

Social Media Communications and National Security: A Study of the EndSARS Saga in Nigeria

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Abstract : Social media communicates information quicker than any other medium, resulting in all kinds of content reaching massive audiences, including news, false statements, images, disinformation, and hate speech. Since its inception as an online communication medium that provides audiences with information, education, and entertainment, among others, social media has been a resource to humanity with far-reaching beneficial advantages for the entire globe. The study examined the implications of social media communications on national security, with a focus on EndSARS-related communications on social media. The survey research design was used in the study. The sample procedures used in this study were purposive and simple random sampling. A sample size of 385 was drawn from the population using the Cochran sample determining method. The study sample consisted of 385 participants (161 males and 224 females) from the five states in Southeast Nigeria. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using a t-test and an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings revealed that the audience to a high extent participated in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria; EndSARS communications on social media had a negative influence on Nigeria's security, posed threats to citizens' lives and properties, degraded national unity and peaceful co-existence, triggered chaos in Nigeria, and created a dichotomy among Nigerian youths. Some of the factors that contributed to the level of influence of EndSARS social media communications on national security include the participation of reputable personalities and celebrities, the display of inciting images, exaggerations, and hate speech.

Key words: Social media, Social media communications, National security, Protest, EndSARS Saga.

Introduction

The evolving nature of technology has over the years caused continuous shift in communication processes and information exchange. In the early years, the indigenous media—town crier, smoke signals, symbols, face-to-face communication, and the beating of drums and trumpets, among others—were the prominent means of communication before the emergence of what is known today as traditional media (Shin, 2010). Consequently, the traditional methods of communicating with people are still useful in our society today. Even though there has been an incessant increase in the use of new media for communication purposes (Nsude & Onwe 2017) especially in dissemination of information. Consequently, the evolution of information distribution has switched from conventional to modern communication via digital resources over time (Rosmani, Mutalib & Sarif, 2020).

Communication, which is the dissemination of information from the source to the recipient, is very important to human existence in the sense that life would be boring without it. In support of this statement, Nsude (2017) asserts that the time will come when philosophers will argue that man was made by the media. As a result of advancements in communication technology, we now live in a global village, and the rate at which information is disseminated surpasses that of the traditional media. To this end, penetration of social media within the nooks and crannies of modern society is overwhelming (Amana & Attah, 2014). Thus, social media use is more prevalent compared to the assimilation of other media that preceded it (Amana et al., 2014). The adoption of social media platforms for communication and expression is becoming increasingly common among all individuals. New kinds of media, such as social media, promote user participation in an interactive manner. It fulfils different communication needs for different users (Al-Rahimi, Othman, & Musa, 2013; Popoola, 2014).

The emergence of social media as a new platform for online communication has brought about a sea change in the way people access and share information online (Ali, Yaacob, Endut & Langove, 2017). In the early days of social media, discussion forums and online social platforms made it possible for people to interact, exchange ideas on issues, and communicate with one another (Hamade, 2013). In today's contemporary digital society, social media play an important role. Content that is relevant to the user's needs is available at the time and place they need it (Adesina, 2016). Social media as a computer-mediated tool and platform are designed to facilitate the creation of profiles as well as the explicit and implicit mapping of relationships (Shin, 2010). Interactions facilitated by computer-mediated technologies make communication easier by enabling users to remain connected with friends and family in a time and effort-saving manner, to gain

knowledge about social events, and to gather information about the activities of other users (Popoola, 2014). Some of these platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Every day, millions of individuals utilise each of these social media platforms for a wide range of purposes (Al-Rami et al., 2014; Iwamoto & Chun, 2020).

