect a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.939$). This indicates that both intensity and diversity of social media use during lectures including, more notably, beyond-bell usage would have strong associations with reduced student attendance. There appears to be a strong negative association of social media consumption with attendance in class among respondents.

From regression (Table 3), the predictors out of scheduled lecture use, preferred media platforms among students, and use of social media during lectures account for a vast portion of the variance in students' attendance and participation ($R^2 = 0.914$). It means nearly 91.4 percent of variance in students' attendance and participation could be accounted for by social media variables.

Table 3: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.956 ^a	.914	.913	.21051	1.856
a. Predictors: (Constant), Usage Beyond Scheduled Lecture Hours, Several Social Media Platforms Preferred By Students, Frequency Of Social Media Usage During Lectures					
b. Dependent Variable: Attendance And Participation of Students					

The adjusted R Square of .913 indicates that this model is strong even after adjusting for the number of predictors. There is quite a small standard error of estimate 0.21051, showing that the predictions of the model have great accuracy. Also, the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.856, which approaches an ideal value of 2, providing evidence that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals and thus supports the validity of the regression assumptions for this model. All the statistical results demonstrate a strong and valid model to relate various dimensions of social media use with the attendance of students in lectures and the involvement of students in lectures.

The regression coefficients (Table 4) show that all three predictors of attendance and participation namely, frequency of social media usage in lectures, platform preference, and usage beyond scheduled hours have highly significant negative effects on students. The constant shows an attendance and participation level of 6.637 when all predictors are zero, meaning the expected level of social media impact on attendance/participation is captured when no impact is expected.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.637	.047		141.807	.000
	Frequency Of Social Media Usage During Lectures	-.348	.060	-.382	-5.827	.000
	Several Social Media Platforms Preferred By Students	-.233	.052	-.252	-4.449	.000
	Usage Beyond Scheduled Lecture Hours	-.298	.051	-.338	-5.907	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Attendance And Participation of Students						

Social media use frequency is the greatest of negative predictors with a standardized beta of -0.382; more frequent social media use means greater decline in attendance and participation. Similarly, the usage beyond scheduled lecture hours, along with a beta of -0.338, also has a significant negative effect. Preference for multiple social media platforms also has negative effects on attendance and participation, with a beta of -0.252. All of these predictors are significant at 0.001 levels, with t-values well above conventional thresholds. These results confirm that greater social media use with respect to high frequency, a variety of platforms used, and excessive usage has a significant determinant of reduced student engagement in the lecture.

9. Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study show that frequency of utilization of social media in classroom lectures, preference for a number of social media platforms, and use of social media by students beyond school hours significantly and negatively affect attendance and participation during lecture. These results confirm and extend the existing literature by using appropriate theoretical grounds. Constant use of social media tends to produce negative effects during lectures on attention and participation align with cognitive load theory which argues that divided attention decreases one's processing efficiency (Sweller, 2020). Constant switching between lecture contents and social media would then result in overload of the cognitive capacity of students, which, in turn, results in decreased engagement. This finding supports research by Chen and Xiao (2022) who showed that high-frequency social media use during class diverts students' attention and lowers their academic performance. Similarly, Aslam and Akhtar (2020) discussed that this type of in-class use of social media has a negative impact on student concentration and participation.

Regarding the number of preferred social media platforms, the negative coefficient reflects the situation where multitasking among these platforms increases the

distraction. The findings also confirmed empirical evidence from Chowdhury and Begum (2025): that navigating through different channels during lectures detracts attention and results in poorer involvement with academic life. On the other hand, this finding is contrary to that of Li and Wong (2021), which showed that diversified platform usage may support one's academic collaboration when well managed. Such difference would indicate that contexts and self-regulation matter as issues in moderation of the effect regarding social media them.

This clearly means that social media usage during off-school hours actually negatively affects the students' participation in lectures. This indicates the emergence of blurry boundaries when it comes to the time spent on academics and the personal lives of students in the digital age. This finding also matches the uses and gratifications theory indicating that social media gratifies several needs but can disrupt the academic responsibilities (Katz et al., 2020). It agrees in part with recent findings by Mosharrafa et al. (2024) reporting that engagement in social media but outside class hours diminishes students' total engagement in academics and consistency in class attendance.

The disagreement found in this study argues quite well with more scholarly consensus on the value of such increased and multifaceted use of social media in inhibiting student engagement in lectures. In addition, it has extended the previous work as it examined frequency, diversity of platforms, and usage beyond predetermined time all at once to provide a comprehensive perspective in line with cognitive load or uses and gratifications theories.

10. Conclusion

As shown by the findings of this study, social media usage is proven to mildly dampen students' attention, participation, and attendance as lectures in some higher institutions in South West Nigeria are mostly conducted under the high influence of social media: engaging in various platforms from time to time and logging in and out of its environment even after scheduled lectures have been called off. Another finding notes that social media has now become almost a household name; with these major distractions, the engagements of students with academic activities must be keenly adjusted to create more room for good performance. Henceforth, adequate measures must be set in place to counteract adverse effects on the smooth flow of academic activities brought about by social media.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward.

Higher institutions in South West Nigeria be watchful enough to carry out campaigns to orient students about negative implications of frequent and excessive social media

use during lecture hours on their attention and participation.

It is equally advisable for academic lecturers and administrators to consider instituting structured guidelines or policies which would limit the use of social media during lectures. Such structured measures would assist in minimizing distraction of students to social media activity during lecture hours.

Imparting skills on digital self-regulation might also assist students to balance their social media addiction and academic work in terms of time management, especially on the matters of time spent on social media beyond lecture hours.

Interactive and fun teaching approaches that minimize the temptation of students to switch onto multiple social media sites during lectures would further bolster attention and participation in class.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF URUE-OFFONG ORUKO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE

Precious Akamba Selong

and

Uduot Archibong Iwok

Abstract

This study examined the public relations strategies adopted by Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Council in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, to foster goodwill with the people of the area. Anchored on the two-way symmetrical communication model, the research employed the survey design. The population was 22, being members of the Executive and Legislative arms of the Council. Data were collected through interview schedule. Findings showed that strategies such as meetings, memos, seminars, workshops, town hall forums, news releases, awards and sponsorship of cultural activities were widely applied. These strategies were perceived as effective in enhancing communication between the council and its publics, particularly in motivating staff and improving goodwill. It was concluded that public relations strategies were integral to effective local government administration. Hence, it was recommended that more innovative, participatory approaches to build stronger trust and responsiveness in governance should be put in place by the Local Government Council.

Introduction

The concept of public relations is one of the fundamental principles in industrial relations, marketing and image building of corporate organisations, government (at all levels) and individual interest. Public relations grew out of necessity: the necessity of building a mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and the various public of such organisation. Thus, Igben and Ugboime (2022) defines public relations as the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. Seitel (2011) sees public relations as “a planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication. Denny Grisworld cited in Irawanto, Saputra, Hidayat and Risal (2022) states that public relations is management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organisation with public interest and executes a programme of action to earn understanding and acceptance. International Public Relations Institute (IPRI), in this regard, offers what is considered all-embracing definition of public relations as a management function of a continuing and planned character through which public and private organisations and institutions seek to win

and retain the understanding. Sympathy and support of those with whom they are or may be concerned by evaluating public opinion about themselves in order to correlate as far as possible their policies and procedure to achieve by plan and widespread information more efficient fulfilment of their common interest.

Strategy in the context of public relations entails organisational management's deliberate and well planned use of communication activities in the direction that would position the organisation as a credible one and by so doing, enhance both the image/reputation of the organisation before its publics on one hand and its market share on the other hand (Allert and Zawawi, 2004). Public relations strategies are the collection of methods an organisation uses to help it move from its current situation to its end goal which can include gaining publicity, growing its customer base or improving its reputation. Thus, local government administrators can use public relations strategies to position themselves as credible and enhance the image and reputation people have about them.

According to Olabanjo, Odiboh, Nwosu and Ndubueze (2019), Public relations at the local level helps to communicate good administrative performance for public appreciation. However, the government must first do a good job for the people; and thereafter, call attention to it. Olabanjo, *et al.*, explain that it is necessary for local governments to be sound and honest, if they were to earn the people's confidence, respect and support. There cannot be good local government without public awareness of their performance.

Local government system, guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999 as amended), remains one of man's oldest political institutions. The earliest form of local governments existed in the form of clan and village meetings. In fact democracy itself originated and developed along the lines of local governance initiatives in the ancient Greek city states (Sawaneh and Janneh, 2022).

In Nigeria today, there are over 250 ethnic groups with diverse cultures and languages. These ethnic groups are further divided into communities. These communities form the constituents of most local government in Nigeria. By carving out local governments among people of same community, government is preserving such long "traditional association" and using same to foster the interest of the people concerned. It is on this basis that Sawaneh and Janneh (2022) see local government as a system of local administration under local communities that are organised to maintain law and provide some limited range of social amenities. This implies that local government is a political and administrative organ that is empowered by law to administer a specified locality.

It is important to reiterate that local governments (including Urueoffong/Oruko)

are created to serve as conduits through which government's policies are communicated to the people. In other words, the creation of local government is intended to bring people of common heritage or ancestry together as a political unit to further their interest and increase their participation in government business. One of the channels through which people relate with government and vice versa is by communication, aimed at sustaining relationship between people, friends, family, nations, organisations and between government and the people. Public relations, as persuasive communication that can be used to develop and sustain relationship between government (local) and the people. Hence, its acceptance as a management function in the formulation of policy and decision-making. It is a way in which an organisation plays an important role in the administration of local government. Its importance cannot be overemphasised, which is why local governments map out strategies in the administration of the council. Thus, this study examines public relations strategies in the administration of the Urue offong/Oruko local government council.

Statement of the Problem

Public relations plays a crucial role in local government administration. The importance of public relations in maintaining mutual understanding between government and its public, and its role in communicating good administrative performance for public appreciation as well as building beneficial relationship between government and its internal and external publics make public relations vital to local government. This underscores the use of public relations strategies in the administration of local governments.

However, it has been alleged by some stakeholders that many local government councils appear not to make effective use of public relations in the administration of local government councils. Whether or not this is true about Urue offog/Oruko Local Government Council is yet to be ascertained, and it is the motivation for the study. The question is: does Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government apply public relations in the administration of the Council?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- i. What are the public relations strategies used in the administration of the Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council?
- ii. How effective are the public relations strategies used in the administration of Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council?
- iii. Do the public relations strategies used produced the expected outcome in the administration of Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Council?

Review of Related Literature

Understanding Public Relations

Public relations, in the view of Norman (2015), suggests establishing and maintaining mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of communicating a company's views and objectives while at the same time correcting public reactions. This aligns with Jefkins (2003) who defines public relations as consisting of all forms of planned communication between an organisation and its publics for achieving specific objectives.

From the definitions above, it can be seen that public relations is about creating and maintaining goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. Thus, it is a management function, which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organisation and its publics. Besides, it involves the management of problems and issues that might be relevant to any sector (Ejiofo, Ngong, Chukwuemeka, Chuka, Ugbam and Ibe, 2022). Nwosu (2001) expresses that one major function of public relations is the management of all forms of cooperate information and communications for any organisation. This function includes all types of communications to its internal and external publics. Internally, the public relations members will handle such function as employee communications and organisation communication including grapevine and other informal communication forms.

Although the above definitions range from the simple to the complex, they all point to one direction which Duru, Tahir and Pepple (2025) opine as the deliberate use of organized actions and persuasive communications to influence opinions and actions and, by so doing, secure public sentiment or sympathy in favour of a cause.

According to Tomaš and Stipić (2022), public relations is the propagation of the personality. Similarly, the British institute of Public Relations (IBPR) in Igben and Ugbome (2022) defines it as a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. The above two definitions state the importance of communication between an organisation and its publics. Public relations projects the management personality of which the public relations department represents, through their activities with the use of their respective tool or strategy. Thus, public relations is needed in organisations and government (including local government councils

Public Relations Strategies

The word “strategy” is a military term which refers to “the role of a military commander and his art and skill” (Allert and Zawawi, 2004, p.170). Over time, the concept was imported to management literature to mean a blue print for well-

coordinated corporate and planned activities meant to achieve a long term corporate goal. Therefore, strategy, in the context of public relations, entails organisational management's deliberate and well-planned use of communication activities in the direction that would position the organisation as a credible one. By so doing, the image/reputation of the organisation before its publics in one hand and its market share on the other hand are enhanced (Bozkurt, 2018).

By strategies, we are considering plans or a series of actions that are meant to achieve a goal. We consider public relations strategies on the same line as a planned series of public relations actions meant to help an organisation achieve its goals. We cannot but see public relations as an effective service-providing unit in an organisation. Fundamentally, the concept is a grip on organisations' unflinching relationship with its publics.

On their own, organisations have laid down plans of actions. These plans are equally strategies that the public relations unit of the organisation works in conjunction with. Lauren (1995) holds that there is a high need for a mutual understanding amongst the various units of an organisation if the organisation must achieve a complete success. Therefore, public relations' overall plans need to align with the general plans of the organisation, given that this corporate synergy is what the organisation requires to thrive in a competitive environment.

Oshe and Ushie (2021) maintain that a successful public relations strategy starts with the internal publics of an organisation. These are the employees and management staff of an organisation. The scholars point out that public relations Strategy means educating management about the value of strategic planning. Generally, public relations Strategy is the summation of an organisation's communication input in every organisational plan.

Some experts refer to public relations strategies as planned activities designed and integrated to achieve a stated organisational goal (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2005). Of note is the fact that the management of an organisation draws a long term plan that becomes the blueprint for achievement. This plan cannot be executed in a boardroom; it has to be communicated to the various units of the organisation saddled with implementation responsibility. This plan cannot be useful if it is not properly communicated to implementation units. This plan needs to be communicated to the implementation units by experts – the public relations practitioners.

Thus, Chukwu (2015) states that the task of building good public relations can only be achieved with the use of appropriate tools. These tools, according to the author, among many, are publicity and special events. While publicity gives information about an organisation and its products conveyed to the public by the mass media owing to their newsworthiness, special events could include courtesy calls on stakeholders and

opinion leaders, talk shows, facility visits and sponsorship, all of which create a warm relationship between an organisation or institution with its publics.

Public Relations and Local Government Administration in Nigeria

Public relations in local government administration manifests mostly as community relations because the local government exists in the community and it is the grassroots government. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) buttress the point, noting that government public relations activities may be embraced by terms such as public affairs, public information and public communication, which have developed as a political and administrative response to achieving various organisational goals. In effect, citizens need full and accurate information on which to base their daily lives and ultimately assess government records. However, according to Steenmans, Robin, Acuto, Iwaszuk and Garza (2023), the presentation of government information and statistics such as taxation, crime, education, health, construction of roads are often contentious. That is, government claims do not match up to public experience.

Because of people's lack of faith and belief in the government to deliver, government at all levels always canvasses for popular understanding, interest and support for its activities. It is for this reason that public relations is needed in local government administration in Nigeria to garner support for the government. Elaborating on this, Black (2004) opines that local government has a tripartite function, requiring a working partnership between the citizens, elected councillors and permanent officials. Hence, Black argues that public relations provides the most effective means of achieving this co-operation. Governments are known for promise. However, public relations is about performance and recognition, taking its roots from the basic principle of mutual understanding, honesty, and two-way communication. It is, therefore, needed to ensure government's performance even in complex challenges. Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2000) note that as government becomes more complex and ubiquitous, the challenge of making citizens involvement and ensuring that government is responsible to societal needs becomes more difficult.

Strategic planning, in the view of Mavis (2013), is more than a political or public relations tool. It is a comprehensive approach that makes local governments and the public work together regularly to solve community and neighbourhood problems, set priorities, make plans and decision, design, implement programmes and policies, and deliver public services. This partnership works if the local government and the public official who provide them create an environment that invited and enabled citizens to participate. When citizens and local government officials work together to prepare strategic plans, community needs and priorities are identified; and the local government will be able to design programmes and services that meet the needs of their constituents.

Furthermore, the local government has access to community resources, with government managing community conflicts better. This engenders better public support for local government; and long-term community building can be developed; a trusting atmosphere between the local government and the community could be established and a ground for future elected officials could emerge.

Governments are often categorised as democratic based upon free and fair elections. In line with this view, Black (2004) observes that democracy cannot function properly without good public relations. To the author, the electorate requires knowledge on how government functions, information on decision-making, and education in order to take full advantage of the facilities and services provided. There is clearly need for public relations activities to help citizens understand their privileges and responsibilities under a democratic form of government. Black (2004), therefore, highlights the functions of public relations in local government to include keeping the citizens informed of the council policy and its day to-day activities. It also involves giving citizens an opportunity of expressing ideas on important new projects before final decisions are taken by the council; enlightening citizens on the way in which the system of local government works, and to inform them (citizen) of their rights and responsibilities; and finally promoting a sense of civic pride.

Theoretical Framework

Two-Way Symmetrical Model

The Two-way Symmetric Theory of public relations was propounded by Grunig and Hurt in 1984. The theory, according to Nwosu (2006), anchors on a two-way communication mechanism with emphasis on using public relations to bring an organisation and its publics together through a mutually two-way beneficial communication. This theory posits that effective positive exchange will be of great benefit to all.

The two-way symmetric model, according to Kent and Lane (2021), describes public relations effort in terms of research based description as the use of communication in improving understanding with strategic publics. Under this model, the communication objective is to achieve a true mutual understanding that satisfies the mutual interests of both the organisation and its publics. Two-way symmetrical model emphasises on dialogue, complete and accurate two-way communication; the main purpose is to promote mutual understanding between organisations and their publics.

The utilisation of two-way symmetrical model in PR enables the public to have a voice at the official table. This model makes it possible for exchange and shared comprehension to occur between the association and its publics. The theory is relevant to this study because the local government is an integral part of the social system that

cannot do without public relations strategies if they want to ensure effective administration. This theory accommodates dialogue and communication as part of PR strategies for effective administration.

Methodology

The research design for this study was the survey. The population was 22, made up of the executive and legislative members of Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Council. Executive members were 12 while the Legislative members (Councillors) were 10. The study adopted the purposive sampling technique to select only those who were relevant to the study at hand. Thus, the Vice Chairman, Head of Service, Information Officer and Leader of the Legislative were selected. The instrument for data collection was the interview schedule which was validated by communication research experts in the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies. The interview scheduled bordered on the three research questions posed in the study.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What are the public relations strategies used in the administration of the Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Council?

Data gathered indicated that the public relations strategies adopted by Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Council were seminars/workshops, town hall meetings with the locals, issuing of press releases, sponsorship of community and cultural activities, sponsorship of sports and recreational activities as well as recognition/awards. And the most frequent means of information dissemination by the Council was face-to-face meetings, letters, text messages and social media.

The principal officers of the council interviewed corroborated this. The Vice Chairman, the Head of Service, Leader of the House and the Information Officer held that the Council made use of meetings, letters/memos, press release, two hall meeting, and sponsorship of cultural activities as the public relations strategies used in the administration of the internal and external publics of the council. They also stated that there was a system of reward and recognition for the staff as part of the public relations strategies used for the internal public of the Council. This means that in Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council applies different public relations strategies in the administration of the Council.

The use of meeting as the dominant PR strategy supports the reports given by the Principal Officers of the Council interviewed on the communication flow that best characterise Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council. The Leader of the House and the Information Officer said that upward communication flow which involves communication flow from subordinate staff to their superiors or top management team best described the communication flow in the council. The position was corroborated by

the Vice Chairman and the Head of Service but also submitted that the management makes use of any type of communication depending on the situation. He said that although upward communication best described the communication flow in the council, the council still utilized downward and horizontal communication as the situation demanded.

Commenting on the role of public relations strategies in an organisation, local governments inclusive, Lauren (1995) holds that it is vital, for there is a high need of a mutual understanding amongst unit of an organisation if the organisation must achieve a complete success. So, local governments including Urue offong/Oruko make use of public relations strategies to maintain mutual relations and understanding with the publics' of the council, and this will give a voice to the publics pertaining the administration of the council, thus encouraging two-way communication. The utilisation of the two-way symmetrical model of communication by the local government through the PR strategies will enable the public to have a voice at the official table which will promote mutual understanding between the management of the local government and its public. According to Nwosu (2006), the two-way symmetrical model anchors in a two-way communication mechanism which has its emphasis on using public relations to bring an organisation and its public together through a mutually two-way beneficial communication. These strategies employed by Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council will also help the organisation to build bridges between the council and its various internal and external publics to achieve the desired goodwill, understanding and good image, thus, aligning with the Relationship Theory used in this study.

Research Question Two: How effective are the public relations strategies used in the administration of Council?

Responses showed that public relations strategies used by the management in the administration of the council were effective. The Principal Officers of the council were of the opinion that the effectiveness of the strategies highly - 75% and 70% respectively. The effectiveness was evidenced by friendly quality responses and cooperation between the management of the council and its publics.

The finding of this research question implies that while the public relations strategies used in the administration of the council were effective to the publics of the Council. This finding varies with those of Onojeghwo (2013) who carried out a study on public relations practice in selected local governments in South-South, Nigeria. The findings showed that while public relations department existed in many Local Government Councils in South-South, Nigeria, the public relations practice in the Councils were not seen as effective.

The communication climate is probably why the respondents rated the PR strategies as effective. O'Relly and Chairman (2013) corroborate this, by stating that the communication climate that exists in an organisation is crucial factor in determining the extent to which the employees of the organisation will understand, identify and appreciate the goals the organisation sets to accomplish. Part of organisational goals is to maintain mutual understanding, goodwill and favourable image with its various publics. Thus, the approaches adopted in dealing with the people, will to a great extent, determine how the public will see the organisation.

Research Question Three: Do the Public Relations Strategies used by Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Council produce the expected outcome in the administration of the Council?

Data indicate that the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that mutual understanding existed between the management and employees of the Urue offong/Oruko Local Government, and expressed happiness over the relationship that existed between the management and the employees of the Council as result of the PR strategies adopted by the administration of the Council. Respondents indicated that the PR strategies used by the management of Urue offong/Oruko Local Government had helped in the administration of the council in the following ways: healthy employee relations with the management; bringing about efficiency; workers are motivated to work; and healthy relationship with the people of the Council. The respondents all agreed that mutual understanding existed between the staff/internal public and the management of the council, and that employee are motivated to work. To the external public, they added that the PR strategies have earned them goodwill among the people (external public) of the Council. The implication of the finding is that the public relations strategies used have produced the expected outcome of manifesting goodwill and mutual understanding between the Local Government Council and its publics.

The findings of this study, however, is not in agreement with that of Onejehwo (2013) who carried out a study on public relations practice in selected local governments in south-south, Nigeria. Contrary to the finding of this research question, the research found that the practice of public relations in the selected local governments had not produced the required outcome as the public perceived the local government administration as not being responsive and proactive in their PR practice.

Summary of Findings

Based on the data collected presented and analysed in the chapter four of this study, the following major findings were made:

- i. The most significant public relations strategy used in the administration of the Council were regular meetings with staff and town hall meetings with the

community.

- ii. While the public relations strategies used in the administration of Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council was highly effective for the internal publics.
- iii. The public relations strategies used have produced the expected outcome of mobilisation, support for government and collaboration for development

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that there is a high utilisation of public relations strategies in the administration of the Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council. It is also concluded that there is a high level of mutual understanding between the council executive, legislature and staff of the Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council.

Recommendations

From the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Urue offong/Oruko Local Government Council should from time to time audit the opinions of its publics to ascertain the strength and weaknesses of the strategies used in relationship building.
2. The management team of the council should endeavour to sustain and improve on the strategies used, introduce new strategies if necessary to sustain internal harmony.

Despite the positive outcome of the public relation strategies on the internal public, management of Urue offong/Oruko should sustain the momentum by improving and increasing public relations strategies and activities. This can be done by making employees key drivers of the strategies through inclusiveness and allowing participatory governance.

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EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION IN HEALTH BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Effective communication and education create healthy attitude and belief systems which in turn lead to behaviour change from harmful or unhealthy living to a better life. People behave the way they are used to until they are informed and educated on the right behaviour. This work examined the role of education and communication in health behaviour change in Nigeria, stages in behaviour change communication, importance of behaviour change communication and successful health campaigns held in Nigeria. The paper concludes that since diseases do not exist in isolation, but as a result of interactions between human and animals, there is need for a collaboration between human and veterinary medicine to prevent and control diseases that may likely affect both human and animals alike.

Introduction

People will continue to believe, behave and do things the way they know how to do, until they receive information that opens their eyes to a much better way of doing things. Communication widens the horizon of the individual, community or society. It is the conduit of all education. Education places people at the frontiers of knowledge in order to enhance the understanding of problems and their possible solutions. Both formal and informal education are aimed at building capacity through training to cause an awakening as well as to promote critical thinking in relation to attitudinal change. Change is the process of transformation in any individual or community from an incipient status to another position. Change is a necessary phenomenon that occurs with the aid of consistent persuasion. Each of us has a set of belief system that we learned during our youthful age. Some of these beliefs lead to both healthy and unhealthy behaviours. Some factors that stimulate changes in people's behaviours include education, family, friends, religion, media, community or environment.

Behaviour change communication is a planned communication that is made towards behavioural modification of an individual, group, community or the society at large. Precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance are steps or stages in behaviour change. LaMorte (2016) observes that education and communication play an essential role in encouraging positive health and lifestyle behaviour change. This can involve informing individuals about the foredeals of healthy behaviours such as regular exercise, healthy eating habit, stress management, and avoiding harmful actions or attitudes like smoking or excessive alcohol consumption.

