Use of Social Media Platforms for Citizen Journalism on Security Challenges in Nigeria among The Polytechnic Ibadan Students

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Abstract

The immediacy of social media gives citizens the ability to monitor real-world events and security issues and get immediate feedback that can help shape their responses and priorities, which can also be valuable in promoting security in general. Through its constant use, social media has played a significant role in fostering both positive and negative facets of insecurity. Therefore, this study investigated use of social media platforms and engagement in citizens' journalism regarding security challenges in Nigeria among The Polytechnic Ibadan Students. The study adopted descriptive survey research design; multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in the sample selection of 403 respondents. A validated instrument named; Citizen Journalism Social Media Questionnaire(r=0.874) was used for data collection; data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that students of The Polytechnic Ibadan made use of popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp (weighted $\bar{x}$ 1.40) respectively and engaged in online discussion of security challenges to a large extent using Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram, and others (weighted $\bar{x}$ 2.11). Also, there was no significant difference ($r = 0.053$, $p<0.05$) in level of engagement in online discussion on security challenges in Nigeria. Thus, the study concluded that The Polytechnic Ibadan students' social media use does not have any influence on security challenges in Nigeria. The study recommended that security information should be promptly disseminated virtually by security operatives to avoid spreading of fake security news through social media platforms.

Introduction

Social media is growing into a media convergence that allows people to share information online through the creation of virtual networks and communities. Social media is a computer-based application that enables the exchange of ideas, views, and knowledge. Social networking is Internet-based by nature, allowing users to share content quickly using electronic means. Personal details, notes, photographs, and images are also included in the material. Users interact with social media via web-based software or applications on a computer, tablet, or smartphone (Maya, 2021). Again, social networking began as a means to connect with friends and families, but it was quickly embraced by companies looking to reach out to consumers using a common new contact tool.

The freedom to communicate and exchange knowledge with everyone on the planet, or with a large number of people at once, is the strength of social media. There are over 3.8 billion social media users worldwide according to Digital Marketing Institute 2021. The number of people using social media in the United States is expected to reach 257 million by 2023. Younger people are most likely to use social media. Between the ages of 18 and 29, almost 90% of people used a form of social media. According to a recent survey, Nigeria had approximately 33 million active social media users. WhatsApp is the most popular platform used in the country, with over 90 million users. Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram followed as the most used media platforms in Nigeria. (Statista, 2022)

Notably a multitude of tech-enabled practices can be used as part of social media, such activities include picture posting, tweeting, social gaming, social networks, video sharing, business networks, virtual environments, feedback, and several other practices. Even governments and politicians use social media to communicate with constituents and voters according to Pew Research Centre 2021. Social media plays a significant role in assisting businesses. It enables blending social experiences on e-commerce platforms by facilitating contact with consumers. It helps in promoting products and services, as it enables the distribution of targeted, timely, and exclusive sales and coupons to would-be customers. Further, social media can help in building customer relationships through loyalty programs linked to social media.

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google Plus, Yahoo Messenger, Instagram, Pinterest, Classroom, Wikipedia, and others are examples of social media networking sites. The use of social media, as well as its tools and applications, has had an influence on the social, economic, educational, and political facets of human endeavors. Events and knowledge related to politics, society, morals, philosophy, and other subjects are practically debated, drawing huge crowds. In Nigeria, social media has played a significant role in fostering both positive and negative facets of insecurity; on the one hand, it has encouraged stability and, on the other hand, it has induced insecurity. Therefore, social media can be defined as the technologies that enhance social interaction, make possible cooperation, and enable sharing of information. Undoubtedly, social media can be seen as the most widely accepted technological invention in the 21st century. Social media is now a social communication norm in developing countries as it promotes positive and negative agendas (Ebere & Chijioke, 2018)

Consequently, terrorists, separatists, government organizations, religious parties, people and others use social media to distribute their knowledge and ideas around the world. They send videos of how they murder, torture, and even relay their plan and demand for ransom from the government and the public. In this situation, *Boko Haram (BH),* Fulani herdsmen, Niger Delta Avengers, and the agitation of the Sovereign Citizens of Biafra (IPOB) are all threatening Nigerian national security. Social media is a free-for-all communication medium that government officials have no leverage over. Invariably, social media has been used by the Boko Haram and IPOB communities to promote their practices. (Adamu, 2016)

The use of social media platform has revolutionized peer-to-peer, business-to-business, government-to-government engagements, and so on. Social media outlets are being used to advance social and national insecurity, such as in Nigeria's Northern and South-Eastern regions. Insurgent forces have engulfed the northern part of Nigeria with terrorism and propaganda for many years, while separatist groups have staged protests in the southeast. Any of these organizations use different types of online media to further their agenda, and the general public often uses social media sites to spread advertising, some of which are false (Ebere, 2018). This study seeks to ascertain the social media use, e.g. *Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp,* and other social media (SM) platforms, engagement in citizen journalism, and security challenges in Nigeria among The Polytechnic Ibadan Students.