Social media are forms of electronic communication that facilitate interaction based on interests and characteristics (Acholonu, 2013). They include web- and mobile-based technologies that are used to turn communication into interaction among individuals, communities, and organisations. Social media, as a form of technological communication channel, allows users to interact with one another on issues of common interest. However, Hamade (2013) stated that the advantages of social media or the characteristics that distinguish them from other media include: They are easily accessible, relatively cheap, and even sometimes free; they allow everyone, including individuals, to publish and access information; they are decentralised media with a minimum hierarchy, which is distinguished by multiple points of production and use; social media guarantee prompt and immediate response; they require less specialised skill and technical training; once access is gained, they could be operated by anyone with less difficulty. Research has shown that a higher percentage of people are on the new media platforms, especially the social media, which comprise Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, among others. Statistics from Internet World Stats cited in Ministry Group (2019) state that in December 1995, the number of internet users was 16 million, constituting 0.4% of the entire population, but in June 2019, there had been an increment to 4.422 billion users, who form 57.3% of the world population. The statistics simply show that there has been advancement in internet usage (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame & Watson, 2011), more especially in the aspect of social media communication. This study has its focus on social media communications, which constitute a part of new media communications. Social media communications involve interactive participation that occurs in the new media (Kietzman, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre 2011). Social media communications could also mean web-based conversations and relationships.

The primary concern is to highlight the potentials of social media in enhancing human interaction in contemporary times. Given that social media is more accessible and more user-friendly, which by extension makes it very interactive among users; its place in the realm of information sharing is undoubtedly central. Apart from serving as a platform for mass information, mass education, and mass entertainment, social media remains a useful platform for advocacy, campaigns, and mass mobilisation towards a certain interest or course of action. To this end, social media have widened the scope of communication and heralded a lot of positive changes as they enable people to know what is happening

within and outside their environment (Asogwa, 2020). However, concerns have been raised about the negative impact of these media on national security. Due to the accessibility and unrestricted nature of social media, the spread of fake news is on the rise. It serves a dual purpose in Nigeria since it provides citizens with unlimited access to information (Obi-Ani, Anikenze & Isiani, 2020; Abdullateef, 2021). People also tend to discuss issues on social media that are capable of triggering unrest and tampering with the peace of the nation.

EndSARS is a grass-roots social movement in Nigeria that opposes police brutality. It was a demand that the federal government of Nigeria disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Dambo, Olonode, Arikewuyo, and Joseph, 2020). The demonstration was initially organised on Twitter in 2017 under the hashtag #EndSARS, with the intention of demanding that the government of Nigeria disband the force. As a result of the resurgence in October 2020, massive rallies were held in Nigeria's major cities, and the associated hashtag received more than 28 million tweets (Amnesty International, 2020). Similarly, no movement had been made against Nigeria's police brutality prior to the EndSARS protest (Adesina, 2016). The Nigerian police force conducted a campaign against citizen brutality. The result of the campaign is that maltreatment of Nigerian citizens is rampant among law enforcement agencies in Nigeria. Years after that report, Amnesty International (2020) argues that ill-treatment of citizens is widespread, especially within the SARS unit of the Nigerian police force.

Their primary assignment is to detect and prevent robbery; however, some of its members have been found taking unlawful actions that endanger the lives of Nigerians (Dambo et al., 2020). Even though the Nigerian police force is saddled with the responsibility of executing the law, they are associated with corruption, brutality, and poor recruitment practises (Ayoyo, 2018). In Nigeria, this abuse of power is said to be targeted towards the youths (Adesina, 2016). According to the reports, the youth were the most affected. Scholars from different research projects have demonstrated that Nigerian youth protest on social media as well as in the streets against police brutality and for further reform in Nigeria (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020; Ekoh & George, 2021). Subsequently, the #EndSARS protest was orchestrated by undue maltreatment, harassment, and wanton extrajudicial killings of innocent citizens by some SARS unit members (Akoni, Adelaja, Abubakar, Ajayi, & Ewepu, 2020). The abuse of power also heralded the EndSARS protest via social media platforms.

In a manner analogous to this, on October 3, 2020, the hashtag #EndSARS began trending once more on a variety of social media platforms. The video that showed a SARS official shooting a young guy in Ughelli, Delta State, and throwing his body out of the car

before escaping with the deceased Lexus SUV sparked this demonstration. (Effoduh, 2020; Ekoh et.al, 2020). Nevertheless, the 2020 protest was a response to prior assurances in 2014, 2015, and 2017 that SARS would be demobilised, but nothing was done in those three years.