Communication and Behaviour

Effective communication plays a crucial role in diverse aspects of human interaction and behaviour (Arlinghaus and Johnston, 2017). The following points highlight how communication can influence and shape individual and collective behaviours:

i. Communicating Intentions and Goals:

Communication is a powerful tool for conveying intentions, objectives, and goals. When individuals or groups clearly communicate their intentions and goals, it helps create a shared understanding and alignment among stakeholders. This alignment can drive cooperation, collaboration, and coordinated efforts toward achieving common objectives (Suleiman, 2022). Whether in personal relationships, business settings, or social initiatives, transparent communication about intentions and goals fosters trust and reduces misunderstanding.

ii. Influencing Social Norms and Expectations:

Communication plays a pivotal role in shaping and reinforcing social values, beliefs and norms in a person. Norms are unwritten rules that guide behaviour within a society or group. Effective communication can influence these norms by promoting certain behaviours, values, or beliefs, and discouraging negative tendencies. Through media advertising, public messaging, and interpersonal interactions, communication can challenge existing norms and introduce new perspectives, eventually leading to shifts in collective behaviour. For instance, public health campaigns can use communication strategies to promote behaviours such as wearing seatbelts, quitting smoking, or adopting healthier diets, ultimately altering societal norms.

iii. Overcoming Barriers to Behaviour Change:

People often encounter obstacles when attempting to change their behaviour, whether adopting healthier habits, embracing sustainable practices, or making other positive changes. Effective communication can help overcome these barriers by providing information, motivation, and support. By addressing concerns, providing clear instructions, and offering incentives, communication campaigns can empower individuals to make desired behavioural changes. Tailored messaging, feedback loops, and social support networks can reinforce these efforts and assist individuals in navigating challenges on their path to behaviour change. Effective communication serves as an encouragement for diverse aspects of behaviour, ranging from personal intentions and goals to societal norms and expectations. By conveying messages clearly, influencing perspectives, and addressing obstacles, communication plays a crucial function in guiding individuals and groups toward positive behavioural outcomes.

Health Communication

The numerous health challenges in Nigeria call for effective communication approaches such as media advocacy, social mobilization, edutainment among other approaches to address health related issues and to equip individuals and communities to make informed decision about their health. Health communication is an essential part of public health, which plays a crucial role in information dissemination and promotion of behavioural change. Health communication is concerned with awareness creation and how to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle such as disease prevention, family planning, immunization, good hygiene culture, among others. Health communication is the study and use of communication approaches to inform and influence individual and community decision to promote healthy behaviours (Sixsmith *et al.*, 2014). The essence of health communication is to change peoples' behaviour about certain health issues. Guttman and Salmon (2004) assert that health communication helps in creating awareness of new infections, chronic diseases and the promotion of recommended treatments.

The world is heading towards One-health. One-health is a global movement that involves a holistic, trans-disciplinary, multi-sectional strategy adopted to manage human, animal and environmental health. The Nigeria government keyed into the global initiatives by launching the One-health strategic plan in 2019 at Abuja. The One health initiative involves the Federal Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Environment (Batta, 2024). The major concerns of one-health is to bring changes to human health and the environment by transforming individual or organisms from its incipient position to another position. Government alone cannot do it. Hence, it becomes necessary for the health communicators to communicate and educate people about this initiative for the purpose of protecting and restoring our natural habitats, securing our health and to have a healthy environment for human, animal and plant habitation. Satcher (2000) notes that accuracy, consistency, repetition, cultural competence, reliability, availability, balance and timeliness are effective elements of health communication. Health communication is an extensive area that includes risk communication, health and policy promotion, focus communication, patient and supplier communication, health literacy and health education. Health education messages are transmitted through diverse communication channels to inform and educate people about certain harmful behaviours.

Health Education

The primary concern of behaviour change is the provision of information to disseminate the knowledge base of the people so as to take reasonable decisions and engage in behavioural change. Education provides individuals with prerequisite information and knowledge about the risks and benefits associated with certain

behaviours. Education stimulates or induces change and serving as a cornerstone for personal and societal advancement. It equips individuals with the tools needed to adapt to a changing landscape, enabling them to confront challenges and embrace opportunities. Through education, people are empowered to challenge the way things are, question assumptions, and drive innovation. Education helps in fostering critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, creativity and empowering individuals to become active participants in shaping their communities or societies.

Through education, people have acquired skills and information. The acquisition of skills and information is a fundamental outcome of education that empowers individuals to succeed in diverse spheres of life. From practical skills to advanced academic knowledge, education endows people with the competence to navigate complex professional environments. These skills do not only enhance employability but also instill a sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy. As individuals become proficient in various areas, they gain the autonomy to make informed decisions, pursue their passions, and contribute meaningfully to society

Education is not limited to the dissemination of facts; it also shapes attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives. Exposure to various cultures, ideas, and viewpoints encourages tolerance, empathy, and a wider understanding of the world. Education encourages open-mindedness and promotes critical engagement with societal issues. Individuals are equipped to become agents of positive change through education. Education enables communities or individuals to recognize the importance of ethical considerations, promoting responsible and compassionate decision-making. Directing messages to solve specific needs of an individual or community can encourage and stimulate behaviour change. As individuals, communities and societies embrace education, they overcome challenges, contribute meaningfully, and create a better future. We can collectively work towards a more inclusive, innovative, and enlightened world via recognizing education and transformative potential (Edgar, 2012).

Health education is an essential component of health communication in Nigeria. Individuals and communities need to be educated about symptoms, preventive measures and diverse health care services where they can be well informed about their health status. People can be educated on their reproductive health, mental health, communicable and non-communicable diseases. Health education is instrumental in diverse prevention. Through frequent transmission of information about certain health complications such as diabetes, cancer, hepatitis etc., individuals or communities involved will be educated to take preventive measures. Olalekan, Adebimpe & Olawoye (2018) note that health education campaigns have been successful in promoting immunization programmes leading to increased vaccination coverage and reduction in vaccine – preventable diseases in Nigeria. They further observe that health

education interventions can enhance positive health behaviour changes, such as improved hygiene cultures, reduced high in-take of alcohol and tobacco consumption in the nation (Olorunfemi, Oyewole & Olorunfemi, 2019). Health education facilities such as schools, community centers and health care facilities can provide educational programmes to teach people about living healthy lifestyles or behaviours.

Behaviour Change Communication

Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) is an interactive process with individuals or communities to create specific messages and methods using diverse communication channels to develop positive behaviours, enhance and maintain individual, community and societal behaviour change. For instance, communication is important in educating families with history of HIV/AIDS and diabetes. Communication helps the HIV/AIDS and diabetic patients and their family members to have access to correct information about the illness, complications, treatment, advantages of life style modification, and available health care services. Information alone is insufficient to support behaviour change. Influencing healthy behaviours and creating a supportive social environment is also important. It requires desire for learning and participation of patient, family and community. Before individuals or communities change their behaviours, they must first understand basic facts about HIV/AIDS and diabetes, change life style, know importance of modifying diet, regular exercise and be given access to services. They must have social support of family and community for behaviour change. Iyorza (2015) notes the five stages of behaviour change thus:

- i. **Precontemplation Stage:** At this stage, the individual is not ready to change his or her behaviour even in the next six months. Being uninformed about the repercussions of one's behaviour can cause a person to be in this stage for long.
- ii. **Contemplation Stage:** Contemplation is a stage where an individual is willing to change his or her behaviour in the next six months. At this stage, he or she is aware of the advantages and disadvantages of changing his or her behaviour. He or she is getting ready to change in the next six months. However, individuals at this stage are not ready for traditional action-oriented programmes that expect him or her to act instantly.
- iii. **Preparation Stage:** This is the stage people or individuals are willing to take instant action usually measured as the next month, or in the next one month. At this level, the individuals consult their doctors, buy self-help books, join health education classes and rely on self-change approach.
- iv. **Action Stage:** This is a stage in which people have made specific changes in their lifestyles within the past six months. In most cases, they have to attain a criterion that scientists and professionals agree is sufficient to reduce risk of

disease. For instance, reduction in the number of cigarettes in-take in a day, week or month is not an acceptable action. Rather, total abstinence from smoking culture could suffice.

- v. **Maintenance Stage:** This is a stage where individuals have made specific changes in their lifestyles and are working seriously to prevent any temptation that will make them fall back or go back to their previous behaviour. At this level, people are less tempted. Based on self-efficacy data researchers have estimated that maintenance lasts from six months to about five years.

Importance of Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) in Health

These include:

- a) Increasing knowledge: BCC can ensure that people are given the basic facts about their health in a language or visual medium (or any other medium that they can understand and relate to).
- b) Promoting attitude change: BCC can lead to appropriate attitudinal changes in people living with diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, among many others.
- c) Reducing stress of patient and family: Behaviour change communication provides information about the treatment, facilities, services in government and private health sector and self-help groups.
- d) Creating demand for information and services: BCC can urge individuals and communities to demand information on any health related matter and appropriate services.
- e) Promoting services for prevention, care, and support: BCC promotes services for people living with HIV/AIDS and diabetic patients and their family members; support groups for HIV/AIDS and diabetics; treatment and care for other problems due to HIV/AIDS and diabetes; and also extend social and economic support.
- f) Improving skills and making patients independent: BCC programmes can focus on teaching new skills and behaviours, such as regular exercise, modifying diet, taking insulin injection, precautions when alone or driving or traveling. This will help in building confidence and taking decisions independently.

Behaviour change is a complex process that can be influenced by various factors. Education provides individuals with the necessary knowledge and awareness of the benefits and risks associated with certain behaviours. Without proper understanding, behaviour change is unlikely to occur (Anonim, 2017). People are more likely to change their behaviour when they are motivated by personal or external incentives such as health improvements, financial gains, social recognition, or rewards. Individuals assess the perceived benefits of adopting a new behaviour against the perceived barriers or

obstacles. Behaviour change is more likely when the perceived benefits outweigh the barriers. Individual beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding health and wellbeing can impact the willingness to change behaviour. Positive health beliefs can encourage proactive behaviour change (Gurupada & Kola, 2019). Social interactions and the influence of friends, family, peers, and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping behaviour. People often conform to social norms and seek approval from their social circles. Availability of resources, such as time, money, facilities, and support, can either facilitate or hinder behaviour change. Limited access to resources may act as a barrier.

Understanding these factors and their interplay can help educators, communicators, and behaviour change practitioners design effective strategies to convey information, inspire change, and promote positive outcomes. In today's rapidly evolving world, the empowerment of individuals and societies is closely intertwined with the acquisition of knowledge. Education stands as a powerful conduit for change, enabling people to acquire skills, information, and perspectives that shape their attitudes and perceptions (Nyunt et al., 2015). This interconnected process is pivotal in driving progress, fostering innovation, and promoting positive societal transformation.

Instances of Successful Behaviour Change Campaigns in Nigeria

i. Nutrition, Education and Behaviour Change:

The "Alive & Thrive" programme in Nigeria has successfully combined education and communication to improve infant and young child feeding practices. Through various media channels, this initiative has promoted exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding, resulting in improved child nutrition.

ii. HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention:

Nigeria has implemented successful behaviour change campaigns to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and promote safe practices. These campaigns have utilized various communication channels, including mass media, community outreach, and peer education. As a result, there has been increased awareness, improved condom use, and a decline in new HIV infections.

iii. Polio Eradication Campaign:

Nigeria successfully tackled the challenge of polio through a comprehensive behaviour change campaign. The Nigerian government along with international organizations like WHO and UNICEF, launched awareness programmes and engaged with local communities to address vaccine hesitancy. This campaign led to a significant reduction in polio cases and contributed to the eventual eradication of the disease in the country (Udoudom, Saawuan & Igiri, 2023).

iv. Almajiri Education Initiative:

The Almajiri Education Initiative focuses on providing formal education to out-of-school children, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Through this initiative, many Almajiri (Quranic school students) have been integrated into the formal education system, improving their access to quality education and enhancing their future prospects.

v. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Programmes:

Organizations like the "Bridge International Academies" have introduced Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics education programmes in Nigeria. These initiatives have enhanced students' skills tremendously, preparing them for future careers in technology and innovation.

vi. Voter Education and Civic Engagement:

Every four years, general elections are held in Nigeria to provide opportunity for eligible voters to elect their leaders. Nigerians have seen successful voter education campaigns that use various communication channels to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities as voters. These campaigns have contributed to increased voter turnout and civic engagement (Udoudom, Saawuan & Igiri, 2023). These examples showcase how behaviour change campaigns, educational initiatives, and the education communication nexus have been effectively leveraged in Nigeria to address various social and developmental challenges.

vii. Girl-Child Education Initiatives:

Several organizations in Nigeria have worked to promote and support girl-child education. "Girls' Education Project," which aims to improve the enrollment and retention of girls in schools, is a typical example. Through intense campaigns and community engagement, the initiative has led to increased enrollment and reduced dropout rates among girls (Udoudom, Saawuan & Igiri, 2023).

Synergy of Education and Communication

Education and communication are closely intertwined and often go hand in hand. Nancy and Dongre (2021) point out that effective communication is crucial in conveying educational information, while education provides the knowledge and understanding necessary for effective communication. Effective communication and education can influence policy-makers' decision or advocate for policies that prioritize public health. By providing evidence-based information, awareness creation, stakeholders engagement, these practices can lead to the implementation of policies that support health promotion and disease prevention (Olorunfemi *et al.*, 2019).

Nancy and Dongre (2021) note the following roles of education and communication:

- i. **Information Dissemination:** Education involves the imparting of knowledge, skills, and values to individuals. Communication is the vehicle through which this information is shared. Effective communication ensures that educational messages are clear, accurate, and comprehensible to the intended audience.
- ii. **Two-Way Exchange:** Communication allows for a two-way exchange of information. Educators can gather feedback from their audience through communication channels, such as discussions, surveys, or interactive sessions. This feedback informs the adaptation and improvement of educational content.
- iii. **Engagement and Participation:** Effective communication strategies, such as active listening, engaging storytelling, and interactive presentations, enhance learner engagement and participation in educational activities. Engaged learners are more likely to grasp and retain the information being conveyed.
- iv. **Contextualization:** Communication helps contextualize educational content by relating it to real-life situations, personal experiences, or societal issues. This aids in making the educational material relevant and relatable to the learners.
- v. **Behavioural Change:** Communication plays a vital role in motivating and inspiring behavioural change. Well-communicated educational messages can influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, fostering positive change in individuals and communities.

Other contexts of Education and Communication

1. Societal and Cultural Influences on Behaviours:

Education and communication can help address societal and cultural factors such as peer influence, cultural sensitivity and social norms that influence behaviour. Also, movies, television shows, and social media can influence behaviours and attitudes. Positive portrayals of desired behaviours can lead to emulation. In each of the above mentioned points, effective education and communication strategies involve clear messaging, engaging content, targeted outreach, and a deep understanding of the specific audience's needs and motivations (Milgrom, 2015). Collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, businesses, and community organizations are often necessary to achieve widespread behaviour change and create a positive impact on human health, as well as a healthy environment, and society.

2. Environmental and Sustainable Practices:

Education and communication are essential for encouraging environmentally

friendly and sustainable practices. People need to know and understand the impact of their actions on the environment and be motivated to adopt more sustainable behaviours. Some of the effective approaches to environmental sustainability practices are schools, museums, and community organizations. These can educate people about ecological systems, climate change, and the importance of conservation. Governments and environmental groups use communication campaigns to raise awareness about issues like recycling culture, STEM, green economy, renewable energy and organic farming practices to sustain a healthy environment for man, animal and plant habitation. Also, companies can educate their employees and customers about their efforts to reduce their environmental footprint and encourage similar actions.

Conclusion

Through intense dissemination of accurate communication and education, individuals would be equipped with the necessary knowledge they need to make an informed decisions and adopt healthier behaviours. The need for collaboration between educators and communicators can lead to more effective and holistic strategies for behaviour change. Educators possess expertise in teaching and educating curriculum development, pedagogy, and understanding learning needs, while communicators possess expertise in message creation to reach various audiences, and utilizing diverse media channels. The adoption of technology such as mobile apps and virtual reality experiences can create or enhance immersive and interactive learning environment that encourage positive and healthy behaviour change.

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MASS MEDIA, PUBLIC OPINION AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

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and

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Abstract

Democracy cannot thrive where there is a dearth of public opinion. At election, the people give their mandate to some persons to conduct the business of government and make decisions that would control their lives. But it would be self-deception to expect such public officials not to resort to arbitrary use of such powers. The absence of public opinion would simply mean entrenchment of dictatorship. The influence of public opinion which set them up for election in the first place is always necessary to restrain the public official; and the furnace of public opinion is primarily the mass media. Thus, the thrust of this paper is to bring to the fore the role of the mass media in building up, and or, amplifying public opinion in a democratic environment so that public officials would not derail from the goals upon which they were given mandates. The paper also x-rays the challenges facing mass media today, especially in Africa, and pinpoints some ways through which the mass media can continue to hold the ace in defending and deepening democracy to enhance the needed development. Interdisciplinary method was adopted for the study. The findings have shown that there can never be democracy without public opinion; and opinions can only be weighty and termed "public" when it is channeled through the mass media. Thus, stakeholders in the mass media should hold their heads high so as to avoid "strange influences" if democracy in Africa is to thrive, and development, in the true sense of the word, is to be witnessed.

Introduction

The role of the mass media in building the political fabric of democracy cannot be underestimated. The news media are the widely and readily available channels through which leaders express their views and seek to sell them to the public. But where a public official creates a credibility gap, he undermines his power. The news media also serve to bring to the officials the thoughts and desires of the people and the viewpoints of the political opponents, a two-way transmission of political policy and reaction. An especially effective technique is to submit a public official to intensive and sometimes unfriendly and aggressive questioning by a panel of journalist.

The political education role in the news media cannot be downplayed insofar as they are always there to publicize new plans. The publicity process is of immeasurable importance to public officials who exploit it to win elections in the first place. It is unfortunate, however, that some public officials try to control the opinions of the citizenry by manipulating and restricting the release of information thereby distorting the public image of a problem, making it seem real, and the political solutions they proffer more desirable. This is the problem with the political system.

The mass media also plays a crucial role in forming and reflecting public opinion. According to Hasan (2013), "It communicates the world to individuals, and it

produces modern society's self-image". Public opinion, however, is waxed albeit, indirectly by the mass media. That is to say, the mass media collate information from diverse sources on issues of state and make them weighty and intimidating by amplifying them. Thus, the moment the mass media take up opinion of the people on a particular issue and trumpet them professionally, those opinions become public opinions, and have the propensity to influence government officials.

Without the public there can never be mass media, and mass media is about the public, their opinions and their interests. Take away the mass media, democracy becomes wobbled, and authoritarianism or tyranny would set in.

Thus, this paper examines the role of the mass media in building up public opinion for the survival of democracy in Africa. However, the challenges facing mass media in Africa today are also x-rayed, and possible solutions are also proffered.

Conceptual Review

Mass media:

Mass media is generally considered to be a pattern of communication reaching a large audience almost instantaneously and or simultaneously irrespective of their location and or spread. In the words of Hasan (2013) when the members of the general public referred to "the media" they are usually referring to the mass media, or to the news media which is a section of the mass media.

The mass media comprises of television, radio, newspaper, magazine and the internet. It is sub-divided into three groups viz: the electronic, the print and the traditional media. But of late the mass media is driven by technology that allow massive duplication of materials, and turning the world into a global village. Hasan (2013: 651) sees mass media as those type of media that are designed to reach large numbers of people. The mass media is an important aspect of a society that plays the crucial role of relating the government and the governed to the state in all matter of policies, decision and actions as they affect the state.

Public opinion:

Public opinion refers to the collective stance of legitimate but credible adult population of the society on issues of state. Public opinion develops as a concept with the rise of a "public" in the 18th century. Hasan (2013: 126) defines the concept as the engine that keeps the wheels of a democracy turning. She however, asserts that public opinion is that opinion that is of large public interest and is held by a heterogeneous group of people who have some common interests.

There are many factors that induce public opinion. First when a government's policy is obnoxious and seem to be far apart from the yearnings of the people, the people must react and they divergent views held will coalesce and become the collective stance of the governed on such issues of policies.

Democracy:

The Chambers 20th Century Dictionary defines democracy as “a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people collectively, and is administered by them or by officers appointed by them”. It goes further to describe it as a state or society characterized by recognition of equality of rights and privileges, be it political, social or legal.

The core of democracy is participation by the people in the affairs of their state or society. Without participation, democracy loses meaning and relevance.

Another very important element in a democracy is the issue of accountability. According to Akpanobong (2003), it is not enough to talk about participation of the citizens by exercising electoral rights to vote for the person of their choice, such an elected person has a duty to be accountable to the people and it is only through the media that the people can call their officials to order, and cause them to render account of the stewardship.

Democracy in Africa: A Historical Overview

The term “democracy” originated from the Greek city state of Athens with two hundred and fifty thousand people in 6th century B.C (Thompson and Umoh, 2001). The “demos” – the people – of Athens were the peasants, craftsmen, sailors and day labourers, and had no voting rights, because the “Kratis” monopolized power (Tilly, 2007). Upon noticing an imminent confrontation on a major scale between the “Kratis” and “demos” with a propensity to spark off a revolution that could cost the state, a leader then called ‘solon’ introduced reforms that expanded space for participation by the “demos”.

The Athenian experiment became known as democracy or power of the “demos”. That Athenian model informed the struggle for self-determination and freedom in Europe for centuries. The model had, however, undergone modifications and redefinition which called for representation as against “participation by all free citizens” that was the case in Athen (Thompson and Umoh, 2001).

Democracy in the Euro-America are fashioned from the Athenian Greek model, though with some modifications. What is currently practiced in almost all African countries were introduced by the Western powers which colonized Africans. However, democracy is not so strange a concept to some Africans, but the manner in which it is practiced in contemporary times in the continent is foreign, brought into being by the Western colonialists. Democracies in pre-colonial African polities were “villagetic” in nature, where every elder and adult citizens participated in decision-making and decision taking in village squares. It is proper for us to term this kind of democracy “Villageticism” or “Village Square democracy”. This form of democracy was in vogue in

“acephalous” communities in Africa, which Thomson (2010) in his “An Introduction to African Politics” posits that “at its most efficient, it will involve the whole community meeting regularly to make decisions”.

It is pertinent to state that colonialism had replaced “villagetism” or “village square democracy” with the Western - styled democracy; or at most, the former has been pushed to interior villages in Africa, and the western styled is now the in-thing across the continent, even though African leaders have so abused it because of ineffective media and morbid citizenry.

In Nigeria, modern democracy or the Western styled democracy began officially in 1922 with the introduction of Clifford Constitution. Sir Hugh Clifford who succeeded Lord Laggard in 1919 was the Governor who had to grapple with the problems and agitation associated with the Nigerian Council. At first, proved to be up to the tasks of resisting the nationalists' demand, but at last he gave in and initiated a new constitution usually described as the Clifford constitution.

The constitution provided for an Executive and Legislative Councils. The most significant feature of that constitution was the elective principle which was unprecedented in the political history of Nigeria. One of the advantages of the elective principle was the possibility of learning to take part in elections for eventual self-government. This had the desired effect on political activities in the country such that political parties sprang up in the country, in 1923 with Sir Herbert Macaulay forming the first political party with the name Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). And in order to appeal to the voting masses, and for effective communication, newspapers were floated by politicians. Among the earliest newspapers were Lagos Daily News founded by Sir Herbert Macaulay in 1925, the Nigerian Pioneer founded by Sir Kitoye Ajasa and Daily Times founded in 1926 by Richard Barrow and Co (Thompson and Umoh, 2001).

The birth of newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s brought Nigerian politicians like Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Prof. Eyo Ita, Ahmadu Bello, Alvan Ikoku, etc. to limelight, and their opinions, and those of the people they represented, were made known to the colonial government. Hence, when another colonial regime came on board a fresh constitution called Author Richard constitution was enacted in 1946. This constitution created three regions in the country based on the people's opinion as canvassed by the mass media. Thus, democracy got expanded, modified and entrenched in the Nigeria from 1923 till date due to public opinions as amplified by the mass media (Thompson and Umoh, 2001).

In other parts of Africa such as Tanzania, Gambia, Kenya, Senegal, Ghana, South Africa, and so on, the media aided the enthronement of democracy and the rise of leaders such as Julius Nyerere, David Kaunda, Kenyatta, Leopold Sedar Senghor,

Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, etc. Even though, at a point (1960-1980) some of these leaders turn themselves to despots partly because of defective media in their respective polities, and partly because of morbidity of their citizenry (Meredith, 2006). Findings show that the very media that catapulted the first generation of African leaders to prominent were also employed in the negative to stampede progress in Africa. At some points, the media were used to whip up ethnic sentiments and useless propaganda. These defective practices in the media contributed to failed democracy, and in some cases, outright dethronement of democracy, in some African states. According to Meredith (2006), the press, in the early days of African independence, existed merely as an outlet for government propaganda. Political debate, in his words, “became matter of platitudes and praise-songs, no longer taken seriously”. In one country after another, the first generation of African leaders acted in contempt of constitutional rules, and constitutions were either amended or rewritten, or simply ignored. All this happened because the media ignored the masses and their opinions and rather became pages to the leaders. For instance, in Guinea, the media keyed into the thinking of Sekou Toure and deified him as “Guide Supreme de le Revolution”. He was also often referred to as “The great son of Africa”, “The Terror of international imperialism, colonialism and Neo-colonialism”, and “The Doctor of Revolutionary Sciences” (Meredith, 2006).

Mass media, Public Opinion and the Restoration of Democracy in Africa

Even in the era referred to above, a section of the media in Africa was living up to expectation. But some contributed to the collapse of democracy in almost all African countries and the taking over of the reigns of power by the military juntas. The media was also in the lead to restore democracy in Africa beginning from the 1980s. It was the mass media that forced the then Military President of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida to “step aside despite many years of grand-standing and brutality (Ukpong, Tony 2021: Interview).

The media also played the greatest role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and the eventual enthronement of Nelson Mandela as the first Black President of that country (Meredith, 2006). Thus, there is a nexus between mass media, public opinion and democracy. Suffice it to state that for an “opinion” to be termed “public”, it must emanate from a credible public. A credible public is that public which is legally, morally, socially and legitimately fit to hold a view or views for or against the government or its policies. A public must be credible in order to be taken serious by the media for the interest of democracy and the people. For instance, medically confirmed lunatics, convicted persons or non-indigenes who are not residents within a given jurisdiction cannot express any valid opinion on a subject of public importance within that state or society. Thus, such “public” and its opinion(s) are “non gratas”, and are readily

dismissed. Hasan (2013) defines a public as:

.. a dispersed group of people interested in and divided about an issue, with a view-to-registering a collective opinion, which is expected to affect the course of action of some group or individual. A public is not one composite group, but a number of interest groups, often working at odds with one another.

The mass media rely on the public; and without the public the media has no function. Therefore, public opinions shape the character of the mass media for better or for worse. Hasan admonishes that the public should ensure that whatever opinion brought to bear on the mass media are for the better. She also sees "public as a heterogeneous group of people interested in an issue but having difference of opinion and aiming to reach a collective opinion to affect a particular course of action.