Since independence, there have been reports of conflicts, unrest, ethnic cum communal clashes, and religious clashes in history and these have affected Africa's most populated country, Nigeria. The nation has failed to tackle the problems of significant ethnopolitical and religious threats. The nation Nigeria had co-existed as a heterogeneous group since independence, after the colonial amalgamation of 1914 (Adamu, 2016) This colonial arrangement saw over 500 ethnic groups, (the majority of which were the Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba) who spoke over 1,500 dialects and held diverse socio-cultural and religious values, with a population of 170 million people, faced with the challenges of living together in peace. To date, this arrangement has led to a lack of national identity and integration among Nigerians. (Adamu, 2016)

Therefore after 61 years of both military and democracy, Nigeria's greatest problem remains insecurity. However, after the Nigerian civil war, history has demonstrated that insecurity began with civilian access to weapons. The ongoing security challenges in Nigeria can be traced back to the wake of the civil war, which encouraged people to buy and use weapons and ammunition. Following the war, the weapons passed into the hands of civilians and ex-military men who had lost their jobs and needed to survive. In reality, Nigeria's insecurity has become a global issue, with no end in sight. In Nigeria, insecurity is multiple-faced. It can be as easy as political abuse, or it can be as hard as a decade-long extremist. As a matter of fact, Nigeria's security problems have grown into many strains over time. (Adeyeye, 2020)

Between 2012 and 2020, the security challenges resulted in as many as 70,000 deaths. The following are some of the losses of lives and properties insecurity has caused in Nigeria: insecurity caused over 70,000 deaths reported in Nigeria between 2012 and 2020 because, since 2011, Boko Haram insurgency has led to 37,500 deaths, 2.5 million displacements, and 244,000 refugees; in just two years, farmer-herder clashes claimed 10,000 lives and resulted in the displacement of 300,000 people, Nigeria has one of the world's worst kidnap-for-ransom with 685 kidnaps reported in the first quarter of 2019 alone, between June 2011 and March 2020, Nigerians paid about $18.34 million as ransom, militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta has resulted in kidnapping, unrest, and economic distortion.

Other security concerns include the ongoing conflict within Nigeria's Northeast and Southwest regions, as well as increasing instability in the northeast and southwest regions, as well as other areas of the country, which has resulted in an increase in violent crimes, banditry, and kidnappings.

Inter-tribal conflicts, religious divisions, unemployment, and a slew of other social and political frustrations are all fueling instability in Nigeria, generating flash points for violence and insecurity. However, there are some causes of insecurity in Nigeria which include; imposing bad Policies, unemployment, poverty, terrorism/suicide bombing, and kidnapping amongst others. A nation's elected government should be responsible for ensuring that the security sector is operated in compliance with democratic best practices and that security is delivered as a public need. The government is also responsible for the defense sector's operations from a strategic perspective and as a result, policymakers may need clear and comprehensive strategies as well as management systems to ensure that security policy and procedures are consistent and accountable. Government must therefore ensure that the regulatory bodies for each security sectors operation is comprehensive (Adeyeye, 2020)

The regulatory system for ministers, directorates, and security agencies must be established in accordance with standard practices and also ensure rule of law continuity. Legislation must specifically describe each security institution's duties and obligations, determine authorization protocols for administration, establish the applicability of internal rules and procedures, and also make sure the internal rules and procedures are followed. In addition, they should ensure that instruments exist for all stakeholders to communicate with and track security institutions, and define the legislative framework for each component's operation, the legal system must therefore integrate and promote civic and political authorities' access to information thereby ensuring that security institution personnel are held responsible before the legislation. (Uwabueze, 2020)