However, SARS officers continued to commit armed robbery, other acts of torture, and extrajudicial killings. This protest was further harnessed by the Lekki toll gate massacre, where over 50 people were killed (Amnesty International, 2020; Ekoh et al., 2020) who were involved in the demonstration. Even in the face of death, Nigerian youths are not backing down from their dreams of rebuilding. They are fighting for a change in the Nigerian system. It is a demand for existence, a chance for Nigerians to reset their nation (Effoduh, 2020). Thus, the Nigerian nation is exposed to a security threat. Nigerians exposed their experience of SARS members engaging in extortion, abduction, murder, robbery, abuse, torture, unfair arrests, mockery, and extrajudicial killings on social media, along with video footage of these crimes (Caleb, 2020). This unrest resulted in the deaths of protesters, the burning and destruction of public and private property, and presented a threat to national security.

Suffice to say, national security borders on incidents that endanger human existence or welfare. National security is defined as the safeguarding of a country's resources, cultural integrity, territorial integrity, and legal systems (Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016). The essence of national security is to protect the just and equitable living conditions for all the citizens of the country and the peace of human life. National security includes being free from danger or threats to a country's stability in order to safeguard the nation, advance its ideals, and improve the quality of life for its citizens (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013).

There has been a significant shift in the communication landscape since the rise of internet-based communication platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Communication has been simplified by overcoming time and space constraints for users on communication platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Nsude, 2017). Social media platforms are helpful in combating security challenges (Benson, 2014). On the other hand, arguments have been raised that social media platforms may threaten national security. Because national security is essential to a country's growth and prosperity, stopping the spread of disinformation is a top priority (Madu, Aboyade, & Ajayi, 2019). From the perspective of national security, the anonymizing features of social media platforms pose a significant threat (Al Naqbi et al., 2022). In a similar vein, Al-Labban (2016) argued that the proliferation of damaging ideas and a toxic culture, such as violence and terrorism, through social media had a negative impact on the public's view

of national security. Dahiru and Mohammed (2021) found that problems with security in the country are getting worse because people don't know how to use new media well. So, the authors said that Nigerian media should pay more attention to how they report on conflicts and that a well-coordinated communication strategy that uses new media should be put into place. Al-Huwaish (2017) emphasises the governance problems with social media, contending that when social media channels or platforms are not managed by laws or frameworks that regulate the material conveyed and circulated through them, a new national security threat is enabled. Norri-Sederholm, Norvanto, Talvitie-Lamberg, and Huhtinen (2019) studied how young people's use of social media affects their sense of personal safety and security. The authors anticipate that the findings will enrich the diverse scientific knowledge on young people's varied kinds of agency in this area and add to the academic debate on the connection between social media and one's sense of safety and security. The authors also aimed to uncover and make sense of the elements that shape, restrict, and govern the manner in which young people take in and make sense of the current flows of (mis)information on social media. The findings are expected to lead to expanded national preventive activities, which in turn will keep young people feeling safe. Social media also serve as platforms that could influence communications or interactions on national security (Asogwa, 2020).

The foregoing expresses concern generally about the challenges and benefits of social media platforms, regarding national security. Not much, if any, has focused specifically on the implications of social media communications on Nigerian security, with a focus on the EndSARS saga in Nigeria. Hence, the need for this study was to ascertain the implications of social media communications on national security with a focus on the EndSARS saga in Nigeria and specifically to: determine the extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria; examine the influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria; and ascertain the factors that contributed to the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security. To achieve this, efforts were made by way of survey to ascertain the extent to which the audience participated in the EndSARS saga through their communication through posts, blogs, responses to posts and blogs, or any other form on Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp, among others. Furthermore, efforts were made to find out the level of influence of social media communication, such as posts and comments, on the audience's actions. Audience actions could, apart from posts, comments, blogs, and others, inform of participation in rallies and protests and how these influenced national security.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between EndSARS related social media communications and national security.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of the respondents of various age groups on influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

Literature Review

Social media, as discussed, is part of new technologies that have the capacity to mobilise people for a particular cause. The use of social networks is increasingly central to everyday life in that these platforms have proven to be inevitable as they are tools through which people interact with each other.

The rise of numerous social media platforms can be attributed to the increasing popularity of the internet. In addition to providing a variety of information on public affairs and politics, social media also makes it easier for audiences to participate in and have discussions about topics of interest by offering online forums in which individuals may share their perspectives (Olley & Ekharrafo, 2013; Uji, 2015). Similarly, in audience participation, Uji (2015) investigated the influence of social media on Nigerian youth participation in socio-political problems. According to the findings, a significant number of young people are spending time online and taking part in social media debates on socio-political issues that are relevant to the nation. By doing so, they are advancing the cause of good governance by becoming more informed on a variety of topics and raising awareness about those topics through the use of e-publicity and protests.