The absence of public opinion is the death of democracy. And public opinion would be or remain a mere rumour or gossip in the absence of the mass media. That is to say, it is the mass media that orchestrate opinions in a democratic setting and wax them into a viable weapon of development. Mass media, to a greater extent, is the arsenal that guard democracy. They are a vehicle through which the people's voices are conveyed to the elected officials to guide them in the discharge of their duties. The weight of public opinions is determined by the support of the media, and the credibility of the public.

Since the return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the masses have constantly aired their views and aspiration on matters of state importance. The people have wished that their wishes on state matters be considered by the officials, but often times, their wishes are dashed by the media practitioners who instead choose to support the government and their officials against the people. Hasan (2013) maintains that:

Public opinion is the engine that keeps the wheels of a democracy turning. Though we elect officials to conduct our government, they are restrained by influence of the same public opinion that put them into office. The average person is strongly affected by the social group and the opinion leaders who reflect the opinions obtained from the mass media. Thus, the divergent views and in-depth analysis presented by the mass media are of vital importance in the stance public takes on critical issues.

Global Concord Newspaper, in one of its editorials published on Thursday 26/1/2012, states that "the media sniff at instances of ineptitude, malfunctioning and corruption, and inform the public accordingly. Once a deleterious situation is exposed, public opinion could force a reform". This is to say that not the public alone feeds the media, the media also feeds the public. This is where symbiotic relationship between the public and the media comes in. The public and the media feed each other with information that help democracy to thrive.

In a democratic setting, the mass media is the melting pot of political thought. The policies and aims of government are made known through the press, and are

deliberated upon by opposition political figures, editors, commentators and the public at large. Sometimes, a high government official intentionally sets to test public reaction to a policy idea; somehow, he gets the idea to the press. Analysts examine the proposal in print and on the air, and before long, millions of the citizenry are aware of the tentative plan and form an opinion. If the policy idea meets with heavy opposition, it is quietly abandoned. If it gets popular support, it is put into operation.

Interview sessions conducted by local state owned news media are, to say the least, pedestrian, of late, and obviously driven by sycophancy. A journalist is trained to ask incisive questions with the aim of unraveling the truth and getting the people better informed. Not the show of shame we watch on television when a high public official is guest. He is never made to feel the heat. He is never asked a question over which he needs to ponder before attempting a reply. And the public ends up as the loser.

In January, 2012 the whole world was subjected to a spectacle for over two weeks when the traditional two-way transmission of political policy and reaction suffered, and Nigerian government apologists had a field day. The ordinary Nigerian was bombarded with figures government considered would sway public opinion in its favour. Some of the not-too-clean facts about the so-called subsidy were hushed up and therefore affected the quality of the debate and gave the government the cheap opportunity of running away with a pyrrhic victory. The ugly facts, however, emerged later from the House of Representatives.

The House of Representatives Ad-hoc Committee investigating the management of fuel subsidy headed by Farouk Lawan was shocked to learn that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) did not have documents to back up fuel importation. The allegation was made by the relevant authority which should know: the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS). It said the Federal Ministry of Finance aided the “illegality” by warning customs in writing to overlook the essential documents to “avert undue hardship on Nigerians.” Julius Ndubusi Nwankwo, Deputy Controller General also added that most fuel importation did not follow due process, that Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) was not in a position to give the exact number of vessels imported by the NNPC; that the vessels do not get to the ports here in Nigeria; that the manifests covering these imports simply read “Offshore Cotonou” or “Offshore Lome”. That customs did not board those vessels as they were anchored outside Nigeria's territorial waters and could therefore not ascertain the volume of imports. He also said that the NNPC had not paid duty, as at January 2012, of N45B for PMS imported between 1999 and 2002 when such duty was suspended. Government was aware of these and other facts, but chose to keep them to itself. Government had been smarter because the public did not care, and the media subsequently became aloof - which is a clear sign that Nigerian's democracy is not too far from being a modified form of dictatorship.

If the citizens are denied full disclosure of facts, where do they turn to? The investigative work of the news media, of course. This is the only way the public could have the complete story. Governments generally release and stress on facts favourable to their cause. But the public is entitled to all the facts in a political situation to enable it take educated stance.

Factors Militating Against the Media and Democracy in Africa

Media in Africa is under serious threat, and the threat to media is to a greater extent, the threat to democracy. Media houses are now living in past glories because they are no longer living up to expectations as the key objective of almost every media organization now in Africa has been monetary gains, hence, the reason they embark on “Brown Envelope” practices.

Media practitioners are into partisan politicking, thus, abandoning the ethics and principles of the practice which are fashioned along democratic tenets. Objectivity in media practice in Africa is fast becoming a farce because of partisanship of media practitioners. What is in vogue in Nigeria, for example, is the “PDP and APC” – reporters, as well as media houses. And the worse is that the masses have keyed into such “demonic” media divides to the detriment of democracy and national development.

Media houses and media practitioners churn out half-truths or outright falsehood with impunity. Propaganda are now presented as “news” by media houses. By propaganda we mean the art of presenting a piece of information with less than fifty percent verity in a bid to influence the psyche of the public. Hasan (2013) sees propaganda as:

A specific type of message presentation directly aimed at influencing the opinions or behaviour of people, rather than impartiality providing information.

Propaganda is characterized by distortion of facts. It appeals to emotions, and it's misleading in nature. Propaganda thrives on coloured, biased, or one-sided information. The aim is to gag the public and bar them from making their own decisions on issues of democracy or any other issue of state importance.

Also, the elected officials are themselves a threat to the media, and by extension democracy which they profess. No leader or official likes to be criticized although some tolerate criticisms more than some. The yearning of every African leader, right from the dawn of independence, has been to have the media on his side, and any attempt by a media practitioner to be independent ignites acrimony and clamp-down. The need for press freedom is a *sine-qua-non* to effective functioning of democracy. Press freedom, according to Nwabueze (1985), means freedom from all prior restraints, whether in the form of license refusal or a ban or proscription of further publication or distribution. There are cases where journalists in Africa are thrown into police detention for reporting

what is unfriendly to an official of the state.

In democracy, the press is supposed to be free, and the media practitioners are supposed to exercise their inalienable rights of freedom of speech and expression, and freedom to hold opinions and to hold the leaders accountable. But these rights and or freedom are stifled by the officials of the state directly or through proxies or through some obnoxious laws and policies. Media practitioners also get these rights forfeited by state-induced poverty. No one wants to be poor, as such every media practitioner wants to own at least a house, a car and every other luxury owned and enjoyed by his or her contemporaries in other professions. Hence, a media practitioner in Africa is always tempted to “go low” in his practice in order to satisfy his or her desires. This is why Akpanobong (2003) asserts that:

Of all facts of poverty... It has greatly impeded the development and sustenance of democracy. The perpetual struggle for existence and survival has almost always been how to conquer poverty. In consequence with such major concern with matters of mere survival, apathy sets into the practice of democracy.

In Africa, the journalists are paid, and they readily accept, to brainwash the masses using propaganda as tools. By doing this the masses are made to also look the other way like the journalists do, while the state officials are busy strangulating democracy in their respective jurisdictions. The prospect of the media in Africa will be limitless if management and staff of every media house in Africa would always pursue editorial policies that are objective, realistic, national and mass-oriented.

Another threat to the media and democracy in Africa is ethnicity. Today, every journalist want to champion the cause of his or her people. They incite their respective kinsmen and women against the state for pecuniary and parochial interests. Ethnicity obviously is another dark hood covering the prisms of media practitioners in Africa.

Political Education as a *Sine-qua-non* for Informed publics and democracy in Africa

Democracy cannot thrive where the masses are morbid and timid. A morbid or timid public aid tyranny, and are ready tools in the hands of destroyers of democracy. In order to have a vibrant public for the survival and growth of democracy and its attendant dividends, an informed public is imperative. But sadly, the media which should educate the masses have aligned with the government against the people.

As the “Fourth estate of the realm”, it is the duty of the media to educate and mobilize the citizens for the growth and sustenance of democracy in Africa. This is because the media is the purveyor of information, and whoever is in position to control the flow of information exercises great powers. In this regard, Thompson and Umoh posits that the press could therefore utilize these powers to better the lots of the citizenry.

If the mass media practitioners could see themselves as indivisible, see themselves as epitome of truth, the protector of the oppressed, and more so, as responsible men and women who, because of their professional calling, are opportune to lead, direct, inform, educate and entertain people, democracy in Africa, as in the Western world, would grow, and development will be ushered in.

The press could be of great service to a country if it could try to point it audience in the direction of the bright future for which every responsible government is committed.
(Thompson and Umoh, 2001)

Etukudoh (1989) notes that to mobilize the masses for effective and sustainable democracy the mass media cannot be ruled out. But mass mobilization or informing people through the mass media becomes effective only when the people are able to comprehend messages passed to them through the mass media.

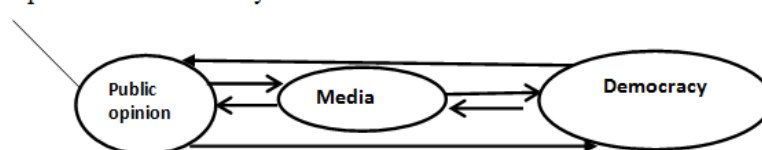
African masses need to be politically informed if democracy is to grow and development witnessed in Africa. If the masses, who constitute the public in democracy, are not politically aware, their opinions would be “off” and the society would be chaotic. Therefore, to “create” an informed public, the mass media hold the ace and/or the key, because of its advantageous great reach. The best purpose media can serve and the best way it can contribute to the progress of democracy (in Africa) is by educating the masses keeping in mind the real needs of the public.

Conclusion

Media, Public opinion and Democracy: Towards a Model

The paper will be incomplete if the authors fail to contribute to knowledge by suggesting a somewhat new model of mass media. Model of mass media are windows through which the media are studied. However, this very model is, for now, suggested for the study of media in relations to democracy and public opinion.

The paper reveals that there is a cordial relationship between the media and the public on the one hand, and between the media and democracy on the other. This relationship is symbiotic such that none of the parties in the said relationship give to the other and not receive in return. Thus, the relationship between the media and public opinion, and between the media and democracy is symbiotic. Hence, the model fashioned out by these researchers is called a “symbiotic model of media, public opinion and democracy”.



A Symbiotic Model of Public Opinion, Media and Democracy

The symbiotic model of public opinion, media, and democracy emphasizes the mutual interdependence of these three elements in sustaining a functioning political order. Public opinion represents the aggregated views and preferences of the citizenry, which confer legitimacy on governance and constitute the moral foundation of democracy. Yet, in practice, public opinion does not emerge in isolation; it is filtered and framed through the media, which serve as the principal channels of information, debate, and political communication. The media provide the narratives and agendas that shape how citizens interpret events, policies, and leadership, while simultaneously responding to public interests and expectations in order to maintain credibility and relevance.

Democracy depends on both public opinion and media to thrive. It requires informed citizens capable of participating in decision-making, and it requires independent media institutions to guarantee transparency, accountability, and the circulation of competing viewpoints. In return, democratic structures secure the rights of citizens to form and express opinions freely and protect the freedom of the press as an indispensable element of public life.

The model is symbiotic because each component is sustained by the others: public opinion needs media to gain visibility and influence, media need democracy to remain free and authoritative, and democracy needs both media and public opinion to uphold legitimacy. When one of these elements is weakened or compromised, the entire system becomes unstable. Thus, the symbiotic relationship between public opinion, media, and democracy forms a dynamic ecosystem in which voice, information, and legitimacy continuously reinforce one another.

The “symbiotic model of media, public opinion and democracy” holds that both the media and the public depend on each other for content and motivation, in that public opinion shapes and can be shaped by the media to create a healthy environment for democracy to thrive. Consequently, the absence of one negates the interrelationship of the others.

The media cannot exist without the people, and the people cannot exist without the media in contemporary world. The media feeds the public with information in order to act for the betterment of the society; and the public feed the media with information in order to stay afloat and also help the society. In other words, the media exist for the public, and without the public, there can never be media, and there would be no need for it; and without the public, there would be no democracy.

For democracy to thrive in Africa, the masses should be well informed and active. And the people can only be better informed if the media live up to expectations, and avoid strange influences such as ethnicity, partisanship, propaganda, etc. It is a well-informed citizenry that can hold their government accountable. Well informed citizens

are the opinion leaders, and the media collate information from a public that is well informed politically, socially and educationally. A weak public breeds tyranny and mediocrity in a democracy.

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EVALUATION OF FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE RADIO STATIONS IN NIGERIA: A CASE OF ORISUN 89.5 FM

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and

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Abstract

Evidences abound in literature that the broadcast media are doing more in respect to language utilisation and development, thus providing a renewed hope for indigenous language utilisation, revitalisation and foreign language decolonisation. However, paucity of inputs may hamper the functionality and sustainability of these indigenous language media. Hence, the objective of this study was to investigate the availability and adequacy of human and financial resources in a monolingual radio station in Nigeria to ascertain the sustainability of the broadcast media in the fight for language and cultural survival and development. The quantitative research design was employed for this study. The data were gathered through the aid of a questionnaire-Instrument for Data Collection on Indigenous Language Radio Evaluation (IDCILRE). The questionnaire investigated to elicit information on the workers' perception on two key items: Availability and adequacy of financial inputs and Human resources input to the station. Orisun 89.5 FM had a total number of 34 staff but for this study, 25 workers were purposively used based on availability. The analysis was done through the use of mean and simple percentages and standard deviation. The study revealed that the station was self-sustaining that is, it was able to generate enough funds to run itself and that provided no problems with respect to financial resources to run the station. As regards staff members at different units of the station-transport and logistics, engineering, news and current affairs, marketing, programming unit, security guards and clerks were available but moderately adequate. It was recommended that government at all levels should rise up to support the available monolingual radio stations in terms of financial support.

Introduction

The situation with language and cultural development in Nigeria is worrisome. The media enjoy a more non-contestable privilege to promote and develop our culture and by extension our indigenous languages. This is aptly corroborated by Ayodabo (2013) that one of the major organs of spreading and technicalising a language is through the mass media.

Meanwhile, there is a consensus among communication theorist that the print media have contributed to the backwardness that is experienced in language utilisation in Nigeria. In a more explicit way, the media of print largely use English language for publication with little attention given to the indigenous language. This is because many of the print media are not sustainable in terms of production in indigenous languages.

Given an instance, Salawu (2006) opines that the trend of indigenous language

media is rising and dying across Africa. That is, the indigenous print media rise and fall at will without sustainability. In 1930 there were 19 registered African language newspapers in South Africa; in Ghana, as recent as 1990s, there were 15 newspapers in Ghanaian languages and today there is none; in the colonial Democratic Republic of Congo, there were more than 150 periodicals before in indigenous languages. Also in Nigeria, the case is not different as we have scanty number of indigenous language newspapers.

The problem facing indigenous languages in Africa and Nigeria especially is not limited to its death and the preference accorded English language by our media and educational institutions. There is the perceived negative attitude of our educational institutions and the media as well as other stakeholders in respect to the use of indigenous language. Parents and teachers hardly encourage children and learners to use their indigenous languages. They see it as a local phenomenon to communicate in indigenous languages. Sometimes children at home or in school are scolded for speaking what is called "vernacular".

Moreover, various language theorists and scholars have also maintained that language attitude of any group influences the practices of maintaining their indigenous languages, the values and the status they give to it and their readiness to preserve and promote it (Adegbija, 2000). Akpojivi and Fosu (2016) & [Dołowy-Rybińska](#) and [Hornsby](#) (2021) confirm that language attitude is basically formed through communication, family, peers and educational system. It implies that people's attitude formation in a positive way, is a major determinant of how our indigenous language would be cherished and preserved.

Furthermore, [Dołowy-Rybińska](#) and [Hornsby](#) (2021) submit that language attitudes must be detected and addressed as a major step in language revitalisation. This view on attitude towards indigenous languages was also reinforced by Adegoroye (2005). He submits that if a balance is achieved in an individual's beliefs, values, motives and actions, there would be consistency in his or her attitude. Given the foregoing, it shows that the problem confronting indigenous languages in respect to utilisation in Nigeria is not from the media alone but other associated factors are responsible.

Interestingly, despite the above mentioned factors, the struggle and the advocacy for language revitalisation is gaining ground by the day. Little progress has been made in the area of language and culture revival. The broadcast media in a way are not totally indicted in this quagmire. The broadcast media are still dependable when it comes to development and utilisation of indigenous languages in Nigeria. Odu (2023) and Odu & Alabi (2023) assert that broadcast media are doing more in language utilisation than the print media.

For instance, we now have a handful of radio stations in Nigeria that are monolingual or they use indigenous languages for the largest percentage of their broadcast, such includes - Lagelu Radio in Oyo State, Radio Lagos 107.5 FM, Orisun 89.5 FM in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Rave 91.7 FM Osogbo in Osun State, Faaji 106.5 FM in Lagos State, Bond FM, etc. Also, some stations in the northern part of Nigeria use Hausa language and other Nigerian languages of their area like Express FM Sokoto and Progress FM Gombe to mention a few for paucity of data.

Orisun 89.5 FM, Ile-Ife is the focus of this study is an indigenous language broadcast medium which is one of such projects on indigenous language media as mentioned above. Orisun FM was established by the Osun State government in the year 2005. The OSBC sub-station at Ile-Ife was renamed ORISUN 89.5FM in 2003, came on air in 2005. The station was named Orisun FM because of its location, Ile-Ife, which is the cradle of the Yoruba race. It is a monolingual radio station that broadcast all her programmes in Yoruba language. All her programme line-up is set out to promote the norms and the cultural antecedents of the Yoruba people. In a study carried out by Akanbi and Aladesanmi (2014, p. 564) - The Use of Indigenous Language in Radio Broadcasting: A Platform for Language Engineering as part of the input identified in Orisun FM in the process to strive towards the achievement of the objectives establishing it, they note by citing Opeyemi (2013) that Orisun FM "broadcasts in rich standard Yorùbá language as it beams out rich cultural programme laced with innovations. The Radio Station propagates both the language and the culture of the Yorùbá nation. This endears the Radio Station to quite a major chunk of the South Westerners and many listeners in other neighbouring states". This submission provides further avenue for verification by this present research.

However, the situation described here raises some questions about the effectiveness of the broadcast media stations in respect to the availability and adequacy of both human and financial resources which are used to produce and disseminate their programmes. It also provides avenue to interrogate the station's capability to produce quality content and fulfill its roles in the society. Contingent on this fact, this study investigates the availability and adequacy of financial and human resources available in a monolingual radio station in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The available evidences from literature reveal that the broadcast media are doing more in respect to language utilisation and thus providing a renewed hope for indigenous language utilisation, revitalisation and foreign language decolonization (Salawu, 2015; Odu & Alabi, 2023). Equally, there are also empirical evidences that these broadcast media are confronted with inadequate and shortage of

resources especially finance which is critical to attracting competent hands as human resources as well as providing material resources in terms of adequate and functional equipment (Oso, 2006 & Order, 2013). It is against this backdrop that this investigation is imperative to actually know the availability and adequacy of resources in a monolingual radio station in Nigeria in a view to ensure what needs to be done to sustain the broadcast media in the fight for language and cultural survival and development.

Research Question

1. What is the perception of workers on the resources (finance and human) that are deployed in the operations of Orisun 89.5 FM to achieve the station's stated objectives?

Review of Related Literature

Resources and Broadcast Media

According to Onabajo (2001), the broadcast management should be able to provide and optimally use the following resources: Human resources, material resources, and financial resources. These resources are needed in any organisation to achieve the goals establishing them and to be effective in impacting the society. It is important to look at these resources in a way to describing each of them in a typical broadcast medium.

- **Financial resources:** This has to do with the finance of the broadcast station. It is imperative for broadcast organisations to have access to fund without which her objectives cannot be achieved.
- **Material resources:** These are materials that are needed to produce and transmit programmes through the airwaves in a broadcast medium. The question of availability, functionality, adequacy, appropriateness, and relevance is critical to the achievement of the objectives of a broadcast organisation in this sense.
- **Human resources:** These are broadcast personnel that are essential and responsible for smooth running of broadcast organisations. These personnel must be a blend of the top, middle and low level management for the execution of various activities of a broadcast station.

Empirical Review on Broadcast Resources

UNICEF (2019) carried out a study on a radio station in relation to the resources of the station. In its findings, it was revealed that the sustainability of a particular programme was vague because of paucity of resources. It was gathered that the Sara Radio Programme which they investigated did not encourage local capacities and engage the parents or communities in design and implementation. Equally, the intervention was not efficient because of delays in response and approval of scripts. The

Sara Radio Episodes delayed Khangarue media from reaching agreed deliverables for payments and these delays dovetailed into late payments of radio stations. Also, SRP did not provide adequate staff to implement programme and resources in terms of human, fund, and materials. These findings portend poor provision of resources in terms of human, material and finance for the radio station.

In a related study, Chinweobo-Onuoha, Ngene, and Akata (2021); Odu and Alabi (2023) found out that there were no enough indigenous language staff in some of the stations they investigated for their studies. This may be due to the fact that those stations under the investigations might not be core indigenous language radio stations but they only use a mixture of Yoruba and English languages for broadcasting. So, little or no attention was given to specialists in indigenous language broadcasting. This correlates to DFID (2005) position that human capacity is a challenge to broadcast media.

Moreover, findings from some prior studies revealed that finance is a major input variable in any project and so a major challenge to airing indigenous language programmes (Chinweobo-Onuoha et al., 2021; Odu & Alabi, 2023). DFID (2005) reported that even though broadcast technology has become very cheap, the cost of running the stations remains a pronounced challenge. That is, payment of salaries, transport (for interviews and research) and other overheads demand regular income for the station even though with low prices of broadcast technology.

Similarly, McEwan (2019) states that a disconnection exists between the levels of funding allocated to Iwi stations that were studied and the goals they were being asked to pursue. This revelation attests to the fact that the radio investigated had some goals to achieve but finance as an input needed to prosecute the goals of the media was not there. It discovered that the goals of the radio station were at variance with the funding provided.

Order (2013) and Anwar (2015) in their research found out and concluded that the largest problem faced by community radio stations is financial and specifically how to ensure an adequate income to the stations in an ever increasing competitive media terrain. This is also in tandem with the submission of Oso (2006). He said that in situating indigenous language media within the economic context of Nigeria, the greatest problem staring at the face of indigenous language media is its perceived lack of economic viability. Finance is hence one of the major problems of indigenous language media.

Methodology

Research Design

The survey research design was employed for this study to collect data from a

sample of staffers at Orisun 89.5 FM using a self-report measure through questionnaire.

Population of the Study

Orisun 89.5 FM had a total number of 34 staff for both junior and senior categories. The junior staff consisted of a clerk, cleaners and a driver. In the senior category it consisted of members of staff who were scattered across various departments in the station- engineering, news and current affairs, marketing, programming unit and transport and logistics.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for the study was 25 members of staff out of 34. Twenty five of them were used based on availability otherwise all of them would have been used because of the small number involved. Hence, twenty-five members of staff engaged for the study were purposefully sampled for the study.

Research Instrument

The data were gathered through the aid of a questionnaire called Instrument for Data Collection on Indigenous Language Radio Evaluation (IDCILRE). The questionnaire investigated the workers' perception on two key items: Availability and adequacy of financial and human resources inputs to the station.

Methods of Data analysis

The analysis was done through the use of mean and simple percentages and standard deviation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Perceptions of Workers on the Financial Resources Available to Orisun 89.5 FM

SN	Items	Yes	No
i.	Does your station receive subvention or other financial supports from the government?	12 (48%)	13 (52%)
ii.	Are you satisfied with the level of financial support received from the government for the station?	9 (36%)	16 (64%)
iii.	Is the station able to generate enough funds to run its self?	25 (100%)	0 (0%)
Iv	Staffers at Orisun FM are well remunerated	17 (68%)	8 (32%)
v.	All media allowances are promptly and adequately paid.	9 (36%)	16 (64%)

A cursory look at the data in Table 1 reveals that respondents maintained almost middle line as to whether the station received subventions or other financial support from government (48% and 52%). A total of 64% of the staff were dissatisfied with the level of financial support received from the government. All of the respondents (100%) agreed that the station was able to generate enough fund to run itself. They further confirmed that staffers at Orisun 89.5 FM were well remunerated (68%). Majority of the staffers did not agree (64%) to the fact that all media allowances were promptly and adequately paid. By implication, the station was self-sustaining; staffers were well remunerated; but media allowances were not paid promptly and adequately. They were not also satisfied with the financial support received from the government.

Table 2a: Workers' Opinion on Availability of Staff in Different Units at Orisun 89.5 FM

SN	Items	Availability	
		Yes	No
i.	Programmes	20 (80%)	5 (20%)
ii.	Transports & Logistics	21 (84%)	4 (16%)
iii.	Engineering	21 (84%)	4 (16%)
iv.	News & Current Affairs	21 (84%)	4 (16%)
v.	Marketing	21 (84%)	4 (16%)
Vi	Research and Statistics	13 (52%)	12(48%)
vi.	Cleaners	8 (32%)	17 (68%)
vii.	Security Guards	20 (80%)	5 (20%)
viii.	Gardeners	14 (56%)	11 (44%)
ix.	Clerks	17 (68%)	8 (32%)
x.	Messengers	7 (28%)	18 (72%)

Responses in table 2a on availability of staff for the implementation of Orisun 89.5 FM programmes on their percentages reveal that respondents agreed that staff were available in programming unit (80%), transport & logistics (84%), engineering (84%), news and current affairs unit (84%), marketing unit (84%), and research and statistics (52%). Moreover, they also agreed that staff were available in security unit (80%), gardeners (56%) and clerks (68%). However, the table reveals that messengers and cleaners were not that available.