Positively, social media has expanded people's horizons and facilitated favourable social, cultural, scientific, and political shifts (Saleh, 2017). However, Akram and Kumar (2017) argue that social media plays a fundamental and strategic role in shaping the values of citizen status and commitment because it provides a platform for broadcasting the state's values and the achievements of Western civilization to the world and, by extension, for using psychological appeals to win over the hearts and minds of the public, especially the young. This systematic broadcast of messages through social media to acquire support from young people in order to affect the national security of the state in many ways (political, economic, moral and religious, cultural, and societal) is a problem that Al Naqbi, Al Momani, and Davies (2022) found to exist.

Similarly, Chang and Park (2020) conducted a study on citizens' use of social media and how it influenced their participation in highly polarising protests during the

2016–2017 corruption scandal in South Korea. The researchers were interested in how citizens' use of social media influenced their participation in these protests. The findings demonstrated that the usage of social media produced additional incentives for individuals to join in both pro-impeachment and anti-impeachment protests throughout the crisis. Citizens who were using social media were more likely to participate in protests. Participation in competing protests prompted many motivated protesters to boost their side's voices online, which is particularly significant when considering the significance of social media as a platform for political action. The research also came to the conclusion that the use of social media and involvement in competing protests influence each other in a circular fashion.

In addition to this, the subject of the influence that communications through social media can have on national security has been similarly examined by certain scholars. Olasya (2016) investigated the use of social media by the security agencies in preventing or eliminating threats to Kenya's national security, as well as diverse measures that have been put in place to curb and minimise the negative effects of social media on the national security. The author found that the primary way in which security agencies use social media to improve national security is by communicating with the general public, the use of open source intelligence gathering and public diplomacy, both of which are also intended to improve national security. Both of these studies are comparable in that they investigated the effects that communications through social media have on national security.

In same vein, Nsude and Onwe (2017) examined the concept of social media as it relates to security challenges in Nigeria and also proffered the way forward. The researchers argued that the numerous benefits of social media as x-rayed in the study show that social media are used to combat security threats and also to perpetrate crime. According to the study's findings, social media has had a substantial impact on Nigeria's security worries.

Similarly, Dairo (2017) x-rayed the Nigerian perspective on the link between national security and communication. There is a strong correlation between communication within a country and national security, with the latter having a significant impact on information disseminated by various societal institutions, including the media, according to the study's findings. This is in relation to this present study in that both examined the interrelationship between communication and national security.

Furthermore, Chukwuere and Onyebukwa (2018) investigated the impact of social media communications on the security concerns affecting Nigeria's northern and southern regions. The researchers discovered that social networking poses no threat to Nigerian national security, yet the country's security atmosphere is dire.

Ogbette, Enwemeka, and Okoh (2019) conducted a study in Nigeria on the relationship between social media and national security. The study's findings revealed that the Nigerian Communications Act 2003 is not very effective in terms of regulating social media in Nigeria, particularly in the area of content sharing; the Freedom of Information Act is not well enforced; and the Nigerian Communications Commission lacks a technological foundation through the provision of a gateway to control the information space, as it does in developed countries around the world. This is pertinent to the current study since they both address the impact of social media communications on national security.

As a result, Asogwa (2020) study created a substantial link between network communication channels and national security, as well as specific ways in which internet use could jeopardize national security. However, internet-based communication channels may also be helpful for raising public awareness of national security threats and raising people's awareness of related issues.