Table 2b: Workers' Opinion on Adequacy of Staff in Different units of Orisun 89.5 FM

SN	Items	Very Adequate	Adequate	Moderately	Not Adequate	Mean	Std. Dev.
i.	Programmes	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	19 (76%)	0 (0%)	2.4	0.76
ii.	Transports & Logistics	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	20 (80%)	0 (0%)	2.4	0.81
iii.	Engineering	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	20 (80%)	0 (0%)	2.4	0.81
iv.	News & Current Affairs	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	20 (80%)	0 (0%)	2.36	0.76
v.	Marketing	4 (16%)	1 (4%)	20 (80%)	0 (0%)	2.20	0.71
Vi	Research and Statistics	4 (16%)	1 (4%)	20 (80%)	0 (0%)	2.20	0.71
Vii	Cleaners	3 (12%)	21 (84%)	0 (0%)	1(4%)	2.20	0.71
Vii	Security Guards	3 (12%)	21 (84%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	2.28	0.68
Vii	Gardner	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	21 (84%)	2 (8%)	2.00	0.50
ix.	Clerks	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	21 (84%)	2 (8%)	2.04	0.35
x.	Messengers	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (12%)	22 (92%)	1.88	0.33

Here, the percentage responses indicate those staffers in Programmes (76%), transportation and logistics (80%), engineering (80%), news and current affairs (80%), marketing (80%) and research and statistics (80%) were all moderately adequate. Also, the mean scores show that majority of the respondents agreed that the transports and logistics staff (2.4), staff in the programming unit (2.4), staff in news and current affairs unit (2.36), staff in marketing (2.20) unit and staff in engineering unit (2.4) were moderately adequate.

The respondents agreed that security guards (2.28) and cleaners (2.20) were adequate but messengers (1.88) were not adequate. By implication, staffers in different units in the transport and logistics, engineering, news and current affairs, marketing, programming unit, security guards and clerks were available and moderately adequate. But cleaners were also available and adequate; gardeners were moderately available while messengers were not adequately available.

Discussion of Findings

The first input variable was finance. It was discovered that Orisun FM could generate enough funds to run itself. Unfortunately, such funds were released late, and the implications was that the performance of the station affected because of late release of funds for allowances. This finding is partially in agreement with the findings of Chinweobo-Onuoha et al. (2021) and Odu & Alabi, in which they established that finance was a major problem for indigenous language programmes. In another study by DFID (2005), it was reported that, though broadcast technology has become very cheap, the cost of running the stations remains a significant challenge. That is, salaries, transport (for interviews), and overhead costs demand regular income for the station no

matter how low the technology becomes in price. This whole scenario was summarily put forward by Order (2013) and Anwar (2015) in their findings, and they concluded that the largest pressure faced by community radio stations is financial, particularly how to get adequate income in an increasingly competitive media terrain. One should begin to express worry at this point for the future of the radio station in terms of sustainability. If the station was able to generate enough funds, but such funds were not timely and adequately released to the station to carry out its objectives, the hope of realizing the objectives of establishing the station may be dashed.

Human resources were evidently another variable in the list of inputs investigated. Human resources in any organization are key to its success. This study therefore revealed that staffers at different units in the station, such as transport and logistics, engineering, news and current affairs, marketing, the programming unit, security, and clerks, were available but moderately adequate. Cleaners were found to be available and adequate; gardeners were moderately available, while messengers were not adequately available. It may imply that the government of Osun State focuses more attention on the recruitment of core staffers at the station than the auxiliary staff, probably to cut costs. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Chinweobo-Onuoha, Ngene, and Akata (2021); Chukwunalu et al. (2022); and Odu and Alabi (2023), who also observed the same irregularities in the availability of indigenous language broadcasters in the stations they investigated. In their own case, however, the stations they investigated were not core indigenous language stations. DFID (2005) submits that human capacity is a challenge to broadcast media.

Conclusion

In view of the findings of this research, one can conclude that Orisun 89.5 FM was self-sustaining that is, it was able to generate enough funds to run itself and that provided no problems with respect to financial resources to run the station. The implication is that indigenous language broadcast stations can be self-sustaining. However, funds generated and subventions to the media stations should be released to time and there should be prompt payment of salaries and other allowances in order to motivate the staff to realise language utilisation and development with those stations.

As regards members of staff at different units of the station-transport and logistics, engineering, news and current affairs, marketing, programming unit, security guards and clerks were available but moderately adequate. By implication, the core staff were available to pursue the goal of indigenous language station. Cleaners were also available and adequate; gardeners were moderately available while messengers were not adequately available at all. In the long run, human and financial resources available at Orisun 89.5 FM were found available in small proportion and this means that the

productivity of the station in the fight for language, cultural survival and development can be promoted through the indigenous language broadcast media. However, auxiliary staff should be provided in their adequate number to assist the core staff in discharging their duties.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made:

- i. the Federal government and other levels of government should invest in more monolingual radio stations across the nation and private individuals should be encouraged to establish these stations too;
- ii. the available stations that are using indigenous languages in their broadcasting which could be private or public radio stations should also be properly funded to achieve revitalisation and promotion of our indigenous languages; and
- iii. the government should encourage and give grants to media evaluators to work on the existing indigenous language radio stations and other ones that will be established later.

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BILLBOARD POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT ON ELECTORATES' PERCEPTION AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION IN PORT HARCOURT CITY

Chidinma Nsirim Ejekwu

Abstract

This study examined the influence of billboard political advertisements on electorates' perception and voting behavior in the 2023 general election in Port Harcourt City. The research was guided by three objectives and anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory. Using the survey research method, the study projected a population of 1,148,665, with a sample size of 384 respondents. Findings revealed that billboard political advertisements significantly shaped voters' perceptions of candidates, which in turn influenced their voting decisions. However, the study also established that the credibility attributed to advertised candidates was not solely dependent on the advertisements, but on other external factors as well. Additionally, respondents indicated that billboard advertisements were not accorded much importance in their voting considerations during the 2023 election. The study recommends that political parties, government, and candidates should continue to employ billboard advertising as a tool for promoting parties, policies, and candidates. To enhance believability, political parties should field credible candidates, while candidates should place greater emphasis on creativity and effective messaging in billboard campaigns to increase their relevance and impact.

1.0 Introduction

Generally, advertising is crucial to the modern day business; ranging from the hawkers of tomatoes, to the multi-national companies that engage in the production of goods and services, advertising is a veritable tool with which to have and keep buyers. To succeed in this ultimate goal of keeping customers to their goods and services, the advertisers employ a lot of mouth-watering promises. As a branch of marketing communication, advertising has many branches which over the years have generated a lot of new postulations, conceptions and school of thoughts by different practitioners and scholars in the field. One of such branches which have found a comfortable home in the field of advertising is political advertising. Politicians engage the service of different advertising agencies; as a matter of fact, people champion the need for better leadership and express these needs in form of advertising and manifestoes; conference rallies from ward to ward, billboard, writings, granting and publishing interviews among others. The essence of political advertising is not for the buyers- the electorates to just come and buy the product, but to appeal to their emotions, in order to win their votes. However, unlike commercial product, they do not have to buy the candidates, but come out to cast their votes for him, to top in the election and this is only done by eligible electorates within the constituency as political advertising is not targeted at every one, but those eligible to

vote. Koga (2006, p.37) notes that:

In politics, the market is likewise a group of people who share a common interest, need or desire, which may be satisfied by the election of political candidate. However, unlike commercial products, they do not have to afford him. A political market is composed of those in the candidate's district of influence, who are eligible to vote, those people are called constituency voters.

In modern times, political advertising is one of several ways politicians and political parties mobilize the electorates. Political advertising can be done in several ways, such as television programmes, radio, newspapers and display of candidate's portraits, with several promising and persuasive inscription on the billboard, magazines and even the new media of communication. Part of the basic objectives of this political advertising is to gain attention of the electorates and for this reason, political advertising sometimes involves orthodox strategies to achieve its aim.

Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number and style of political advertising in the last national and state elections held in 2011. Most of the political parties in the land mounted one form of political advertising or the other, to bring to the attention of the voting public, the parties' political philosophy (manifesto) as well as the parties' contestants for the various elective offices in the country. Many political office seekers also used political advertising to market themselves to the prospective voters. Several media of political advertising were employed during the electioneering campaigns. Most notable of these media include radio, television, Internet, newspapers, magazines, billboards, posters and others. Political parties and their flag bearers used these media, particularly the television, to their advantage in a bid to out- witting one another in the 2023 elections battle.

The use of billboards has been around for many centuries. Prior to the advent of motor 'vehicles, primitive examples of billboards were some-times used to alert people travelling on foot, on horse-back or by carriage that an inn could be found within a distance up the road. Along with naming the inn and providing an approximation of the distance of the establishment, the billboard would sometimes list some of the amenities such as clean beds, food and presence of facilities to house the carriage or stable the horse (Stanton 2008). Hence this study examined billboard political advertising and electorate's perception and voting in 2023 general election in Port Harcourt

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Anyone who passes a major road in Port Harcourt must come across political billboards, but may not be sure of how people receive them. One may not be sure of the impression they create on their target audience, especially with regard to political

communication and 2023 elections in particular.

In addition, political billboards do not only bear colourful messages, their messages are persuasive and they say a lot about what aspirants would do for people if elected as a medium of political communication has such power to arrest the attention of its target audience and influence their voting decision. We do not know if residents of Port Harcourt City during 2023 political advertisements on billboards respond to these messages on election days.

One would wonder whether they see, billboards as influential. Hence this study investigates billboard political advertisement and electorate's perception and voting in 2023 general election in Port Harcourt City LGA.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were used to guide the study and they are to:

1. ascertain the influence of billboard political advertisement on Port Harcourt City LGA resident's perception and voting in 2023 general election;
2. examine if residents of Port Harcourt City LGA believe in billboard political advertising messages; and
3. examine the level of importance attached to billboard political advertisement by Port Harcourt City LGA residents

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review: The Concept of Advertising

Advertising has to do with informing the people about the existence of something, so as to draw attention to it; it is giving of notice, so as to draw attention. Advertising is unique and special and if anything is to be known about the existence of a product, commodity, item, good, service or a political candidate, then there is need for advertising. Advertising describes any form of communication, which is principally aimed at promoting the sales and patronage of goods and services. Advertising as a planned communication is both an act and art of communication. Individuals and government endeavour to communicate their goods, products or services, as the case may be, to the audience (Asemah, 2011).

Arens (2008, p.7) says that advertising is the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products, services and ideas by identified sponsors, through various mass media. The definition given by Arens is closely in line with that of Dominick (2007, p.321), which says that advertising is a form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services, usually paid for by an identified sponsor. Advertising intends to promote the sales of a product or service and also to inform the

masses about the highlights of the product or the service features. It is an efficient means of communicating to the world, the value of the product or the service. Advertising utilises different media to reach out to the masses and uses different types of appeals to connect to the customers across the globe.

Advertising is the process of persuading potential customers to buy products or promote its services. It is the branch of marketing that deals with communicating to customers about products, brands and services. Advertising is a form of communication used to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to take some action with respect to products, ideas or services. Most commonly, the desired result is to drive consumer behaviour with respect to a commercial offering, although political and ideological advertising is also common. Advertising messages are usually paid for by sponsors and viewed via various traditional media, including mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television commercials, radio advertisements, outdoor advertising or direct mail or new media, such as websites and text messages (Wikipedia, cited in Asemah, 2011).

Billboard has made their mark as a medium of advertising. Billboard advertising has grown popular as a field of professional practice and as an index of modern business. Increasingly, marketers find them as handy tools for business promotion. Their prominent position along major streets makes them instant and compelled eye catch.

Billboard are usually located at points with high vehicle and traffic consequently, uses of such point are regularly exposed to the advertisement on the board. Billboard offers the advantage of very good color production and at the same time. It is an effective reminder medium for buyers who buy on impulse. As an authority put, "They have to be powerfully executed so as to intrude on the passers-by consciousness".

Product (1998.p5) believes the strength of billboards lays in their large prints billboards. Like newspaper use the power of photos to portray their photos to portray their power as effective visual medium. Billboard tap the full communicative effects of color photographs to force the eye of passes-by up on to the boards. Even those in traffic hurry. Unwillingly glance up at boards. Modern billboards are designed with different colours for attractions and variations.

Ban (1992), advises that one must select a way of blending the main facts of advertising: ideas, colours and lettering. Each billboard, however ought to show originality in the use of the elements of billboard design. This is one way to assure to convert peoples gazes into rapid attention for Bakor (1991 p5). Billboard ought to be bold enough and should pass on their messages clearly and vigorously. This is because complex and over crowded billboards confuse readers and make it difficult for them to understand anything within the split second they speed pass. A billboard should try

within Its capacity to deliver its messages with simplicity (Bakor 1991 p 15).

Illegibility is caused by small tipe. Wrong use of tipe face too wide lines and too many words on billboard. For a billboard to be devoid of the quality of boldness means that the designer has not only succeeded in straining the eyes of the public but has also attracted the criticism of the masses (Orji, 2001) Good billboards communicate to both those targeted and otherwise interestingly to both those targeted and otherwise can hurry incite at a billboard for non performance. It becomes worse if its competitive product is concerned those who never used or like the product will then have more opportunity to dislike the product.

Udeagwu (2002) believes that political billboard is a powerful medium socialization and education. He urges government to use billboards the way politicians use them. That is using them as signposts or announcements boards to adopt them as tools of political education. This he says is necessary because the formality of other media especially newspapers make the audience feel that they are not the ones being addressed by politically educative. Newspaper content in addition. Limited access to television, together with its transience affords and retention of political messages. It is not emphasizing that a product is anything that is capable of satisfying human want in an exchange seething. Nkenambe (2003) political parties, candidates and party polices are product that can be sold to the electorates (political consumers) and other political operators in the political market.

Political advertising is one of the types of advertising that over the years has been used by politicians and their well- wishers to convince people to cast vote for them. Asemah (2010, p.20) avers that political advertising is used by politicians to persuade people to vote for them and it is therefore part and parcel of political process in Nigeria and any other democratic society. It is a very important source of communication for voters. It is the advertising that involves political parties presenting candidates in order to win votes and be in power. Okoro (1996, p.18) notes that political advertising is a special type of advertising which calls for high strategic thinking and action initiative. It starts with the objectives analysis of the image and appearance of the candidate involved (in the case of human product) or the evaluation of the programme in respect of the issues at stake (in the case of political programme merchandising). Regarding the selling of the candidate to the electorate, it may involve matters like getting a new haircut or a new suit or assuming particular positions in religious matters. This way, the candidate talks, smiles, laughs, walks, etc, is very crucial (Okoro, 1998, p.18).

In the words of Kogah (2006), political advertising functions to communicate the attributes of the politician that relates to the constituent's needs and the candidate in

turn gains the voter's confidence and votes. This way this “political product” is packaged, much like a commercial product. Political advertising comes up every year that election is to be conducted in every state of the globe. Political advertising is a form of marketing communication that is aimed at selling the candidate of a party to the electorate. Political parties now package their political candidates and sell to the people, so as to draw their votes. Modern politics is therefore, incomplete without political advertising. Political advertising encompasses all forms of advertising pertaining to building support for any and all political campaigns, including candidates running for office, ballot measures, political activism, etc.

As noted by Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyuan (2010), political advertising is the use of media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public. The extensive use of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail, which was popularly used by politicians in the past five decades. Spot advertising is the most commonly used technique and it attempts to create a favourable image of the candidate and a negative image of the opponent. It links the candidate with desirable groups in the community and communicate candidate's stand on selected issues.

Generally, political advertising embraces all forms of government-related propaganda, propagation of political ideologies, political image-laundry communication as well as communication of electioneering campaign messages to attract votes, through relevant media. Political advertising is basically concerned with opinion management since it is a systematic way through which political parties and/or party candidates, and pressure groups sell their programmes, activities and actions to the electorates, members of the public and stakeholders (Biakpara, 2004). In other words, as pointed out earlier, political campaigns are not the only places we see political advertising and politicians are not the only products projected by political advertising.

In the context of this research however, political advertising will refer to the application of advertising concept and principles to win votes during elections. According to Jamieson and Campbell (2001), it entails the sponsorship of advertisements that argue that we should elect one person rather than another or urge us to vote in specific ways. It therefore entails the formulation of advertising theme, identification of target audiences, design of most appropriate advertising messages, and selection of most appropriate advertising channels and the most appropriate dosage of dissemination of the advertising messages for the purpose of attracting the most votes in a general election. The justification for political advertising in elections rests in the age-long realization that it influences voting decisions. Warren, Leinenweber and Anderson (1963, p 72) pointed this out long ago when they observed that:

For several weeks before the date of general elections, rival candidates and political parties engage in a campaign to attract voters. Some party members are not

very strong in their loyalties, and an opposing candidate and party may induce them to swing to their side. There are also many voters who do not belong to any party. Attracting this 'independent' vote may make the difference between winning and losing an election.

In the same vein, Cummings and Wise (1981) point out that for every candidate for election, between nomination and election stood the campaign which is a battle ground and that victory sometimes depend on how well the battle is fought, as many voters (up to 35% of voters or more) decide how to vote during the campaigns. In this scenario, the place of effective political advertising cannot be overemphasized since winning or losing 35% or more of voters can determine success or otherwise. No wonder Ezeudu (2003) avers that political advertising has been found to be indispensable as a key element in political campaign marketing as it is being relied on extensively to contend with the ever-mercurial and changing citizenry's political behaviours, attitudes and demands in the complex and dynamic environment of politics.

The end result of political advertising, unlike the normal advertising of goods and services, is not to promote sales or patronage but opinion management. This follows from the concession that since political advertising is a systematic way through which political parties and/or candidates for elections sell their manifestos, programmes, activities, actions and views to the electorate, it is a process to sway the opinion of the electorate to their favour (Biakpara, 2004). It is believed that voting decisions, which are highly individualistic, are products of individual opinions and to woo an individual's favourable opinion successfully is a ticket to securing that individual's votes. No wonder Abrahamson, Arterton and Orren (1988: 86) describe political advertising as “an attempt to seduce voters” to vote in a particular way or for a particular candidate or party in a general election. This view is supported by Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (1995) in their submission that political advertising is used by politicians to persuade people to vote for them. It therefore serves as an important source of communication between candidates for elections and voters thereby making it an important part of the political process in any society.

Expectedly, present day politicians continually fine-tune their strategies to create more comprehensive media mixes intended to give them the edge in the competition for voters' acceptance and support. This is in line with the notions of Prof Ikenna Nzimiro recapitulated by Biakpara (2005) and that of Ezeudu (2003) that the concept of political advertising is a positioning technique to show how one politician or political party is different from another and to build massive support for the politician or political party. This is because politicians are primarily trying to persuade audience members to adopt a certain view of themselves, or of their parties or factions, and what they are trying to achieve in politics. In this direction, political advertising positions

politicians and political parties in the minds of the electorate and helps them sell their manifestoes to the public (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Adum, 2007). Notable among the strategies suspected to have been adopted by political advertisers for the April 2011 general elections is the appeals to cultures of voters. What then is culture?

Culture refers to the total way of life of people and societies which guides their social interactions. It is perceived as consisting of a system of knowledge, belief, values, customs, behaviours and artifacts that are acquired, shared and used by members of a society in their daily living (Gamble and Gamble, 2002). On their part, Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth and Harter (2003) see culture as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and rituals that the members of a society use to cope with one another and with their world. The above definitions point out some basic features of culture among which are fact that it is composed of ideas, behaviours and artifacts (material possessions). Another is that culture does not thrive in individualism: It must be shared and practiced by the society as a whole otherwise it would be unpopular and extinction-bound. Culture is also acquired through the process of socialization: It is not genetically transmitted (Acholonu, 2010; Okumagba and Ogege, 2009).

Culture differs from society to society and these differences are visible in cultural compositions. In a multicultural society like Nigeria, cultural differences are visible in cultural compositions such as language, dressing, food, marriage customs, political structure, environmental practices, economic system, festivals, religion, interpersonal relationships, and tribal markings on the body, among others (Kombol, 2010; Okumagba and Ogege, 2009). As noted earlier, these cultural compositions give the members of a particular society sense of belonging. They either differentiate or unite people in the context of cultural identities and by so doing, define realities and ultimately shape the way affected people think, feel and act. This is because people with a specific culture want to conform to their popular culture in order to be accepted among their people. In the same way, people tend to be more comfortable with others who show signs of sharing their culture with them. Little wonder then that candidates and campaigners for general elections try to appeal to the cultural sentiments of the electorate.

Election is an important hallmark of enthroning and sustaining democracy in societies like ours. Umechuhwu (2004, p. 32) avers that election is paramount and highly significant in any given society. It is the time when leaders who pilot the affairs of a nation are elected. It is also the time when all the eligible voters exercise their rights as citizens to participate in the government. That is, the right to vote and to be voted for. Also writing on the importance of election, Umar, (2000, p.1) admits that elections give the people control over their governments by enabling them decide on who should be their law makers and decision makers. Hence election provides the electorates the

opportunity to vote their representative into office for a particular length of time. An election can be seen as the process of selecting leaders through voting. According to Clotefelters and Prysby, cited in Lawal (2003, p.127) election can be described as mechanism which permits the largest possible part of a population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office. Lawal (2003) further states that election performs the important functions of leadership selections; it enables the electorate to indicate, and by implication, underscore their preference of a particular leader or leaders who they consider worthier than others for a specified public office.

Okwodu, cited in Lawal (2003, p.126) defines electoral system as the process by which the citizens of a state vote, to elect people to represent their interests and opinions in government. Thus, for this purpose, the territory of the state is normally divided into various electoral constituents, the inhabitants of which vote for one of the various candidates to become their representative. Election is the celebration of the fact that in final analysis, sovereignty resides with them and they have the last say on the conduct of affairs of the nation.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is built around agenda setting theory of mass communication. McComb and Shaw (1995) are unequivocal in identifying agenda setting as a function of the mass media. They submit that while the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, they set the agenda in the political sphere by influencing the salience of attitudes towards political issues. To buttress their point, they quote Lang and Lang thus: “The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, and have feelings about”.

This study is anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory, propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory emphasizes the power of the media to influence the salience of issues in the minds of the public. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), while the media may not tell people what to think, it effectively tells them what to think about by prioritizing certain issues, personalities, or events over others. In this way, the media shapes public perception and directs attention toward selected topics.

Applying this theory to the study, billboard political advertisements serve as a medium through which political candidates and parties attempt to set the agenda for electorates during elections. By repeatedly displaying messages, slogans, and images in strategic public spaces, billboards highlight certain candidates and their campaign promises, thereby influencing voters' perceptions and evaluations (McCombs, 2004).

The prominence of billboard advertisements can make electorates consider the featured candidates as more relevant or credible compared to others.

However, the study also acknowledges that while agenda setting through billboards may influence perception, voters' final decisions are moderated by other factors such as candidate credibility, political party reputation, and personal experiences. Thus, Agenda-Setting Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how billboard political advertisements attempt to shape electoral behavior and guide voting patterns in the 2023 general election in Port Harcourt.

2.3 Empirical Review:

In a study by Ijeh, N. P (2011), titled “Voters' Perception of Cultural Elements in Political Advertising for the April 2011 General Elections in Nigeria”, the paper observes that some political advertisers for the April 2011 general elections in Nigeria incorporated cultural elements such as native languages; cultural dressing; emphasis on candidates' cultural affinities by birth, history, marriage and chieftaincy titles; cultural music and dances; cultural norms, values and ideologies; as well as visits to and endorsements of candidates by traditional rulers. Voters perceived this in good light and majority indicated that they were attracted by these cultural elements to the political advertisements and learnt about the candidates from them. However, a minority of them indicated that these incorporated cultural elements actually influenced their voting decisions. These findings, emanating from a content analysis of selected political advertisements for the elections, tally with the notion of agenda setting theory of mass communication that the media can tell people what to think about but never what to think.

Another study by Edegoh, Ezebuenyi and Asemah (2013) entitled “Television as a Medium of Political Advertising during Elections in Anambra State, Nigeria”. The study, among others, aims at finding out whether exposure to television advertising influences respondents' preference for advertised candidate. The study was anchored on the agenda setting and reinforcement theory. Survey research method was adopted while the questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The findings show that exposure to television advertising influences voters' preference for advertised candidates. The findings also show that television advertising generates quicker recall of advertised candidates in voters. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that the influence of television political advertising on electorates is such that it makes the voters to recall the advertised candidate and that it persuasively generates in voters, preference for the advertised candidate. The paper, therefore recommends, among others, that political parties in Nigeria should give due attention to the use of television for the dissemination of political activities.

3.0 Research Design

The design for the study was a descriptive survey. A descriptive survey according to Ali (2006) is concerned with describing events as they are without any manipulation of what is being observed. Ihechu and Ukaegbu (2018) also posit that descriptive research is concerned with the collection of data from a well-defined population which is used to describe the present condition of the population using variables under investigation. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to identify the characteristics of the population objectively.

3.2 Population of the study

According to NPC census of 2006 which is projected to 2021 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the population of Port Harcourt stands at 1,148,665. The population of the study consisted of 1,148,665 registered voters in Port Harcourt City during the 2023 general election (INEC, 2023). The sample size of 384 was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire on a four point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

4.1 Presentation of Data

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of which 376 were retrieved and used for this study.

Section A of the Questionnaire

Table 1: Copies of Questionnaire Distributed and Retrieved

S/N	Zones	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Retrieved	Retrieval Rate %
1	Town	121	120	31.25%
2	Ogbunabali	135	133	34.63%
3	Mile 3	128	124	32.29%
	Total	384	377	98.17%

Table 1 above shows the distribution of 384 copies of the questionnaire in Port Harcourt, 377 copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved.

Table 2: Respondents' Gender

S/N	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage Rate
1	Male	196	51.98%
2	Female	181	48.01%
	Total	377	99.99

Table 2 shows the number of female and male that participated in the research.

Table 3: Respondents' Age

S/N	Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage Rate
1	18 – 30	184	48.80%
2	31 – 50	134	35.54%
3	51 and above	59	15.64%
	Total	377	99.98%

The table above shows that more of young people participated in the study

Table 4: Mean ($\bar{x}$) analysis of influence of billboard political advertising on residents

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
1	Billboard political advertisement influences my decision to vote for a particular candidate.	108 432	159 477	69 138	41 41	377 1088	2.88	Agree
2	Billboard political advertisement is not the only factor that influences my decision to vote for a candidate	138 552	94 282	80 160	65 65	377 1059	2.80	Agree
3	Billboard political advertisement did not in any way influence my perception and voting for any candidate	87 348	49 147	136 272	105 105	377 872	2.31	Disagree
4	I am indifferent about billboard political advertisement because it is mere political activity that does not translate to good government	128 512	132 396	72 144	45 45	377 1097	2.90	Agree

The table above shows that Port Harcourt City residents agreed with a mean score of 2.88, 2.80 and 2.90 respective that billboard political advertisement influence perception and voting for a particular candidate but disagreed that billboard did not influence their decision with a mean score of 2.31

Table 5: Mean ($\bar{x}$) analysis of extent of believability of Political advertisement.