Understandably, there are certain factors that were responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security. Studies were carried out in relation to the above statement. In a study by Odvwri (2020) on hate speech, intergroup relations and national security in Nigeria, the study examined the relationship among the above mentioned variables. The findings of the study showed that hate speech encourages hatred, promotes disunity, violence, a threat to national integration and poses serious security challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Technological Determinism Theory serves as the theoretical underpin of this study. Marshal McLuhan first proposed this theory in 1964, and it describes how the rise of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has changed the ways in which we receive, store, and disseminate information today. This theory puts emphasis on one key variable in an attempt to explain historical and social occurrences (technology). When societies progress from one technological epoch to the next, we can determine from the technological determinism theory how those societies' members believe, react, and conduct themselves. This theory posits that information technologies shape every aspect of our life and how society operates from one technology age to another. Nsude and Onwe (2017)

state that this theory best explains the impact of ICTs on how information is consumed retrieved and disseminated in contemporary society. It draws attention to the strength of communication technologies in fostering human interactions. Nsude (2013) explains that the recent development in ICTs have immensely enhanced the area of human communication, making everyone information creator instead of mere receiver. As this applies, the theory emphasises the relationship between technology and everyday social existence. The theory holds that the manner or approach we take in dealing with societal issues is primarily determined and shaped by current technological advances. Social media is at the centre of our social existence and has influenced every aspect of our lives in contemporary times, including the way and means in which we interact. Hence, it was employed in the ENDSARS campaign to advocate, campaign, and mobilise the public in favour of a specific course of action. This theory is appropriate for this study because it explains the level to which technology influences our daily lives, as seen in the case of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria, which started on social media and sparked a movement that disturbed the peace and unity of Nigeria. Also since the arrival of technological advancements has altered social interactions, this theory is pertinent to the present study.

Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Context and Data Analysis

This study employed a survey research design. The self-administered questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. A cross-sectional study of respondents in south-eastern Nigerian states, which include Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia, and Ebonyi, with a population of 21,955,414 (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2017), formed the population of the study. These states were selected because of the high level of youth participation in social media communications in the States during the protest. Thus, descriptive statistics involving the mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. For inferential analyses, we used Student t-test for independent samples. Finally, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the grand mean describes the various age groups and various educational qualifications on the influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria to test the hypotheses.

Sample

A sample size of 385 was drawn from the population using Cochran sample determining method. The study sample consisted of 385 participants (161 males and 224 females) from the five selected areas who willingly agreed to participate and who correctly completed the instrument. Purposive and Simple random sampling techniques were used in this study because the researcher sought to collect data from those who understood the subject matter. All participants in the study are mainly youth between the

ages of 18-37 years. The questionnaire uses a four-point scale with the following values: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The reliability of the instrument was tested by distributing 20 copies of the questionnaire, and the reliability coefficient was checked through the Pearson reliability coefficient, which was 0.89. These copies of the questionnaire were conveniently distributed in the five states by the researchers with the help of two research assistants in each state for data generation over a period of two weeks to sample the opinions of social media users on the extent to which social media communications contribute to national security issues with a focus on the EndSARS protest in Nigeria. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 (the real limit is 2.50) or above was accepted for social media communications and national security: a study of the Enders Saga in Nigeria. Any item with a mean rating of less than 2.50 was seen as not suitable. If the probability value (P-value) of F is greater than or equal to the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses are not to be rejected; otherwise, the null hypotheses are to be rejected.

Result

1. Extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	EndSARS protest in Nigeria trailed more on twitter platform	3.44	0.73	Agree
2.	I diligently followed the EndSARS story on social media	3.13	0.72	Agree
3.	I saw pictures, videos, texts about the EndSARS protest in Nigeria on social media	3.46	0.64	Agree
4.	I shared EndSARS related texts and videos on social media during the protest	2.86	0.88	Agree
5.	I was engaged in EndSARS related discussions on social media	3.01	0.86	Agree
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	3.18	0.50	Agree

Key: \bar{X} –Mean, Std. Dev –Standard Deviation

The results in above Table 1 show that respondents agreed to all the items presented, that is, items 1 to 5, as it regards the extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria. Among the five items

presented, item 3 with a mean of 3.46 is the highest activity, while item 4 with a mean of 2.86 is the lowest activity that the audience participated in during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria. The grand mean rating is 3.18, which implies that, generally, the audience participated in all the suggested activities as regards social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria. The standard deviation ranged from 0.64 to 0.88, which showed that the respondents were not far from each other in their responses with respect to the extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria.

2. The influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	EndSARS communications on social media led to the protection of lives and properties	2.90	1.15	Agree
2.	EndSARS communications on social media promoted national unity and peaceful coexistence	2.74	1.04	Agree
3.	EndSARS communications on social media increased Nigerian economy	2.38	1.09	Disagree
4.	EndSARS communications on social media triggered chaos in Nigeria	3.25	0.82	Agree
5.	EndSARS communications on social media led to the interference of international community on Nigeria's security issues	2.99	0.87	Agree
6.	EndSARS communications on social media created dichotomy among Nigerian youths	2.95	0.71	Agree
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	2.87	0.65	Agree

Key: \bar{X} –Mean, Std. Dev –Standard Deviation

The results in Table 3 above show that respondents agreed to items 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 with a mean range of 2.74–3.25 while they disagreed to item 3 with a mean of 2.38 as it regards the influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria.

The grand mean rating of Table 3 is 2.87, which is agreeable and implies that generally all the items presented are about the influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria. The standard deviation ranged from 0.71 to

1.15, which showed that the respondents were not far from each other in their responses with respect to the influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria.

3. Factors responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of responses on factors responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	I think the involvement of some reputable personalities/ celebrities in the EndSARS discussion on social media intensified the protest	3.19	0.82	Agree
2.	Inciting/graphic images that were displayed during the EndSARS discussions on social media triggered the protest that led to Nigeria's security issues	3.17	0.70	Agree
3.	I think exaggeration and hate speech that occurred on social media during the EndSARS discussions endangered Nigeria's security	3.02	0.87	Agree
4.	I think misinformation on social media during EndSARS communications posed a threat to Nigerian security	3.17	0.89	Agree
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	3.14	0.59	Agree

Key: \bar{X} –Mean, Std. Dev –Standard Deviation

The result in above Table 3 shows that respondents agreed to all the items presented, that is, items 1–4 as it regards the factors responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security. Among the four items presented, item 1 with a mean of 3.19 is the highest factor, while item 3 with a mean of 3.02 is the lowest factor responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security.

The grand mean rating is 3.14, which implies that generally all the presented items are the factors responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security. The standard deviation ranged from 0.70 to 0.89, which showed that the respondents were not far from each other in their responses with respect to the factor responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security.

Test of Hypotheses 1

Ho₁: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of male and female audience/respondents on the extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the grand mean responses of male and female audience/respondents on the extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Dff	Mean diff.	t-value	p-value	Sig. Level	Remark	Decision
Males	161	3.04	0.56	383	-.2406	-4.79	0.000	0.05	S	Reject
Females	224	3.28	0.43							

Key: S = Significant, NS = Not Significant.

The result on Table 4 shows $t(2, 383) = -4.79, P = 0.000 < 0.05$. The table showed a t-value of -4.79 at 383 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there is a difference in the mean responses of male and female audience members or respondents on the extent of audience participation in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria.

Hypotheses Two:

Ho₂: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of the respondents of various age groups on influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of grand mean responses of the respondents of various age groups on influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria

	Sources of Variance	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Sig. Level	Remark	Decision
Between Groups	.946	3	.315	.743	.527	0.05	NS	Not Reject
Within Groups	161.625	381	.424					
Total	162.570	384						

Key: S = Significant, NS = Not Significant.

The analysis of the data presented in Table 5 above shows $F(3, 384) = 0.743$, $P = 0.527 > 0.05$. With a significant P value of 0.527, which is greater than the 0.05 alpha value at which it has been tested, the null hypothesis was not rejected. With this result, the age of respondents is not a source of difference in their grand mean ratings on the influence of social media communications on national security during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria.

Hypotheses Three:

Ho₃: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of the respondents of various educational qualifications on factor responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of grand mean responses of the respondents of various educational qualifications on factor responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security

	Sources of Variance	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Sig. Level	Remark	Decision
Between Groups	3.655	3	1.218	3.529	.015	0.05	S	Reject
Within Groups	131.542	381	.345					
Total	135.197	384						

Key: S = Significant, NS = Not Significant

The analysis of the data presented in Table 6 above shows $F(3, 384) = 3.529$, $P = 0.015 < 0.05$. With a significant P value of 0.015, which is less than the 0.05 alpha values at which it has been tested, the null hypothesis was rejected. With this result, the education qualifications of respondents are a source of difference in their grand mean ratings on the factor responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communication on national security.