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
1	I believe billboard political advertisement to a very high extent which changed my perception and made me vote for a particular candidate.	47 188	32 96	138 276	160 160	377 720	1.90	Disagree
2	I believe billboard political advertisement to a high extent which changed my perception and made me vote for a particular candidate.	100 400	83 249	110 220	84 84	377 953	2.53	Agree
3	My believe to billboard political advertisement is low and did not changed my perception about voting for a candidate.	101 404	127 381	61 122	88 88	377 995	2.63	Agree
4	My believe to billboard political advertisement is very low and did not changed my perception about voting for a candidate.	0 0	0 0	178 356	199 199	377 555	1.47	Disagree

Table 5 above indicates that respondent's believability to political advertisement about candidate is moderate, which is to say that respondents agreed that believability to political advertisement is high with a mean score of 2.53 and also agreed that their believability level is low with a mean score of 2.63 but disagreed that believability levels are very high and very low with a mean score of 1.90 and 1.47 respectively.

Table 6: Mean ($\bar{x}$) Analysis of other factors that can influence Mobilization and participation in 2023 general election.

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
1	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is very high	61 244	25 75	157 314	134 134 61	377 767	2.03	Disagree
2	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is high	127 508	78 234	116 232	56 56	377 1030	2.73	Agree
3	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is low	101 404	127 381	61 122	88 88	377 995	2.63	Agree
4	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is very low	84 348	49 147	136 272	105 105	377 872	2.31	Disagree

The above table shows that respondents' level of importance to billboard political advertisement is not that high, this is because billboard advertisement does not translate to performance.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What influence does billboard political advertisement has on Port Harcourt City resident's perception and voting in 2023 general?

The table 4 above shows that Port Harcourt City residents agreed with a mean score of 2.88, 2.80 and 2.90 respective that billboard political advertisement influence perception and voting for a particular candidate but disagreed that billboard did not influence their decision with a mean score of 2.31. a study by Edegoh, Ezebuonyi and Asemah (2013), showed that exposure to political advertising influences voters' preference for advertised candidate. Another study by Ijeh (2011), political advertng influences voters more especially when laced with cultural elements.

Research Question 2: What is the extent to which Port Harcourt residents believe billboard political advertisement messages to influence their voting in the 2023 general election?

Table 5 above indicates that respondent's believability to political advertisement about candidate is moderate, which is to say that respondents agreed that believability to political advertisement is high with a mean score of 2.53 and also agreed that their believability level is low with a mean score of 2.63 but disagreed that

believability levels are very high and very low with a mean score of 1.90 and 1.47 respectively. This signal shows that it not only political advertising that makes a voter cast his or her vote for a candidate other element are inclusive, according to Ijeh (2011), cultural elements like, music, chieftaincy titles, visits by candidates to traditional rulers for endorsement in political advertising contribute to voters' goodwill towards a candidate.

Research Question 3: What is the level of importance attached to billboard political advertisement by Port Harcourt City LGA residents?

The above table 6 shows that respondents' level of importance to billboard political advertisement is not that high, this is because billboard advertisement does not translate to performance. In as much as advertising on the whole influence people but much importance is not attached to billboard political advertising by residents of Port Harcourt City LGA.

Findings of the Study

It was discovered that:

1. billboard political advertisement influence voters' perception about a candidate, which translated to vote in the 2023 general election
2. believability of political advertised candidate does not depend on advertising alone but also on other factors.
3. Port Harcourt do not attach much importance to billboard political advertisement in the 2023 general election.

Conclusion

This study investigated billboard political advertisement and the electorate perception and voting in 2023 general elections in Port Harcourt City LGA, three research questions were used to guide the study, Agenda Setting theory was used to anchor the study and the survey method was used in the study. Therefore, the study concludes that in the last 2023 general election billboard political election played its role in influencing electorates' perceptions and votes but it was not the only element that compelled people to vote on Election Day.

Recommendation

1. Political parties, government and political candidates should keep using advertisement to promote their parties, policies and candidates
2. Political parties should do more to make people believe in their political advertisement by fielding credible candidates to increase believability.
3. More value should be placed on billboard advertisement by candidates in terms of creativity and captions, to ensure more importance is attached to it.

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VLOGGING AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING AFRICAN CULTURE IN SELECT TAYO AINA'S FILMS.

By
Gift Nkesi Chindah

Introduction

It can be said that there is no human society without culture and values, Africa inclusive. The continent, like every other, has its own culture which forms a unique way of bringing about unity and commonality of interest among the people. The word culture is derived from the Latin word 'cultura' which means 'to cultivate. Asemah (2011) in an attempt at deliberately emphasising on the concept of culture, notes it is the specific system of norms, beliefs, practices, techniques and objectives that the people of a given society have inherited from their forefathers, invented or adopted from other sources, thence, it is all that man has added to nature. Indeed, a study in communication is incomplete without the understanding of culture. Culture may mean different things to different people in different fields who use the term except that in all of the usages, Haralambos, "Holborn, Chapman and Moore (2013) note that culture implicitly or explicitly contrast with nature. (p.61), Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore. Culture is an integral part of our lives. [It shapes our identities, drives economic development, encourages collaboration between different cultures, fosters creativity and innovation, and builds bridges between communities](#). Culture defines our shared values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours. It provides a sense of belonging, especially when everyone speaks the same language. Moreover, having a diverse culture broadens our understanding and acceptance of various viewpoints, fostering mutual respect. [Ultimately, culture plays a major role in how communities react, respond, and grow](#). It also serves as an identification purpose, a problem solver in a society, a socialization function, instrument of governance and more importantly a tool of communication.

As noted in sociology and other related disciplines, culture is made up of certain traits known as its components. The components of culture are the major elements such as material culture (tools, artefacts and technology), institutional culture, (coronations, leadership in the society), philosophical culture (religions, beliefs) and creative culture (oral/written literature, folklores) and social organisation that characterise its existence. As human society continued to increase in size and population, modern ways of sharing and passing on these cultural values and elements became a problem for mankind (Usua, 2022). This is because these cultural values in themselves are vital means of communication as Baran (2010) rightfully opined that culture is socially constructed and maintained through communication, with the media of communication generally defining our realities, in the process, they shape the way we think, behave, feel and act.

Advancement in technology birthed the social media platforms which are offshoots of the Internet developed by man. Conventionally, it is an undeniable fact that the internet has become the most important achievement of modern society (Madon, 2000). According to Okorie (2021), life before the internet was characterized by slower communication, limited access to information, and a reliance on traditional forms of media and entertainment. The advent of the internet transformed every aspect of human lives, from how we communicate and learn to how we shop, work, and socialize. The internet has created a place where people from every culture can convene and share their experiences. It has transformed the ways in which people create, consume, and share cultural content, leading to new forms of artistic expression, communication, and interaction.

YouTube is among the third most visited social media platforms in the whole world (Nyagadza, 2020). With many different forms that can attract different types of audiences, YouTube has become an important social media medium.

Vlogs include several types and they are viewed by large audiences and with their authentic (Cunningham & Craig, 2017), credible (Johnson & Kaye, 2004) and realistic nature, they attract millions of watchers (Lee & Watkins, 2016) and therefore are more influential than any other type of content available on social media. More so, this can be created on various topics and niches, such as social issues, health and wellness, lifestyle, current affairs, comics, marketing, etc. The video of a vlog typically comprises supporting images, texts, and other valuable resources.

Tayo Aina films which the researcher used as a case study in this research is a social media YouTube Vlogger who mostly showcases African culture by traveling and exploring African countries, vlogging his whole experience and in essence promoting African culture. Therefore, with this research, the researcher talked about the use of Vlogging as a tool for promoting African culture in select Tayo Aina's films.

Statement of the problem

The mass media which are believed to be major carriers of cultural values are the vehicle through which news, information, ideas, culture and entertainment can move from the developed world to the developing world, because every media content carries the culture of the originator. Thus, the aggregation of cultural values spread by means of the media of mass communication, makes up mass culture. Yet, this culture is disseminated mostly by a handful but large media conglomerates which control the daily media output or news and entertainment that most of the people of the world use including Africans. The power and spread of the large media conglomerates along with their technologies give them their multinational outlook, with extensive networks of interest operating across the globe. Having, so widely spread their presence, the

network becomes vehicles for the worldwide dissemination of language, identity, aspirations and values that are congruent with the ideologies of their home countries.

During the 1970s, studies on information flow revealed imbalance of information and entertainment between the industrialized world and the nations of the South. This is because most of the contents are coming from the Western world, hence, one part of the world dominates the global media and Africa does not seem to have too much voice. As earlier hinted by scholars, international broadcasting from these rich nations continually leads to the exportation of social products with the least value to developing nations; the programmes lead to new cultural patterns that are detrimental to the development of indigenous cultures because foreign programmes that are broadcast over local networks in most cases determine the socio-cultural outlook and direction of the nations. Implying that most of what is available on the media are from the Western world, and this reduces visibility of the African cultural values. This ignited the debate on new world information and communication order.

But, as it has been shown, the digital era opened the space for media and content creators to navigate, and many of these content creators in Africa have utilized the opportunity to portray the African cultural values and heritage. ICTs have enabled nations and regions to have access to the global market place and have afforded people of the world the opportunity to share knowledge and views irrespective of distance and socio-cultural differences. A clear example is Tayo Aina's films which is projecting African culture so that people including the Western world will know about it and invariably lending a voice to Africa as a continent. However, it is not known if the residents of Port Harcourt Local Government Area consume the contents created by Tayo Aina films and their attitudes towards these contents that appreciate African cultural values and heritage. It is against this background that the study emerged.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the level of awareness of Port Harcourt Local Government residents on Tayo Aina's films via Vlogging on African culture?
2. To what extent do the residents of Port Harcourt local government area consume Tayo Aina's films via Vlogging on African culture?
3. To what extent does Tayo Aina's vlogs on African culture influence the residents of Port Harcourt Local Government Area?

Review of Related Literature

Vlogs

Vlogging has grown in popularity among all generations as one of the most popular daily digital videos. It is a mix of the words "video" and "blog" that allows users

to create, upload, and watch lifestyle videos. Users can record their ideas on a variety of topics and publish them to vlogs using video (Anil, 2016). Vlogs include several types and they are viewed by large audiences and with their authentic (Cunningham & Craig, 2017), credible (Johnson & Kaye, 2004) and realistic nature, they attract millions of watchers (Lee & Watkins, 2016) and therefore are more influential than any other type of content available on social media (Burgess & Green, 2009; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Culture

Culture is “the way in which the minds of people inhabiting a particular area are cultivated, in turn determining or contributing to the area's culture” (Ololube 2011, p. 105). According to Usua (2022), the word culture is derived from the Latin word 'cultura' which means 'to cultivate'. Indeed, a study in communication is incomplete without the understanding of culture. Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore (2013) note that culture implicitly or explicitly contrasts with nature. Mari (in Asadu and Usua, 2011) defines culture as “the common possession of the body of people who share the same traditions in social terms” (p.61), Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore (2013) see it as the whole way of life of the people found in a particular society. Culture connotes beliefs, customs, traditions, practices and behaviours of different people in human groups or tribes within the African continent.

Aspects of culture

Onabajo (2005) breaks down culture to comprise material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects. The material aspect has to do with artefacts in its broadest form (tools, clothing, food, medicine, utensils, housing, building architecture, fine arts and any other physical items). According to an American Sociologist, Charles Ellenwood, these are material instruments or artefacts in which cultural achievements are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects. Nnonyelu (2009) & Ogundele (2005) add that this material aspect can be physical. The physical culture can be physically ingenious products, such as buildings, crafts, tools, food, dresses, pottery, works of arts.

The institutional aspect deals with the political, social, legal and economic structures and spiritual objectives. Charles Ellenwood describes culture as the collective name for all behavioural patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols; hence a name for distinctive achievements of human groups, including not only such items as governance, kinship, language, tool making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religion. Philosophical aspects of culture are nonmaterial, it deals with African philosophy, religion and beliefs, language, proverbs

and idioms, morals, behaviour, character, ethics and knowledge.

Culture holds the background for every philosophy and gives shape to its existence, the meaning to its morale. Philosophy gives us the rationale that saves us from anachronism. The creative aspect is concerned with a people's literature (oral and written) as well as their visual and performing arts (folklore, music, dance) which are normally moulded by as well as help to mould other aspects of culture.

Culture and communication

As Usua (2022) rightly puts it, not only does culture influence communication, the latter reflects the former and, in the end, as Martin and Nakayama (2000) have it, both are interrelated and reciprocal. Communication is the bedrock of any culture. Cultural groups influence the process by which people create and maintain the perception of reality, just as “we might also say that communication helps create the cultural reality of community” (Martin & Nakayama, 2000, p.62). Culture and values are passed and kept alive from generation to generation through communication and socialization. This is because socialization is inevitable in every society. Both those that are born into the society and settlers are introduced to norms, values and behaviours that are acceptable within that society. To socialize, whether an infant or a new entrant to the society is to teach them what they should do or say and how they should do or say them. To that extent to socialize is to communicate to them (Usua, 2022). The same is the fear of social media. Many Africans see it as polluting African culture and influencing African youths negatively because of its major western culture content. They lament its impact on the attitude, behaviour, language and ways of life of Africans. Johnson (2012) declares thus, “the exploding new media realities and globalization are sensed as both a gift and a threat especially to African culture. This is enunciated in the cultural transmission function of the mass media. The media makes for the sustenance of a culture through its coverage and reporting of people and activities of a particular culture. Thus, helping people of other culture know and appreciate the culture.

Using social media in the sustenance of African culture

In all, the increasing usage and prominence of social media cannot be ruled out. In Africa, social media is one which has a growing population of users and audience. What needs to be done is to find ways to harness the potentials of social media and use them as channels to transmit and make for sustenance of African culture which are; Global nature of social media: social media is global in nature, in that users and consumers of social media contents are diverse and from all across the world. Uploading contents on African culture – values, lifestyle, dressing, arts, music, food, etc, on social media afford the world to see and appreciate the various aspects of African cultures. Such information gets into discussions and writings thus making for the

perpetuation of the culture. Archive for cultural materials: Being a mass medium that is not transient, social media can be a repository or archive for African cultural materials thus enabling the sustenance of the culture. Contents on social media are available 24 hours a day; 7 days a week and users have the opportunity of viewing previous content on a site any time. This will mean that social media sites, pages or accounts that are dedicated to African culture displaying – videos, poems, literature, drama, music, images – can be stored and accessed anytime, even in many years to come. Creating virtual cultural and ethnic communities: social media builds close interactions among users. It facilitates greater connectedness among users of the same ethnic group; reinforces existing ethnic links and ties. Poster (2010) in Bainum puts it this way “internet use also has the effect of linking together web users with the same ethnicity, into a tightly knit online community.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural proximity theory

The theory of cultural proximity was suggested by Joseph Straubhaar in his 1991 paper, “*Beyond Media Imperialism: Asymmetrical Interdependence and Cultural Proximity*.” The theory argued that audience would like to choose media products that are proximate to their own cultural backgrounds ([Straubhaar, 1991](#)). Cultural proximity was defined by similarities in history, ethnicity, religion, language, and geography. Among them, similar language was often highlighted as an important determinant of audience preferences ([De Sola Pool, 1977](#); [La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005](#); [Straubhaar, 2003](#)). Besides language, there are other cultural elements at play, such as dress, ethnic types, gestures, body language, humours, music, religion, gender image, lifestyle, personal experiences, education, family, and organizational affiliation ([Ksiazek & Webster, 2008](#); [La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005](#); [Straubhaar, 2003](#)).

Cultural proximity theory is particularly relevant to the study of vlogging as a tool for promoting African culture in the sense that vlogging, as a medium, has the potential to bridge cultural gaps by bringing African culture closer to audiences around the world, fostering a sense of familiarity and connection. With this, individuals are more likely to engage with content that aligns with their own cultural background.

Technological Determinism Theory

The theory was developed by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. The theory states that the media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how society are operates, as we move from one technological age to another (Anaeto, Onabanjo & Osifeso, 2008). We learn and feel and think the way we do because of the messages we receive through the current technology that is available.

The theory 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. This theory therefore, is relevant to this study because, the advent of vlogging the scene of filming is as a result of the advancement in technology which the society in turn must adapt to as a way of modernisation. Vlogging, the technological features of video-sharing platforms influence how content creators present and promote African culture. As a technology-driven medium, it facilitates the transmission of cultural information.

Methodology

7.1 Research design

The research design used in this study was the triangulation design method. This method enabled the researcher to use a mixed method of content analysis and survey. The choice of this mixed method was to avail the researcher the opportunity to analyse the contents of the study. The content analysis was to handle the aspect of the cultural elements established in Tayo Aina's films via Vlogging. Whereas, the survey sought to evaluate the residents' awareness, consumption and influential level of Tayo Aina's films.

7.2 Population of the study

According to the National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics 2022 population projection of 2.3% growth rate, the population of Port Harcourt City Local Government Area is 774,600 which is a projection from a number of 538,558 from the last held census in Nigeria.

7.3 Sample size

The sample size for this study therefore, was drawn from the population using the Meyer's Sample Size Determination Template. The sample size derived from the population of the study was three hundred and eighty-four (384) for the survey.

7.4 Research instruments

The research instruments used for this study was questionnaire. The questionnaire was for the survey, it was divided into sections A and B, with section A consisting of demographic items of the respondent, while the B section contained questions and propositions which the respondents are meant to answer. The items in section B of the questionnaire were couched to address the research objectives and questions

7.5 Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis adopted for this research was the descriptive technique. The research was analysed entirely in verbal terms and statistical dealing on numerical values and explaining the data in tables. For the questionnaire, the opened-ended questions were analysed using Yin's explanation building technique, while the Yes-No questions of the closed-ended were analysed using simple percentage and frequency tables

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this chapter, the analysis of the copies of the questionnaire responses collected from the residents were analysed and interpreted here. This research work was set out to assess Vlogging as a tool for promoting African culture with a focus on Tayo Aina Films in Port Harcourt Local Government. In doing this, the researcher made use of the mixed research method which was a mixture of survey and content analysis. The choice of this was to give the researcher the opportunity to explore the multifaceted nature of the work.

Thus, for the survey, a total of three hundred and eighty-four (384) copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher on the different communities under Port Harcourt Local Government Area, and three hundred and sixty (360) copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and retrieved for the analysis. This means that only twenty-four (24) copies were wrongly filled and not used for the study. Thus, the retrieval rate of the copies of the questionnaire was 93%.

From the demographic data analysis, 108 (30%) representing the highest number of respondents were within the generation age of gen millennials and gen z, showing their awareness and knowledge on the research topic. Also, the male gender 216 (60%) constituted the higher number than the female who had a percentage of (40%). The analysis on the respondent's exposure to social media had a high percentage of (80.6%), while the percentage of those who watched vlogs on YouTube was 270 (75%) with the minority of 90 (25%) respondents. 270 (75%) respondents agreed to be aware of vlogs covering African culture on YouTube while 90 of the respondents claimed they were not aware of vlogs covering African culture on YouTube. Lastly the majority of respondents with a frequency of (75%) accepted that they watch Tayo Aina's vlogs relating to promoting African culture On YouTube.

Research question 1: What is the level of awareness on residents of Port Harcourt Local Government of Tayo Aina's films via vlogging on African culture?

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	Remark
1.	I am aware of Tayo Ainas films	108 432	108 324	144 288	0 0	360 1044	2.9	Agree
2.	I know he is a vlogger	0 0	36 108	288 576	36 36	360 720	2.6	Agree
3.	As a social media user, I know that he makes videos dealing with African culture	36 144	180 540	144 288	0 0	360 972	2.7	Agree
4.	I am aware of Tayo Ain as films but not aware it Is used as a means of promoting African culture	36 144	144 432	180 360	0 0	360 720	2.0	Disagree

The results of this analysis as contained in table indicated a high level of awareness of Tayo Aina's films via vlogging in promoting African culture and it showed in the response rate as having a criterion mean of above the 2.5 which showed valid response to the research question. A total number of 216 (60%) respondents agreed to be aware of the film, while the other 144 (40%) claim not to be aware.

Research question 2: To what extent do the residents of Port Harcourt Local Government Area consume Tayo Aina's films via vlogging on African culture?

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	Remark
5.	I consume Tayo Aina's vlogs as soon as I get a notification on a new vlog	85 340	150 450	100 200	25 25	360 1015	2.8	Agree
6.	My level of consumption on Tayo Aina's vlogs are bi-weekly.	0 0	50 150	288 576	22 22	360 748	1.5	Disagree
7.	I consume Tayo Ain as films via vlogging weekly	0 0	36 108	324 648	0 0	360 756	2.1	Disagree
8.	My consumption on Tayo Aina's vlog is a daily occurrence	0 0	0 0	360 680	20 20	360 720	1.9	Disagree
9.	My level of consumption of Tayo Ainas vlog is inconsistent.	0 0	20 60	340 680	0 0	360 740	2.0	Disagree

The results of the analysis contained in table showed the responses on the consumption level of Tayo Aina's films via vlogging. The data indicated that respondents agreed on the consumption of Tayo Aina's vlogs as they claimed that they consume (watch) the films as soon as they get a new notification on the vlog which has a mean value of 2.8. this explained that a total of 235 (65.3%) respondents agreed to have watched the films as soon as they were notified. The other respondents disagreed with the consumption extent of the vlog. This implies that the consumption level of the films is high (65.3%).

Research question 3: To what extent does Tayo Aina's vlogs on African culture influence the residents of Port Harcourt Local Government?

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	Remark
10.	When I started watching Tayo Aina's vlogs, I gained new knowledge on African culture.	16 64	200 600	144 288	0 0	360 922	2.6	Agree
11.	The portrayal of African culture in Tayo Aina's vlogs has influenced me to visit and learn about African culture in different African countries.	0 0	108 324	252 504	0 0	360 828	2.3	Disagree
12.	I have been influenced by Tayo Aina's vlogs to appreciate my culture.	0 0	216 648	144 288	0 0	360 936	2.6	Agree
13.	I have not been influenced in any way from the content in Tayo Aina's vlog.	0 0	24 72	300 600	36 36	360 708	1.9	Disagree
14.	I understand the content of culture in Tayo Aina's vlog but I am indifferent about it.	0 0	40 120	320 640	0 0	360 760	2.1	Disagree

The data in Table above showed that out of the 5 items (14-18) used to measure the influence of Tayo Aina's films on the audience, item 15 and 16 had a negative mean below 2.5; others had mean scores above the mean average. This, therefore, indicated that the majority generally agreed that there is an influence of the vlog on them. Thus, the films have made them gain new knowledge on African culture thereby making them to appreciate culture as humans' way of life.

Discussion of Findings

The aim of this research work was to examine vlogging as a tool for promoting African culture. Using the collated and analysed data, answers would be provided for the research questions and inferences made as well.

For research question 1, which sought to ascertain the residents' level of awareness of Tayo Aina's films via vlogging on African culture. From the result on Table 8.1, it can be inferred that the level of awareness of the respondents on vlogging as a tool for promoting African culture is high. This conclusion is clearly seen in the fact that the average mean for three of the variables were above 2.5. However, there was a variable (item 4) with a low mean average which also represented the disagreement to non-awareness of the promotion of African culture. This finding goes in relation with that of Uche and Nwosu (2023) that the users of social media are highly aware of the media's use in the promotion of their culture and thus, this culture can be transmitted, promoted and sustained by the present generation using their media.

The research question 2 was to ascertain the extent to which the residents consume Tayo Aina's films via vlogging. The data indicated that the respondents agreed

that they consume (watch) the films as soon as they get a new notification on the vlog which has a mean value of 2.8. This explained that a high number of the respondents agreed to have watched the films. Thus, the extent of consumption was relatively high. This finding agrees with the study of Lashley (2013) that all the users are being constantly engaged with feedback solicited from and offered by other users.

Research question 3 was to ascertain the extent to which Tayo Aina's vlogs on African culture influence the audience. The result on table 8.3 showed the responses on the extent Tayo Aina's vlogs on African culture have an influence on the audience. This, therefore, indicated that the majority generally agreed that there is an influence of the vlog on them. Thus, the films have made them gain new knowledge on African culture thereby making them to appreciate culture as humans' way of life. This finding supports that of Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (2015) that YouTube among other media have made the communication process faster, interactive, user friendly and enabling user generated content. As all these make the influence of social media far reaching; with good sides and bad sides to it. It also corresponds with Saidalvi, Mohamad and Fakhruddin (2021) findings which revealed that English Vlog within YouTube offers many positive changes towards students' speaking skills in the aspects of language learning and motivation. This also resonates with the study by Jensen (2020) as the results indicated that the travel vloggers are established as a tourist research method does affect what tourists want to experience when they visit. Similarly, Arinze-UmobiSomtoo and Chiweta-Oduah (2020) which lent credence to this found out that Nollywood films are used to promote African culture, thus, having a heavy positive influence on the consumers.

Conclusion

This study has argued and discussed that vlogging as a tool for promoting African culture is on the high level as a whole. Vlogging will still be used as a means of promoting African culture by constantly creating awareness and building knowledge on culture and also consciously and unconsciously influencing the audience. The analysis of this study shows that there is a high level of awareness and consumption on the vlogs. It also shows that the messages and content created in the vlogs have a positive influence on the audience which relatively means vlogging serves as a tool for promoting African culture. This doesn't dispute the fact that there were also disagreements to some of the research questions which means that there are still some solutions that need to be done to ensure the promotion of African culture through the use of new media enabling more awareness and engagements.

Furthermore, the role that media plays in the development of a society cannot be over-emphasized; therefore, African culture should not be limited to be discussed on

just the new media, but also on every other media platform, as it was found in this work that the gen x carried a low percentage of those who use and engage with social media, meaning the use of radio and TV should still be used to create awareness on African culture.

Finally, even if individuals and organisations work to promote African culture, this paper concludes that such efforts will only have a lasting impact if the media is able to raise more awareness and reach more audience, even with the support of the government.