Discussion

The findings with respect to research question 1 revealed that the audience participated to a high extent in social media communications during the EndSARS saga in Nigeria. This implies that the respondents were fully active in the EndSARS communications as they were of national interest. Their active participation could be linked to the high level of their educational attainment, as seen in the demographic data

(see table 3). This finding supports the postulation of the technological determinism theory that this study was anchored on. Furthermore, this finding resonates well with the assertion of Hamade (2013), who opines that social media, discussion forums, and online social platforms make it possible for people to interact, exchange ideas on issues, and communicate with one another.

Findings in research question 2 showed that EndSARS communications on social media had a negative influence on Nigeria's security. It posed a threat to citizens' lives and properties, demoted national unity and peaceful coexistence, triggered chaos in Nigeria, and created dichotomy among Nigerian youths. These threats affect Nigeria's security as protection of lives and properties, promotion of national unity and peaceful co-existence, and promotion of the Nigerian economy make up the objectives of Nigeria's national security strategy for 2019 under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The findings corroborate the findings of Dahiru and Mohammed (2021), who found that people's inability to effectively utilise modern media has been linked to a worsening of security issues in the country.

Findings in research question 3 showed that there are certain factors that are responsible for the influence of EndSARS social media communications on national security. Some of which include: involvement of reputable personalities or celebrities; displayed inciting images which exaggerations; and hate speech. According to the findings, these factors triggered the threats that social media communications posed to national security during the EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The findings are in tandem with the findings of Al Naqbi, Al Momani, and Davies (2022), who pointed out the issue of systematic broadcasting of messages via social media to garner support from young people in order to affect the national security of the state in a variety of ways (political, economic, moral and religious, cultural, and sociological). The result of the analysis showed that social media communications pose threats to national security. They could be used to fight national security. This result is consistent with that of Nsude and Onwe (2017), who reported that internet-based communications are inimical to national security, and contrary to Chukwuere and Onyebukwa (2018), who reported that social media communications have no negative implications for national security.

From the hypotheses tested, it is pertinent to note that EndSARS-related social media communications have a significant relationship with national security. The result showed that discussions on social media can be detrimental to national security. The result of this study has implications for the technological determinism theory, suggesting that advancements in technology have led to corresponding changes in approaches to addressing national security issues.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is obvious that social media communications played key roles and provided a useful platform for mass sensitization and mobilisation on the ills associated with police brutality in Nigeria during the EndSARS saga and, in the same view, posed serious security threats, including loss of lives and property and disruption of peaceful coexistence and national unity. It is vital to note that social media users should continue to use social media to advocate for favourable reform in Nigeria; however, it should be done in a more decent and peaceful way.

Theoretical Contribution

The study was anchored on the technological determinism theory. This theory simply states that technology drives society. In other words, the technology prevalent at any given time determines society's manner or course of action. The theoretical implication is that we are in an era of social media, and social media is at the centre of our daily activities, including information sharing, mass entertainment, education, and mobilisation, among others.

Practical Implication

The practical implication is that social media has been tested and is now trusted as a viable instrument for any form of communication engagement, such as the EndSARS SAGA.

Recommendations

1. There is need for social media users to maximize the use of social media but in a more decent way while clamouring for positive reforms in Nigeria.
2. Social media users need to be sensitized on the need to shun the spread of fake news, hateful comments that can trigger chaos which can lead to serious security challenges.
3. Influential personalities in Nigeria should be guided so as not to incite their followers towards activities that can endanger Nigeria's security.

Limitations of the Study/ Future Research

The study's weaknesses could be attributed to a small sample size or the fact that South East Nigeria was chosen as the study's focus rather than Nigeria as a whole. Instead of merely using quantitative data, the study could be expanded to include qualitative research. The conclusions of this study are based on a representative sample of the population, which is primarily made up of young individuals aged 18 to 37 and was not completely covered. Yet, the study sample's sampling is thought to have resulted in valid results. Only youths from Southeast Nigeria took part in the survey. The study might be repeated in other regions or geopolitical zones, such as the South-West, North Central, and South-South, to evaluate how consistent the results are with the study's conclusions. This will allow the findings to be used more extensively.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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