Recommendations

The research has been able to demonstrate that the new media have helped a great deal in creating awareness on vlogging as a tool for promoting African culture. It has also been advanced that what remains is need to spread more awareness not just through the new media but also other forms of media. On the strength of the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

1. Vlogs relating to African culture should be made more accessible to the audience than just on YouTube. Although development has been established and has made spread of information easier, there is still avenue to make it accessible to the audience who do not use social media (YouTube in particular), so the need to put it in other media outlets should be encouraged.
2. Vloggers and content creators on African culture should ensure there are constant ways of notifying viewers and audience when contents on African culture are done as it has shown that there is an almost instant action from the viewers.
3. Diverse and educational messages on African culture should also be inscribed in media messages as it has shown that there is a form on influence on the mass, as it helps to keep the culture alive and preserve history that would be passed down for easy referencing and understanding.

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FAKE NEWS AND THE SAFETY OF INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of fake news on the safety of journalism, focusing on the experiences of independent journalists. The main objective of this study was to explore how fake news endangers journalists and to identify measures that can be taken to mitigate these risks. The theoretical framework employed included Agenda-Setting Theory and Framing Theory, which provided insights into the dynamics of media content and public perception. The study relied on library research, reviewing existing literature on the subject, with secondary data sources comprising journal articles, books, online resources, reports, and empirical studies. The discussions revealed that fake news poses multidimensional challenges to journalism in Nigeria, including the erosion of public trust, the spread of misinformation, and increased risks of violence and harassment against journalists. The study highlighted that social media proliferation, lack of fact-checking, and political and economic interests are key enablers of fake news. It was also found that fake news has severe implications for democracy, potentially undermining democratic processes and national security. In conclusion, the study emphasised the need for robust fact-checking initiatives, enhanced media literacy programmes, and the establishment of regulatory frameworks to curb the spread of fake news. Support for independent media was also recommended to ensure the continuation of fact-based journalism in a challenging media landscape.

Introduction

In recent years, the proliferation of fake news has emerged as a significant challenge to the practice of journalism, profoundly affecting both the credibility and safety of independent journalists. As the digital landscape evolves, the spread of false information has intensified, posing severe threats to the public's understanding of events and the well-being of those responsible for reporting the truth. Independent journalists, who frequently operate without the institutional protections available to those in larger media organisations, are particularly vulnerable to the dangers associated with fake news (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018).

The phenomenon of fake news is not entirely new; however, its impact has been magnified in the digital age, where information can be rapidly disseminated across multiple platforms with minimal verification. The term itself gained widespread attention during the 2016 United States presidential election, where it was used to describe a range of misleading or entirely fabricated stories that influenced public opinion (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The consequences of fake news are far-reaching, undermining public trust in media institutions, fuelling misinformation, and creating an environment of uncertainty where discerning the truth becomes increasingly difficult. For independent journalists, the rise of fake news represents both a professional hazard

and a personal threat, as they are often targeted for their efforts to expose falsehoods or report on contentious issues (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018).

The relationship between fake news and the safety of journalists is complex and multifaceted. Journalists are increasingly at risk of physical harm, harassment, and legal repercussions as they navigate the treacherous terrain of misinformation. Their credibility and professional integrity are under constant scrutiny, as the line between factual reporting and fabricated content blurs in the eyes of the public (Posetti & Storm, 2018). This dynamic is particularly challenging for independent journalists, who may lack the resources and support systems available to their counterparts in established media outlets. Consequently, they are more susceptible to the dangers posed by fake news, both in terms of their physical safety and their ability to maintain the trust of their audience (Farkas & Schou, 2018).

The experience of independent journalists in the age of fake news underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive examination of the strategies and protections necessary to safeguard their work and well-being. This study aims to explore the impact of fake news on the safety of independent journalists, drawing on real-world experiences to highlight the challenges they face and the measures that can be taken to mitigate these risks. By examining the intersection of fake news and journalistic safety, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on media integrity and the vital role of independent journalism in upholding democratic values.

Statement of the Problem

The rise of fake news has significantly increased the risks faced by independent journalists, who, lacking the institutional backing of larger media organisations, are particularly vulnerable to threats such as harassment, legal challenges, and physical violence (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). This pervasive misinformation has eroded public trust in the media, complicating the efforts of independent journalists to maintain credibility and report the truth amidst a deluge of false information. Without adequate resources or support, these journalists are not only at greater risk of harm but also face the daunting task of rebuilding public trust in their work. This study aims to explore the impact of fake news on the safety and professional standing of independent journalists and to propose strategies for mitigating these risks.

Theoretic Framework

The Agenda-Setting Theory and Framing Theory provided a foundational understanding of the relationship between fake news and the safety of journalism. The Agenda-Setting Theory, introduced by McCombs and Shaw (1972), posits that media significantly influences the public agenda by highlighting certain issues while

downplaying others. In the context of fake news, this theory suggests that the prominence of false information can shape public perception, leading to a distorted understanding of reality. Independent journalists, who often work to counteract such misinformation, may face increased scrutiny, harassment, or even violence as they challenge the prevailing narratives set by more prominent media outlets or social media platforms.

Framing Theory, as articulated by Goffman (1974), explores how media frames information to influence audience interpretation. In the case of fake news, misleading frames can lead to public mistrust in legitimate journalism. Independent journalists, striving to present accurate information, must navigate the risks associated with re-framing the narrative to counteract these misleading frames. The theory highlights the importance of understanding power dynamics in news presentation and how these dynamics can impact the safety and credibility of independent journalists as they work to correct misinformation.

Review of Related Literature

Fake news refers to the intentional creation and distribution of false or misleading information presented as legitimate news, often aimed at deceiving or manipulating public opinion. The rise of digital and social media platforms has amplified the spread of such content, which includes fabricated stories, misleading headlines, and manipulated images or videos. This phenomenon has significant implications for journalism, as it undermines the credibility of legitimate news sources and blurs the distinction between fact and fiction, making it increasingly challenging for the public to make informed decisions (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

The pervasive nature of fake news is particularly concerning in democratic societies, where a well-informed public is crucial for the functioning of the political system. Independent journalists, who rely heavily on their credibility, are especially vulnerable to the detrimental effects of fake news, as distinguishing their work from false information becomes more difficult (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018). Various strategies, such as fact-checking, media literacy education, and regulatory measures, have been proposed to combat the spread of fake news. However, these solutions face challenges, particularly when they require the cooperation of social media platforms and governments, which may have conflicting interests. For independent journalists, addressing fake news is not only a professional duty but also a matter of personal safety, as their efforts to expose falsehoods can provoke backlash from those who benefit from misinformation (Pennycook & Rand, 2018).

Safety in journalism refers to the protection of journalists from physical harm, harassment, and legal threats as they perform their duties, a concern that has intensified

with the rise of fake news. Traditionally, journalists faced risks primarily in conflict zones or under authoritarian regimes, but the digital age has introduced new threats, including online harassment, doxxing, and cyber-attacks. Independent journalists, lacking the institutional support of larger media organisations, are particularly vulnerable to these dangers, as they often work without the resources necessary to protect themselves from such risks (Posetti & Storm, 2018). The spread of fake news further exacerbates these threats, as journalists who expose misinformation may become targets of violence or harassment by those seeking to suppress the truth (UNESCO, 2019).

Efforts to enhance journalist safety have included the creation of press freedom organisations, the development of safety protocols, and the provision of digital security training. However, these measures frequently fall short for independent journalists, who may not have access to the same level of support as their peers in larger media outlets. The evolving concept of safety in journalism, therefore, demands a multifaceted approach that addresses both traditional and emerging threats, ensuring that all journalists, regardless of their affiliation, can work without fear of retribution (RSF, 2020).

Journalism plays a critical role in democratic societies by gathering, assessing, and presenting news and information to the public, thereby enabling informed decision-making. Guided by ethical standards that emphasise accuracy, fairness, and accountability, journalism acts as a watchdog, holding those in power accountable and providing a platform for public discourse. However, the rise of fake news has significantly challenged these standards, undermining the credibility of legitimate journalism and complicating journalists' roles. Independent journalists, in particular, face unique challenges in maintaining these standards amidst the widespread misinformation that pervades the media landscape (Schudson, 2018; Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018).

In response to the challenges posed by fake news, journalists have adopted new strategies, including fact-checking tools, collaboration with peers, and media literacy programmes aimed at educating the public about the dangers of misinformation. Independent journalists have been especially proactive in these efforts, leading initiatives to expose falsehoods and advocate for greater transparency in the media. Despite the obstacles, journalism remains a vital component of democratic society, essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring accountability, even in an era increasingly dominated by fake news (Silverman, 2017; Tsegyu & Garba, 2024).

The intersection of fake news and the safety of journalism has been the subject of extensive debate and analysis in recent years. Scholars and practitioners alike have explored the various dimensions of this issue, with a particular focus on the impact of

fake news on the credibility and safety of independent journalists. One of the key arguments in the literature is that the rise of fake news has significantly eroded public trust in the media, making it more difficult for journalists to carry out their work effectively. This erosion of trust is particularly damaging to independent journalists, who often rely on their credibility to attract and maintain an audience (Farkas & Schou, 2018).

Another critical issue explored in the literature is the role of social media platforms in the spread of fake news. Social media has been identified as a major conduit for the dissemination of false information, with algorithms designed to prioritise engagement often amplifying sensationalist and misleading content. This has serious implications for the safety of journalists, as those who attempt to correct misinformation or report on contentious issues may become targets of online harassment or even physical violence. Independent journalists, who often lack the resources to protect themselves from such attacks, are particularly vulnerable to these risks (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019).

The literature also highlights the importance of media literacy in combating the spread of fake news and protecting the safety of journalists. Media literacy programmes aimed at educating the public about the dangers of fake news and the importance of critical thinking have been proposed as a solution to the problem of misinformation. These programmes are seen as essential for rebuilding public trust in the media and ensuring that journalists can continue to operate safely in an increasingly hostile environment. Independent journalists, who often engage directly with their audiences, are well-positioned to play a leading role in these efforts, using their platforms to promote media literacy and counteract the spread of fake news (Carlson, 2020; Tsegyu & Garba, 2024).

In addition to media literacy, the literature suggests that regulatory measures may be necessary to address the threat of fake news and protect the safety of journalists. Some scholars have argued that social media platforms should be held accountable for the spread of misinformation and that governments should implement stricter regulations to prevent the dissemination of fake news. However, these proposals are not without controversy, as they raise concerns about censorship and the potential for abuse by authoritarian regimes. Independent journalists, who often operate in environments where press freedom is already under threat, may be particularly wary of such measures, as they could further limit their ability to report freely and safely (Napoli, 2018).

The literature also explores the psychological impact of fake news on journalists, particularly independent journalists who may lack the support systems available to their counterparts in larger media organisations. The constant exposure to misinformation, coupled with the risks associated with reporting on contentious issues,

can take a significant toll on the mental health of journalists. This issue is further exacerbated by the increasing prevalence of online harassment and threats, which can create a climate of fear and intimidation for those working to expose the truth. Independent journalists, who often work alone or in small teams, may be particularly vulnerable to these pressures, highlighting the need for greater support and resources to protect their mental well-being (Holton, Coddington, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2018).

Thus, the literature underscores the urgent need for a multifaceted approach to addressing the challenges posed by fake news to the safety of journalism. This approach must include efforts to combat the spread of misinformation through media literacy and regulatory measures, as well as initiatives to protect the physical and mental well-being of journalists. Independent journalists, who play a critical role in exposing fake news and holding those in power accountable, must be at the forefront of these efforts, with the support of both the public and the broader journalistic community. By addressing the issue of fake news and its impact on the safety of journalism, we can work towards a media environment that is both credible and secure, ensuring that journalists can continue to fulfill their vital role in society.

Several studies and researchers have looked at fake news and its impact on contemporary society. In fact, since the advancement in technologies and their adoption including social media proliferation, there has been an increase in studies relating to fake news. A study conducted by Ciboh and Ugondo (2024) was specifically focused on gauging the attitudes and perceptions of journalists on the concepts of media, fake news and Nigeria's political stability. Relying on the survey with the adoption of a structured questionnaire to elicit data on the perceptions and attitudes of journalists in Nigeria, findings of the study revealed that fakes news is made manifest in scoops, political speeches, sensationalism, unverified reports, and false information. Furthermore, it showed in findings that fake news posed certain challenges to journalist as it affects credibility of news medium, journalists' reputation, and also disorganises society. It is instructive to note that a disorganised society also poses threat to journalists' safety as much as a lack of reputation.

Farkas (2023) also conducted a study with a focus on metajournalistic discourse on fake news. The study relied on qualitative data from in-depth interviews of practitioners. Accordingly, findings of the study revealed that fake news represents an alien and new threat to journalism. Furthermore, study also showed that fake new posed as external danger from which journalists attempt to protect democracy. The menace is said to challenge the traditional journalistic models of business. The issues surrounding fake news and the threat to journalism are not hidden as they become glaring by the day primarily due to their proliferation in the era of the digital media (Inobemhe et al., 2020). This is not far from the findings of a study by Ordway (2017) where fake news was

found to pose threat to institutions and persons in society.

A study by West (2017) also revealed that practising journalists have been accused of spreading fake news. It also alluded that some legitimate journalists have been arrested or even subjected to scrutiny by officials of a country. The researcher revealed that a case of arrest of a journalist can be seen in Egypt where the Al-Jazeera producer was charged for incitement against the institution through the broadcast of fake news with the intention of spreading chaos. It also revealed that fake news has led to the decline in public trust for traditional journalist, and this implies that the menace constitute a serious challenge as well as posed as threat to journalism practice across the world.

Another study by Ognyanova, Lazer, Robertson and Wilson (2020) was on how exposure to fake news and misinformation leads to a reduced trust in the media and government. It relied on a wider opinion poll involving 3000 respondents split into two separate surveys conducted in 2018 around October, November and December of same year. Though the respondents were asked to install a browser extension so as to track their prevailing online behaviour, only 227 representing 8% of them positively responded. Findings of the study demonstrated that a decline in mainstream media trust can be linked to people's exposure to fake news. Whereas, the foregoing was the case in respect of media trust, a contrasting result was seen in the case of political trust. Results from the study revealed that exposure to fake news led to an increase in political trust especially in respect of justice system and congress in the United States.

Furthermore, Arikenbi, Ekhueorohan, Eguono and Ekwemalor (2023) conducted a study into the implication post-truth and fake news has on the canons of journalism within the Nigerian media space. It relied on secondary data already collected in other studies. Findings of the study revealed that proliferation of fake news in the Nigeria's media space has had a great impact on the credibility of journalism. According to the study, the foundational principles of journalism are greatly challenged by the blurring of opinions and facts coupled with the spread of falsehood in the country. Additionally, the study revealed that news media credibility is shaped by public perceptions and this has a number of implications for the norms of journalism profession.

Similarly, a study on perceptions of journalists and media scholars on journalism and fake news circulating in the Nigerian online space was conducted Habib and Akila (2021) and through carefully drawn samples conducted In-depth interviews. Accordingly, the researchers revealed that fake news can spread through words of mouth (WoM), and that the spread finds strength in bias human nature. It has dire consequences on journalism practice as it can lead to loss of credibility, the study showed. Furthermore, findings of the study showed that online platforms and the

festering spread of fake news enabled by the growing adoption of technology makes a space for proliferation of fake journalists making it difficult for members of the public to separate a professional from an amateur that works for an online medium.

The gaps from these studies reviewed are multidimensional. First, their focus was more on the spread of fake news and credibility of the media. Second, there was no much focus on first-hand experience from a practicing journalist who has had a unique sore experience from the fake news menace. Finally, there is also the gap occasioned by the lack of detailed literature on the fake menace and its implications to the safety of journalism in this part of the world. Therefore, this current study sought to dissect the fake news problem vis á vis its implications on the practice in Nigeria – taking on a unique approach that considers the experience of an independent journalist in the country.

Methodology

The library research was relied upon to advance a discourse on fake news and journalism safety from the perspective of an investigative journalist. This involved the review of existing literature on the subject matter. The secondary data sources include articles in journals and book chapters, books, online resources, related documents in form of reports, and empirical studies of private and government agencies.

Discussion

According to Inobemhe et al. (2020), fake news has been enabled by new media technologies. This does not just pose as challenge to the professional journalist but also the society at large. In Nigeria the fake news menace has created a lot of concerns not just for conventional media but also the society and citizens within it (Oso et al., 2024). On account of the proliferation of fake news, journalism in Nigeria is said to be facing numerous challenges among which is the fake news dilemma which not only threatens trustworthiness of the media but also its credibility. These issues are multidimensional and sometimes exacerbated by the speed in which the new spread.

A major dimension to this challenge is the causes of the spread of fake news in Nigeria. A major reason cause is social media proliferation and their wide adoption by citizens. Social media platforms are numerous with overabundance of information and this has enabled quick spread of false information. Aside their multiplicity of use, numerous user base and accessibility, social media also reward people for engagements and posts made. This Madrid (2023) claimed is made based on the structure of the sites where engagements and posts are rewarded. This drives the spread of fake news as users strive to post to attract comments and get engagement towards rewards.

The challenge is further compounded by the lack of fact-checking. This is a

multidimensional challenge as it creates challenge for both professional journalists, amateur and the individual users of information-dissemination channels such as social media in modern times. Some newsrooms lack adequate fact-checking and verification processes. Findings from a research conducted by (Porter & Wood, 2021) showed that fact-checking reduced people's belief in fake news. The implication of the foregoing is that without fact-checking, people are likely to belief misinformation they encounter across platforms. Westlund et al. (2024) alluded to the foregoing that though misinformation is a challenge, but fact-checking is one way to solve the problem in society.

Taking a critical look at the fake news dilemma in Nigeria specifically, the cause of its spread, another perspective to see is that of political and economic interests. This is the case because fake news more often serves economic and political agendas. An example is the use of social-enabled fake news as a tool for propaganda for the sole aim of spreading panic and confusion among the people. If such objective is achieved, then the deliberate circulation has served a purpose. According to Kwoide and Selekane (2023), fake news used as propaganda is often targeted at political opponents either to divert the attention of the public from government policy or destroy the character of the political opponent. This is the case whether the opponents are perceived or real enemies in the political domain.

Low media literacy is another enabler of fake news and its rapid spread in modern times. In fact, limited understanding of how to critically evaluate information posed as a serious challenge to the society as fake news spread dangerously. According to Inobemhe and Asemah (2024), lack of media literacy can lead to spread of disinformation in our society and with adequate media literacy, the menace can also be combated. Relatedly, a USC-led study found that among several others, lack of critical reasoning was dominant as motivation for sharing fake news (Madrid, 2023). The implication is that once people do not give a piece of information they see online or hear offline a good thought before sharing, chances are that they will contribute to the spread of falsehood.

Fake news has several negative consequences including the eroding trust – where public trust in the media is undermined by the spread of fake news in society. A study conducted by Idiongo (2024) revealed that fake news comes with the consequence of erosion of trust in the media. In fact, it is not just the media that suffer the impact but democratic institutions that stand the danger of loss of trust from members of the public (Ognyanova et al., 2020). In addition, spreading misinformation is seen as an effect of fake news as false information can lead to confusion, misinformed decisions, and harm to the people and actors involved. Furthermore, polarisation is another issue relating to the effect of fake news in modern society as it reinforces existing biases as much as it

exacerbates social divisions.

The threat of fake news to democracy cannot be overemphasised. This is because it can undermine democratic processes through its influence on elections and by extension threaten national security of a country. The democratic process can be negatively impact by knowledge resistance and misconceptions (Broda & Strömback, 2024) both stemming from the spread of fake news in our contemporary society. According to Sanchez and Middlemass (2022), democracy is serious trouble on account of misinformation because the fake news menace continues to lead to a gradual erosion of public's trust in democracy.

How Fake News Endangers Journalists' Safety in a World of Information Manipulation

The focus here is the impact of fake news on the safety of journalists in a world where information manipulation is rife. In fact, there are several ways in which fake news endangers journalists' safety. Some of them are discussed hereunder:

- i. **Violence and attacks:** This is a major impact of fake news on journalists. Fake news can create a scenario where people are incited to take on violent acts against journalists putting them at risk of physical harm. Several scenarios of attacks against journalists on account of fake news abound in Nigeria. However, a recent case was that of a Pakistani journalist that suffered arrest over fake news that led to riots in the UK (Latif, 2024).
- ii. **Harassment and threats:** It is possible that journalists are harassed and threatened offline and online on account of fake news circulated in their name knowingly or unknowingly.
- iii. **Loss of credibility:** There is a credibility side to the fake news menace in relations to the safety of journalists. Fake news can erode the credibility of media outlets and their journalists. This creates a situation where it increasingly gets difficult for them to carry out assigned duties in safe and effective ways.
- iv. **Chilling/shocking effect:** Fake news spread and its consequences can also have eerie effect on journalisms, and by extension deter reporters/journalists from pursuing important investigative leads or stories.
- v. **Misidentification:** On account of fake news and its spread, journalists can be misidentified as propagandists or biased reports and this can put them up for attack or harassment.
- vi. **Targeted disinformation:** The fake new menace is deep-rooted that it can be used to spread targeted information about media practitioners, consequently damaging their reputation and putting them at risk.
- vii. **Self-censorship:** Censorship can result from the fear of fake news and its

consequences as journalists may take a stance where they avoid reporting on certain stories, subject matter, or topics.

- viii. **Increased surveillance:** Journalists can attract attention of concerned authorities to the point that they see increase surveillance which may make it harder for them to provide protection to their sources and maintain source confidentiality.
- ix. **Psychological impact:** Once there are ceaseless cases of online harassment resulting from the proliferation of fake news across virtual spaces, the journalist can suffer psychological pressure that negative impacts their mental health and general well-being.
- x. **Polarisation and division:** A hostile environment for journalists is often created due to the polarisation effect of fake news and division. Consequently, journalists are perceived as opposing a particular group of ideology.

Understanding of these risks is not merely to instill fear on the journalists but to create an environment for knowledge where critical decisions can be taken to protect practitioners. Interestingly, the knowledge of these risks also create and understanding where journalists are better protection towards the promotion of a safe and free press even in the face of the proliferation of social media platforms and rapid spread of fake news.

How Factual Report can be Weaponised against a Reporter: Experience of a Journalist in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are several cases where journalists' reports are taken out of context to suit a specific purpose – sometimes the purpose that suits the desired intention of the actors involved in the act. This is an excerpt from a reporter's story about how a truthful and factual story was taken out of context and weaponised by purveyors of fake news. It details the harmful impact such could have on the morale of the practitioners.

Oluatobi Enitan is a freelance journalist based in Abuja.

My name is Oluwatobi Enitan I am an Independent journalist based in Abuja. I have worked with the International Center for Investigative Reporting, ICIR Nigeria, Inter Press Service based in Rome Italy as a freelancer. Presently I work as a freelancer for TV Platinum, a News and Media outlet based in Abuja, Nigeria.

Asides this, I have a YouTube Channel named Oluwatobi Enitan this allows me to work on stories that calls for positive change and reactions for a better Nigeria. My content spans across three major programmes areas – *Unbiased with Enitan*, *Surviving Nigeria*, and *All that Happened in Nigeria*. These programmes provide me the opportunity to give a bird eye view about issues which directly affect the country by providing my subscribers and followers a knowledgeable angle ignored in the mainstream media.

On June 17, 2024, [I uploaded a 12 minutes 45 seconds long video](#), with the tittle "this is what lawmakers allegedly earn in Nigeria" on my Tiktok and YouTube pages. Within 24

hours of posting the video a whirlwind of controversy was stirred. Honorable Leke Abejide representing Yagba Federal Constituency had accused Adeola Fayehun of instigating the public against lawmakers over their salaries and allowances.

The original content read:

"One Adeola Fayehun who alleged on social media and Instagram (sic) that a member of this House collect basic salary of 2.5 million naira per month, furniture allowance 7.5 million Naira per month, newspaper allowance 1.2 million naira per month, wardrobe allowance 631,000 naira per month, recess allowance 248,000 Naira per month, accommodation allowance 4.9 million Naira per month utility allowance 828,000 Naira per month, personal assistant allowance 621,000 Naira per month and so. and very interesting for you to know that this Adeola Fayehun does not reside in Nigeria; she's in UK and this is the same person December time when one of our colleagues maybe by mistake said trailers of rice were given to members of national assembly the same lady was spreading it everywhere that you should ask your representatives where is your trailers of rice so if this House does not take a stand on this and take it as a case against her I Elder Leke Joseph Abejide will take it up with her, because in my own constituency this is what is now spreading around that I take this amount. I was on Channels Television at a time and I put up my salary to the whole world for them to see. What is there that we are hiding? We are not hiding anything in this hallowed chamber. I want to bet it with you, there are some members that cannot survive more than 5 days with their salaries even before the end of the month, the request from your constituents has already taken over everything and somebody who does not reside in Nigeria will be instigating the general public against us and then we will be quiet this is the privilege that has been breached against me and I Believe by extension to all members of this house thank you so much Mr. Speaker and honorable colleagues."

The video with my name and social media handles "Oluwatobi Enitan" made it easily identifiable as my original content, but what I was not prepared for was the trouble my re-edited content bore to me.

A content creator with the name "Merit O'clock" on Tiktok re-edited and republished the video to suit specific agenda leading to a flurry of accusations and counter accusations with many labeling me as the source of the disinformation.

The re-edited video reads

"I, a member of this House collect basic salary of 2.5 million Naira per Month, furniture allowance 7.5 million naira per month, newspaper allowance 1.2 million Naira per month, wardrobe allowance 631,000 Naira per month, recess allowance 248,000 Naira per month, accommodation allowance 4.9 million Naira per month utility allowance 828,000 Naira per month, personal assistant allowance 621,000 Naira per month."

The edited video that sparked this controversy was maliciously cut to include only the portions listing the purported salaries and allowances, which were then taken out of context to generate public outrage. The re-edited version omitted crucial details and was crafted to mislead viewers intentionally. As a result, several of my colleagues reached out to me, expressing their concerns. Upon reviewing the original video, they realised that the disinformation stemmed from a mischief-maker who had altered the content.

Given the gravity of the situation, and considering the advice of a Lawmaker and journalists I had no choice but to issue a public disclaimer one week after posting the original video. The disclaimer reads:

"Disclaimer Regarding Misleading Video Clip on Lawmaker Salaries"

My attention has been drawn to an edited clip from a video circulating online concerning the salaries of lawmakers. This clip has been maliciously edited by mischief makers with the intent of inciting the public against lawmakers. I, Oluwatobi Enitan, am issuing this statement to bring clarity to the matter and to present the original video to the general public.

The original video was created with the sole purpose of informing and educating the public about the factual details of lawmaker salaries. However, the version being circulated has been altered to misrepresent the content and context, leading to misunderstandings and potential public unrest.

I want to categorically state that I am not involved in the creation or distribution of the misleading edited clip. Furthermore, I am not associated with the actions of those who have spread this misinformation. Specifically, merit o'clock on Tiktok, is the individual who edited the video for selfish reason to gain traffic on his page. The video has 429k views over 12k shares and 33k views. He is responsible for circulating the edited clip. He should be held accountable for this act of deception any individual who wishes to take legal action should hold him accountable.

Ugotok on Tiktok has since deleted the video from his Tiktok account while "tmyposts" on Instagram are still circulating the misinformation. In addition, Merit Oclock has over 18 thousand followers on TikTok, and in one of his pictures, he is shown wearing soldiers uniform. Upon seeing this, I contacted the Director of Army Public Relations, Major General Onyema Nwachukwu, who expressed doubts about him being a soldier of the Nigerian Army based on the cap badge he was wearing. I have forwarded this to the Nigerian Army to determine if he is their soldier. I urge the public to refer to the original video for accurate information and to disregard the edited clip intended to mislead and provoke. Let us maintain our commitment to truth and responsible sharing of information."

While in my attempt to clear my name @atlantic7949 believes [@atlantic7949](#) – [2 months](#)

[ago \(edited\).](#)

He should be held accountable? Nigerians are very swift to backstabbing and betraying themselves. True or not, why can't they declare their salaries to rest the case? Y'all still scared for these criminal politicians? And y'all said you want a better country? Y'all scared. Keep dreaming

One would expect that lawmakers would publicly declare their salaries to counter these allegations, but this transparency never materialised. This lack of openness further empowers mischief-makers to thrive and perpetuate disinformation. In light of this, it is crucial that journalists receive protection against the damage that disinformation, like that spread by Merit O'clock using my content can inflict on our reputations. Ensuring the integrity of our work is essential in maintaining public trust and upholding the truth, Enitan concluded on the bases of her experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, fake news has become a hot topic of discourse in academic and media circles not just for the negative impact but also for the multidimensional negative consequences for journalism practice and information management. In greater dimensions, it creates series of problems for journalists and media organisations in the 21st century information world. The issues are numerous and are further execrated by the channels of information dissemination such as social media's Facebook, Instagram, X and more with their capacity to spread, retain and archive information leading to overabundance. Once used for the wrong reasons, fake news whether emanating from the traditional media or online platforms creates serious safety issues for journalists in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world.

Owing to the discourse above and the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is a need for fact-checking initiatives where independent fact-checking organisations and media outlets can be encouraged to help verify authenticity of information. This can also further strengthened and supported with a kind of collaboration where media outlets synergise to promote accuracy and accountability.
2. More than ever before, there should be concerted efforts at packaging and in repackaging existing media literacy programmes. This becomes imperative because of the need to educate the public on how to critically evaluate information especially the piece of information to which they are exposed on various online platforms including social media.
3. As much as it gets technical to regulate, it has become pertinent that regulatory framework be put in place to establish and enforce regulations to curb the spread of fake news in our country media space- both digital and traditional.
4. Support must now be provided for independent media as this will ensure

independent, fact-based journalism. The appropriate agency of government must lead efforts at providing this support.

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- 475

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG UNIVERSITY OF UYO UNDERGRADUATES

Oyokunyi Otu Ita

and

Iniobong Courage Nda

Abstract

This study examined self-esteem and how the social media are a contributing factor. The study adopted the survey research method and the questionnaire was the instrument for data gathering. The sample size was 400 drawn from a population of 31,461 undergraduate students. Finding revealed that excessive use of the social media had a negative influence on University of Uyo undergraduates' self-esteem. Facebook was considered the most used social media platform followed by Instagram, Tik Tok and Snapchat in that order by the University of Uyo undergraduates; that the higher levels of social media usage would invariably result in lower level of self-esteem among the University of Uyo students. It was therefore recommended that undergraduates should avoid excessive usage of social media platforms as they could be detrimental to their self-esteem and mental health.

Introduction

Early 21st century marked the emergence and growth of social networking sites in the whole world. Since then these sites have become a major part of people's lives, specially the lives of the youth. Many teenagers are using social media namely facebook, Tik tok, Instagram among others to build relationships, connect with the world, share and gain knowledge and information, build stronger personalities and have better social lives Boyd, (2017).Imam & Tanisha (2023).

Mitchell (2019) claimed that social networking sites are used by youngsters to get engaged in romantic and casual online relationships. It has been observed by the changing behavior of the people that social media has many negative repercussions on people. Social networking sites help people to make social comparisons which increase the psychological distress of individuals and as a result lower the overall level of self-esteem (Chen & Lee, 2017). Many observers and researchers believe that due to increase in the usage of social networking sites, people have become the victims of lower self-esteem and self-growth. Social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives, especially among undergraduate students. With the advent of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, the way we communicate and interact has drastically changed. These platforms offer students opportunities to connect with others, share their experiences, and express themselves in ways that were not possible before. This study focuses on social media and its impact on

self-esteem, particularly among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo . Self-esteem is a crucial aspect of a person's mental well-being as it influences how individuals perceive themselves and their abilities. It plays a significant role in shaping their social relationships, academic performance, and overall happiness.

Understanding the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem among undergraduates is highly important, as it can shed light on the potential consequences of excessive social media consumption. While social media can offer a sense of belonging and empowerment, it can also be a breeding ground for comparison and low self-esteem. With the generation of media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram, its users are now able to craft the most idealized version of their lives and broadcast with innate selectivity. With that, social media has successfully consequently generated the perfect platform for breeding social comparison as its billions of users aimlessly scroll through falsified lives of their peers in return for the numeric validation of another “like” or “comment”. Social comparison may entail the evaluation of one's own successes, image, beliefs, and social status in reference to those of other people, which may induce either positive or negative psychological effects. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the positive and negative aspects of social media. Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten (2006), concluded that “positive feedback on profiles enhanced adolescents' social self-esteem and well-being, whereas negative feedback decreased their self-esteem and well-being.

Statement of the Problem

There are many issues that can occur when using social media sites. One issue that has been known to happen on social media is cyber-bullying. One study researched cyber-bullying, psychological distress, and self-esteem levels in youth-aged children. Their results were that overall, 22.9% of teenagers experienced cyber-bullying in the past year. Girls presented a higher prevalence of cyber-bullying, psychological distress, and low self-esteem than boys. Self-esteem is something that everyone has and each person has a different perception of themselves and different levels of self-esteem. Self Esteem is conceptualized as one as positive and negative evaluations of himself or herself and, relatedly, one as approval or disapproval of the self (Coopersmith, 2020; Rosenberg, 2021). One study focused on how many "selfies" a person posts on social media and how that relates to narcissism and self-esteem. This study also came to find that taking and posting "selfies" was not an action of showing off to their peers, it was more a typical way of communication (Barry, 2015).

The current study is taking a different path and not testing young children but testing gv young adults (undergraduates) to see if age might play a factor in the effects of social media. Once there is a clear understanding of what age group suffers the most then

not only psychologists but school administrators, parents, teachers, etc., can focus on eliminating cyber-bullying. The rapid rise in social media usage among undergraduate students has raised concerns about its potential impact on self-esteem. While social media platforms provide opportunities for students to connect and express themselves, there is increasing evidence suggesting that excessive use of social media may contribute to negative self-esteem outcomes. This study therefore seeks to answer to the question does social media usage by undergraduate students of University of Uyo have any significant relationship with their self-esteem affect aims to address the specific ways social media affects the self-esteem of undergraduates and also the promotion of self-esteem among undergraduates of University of Uyo.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following questions¹. How does social media affect self-esteem among undergraduate students in University of Uyo?

1. What are the social media platforms used to promote self-esteem of undergraduates students of University of Uyo?
2. Which is the preferred social media platform among undergraduate students of University of Uyo?
3. What are the factors that influence undergraduate students of University of Uyo self-esteem when using social media?
4. What is the perception of undergraduates about self-esteem across various social media platforms?

Literature Review

This section deals with critical concepts and the theoretical underpinning that gives the study the necessary bite and shape that makes it easier to appreciate the researcher's opinion.

Self Esteem

Self-esteem is identified by the way we act and behave, by the attitudes and beliefs we hold about ourselves and the way we feel about ourselves and the emotion we experience. Self-esteem is also the evaluation of oneself in either a positive or a negative way. James (2020) viewed self-esteem as an evaluative process; he argued that self-esteem, at its simplest, could be measured as the ratio of a person's successes to his or her pretensions. Pretensions are viewed as goals, purposes, or aims, whereas successes constitute the perception of the attainment of those goals.

As people attain more of their pretensions, the ratio grows larger and self-esteem becomes correspondingly stronger. Pretensions also add a vulnerability component to self-esteem in that these are the areas where the individual is proposed to be most competent. If he or she comes up short in the perception of goal-attainment, or in

comparison with others in the same pretension arena, self-esteem suffers. Rosenberg concluded that self-esteem is an attitude toward a specific object, the self. Feedback from others, particularly significant others, is a key element of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 2019). Wells and Marwell (2017) concluded self-esteem falls into 4 distinct categories which are object/attitudinal approach which means thoughts, feelings, and behaviours toward ourselves. Relational approach which means different thoughts, feelings, and behaviours when comparing our ideal self with our real self.

Next, psychological responses approach which means feeling either positive or negative about some elements about ourselves, such as our behaviour or our appearances and personality function/ component approach which means self-esteem as being part of personality (a construct itself), the self, or self-system. Guindon (2012) explained self-esteem as “the attitudinal, evaluative component of the self; the affective judgements placed on the self-concept consisting of feelings of worth and acceptance which are developed and maintained as a consequence of awareness of competence and feedback from the external world.” Humanists also described self-esteem. Rogers (2018) defined self-esteem as the extent to which people like, value, and accept themselves. He believed that the self develops from a combination of what is experienced and what is interjected, derived from values and affective preferences. The individual conceptualizes an ideal self, or the “person you would like to be”; and the true self, or the “person you really are.” The more congruent are these two aspects of the self, the healthier the self-esteem.

Social Media

The way people communicate with others has been significantly altered over the last couple of decades due to the development and improvement of social media sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and others. These platforms have allowed individuals to stay in contact with their friends and family members, even people from other countries. Since Facebook launched in 2004, the number of people who use social network sites has increased dramatically, year by year (Emarketer, 2018). While, as of January of 2017, on average, the total number of active social media users in the world was 2.789 billion, the total number of active social media users in January of 2018 was 3.196 billion, and the whole world population was measured as 7.593 billion (Kemp, 2018; Kemp, 2017). This growth shows that 42% of the world's total population actively use social media, and the global annual digital growth has been +13% since January 2017. Regarding the Nigeria specifically, the number of active social media users is 648 million among the total population of 1.011 billion (Kemp, 2018).

Facebook, which is one of the most heavily used social media networks in the world, had 1.871 billion active monthly users in 2017, while it had 936 million active

daily users in the world in 2015 (Facebook, 2018). Globally, Instagram has more than 500 million regular active users (Instagram, 2018), and Nigeria is one of Instagram's top countries (Kemp, 2018). LinkedIn had more than 546 million active users in 2018 (LinkedIn, 2018). Snapchat had 178 million active daily users and 301 million monthly active users in 2017 (Snapchat, 2018). With regards to Nigerians, 78% of young adults (18- 24-year-olds) use Snapchat, and similarly, 71% of young adults (18-24 years old) use Instagram. Besides, almost half of this age group (45%) use Twitter (Smith, & Anderson, 2018).

As a result of social media's popularity, these significant increases in social media usage have attracted the attention of many researchers, and they have studied social media and its effects on people. Most of these researchers have only focused on Facebook usage, and on its influence on individuals' lives, because it has more global users than any other social media platform (Eksisu, Hosoglu, & Rasmussen, 2017; Burrow & Rainone, 2017; Blachino, Przepiorka, & Rudnicka, 2016; Woods & Scott, 2016; Blachino, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2016). However, it has been observed that the usage of Facebook among Nigerian young adults 18-25 years-old has not been trendy over the last couple of years. Other platforms (such as Instagram and Snapchat) have been used more widely than Facebook (Smith, 2018). According to Smith (2018), the number of Facebook users in Nigeria will increase by 0.9% to 169.5 million in 2018, but it is expected that older people are going to make that increase. On the other hand, Facebook users will decrease between 5.6% and 9.3% among younger users aged under 25. Also, the most significant increase in use will be seen on Snapchat. It is expected that 68% of internet users aged 17 to 24 will use Snapchat actively. Snapchat's influence among internet users in this age group will thus surpass that of Facebook (47.2%) and Instagram (43.6%).

Additionally, the number of Instagram users is expected to rise to 104.7 million in 2018, up 13.1% from 2017 users 35 and older who are creating profiles will drive platform growth and be connecting with (likely younger) family members who spend less time on Facebook. This change in the use of social media has encouraged researchers to focus on it anew, and a few researchers have just started to study non-Facebook social media sites, such as Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and others (Hawi, & Samaha, 2017; Andreassen, Pallesen, & Griffiths, 2017). However, those research studies have focused on social media users in other countries besides Nigeria. This study intends to examine the associations between the use of different social media platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and others) and self-esteem and life satisfaction among young university students specifically residing in the Nigeria.

Social Media Usage

Social media websites are the most common activity of today's children and adolescents. It was reported that 22% of teenagers engage in social networking at least ten times a day and more than half of the teens report that they engage in social networking at least one time a day.(O'Keefe & Clarke Pearson, 2011). According to the Pew Internet and Nigerian Life Project, more than 70% of youth and young adults (ages 12 to 29) who use the Internet use social networking sites (Lenhart et al., 2010).

A survey found that 47% of Nigerian adults use at least one social network (Donde, Chopade, & Ranjith, (2018). 95% of university students maintain a Facebook profile Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, (2021). This study also found that 268 college students (primarily freshmen) reported spending an average of almost two hours per day engaging in social networking. Facebook has reported that members upload over 2 billion photos per month and 14 million videos per week, in addition to blog posts and weblinks Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2021). Another study showed that 88.5% of their sample of undergraduate students from one university reported that they visited a social networking site at least once a day.60% of the students stated that they visit these sites more than once a day. Social media has become so popular that it is a part of everyday life for students, Miller, Parsons, Lifer, (2010).

Social Media and Age

Use of digital media (e.g., text messaging, email, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, photo and video sharing, and other forms of digital communication) has skyrocketed in recent years in ways that are dramatically shifting how and when young people connect with their friends and family members (Common Sense Media, 2012). The expansion of both the forms of and access to social media has challenged staff in youth serving programs to create policies that are responsive to the affordances of these ever-changing forms of communication, while also guarding against unforeseen risks and unintended negative consequences to program participants, Schwartz, *et al.*, (2014). Communication through social media is so prevalent today that it has invariably affected interpersonal communication mode in the sense that most youths are no longer capable of holding meaningful dialogue in a face-to-face situation. Youth mentoring relationships, once largely considered to be one-to-one relationships between youth and adults that were cultivated through in-person meetings or activities in the community or at school, now take a wide variety of forms with some relationships taking place solely through digital forms of communication, Shpigelman, (2014). Reports show that people of all ages use social media sites. The age varies between the sites and is changing with each year. Usage is increasing not only in age but in men and women also. More men were reported using social media sites in 2014 than they did in 2013. In 2014, it was

reported that 70% of people with a high school education or less use Facebook. In that same study it was reported that 71% of people who had some college education used Facebook. 74% of people who have a college degree use Facebook. 66% of the people who used Facebook in 2014 were men and 77% were women. Duggan, *et al.*, (2014).

Twitter users have different statistics. In 2014 it was reported that 16% of secondary school graduates reported using Twitter, 24% of people with some college education reported using Twitter and 30% of college graduates use Twitter. Twitter users are 24% males and 21% females. These results are dramatically different from Facebook but there was a rise in use from 2013 and 2014 (Duggan, *et al.*, 2014).

Social Media and Self Esteem

Leary & Baumeister, (2020) asserts that self-esteem is defined as an individual's appraisal of his or her value. Furthermore, it also refers to a person's subjective judgment of his or her worth as a human being. There are approximately 35,000 studies on self-esteem as put forward by Bleidron *et al.*, (2016), given that it is one of the crucial phenomena for an individual's life because high self-esteem brings many positive outcomes. According to researchers, high self-esteem is one of the mediators of mental health (Taylor & Brown, 2018), physical health (Mechanic, 2019) and it is also linked to an individual's well-being (Mehdizadeh, 2017). Additionally, individuals with high self-esteem have more social support, more malleable coping behaviors, and less stress (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2019). In contrast, people with low self-esteem are observed to feel more lonely, shy, unsociable and anxious. They also face dissatisfied and short-term relationships more than those with a high self-esteem

Many factors affect an individual's level of self-esteem, and research has indicated that social media use is one of the factors that is associated with an individual's self-esteem level (Andreassen, Pallasen, & Griffiths, 2017; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2016). Many researchers have studied the relationship between social media use, especially Facebook, and self-esteem. The researchers have found that low self-esteem is related to intense social media usage and people who have a low self-esteem tend to use social media sites to increase their self-image and self-esteem. It has been established that there is a relationship between self-esteem, life satisfaction and negative and positive feedback they received through social media sites among 881 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19. They found that a positive effect was positively associated with self-esteem and satisfaction with life ($r = .40$, $p < .001$ and $r = .37$, $p < .001$, respectively). Andreassen, Pallasen, & Griffiths, (2017) Similarly, Eksisu *et al.*, (2017) suggested that individuals with a low self-esteem spend more time on social media networks and tend to log in to Facebook very frequently to compensate their lack of self esteem by having a high number of online friends to increase popularity and have a sense of belonging.

Theoretical Framework

Whenever we bring in theory in analyzing a study the underlying reason is often that it presents us a valuable tool for understanding our everyday lives, our relationships with others and the way communication shapes our world and social interaction. Thus this study is anchored on the social comparison theory. Leon Festinger (2018) developed social comparison theory to explain the process in which many facets of the self can be evaluated only through comparisons with other people. According to the theory, in the absence of a physical or objective standard of correctness, we will seek other people as a means of evaluating ourselves. Others' opinions may be particularly influential for physical appearance, where the objective criteria are not altogether clear. Felson (2015). The idea is that people are often motivated to explore their beliefs and abilities by comparing them with social reality. Wood (2019) has identified three reasons people use social comparison – evaluation, improvement, and enhancement. Because the goals differ, each of these motivations involves a slightly different way of comparing. When one's goal is self evaluation, people use social comparison to obtain an accurate impression of the self. Therefore, social comparison is more fruitful when we choose to compare ourselves with people whose abilities are similar to our own (Wheeler, Koestner, & Driver, (2022).

When choosing a “comparison other” for self-evaluation, people generally select someone whose performance represents a standard they may be able to match in the future. Later, if one's performance improves, the standard of comparison probably will rise as well. Sometimes however, exploration involves unfamiliar facts or dimensions of the self. Wood (2018) suggests an individual will seek information about people who represent the extremes of the dimension. This is because knowing your own on a dimension is not very informative unless you also know whether that level is high, low or in the middle of the range of possible levels of the dimension. As we learn more about our level in a particular dimension, we tend to choose to compare others who are similar to us. Gender, for example, is an important characteristic of comparing others. Both genders (males and females), generally showed a strong preference for someone of the same gender. The choice of someone of the same gender for comparison purposes is particularly like if the individual believes the task is somehow related to gender and if the individual has a strong tendency to refer to gender in processing information (Miller, 2017). Thus people will seek relevant others with whom to compare their performance, and similarity often serves as a cue for potential relevance. Festinger's unidirectional drive upward is most apparent when self-improvement is the goal of social comparison. According to Wood (2018), people who are especially achievement oriented or competitive are likely to compare themselves to others who are better on a relevant

dimension. Comparing ourselves to people who are better on the relevant dimension enables us to improve ourselves. At the same time, the fact that the “better person” is similar to us in other ways is a source of inspiration. Finally Wood notes that self-enchancement attempts to convince ourselves that we are better off than we are, usually leads to downward comparisons. That is, when we need to enhance our self-esteem, we compare ourselves with those who are worse off than we are (Taylor & Lobel, 2018). Social comparison is an active process. We are motivated by different goals that in turn affect the others with whom we choose to compare ourselves.

Research Method

This study made use of survey as a research technique which according to Senam and Akpan (2014), is one of the methods of quantitative research that entails a painstaking process of gathering information or data and using the results as the basis for determining the trend or the issues that formed the thrust of the research. These issues that form a research problem could be opinion, practice, attitude, behavior etc. The questionnaire was used as the instrument of data gathering in the study. The population of this study was University of Uyo undergraduates. According to the Admission Unit of the University, the projected population of Undergraduates as of the 2022 /2023 academic session is 31,461. Wimmer and Dominick (2018) defines a sample size as a subgroup or subset of a population or Universe. This subset is created from the population and is the representation of the entire population. The sample size for this study was Four hundred (400) and was determined using the Taro Yamane Sample Size determination Formula. Furthermore, subjects to be studied were selected using the multi stage sampling procedure to arrive at the respondents.

Presentation of Data

Out of the four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, three hundred and seventy-five (375) copies were correctly filled and returned. Hence the table analyses of data for this study were based on the three hundred and seventy five (375) copies of the returned and valid questionnaire, representing 94% response rate. This study had three hundred and seventy-five (375) as its total respondents, 162 (43%) were male and 212 (57%) were female respondents, within the ages of 16-25 years were 290 (78%) and those within 46 and above were 6 representing 1% of the respondents, 214 (57%) of the respondents were single, 161(43%) of the respondents were married.

Table I: Influence of Social Media on self-esteem of undergraduate students

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Never	30	8
Rarely	56	15
Sometimes	90	24
Often	116	31
Always	83	22
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (31%) self-esteem were often influenced by social media

Table II: Type of Social Media Influence on Undergraduate self-esteem

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Positively	116	31
Negatively	199	53
Others	60	16
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents self-esteem (53%) were negatively affected by social media

Table III: Social Media apps used by undergraduates

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	124	33
Instagram	98	26
Tik Tok	79	21
X (formerly known as Twitter)	30	8
Snapchat	45	12
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (33%) used Facebook

Table IV: Hours spent on Social Media

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1-4	34	9
4-8	56	15
8-12	75	20
12-16	128	34
16-20	84	22
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (34%) agreed they spent 12-16 hours on social media

Table V: Thoughts of Social Media when not in use

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Never	23	6
Rarely	26	7
Sometimes	49	13
Often	66	18
Always	211	56
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (56%) always thought about Social Media when they weren't using it.

Tables VI: Factors that influence self-esteem while using social media

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Comparison	150	40
Online bullying	87	23
Lack of validation from online media users	75	18
Lack of recognition/ feedback from peers	51	15
Focusing on your physical experience	10	3
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (40%) agreed that Comparison lowers their self-esteem while using Social Media

Table VI: Social Media apps used to promote Self-Esteem

Response	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Facebook	60	16
Instagram	41	11
Tik Tok	139	37
X (formerly known as Twitter)	83	22
Snapchat	52	14
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (37%) used Tik Tok to promote undergraduates self-esteem

Table VII: Perception of self-esteem while using Social Media apps

Response	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Excellent	38	10
Very good	60	16
Good	90	24
Neutral	79	21
Bad	108	29
Total	375	100

Majority of the respondents (29%) felt bad about their self-esteem while using social media apps.

Discussion of Findings

The data presented and analyzed above formed the basis for this discussion. The discussion of findings is based on the research questions raised in the earlier part of the research.

Research Question 1:

How does social media affect self-esteem among undergraduate students in University of Uyo?

Table I and II provide answers to Research Question 1, while table i shows that 31% representing 116 respondents had their self-esteem often influenced by social media, 24% representing 90 respondents had their self-esteem sometimes influenced by social media, 22% representing 83 respondents had their self-esteem heavily influenced by social media, 15% representing 56 respondents had their self-esteem rarely influenced by social media, 8% representing 30 respondents never had their self-esteem often influenced by social media, Table ii goes to show the type of Social Media Influence on Undergraduate self-esteem. According to the obtained data, 375 respondents, 199 respondents representing 53% had their self-esteem negatively affected by social media., 116 respondents representing 31% had their self-esteem positively affected by social media.

Rosenberg (2019) reiterated the fact that excessive use or comparison with others' curated online personas can lead to lower levels of self-confidence and higher rates of body dissatisfaction among young adults. He also shed light on the potential negative effects that social media can have on an individual's sense of self-worth. He also argued that excessive use of social media leads to comparison and competition amongst peers, which ultimately impacts one's self-perception and confidence level. Wells and Marwell (2017) in relation with the social comparison theory also added that

curated images often portrayed on these platforms create unrealistic standards for oneself to meet, leading to feelings of inadequacy and inferiority complex among young adults striving for acceptance in their peer groups through likes and followers. Hence, the majority of respondent's self-esteem is negatively influenced by Social Media.

Research Question 2: What are the social media platforms used to promote self-esteem of undergraduates?

From the data presented on Table VI , it was observed that Tik Tok which was picked by 137 respondents representing 37% respondents was the most selected Social Media platform used to promote self-esteem, the next being X which was selected by 83 respondents representing 22% , followed by Facebook selected by 60 respondents representing 16%, Snapchat was selected by 52 respondents represented by 14%, while 26 respondents representing 7% selected Instagram as the social media platform least chosen to promote self-esteem.

According to Stankov (2018), certain platforms such as Tik Tok and Facebook allow users to curate their online image through filters and carefully selected content, boosting confidence levels. He also argued that positive interactions and support from friends on these platforms also contribute to higher self-esteem for undergraduate students. Sapmaz & Dogan, (2020), in relation to Self Presentation Theory posits that popular platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are effective in boosting confidence levels of students as they showcase their achievements, talents and positive aspects of their lives to a wider audience. This not only increases their own pride but also earns them validation from others, helping them develop a strong sense of self-worth. Their study highlighted the smart use of social media in improving undergraduate mental well-being through building confidence and providing support from online communities. Yildiz (2021) also agreeing with the data in the study believe that sharing motivational quotes and messages to creating empowering communities online influences mental health of undergraduates and also harness its power for positive influence. He also argued that undergraduates are increasingly using these platforms to uplift one another and create a supportive network that celebrates individuality and boosts confidence.

Research Question 3: Which is the preferred social media platform among undergraduate students of University of Uyo?

From the findings on the field, it was observed that Facebook which was picked by 124 respondents representing 33% was the most selected Social Media platform used by undergraduates, the next being Instagram which was selected by 96 respondents representing 26%, followed by Instagram selected by 66 respondents representing 18%, next being Tik Tok which was selected by 79 respondents representing 21%, Snapchat

was selected by 45 respondents representing 12%, while 30 respondents representing 8% selected X (formerly known as Twitter) as the fewest social media platform chosen. Table IV also provides answers for Research Question 2 as it shows the social media usage of undergraduates. 128 respondents representing 34% spent 12-16, 84 respondents representing 22% spent 16-20 hours on social media, 75 respondents representing 20% spent 8-12 hours on social media, 56 respondents representing 15% spent 4-8 hours on social media while 34 respondents representing 9% spent 1-4 hours on social media. Rogers (2018) posits that there is a strong correlation between the usage of social media platforms and self-esteem levels among undergraduates. He agreed that as more and more young adults turn to these online platforms for connection and validation, their perception of themselves becomes heavily influenced by the curated images and lifestyles displayed on social media. This has sparked discussions on how excessive use of social media can negatively impact one's self-image, leading experts to suggest taking breaks from it in order to cultivate a healthier sense of self-worth. Similarly Emarketer(2018) in relation with the social comparison and the data findings of the study is of the opinion that there is a negative correlation, she also argued that it depends on individual perception and motivational factors. She posits that using social media to compare oneself with unrealistic standards may lead to lower self-esteem; but positive interactions and support from online communities can boost one's sense of worth. Kemp (2018) also argued that undergraduates turn to social media platforms as a means of communication and validation, their self-worth becomes heavily influenced by the number of likes, followers, and reactions they receive. However, this reliance on external factors for validation can ultimately lead to lower levels of self-esteem when these expectations are not met in real life situations.

Research Question 4: What are the factors of social media that are responsible for lowering self-esteem of undergraduates?

Data displayed on table VI answers to Research Question 3, according to Table IV, 150 respondents representing 40% chose Comparison as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 87 respondents representing 23% chose Online bullying as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 75 respondents representing 18% chose Lack of validation from online media users as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 51 respondents representing 15% chose Lack of recognition/ feedback from peers as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem, 10 respondents representing 3% chose Focusing on your physical experience as the factor responsible for lowering self-esteem.

Taylor & Brown (2018) conducted a similar study and argued that the constant comparison to others' seemingly perfect lives and idolized standards portrayed on social

media contribute greatly to this phenomenon. They also posit that the pressure to present a flawless image online also adds to feelings of inadequacy in individuals. Yigit (2018) in relation to the social comparison theory also argued that the comparison with others' seemingly perfect lives portrayed on social media can create feelings of inadequacy and lower self-worth for undergraduate students. He also argued that the pressure to maintain a certain image or persona online can also lead to a negative impact on their mental well-being and confidence levels. He posits that it is crucial for individuals who use social media regularly as undergraduates to be aware of these potential effects and strive for realistic expectations from themselves instead.

Research Question 5: What is the perception of undergraduates about self-esteem across various social media platforms?

Table VII provides information to Research Question 5. According to Table vii , data analyzed indicates that 108 respondents representing 29% felt their self-esteem was bad while using social media apps, 90 respondents representing 24% felt their self-esteem was good while using social media apps, 79 respondents representing 21% felt their self-esteem was neutral while using social media apps, 60 respondents representing 18% felt their self-esteem was very good while using social media apps, 38 respondents representing 10% felt their self-esteem was excellent while using social media apps.

Rosen (2022) in line with the findings of the study posits societal pressure perpetuated through carefully curated posts on these platforms can negatively impact one's perception of themselves. He also argued that individuals believe that their self-worth is bolstered by attention and validation from others online; there are also those who feel pressured to maintain a certain image in order to fit into societal standards set by these platforms. Pantic (2019) also argued that the use of different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have a significant effect on one's level of self-esteem. With so much pressure to portray an ideal image online, undergraduates often find themselves comparing their lives to those curated on social media. He believes this can lead to feelings of inadequacy and lowered levels of self-worth amongst this demographic group.

Findings

The followings were findings revealed in the study:

- i. Excessive use of social media has a negative influence on university of uyo undergraduates self-esteem .
- ii. The following social media platforms are accessed for self esteem purposes : Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, SnapChat and X
- iii. Facebook, was considered the most used social media platform followed by

instagram, Tik Tok and Snapchat in that order by the university of uyo undergraduate

- iv. Comparison, Online Bullying and Lack of validation from online media users were factors responsible for lowering self-esteem of undergraduates
- v. Undergraduates agreed that their self-esteem were affected negatively when they used various social media platforms. They also agreed that usage of social media platforms can negatively impact one's perception of themselves.

Conclusion

Social media sites have become a central part of everyday life. Most social networking sites facilitate the creation of profiles by users who give details about their life experiences. Many people on these platforms have been pressured into sharing positive experiences while hiding the less glamorous parts of their lives. As a result, social media has been linked to outcomes such as social comparisons, self-evaluation, and the need for self-enhancement. When users compare their lives to others, issues of self-esteem are bound to emerge. Social media's impact on self-perception and self-image is primarily negative, whereby users who compare themselves to others are likely to feel inadequate and have poorer self-evaluations. However social media can affect people's mental health both positively and negatively. Undergraduates should focus on the positive aspects and should desist from comparing their lives with people's lives on social media, almost everything on social media is a faux.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward following the findings gleaned from the study namely:

- i. Undergraduates should avoid excessive usage of social media platforms as it is detrimental to their self-esteem and mental health.
- ii. Undergraduates should desist from comparing their lives with others while using social media platforms.
- iii. Social Media Platforms should put policies to curb excessive flaunting of wealth and also Online Bullying.
- iv. Social Media platforms like Instagram should put preventive measures in place to curb user's self-esteem being affected negatively.
- v. Undergraduates should focus on the positive aspects of social media and avoid comparison in order to reduce their self-esteem being affected negatively.

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VOTERS' PERCEPTION OF MEDIA ENLIGHTENMENT CAMPAIGNS AGAINST VOTE-BUYING DURING THE 2022 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study evaluated the voters' perception of media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying during the 2022 Gubernatorial election in Osun State, Nigeria. The importance of the media in curbing the menace of vote-buying in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasised, however, from the literature reviewed, there was no evidence that a study investigated the perception of voters to media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying in Nigeria, also, previous studies on media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying adopted quantitative studies, hence, this study rely on qualitative data and the study was carried out to fill these gaps. Data were collected from voters in Osogbo through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that there is a high rate of exposure to media enlightenment campaigns by the voters. Furthermore, the study found that media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying did not have any positive influence on voters because many of them still sell their votes during the election. The study also established that voters have different perceptions of vote-buying; some felt that it is wrong to sell their votes during elections while others did not see any wrong with it. Thus, the study recommended among others that the media should sustain their public enlightenment programmes for the electorates to enhance their exposure to the menace of vote-buying during elections and the different media houses should introduce different strategies that will enhance the effectiveness of the media in enlightening and sensitizing the electorates to positively change their perception on vote-buying.

Introduction

The mass media plays a major role in how society functions. They serve as avenues for the communication of information from a single source to a sizable, scattered, and multifaceted audience. According to Nwosu (1996), referenced in Afamuefuna (2007), "mass media" refers to the means of delivering messages through distance or time. Due to the media's significance in society, a large, scattered, diverse, and anonymous audience can interact simultaneously. Most people only rely on the mainstream media for their news, yet online media has transformed both the production of media and the audience's ability to access it. The main purpose of media is to give society a forum for information, education, and entertainment.

Elections are one of the key elements of democracy since they give eligible citizens the chance to vote and be elected. It serves as a tool for changing things or establishing new regimes. Elections are the main foundations that support and stabilise all democratic institutions, serving as the backbone of democracy. The election is a fundamental pillar that grants citizens the ability to rule and run for public office to take

charge of and control state affairs and resources, as noted by Baidoo, Dankwa, and Eshun (2018). The Clifford Constitution was in place when the first general election in Nigeria was held in 1923. This election signaled the start of a new era in Nigerian politics because it was the first occasion when citizens were able to take part in the democratic process and choose their leaders. June 12, 1993, Presidential Election was peaceful and credible in contrast to earlier elections that were tainted by widespread fraud, bloodshed, and intimidation. The presidential election was deemed to be the freest and most impartial in Nigerian electoral history.

Statement of the Problem

The current state of our election in Nigeria has left so much to be desired, evidence shows that the recent elections held in Nigeria is been characterized by election malpractices which include snatching of ballot boxes and vote-buying. Omeoyekwule, Onyibe, and Yalumo (2022) opine that many democratic countries now break election laws to ensure effective representation because of their excessive ambition for riches and power. For many political communities around the world, it is a matter of life or death because politicians are eager to acquire governmental leadership positions for personal gain. According to Baidoo, Dankwa, and Eshun (2018), using money and tangible rewards to sway voters is vote-buying. Since democracy was restored in Nigeria in 1999, vote-buying has become a common practice that is used in both primary and general elections. The advantages of democracy are being compromised as a result of this democratic insubordination, and a price is being paid. In a political community that embraces vote buying, the interest of the electorate may not be represented.

However, despite the importance of the media in curbing the vote-buying in Nigeria, from the literature reviewed, there was no evidence that a study investigated the perception of voters to media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying in Southwest, Nigeria, moreover, previous studies on media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying adopted quantitative studies, Santas et al (2022), Leight et al (2020), Bahamonde & Canales (2022). Therefore, it has become imperative to investigate the perception of voters to media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What was the level of exposure of voters in Osun State to media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying during the 2022 gubernatorial election?
2. What influence did media enlightenment campaigns have on voters' decision to participate in vote-buying during the Osun State 2022 gubernatorial election?
3. What were the perception of Osun State voters towards media enlightenment

campaigns against vote buying during the 2022 gubernatorial election?

Review of Related Literature

Media Enlightenment Campaigns

One of the most important methods for people to connect in any culture is through communication. It is only through the use of communication that is realizable for individuals from diverse heterogeneous backgrounds to live together, which is the essence of society. In any given culture, the socialisation of its members involves communication. In this study, communication is defined as more than just the exchange of information; it also refers to the process of influencing beliefs, ideas, and perceptions as well as changing behaviour or attitudes. When it comes to information and education, the public views the media in high regard. According to McQuail (2010), whenever the media impact society, they also bring about change. Hence, communication has the potential to have a significant impact on how the general public perceives a range of life concerns.

Media education campaigns on vote buying can take any shape, including radio jingles, television advertisements, newscasts, Public Service Announcements, children's programming, and more. Knowing that people's sentiments towards the outlawing of vote-buying are influenced by how much airtime or space the media devote to stories about the Enlightenment campaign. As it were, people's opinions and perceptions regarding a range of topics in life are shaped by their high levels of media dependence and exposure.

To put it succinctly, the degree of media dependence is a crucial factor in explaining why audience members' opinions, emotions, or actions change. Ojo, Afam, and Mustapha (2020) believe that television has done a good job of fulfilling its legal obligation to inform voters about the risk of vote-buying during elections. However, their findings show that corruption, a breach of professional and ethical standards, as well as ownership influence, hinder the effectiveness of television as a platform for enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying during elections.

Vote-Buying and Election Process In Nigeria

The word vote is a nascent concept and was coined from the Latin word *votum* and old English word *buy*. Voting means to select, elect, support, and back. The idea of voting also includes the formal declaration of a person's preference. According to Dickson, Salihu, and Danjuma (2020), buying refers to purchase, acquisition, bargaining, or contract. It also includes the act of receiving something in exchange for money. There is no established definition of vote buying. Many scholars tend to define it in various ways. Vote buying, according to Bello (2017), is the practice of bribing voters in exchange for their vote using cash or other valuables.

Uwamahoro (2018), viewed vote-buying as an isolated incident that encourages corruption throughout the entire political system. Vote-buying occurs when a political actor, who is the buyer, decides to pay for support rather than competing honestly for votes. It affects democratic mechanisms including appearance, legitimacy, and trustworthiness. Money politics and this idea go hand in hand. Mogaji & Musa (2022) see vote-buying as a reward offered to a person for casting a specific kind of vote. In an election, voters engage in a financial transaction whereby they sell their votes to the candidate who offers the highest price.

Vote-buying, however, is a topic that is becoming increasingly popular due to its growing global expansion. Khemani (2015) asserts that the evidence demonstrates that where politicians buy electoral support by targeted transfers, they are likely to barter it off against the delivery of broader public services that impoverished people rely on. A blow to free and fair elections has been dealt with by the diversity that votes buying has brought to elections across boundaries. The willingness of the electorates to engage in national elections declines, according to Carreras & Irepoglu's (2013) argument.

Vote-buying has gotten so bad in Nigeria that candidates for political office are now extending their inducements' tentacles to election officials, security agents, and even the media. This explains why the situation in Nigeria has raised concerns and sparked scholarly discussion. Nkwede & Abah (2019) opine that vote-buying appears to have taken centre stage in Nigeria's political process. They believe that voters exchange their votes for particular results that are significant to them. One in five Nigerians, particularly those living in rural areas, reportedly received a vote offer, according to Bratton, 2008, cited in Nkwede & Abah (2019). Nigerian politicians provide prizes in the form of cash, goods like rice, bread, salt, onions, and groundnut oil, as well as souvenirs like umbrellas, bags, and other priceless items. Olaito (2018) argues that the Nigerian election season can be compared to a time of giving and receiving, with a lot of commercial activity occurring during the day.

Nonetheless, many academics believe that there is a connection between vote-buying and the benefits of democracy. Vote buying and democratic dividends in Nigeria are significantly associated with Omeonyekwule, Onyibe, and Yalumo (2022). It also suggested that in Nigeria, partisan allegiance and vote buying had a strong association. Ogbonna, Ufomba & Solomon (2022), claim that vote-buying in Nigeria is a lamentable phenomenon that bedevils both the electorates and the drive for democratisation. The dysfunctional civic processes that result in citizens misappropriating political priority are what lead to vote buying.

Similarly, Osimen & Uloh (2022) opined that vote-buying politics has a great setback on voting behaviour and democratic governance in Nigeria, they argue that vote-buying is consistent with the continued materialisation and commercialization of

party politics in Nigeria wherein electioneering and partisan relations are framed in a manner that translates to economic exchange. Furthermore, Jimoh (2021) in his study on vote buying and its implication on democratic governance in Nigeria: A Study of Ondo State 2020 Governorship Election, the author found that vote-buying and issuance of material gifts to electorates during elections influenced the voting pattern and is rife among the downtrodden and therefore, pose a very big challenge to all stakeholders in Nigeria electoral system particularly (INEC). According to the study's findings, voters accept bribes even if they are aware of the harm electoral corruption can do to democracy. In a similar vein, Ejue & Etika (2018) assert that democracy is the best form of government and that we should safeguard it by rejecting vote buying, they opined this in their research of radio as a real instrument for educating the people about the implications of vote-buying and selling in Nigerian elections.

Similar to a traditional marketplace, politicians, political parties, and party representatives are the vote sellers, while prospective voters are the buyers. The market component that affects the value or price of a vote is the degree of politicians' desperation to win in a certain voting unit during an election. Only affluent people fight for political jobs since it is so expensive to run for office. The electoral authority tasked with overseeing and controlling the costs of candidates has not been active in carrying out this duty because no visible vote buyers and sellers in Nigeria have received the punishment associated with them in the 2022 Electoral Act. The 2022 Electoral Act, Article 121, A person who – (a) corruptly by himself or by any other person at any time after the date of an election has been announced, directly or indirectly gives or provides or pays money to or for any person to corruptly influence that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting at such election, or on account of such person or any other person having voted or refrained from voting at such election, or (b) being a voter, corruptly accepts or takes money or any other inducement during any of the period stated in paragraph (a) of this section, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N500,000 or 12 months imprisonment or both. Despite (INEC's) stance on vote-buying, reports from the 2019 general election and the 2022 gubernatorial elections in Ekiti and Osun States show that the Electoral Act is rapidly becoming a common occurrence. The term "vote-buying" has become increasingly popular in academic and journalistic circles in Nigeria since the start of the Fourth Republic, and has played a significant role in recent elections.

It was widely reported that vote-buying took place during July 16, 2022, Osun State governorship election between members of the two major political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). These two groups were charged with providing between ₦5,000 and ₦10,000 to each voter in nearly every polling unit in the state. Nigerian election politics are increasingly characterised by the

impunity of vote-buying, as political parties compete with one another over the sums given to voters.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts two theories; the Social Responsibility theory and Political Economy approach as a basis for analysis. According to the social responsibility theory, the press must serve society by performing several crucial mass communication tasks. This theory which contends that freedom and responsibility are intertwined was employed in this study. It is used in this study to evaluate the media's social responsibility efforts to launch awareness campaigns against vote-buying in Nigeria. One of the agents of socialization is the media, this is because they bring about the necessary social transformation for a good impact on the planet, Eribo (2017).

Moreover, the media has played and continues to play a crucial part in the awareness-raising effort against vote-buying. The decrease in the prevalence of vote buying and selling during the July 16, 2022, gubernatorial election in Osun State State may be evidence that the mass media's campaign to raise awareness of the negative effects of vote buying is having the desired effect on our society, thereby justify the support for the use of social responsibility theory of the media in this study.

Dialectical materialism and the political economy approach have similarities. Dialectical materialism, in Marz's opinion, attaches significance to the social environment's material and economic conditions. It is predicated on the idea that people are often driven by economic needs. According to Ojo, Afam, and Mustapha (2020), because the poor are subjected to poverty, the rich dominate the country's economic strength and utilise it to sway the opinions of the general public when it comes to voting. Nkwede and Abah (2019) argued that it is therefore not surprising that political rivalry that is engaged to dominate state power can generate significant heat and hostility and encourage extra-constitutional behaviour in the form of electoral malpractices. The importance of this theory to this study is that all electoral frauds, including vote-buying in Nigeria, have their roots in politicians' struggles to gain and control state authority and use it for their financial gain.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method. The method used was an in-depth interview. A qualitative approach (in-depth interview) was chosen because it provided a comprehensive account of the phenomenon from the respondents.

Research Design

This study employed qualitative approach using in-depth interview, this method

involves detailed and open ended discussion with participants.

Population of the Study

Population, according to Sambo (2005), is the collection of all elements, objects, or events that are relevant to a certain study. The population frame for this study consisted of accredited voters in Osogbo Local Government, Osun State. These individuals were chosen for the study because they cast ballots in the Osun state gubernatorial election in 2022. As a result, they offered pertinent data on media initiatives to educate the public about vote-buying, which was used to address the research objectives posed in this study. Since there are 56,020 frames in total, there are 56,020 frames in this study.

Sample Size

For this study that used in-depth interviews, fifteen participants were selected from Osogbo Local Government to gain in-depth knowledge of the experiences of voters. They have participated in previous elections and exposed to vote-buying. Kadiri (2015) opines that the number of informants is irrelevant as long as the researcher reaches the saturation point in the interrogation. The rule in this type of research is the persistent need to attain saturation which is important in conducting qualitative research.

Research Instrument

This study used one on one interviews to get quality information from each informant. The interview questions were designed as open-ended questions. The process enabled the informants to ventilate their ideas, and share their experiences, using the mode of expression they know how to use best (Seidman, 2012).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Fifteen informants were interviewed within Osogbo metropolis. Eight males and seven females.

Theme 1: Exposure To Media Enlightenment Campaigns Against Vote-Buying

Voter exposure to media education campaigns on vote buying is a fundamental responsibility demanded of any serious medium; it is a way of sensitising the electorate to the dos and don'ts before, during, and after the election. Most of the informants explained that they were exposed to different media campaigns against vote buying on different radio and television stations around them. Different programs were dedicated by media houses to educate the electorates about the dangers attached to vote buying.

Media enlightenment campaigns are a way to sensitize people about the

election, and whom to vote for. Media are enlightening people against vote-buying both on Television and Radio. It depends on the acceptability of the people they are enlightening, Informants 2, 4, 5,7,11,12, 14. Many people are exposed to media campaigns against vote buying through different adverts sponsored by some Non-Governmental Organisations, encouraging people not to sell their future and their votes, it is a commendable exercise, Informant 1.

Theme 2: Influence of Media Enlightenment Campaigns on Voters' Decision to participate in Vote-Buying

Media enlightenment campaigns did not influence to a great extent the decision of voters on whom to vote for, Informant 3, 8, 13. Informant 4 opines that "You know that media has a way of setting agenda for the society, the constant programmes on radio and television stations against vote buying kept on ringing on my ears when I was asked to sell my vote and I decline, I did not sell my vote". According to informant 3, she believes that due to the level of poverty in the society and corruption on the side of the leaders, media enlightenment campaigns against vote buying had a negative influence on the voters because many voters sold their votes during Osun State gubernatorial election,...in my polling unit, voters were asked to snap their ballot papers as an evidence to claim the money after the election. Few people have been influenced by media enlightenment campaigns against vote buying. Informant 7, explains that the media influenced her decision to vote buying because many radio stations during Osun 2022 Gubernatorial election spoke against voters selling their votes. "Despite all the messages coming from media against vote buying many people still sold their votes for money," Informant 15. It is a fact that the media is setting the agenda for the masses and encouraging people on what to do according to Informant 9, she opines that no matter any media campaign against vote buying, voters that will collect money will still collect but the media should keep on speaking against vote buying, it can only be reduced, it cannot be eradicated in present Nigeria due to corruption and non-performance of our elected leaders.

Theme 3: Perception of Osun State Electorate on Media Enlightenment Campaigns against Vote Buying during the 2022 Gubernatorial Election

Voters have different perceptions to vote buying during the election. Some of them see nothing wrong in selling their votes while others condemn the act in its entirety. Informant 12, opines that the money given by politicians to voters is too little which cannot buy a bag of rice, she opines that the money is not compensation to the electorates because if a voter sells his or her vote, the person will suffer for it for the next four years.

The above statement shows the level of decadence in Nigeria, many people

believe that there is nothing like vote buying as they see government money as something that belongs to all of them. It is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the marrow of Nigeria's citizenry. There are collaborations to the above informants' perceptions, according to informant 15 "There are some people that have been influenced not to sell their vote, whereas there are some who are catching fun, seeing it as a national cake, let me just take my own, this is the one I can get, let me take it. I know that there is a lot of anger in the land, if the anger did not translate to Nigerians getting it right now, there might be no difference, more so, there is a cash crunch in the land".

Informant 4 corroborated the opinion of Informant 15 that "there is corruption in our society which makes citizens sell their votes during the election. Everybody in Nigeria is corrupt. Furthermore, in a contrary opinion, informant 3 believed that although many voters wanted to sell their votes during Osun State gubernatorial election, they were denied of this because police officers on duty forbid vote-buying and selling in my polling unit.

Discussion of Findings

This study evaluated voters' perception of the media enlightenment campaign against vote-buying during the Osun State 2022 gubernatorial election. The first objective sought to establish the level of exposure to media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying during the Osun State 2022 Gubernatorial election. Based on the data obtained, it is evident that voters' level of exposure to media enlightenment campaigns on vote buying is high. The findings agree with the result of Abdulai, Ibrahim & Mashoud (2020) which state that society relies on the media for information before and during elections to make informed decisions as well as sets agendas for the electorates on issues they consider important during elections. In the entire election process, the media plays an important role.

Similarly, the second objective of this study sought to examine the influence of media enlightenment campaigns on voters' decision to participate in vote-buying during the 2022 Osun State gubernatorial election. The findings to a large extent show that media did not have a high influence on voters' decision against vote buying through different sensitization programmes aired on media houses. This finding is not in agreement with the agenda-setting theory of the mass media which says that mass media indirectly determine what issues are important in society through the prominence they accord to the different issues that make up the editorial content of newspapers and broadcast media.

In addition, the study found that the perception of the informants to media enlightenment campaigns against vote buying during the Osun State 2022 Gubernatorial election was negative. Most of the informants thought that the collection

of money before voting for a particular candidate is not wrong, this shows that the media campaign against vote-buying was less effective. This is consistent with findings in a study by Galadima (2019) on the assessment of newspaper coverage of the 2018 voter registration exercise which indicates that Nigerian newspapers' coverage of the exercise was low and less effective.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the voters' perception of media enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying during the Osun State 2022 Gubernatorial election. Because media campaigns heavily influenced voters' choices during the election, the researchers' findings showed that there was a significant amount of exposure to media enlightenment efforts before and during the election. The research revealed that social media, radio, and television were the primary means through which the voters obtained information on vote buying. Similarly, respondents agreed that media campaigns influenced the electorates' decision not to participate in vote selling. However, the audience's perception of media campaigns was less effective in the exercise. Based on these findings, the study concluded that electorates were exposed to media enlightenment campaigns, but their perception of the media campaigns before and during voting in the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State was less effective. Based on the findings from the results of the analysis and the conclusion drawn, the study recommended as follows:

1. The media should sustain their public enlightenment and sensitisation programmes for the electorates to enhance their exposure to the menace of vote-buying during elections.
2. The media should be redesigned and restructured their communication strategies in a manner that radio, television, social media, opinion leaders, and Non-Governmental Agencies will be effectively utilised in mobilizing the electorates not to participate in future election malpractice exercises.
3. The different media houses should introduce different strategies that will enhance the effectiveness of the media in enlightening and sensitising the electorates to positively change their perception of the influence of media campaigns against vote-buying. Mass media should consistently campaign against vote buying in Nigeria until the menace is curbed.
4. Voters should report any form of inducement to the appropriate agencies or authorities to ensure that they are punished, if they do so, it will go a long way to stem the plague.
5. Further studies on this study should be conducted using mixed methods and enlarge the scope of the study.

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