Statement of the Problem

Insecurity in Nigeria and the deliberate destruction of lives and properties have become a major threat that has portrayed itself as the greatest enemy of the nation to date because the nation, Nigeria, has failed to tackle the issue of ethnopolitical and religious conflicts happening on a daily basis. The media, which is important in the global war against terrorism and insecurity, has been used to fuel various types of terrorism and other illegal acts. Kidnappings, insurgency by Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen-community clashes have recently wrecked the Nigerian security infrastructure, with Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen group using social media to disseminate information to the general public because of less cost and easy access. As a result, the nation has faced multiple forms of ethnic, religious, socio-political, and cultural security threats, resulting in

property damage, loss of lives, and orphaning of many children, rendering many people homeless, known as Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and many people now live in fear of the unknown in Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated The Polytechnic Ibadan Students' Use of Social Media Platforms for Citizen Journalism on Security Challenges in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the social media platforms used by The Polytechnic Ibadan Students for online discussions on security challenges in Nigeria?

2. What is the extent of The Polytechnic Ibadan Students' social media engagement through online discussion on Security challenges in Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H_o1: There is no significant relationship between social media engagement and security challenges in Nigeria

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprises of students randomly selected from four different levels comprising ND1, ND2, HND 1, and HND2 from the faculty of Business and Communication studies of The Polytechnic having four departments namely: Mass Communication, Art and Design, Education and Political Science, Public Administration, and Computer Science, but the age bracket ranges from 18 and above. The population according to the preliminary data collected from the administrative department of the institution is estimated at 18,000.

Further, the study adopted multi-stage sampling procedure. The first stage involved the purposive selection of students and a combination of random and convenience sampling techniques will be conducted among the students in the institution. The next stage involved the random selection of departments based on their sense/judgment of communication. The sample was drawn from four departments, they are: Mass Communication, Computer Science, Business Administration, and Public Administration. The final stage involved the selection of students from the selected departments using snowballing sampling technique for ease in identifying students based on referral.

The sample for this study was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, the sample for the study involved 403 respondents. (Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents). The data for the study was collected using a questionnaire named "Citizen Journalism Social Media Questionnaire" (CiJoSoMeQ). The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded r=0.874

Data gathered was computed and analyzed using descriptive statistics; frequencies and percentages, mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents (N=403)

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	154	38.2%
	Female	213	52.9%
	Missing values	36	8.9%
Age	18 - 23yrs	234	58.1%
	24 - 29yrs	137	34.0%
	30 - 35yrs	20	5.0%
	36 – 40yrs	1	0.2%
	41 – 45yrs	-	-
	Missing values	11	2.7%
Course of Study	Computer	77	19.1%
	Mass Communication	195	48.4%
	Business Admin	18	4.5%
	Public Admin	113	28.0%
Marital Status	Single	347	86.1%
	Married	33	8.2%
	Separated	1	0.2%
	Divorced	5	1.2%
	Missing values	17	4.2%
Level	ND I	131	32.5%

	ND II	151	37.5%
	HND I	75	18.6%
	HND II	40	9.9%
	Missing values	6	1.5%
Religion	Christianity	256	63.5%
	Islam	130	32.3%
	Traditional	11	2.7%
	Missing values	6	1.5%

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

The demographic information revealed that four hundred and three (403) The Polytechnic Ibadan students served as respondents in this study. Table 1 shows that majority 213 (52.9%) of the respondents were male students and 154 (38.2%) were female students while 36 (8.9%) of the respondents did not indicate their gender. Thus, the demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The table also revealed that the majority (86.1%) of the students were single and also majority were within the age range of 18 – 23 years (58.1). Based on the course of study, a more significant number of the respondents were from Mass Communication Department (48.5%), while 28.0% were from the Public Administration Department, 19.1% were from Computer Studies Department and 4.5% were from Business Administration Department.

Results and Findings

Research Question One: What are the social media platforms used by The Polytechnic Ibadan Students for online discussions on security challenges in Nigeria?

Table 2: Use of Social Media Platforms for Online Discussions on Security Challenges by The Polytechnic Ibadan Students (N=403)

S/N	Social Media Platforms Used	Visible	Not Visible	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	*Facebook*	375(93.5%)	28(6.9%)	1.93	.255
2.	*Instagram*	347(86.1%)	56(13.9%)	1.86	.346
3.	*Twitter*	247(61.3%)	156(38.7%)	1.61	.488

4.	*WhatsApp*	377(93.1%)	26(6.5%)	1.94	.246
5.	*LinkedIn*	70(17.4%)	333(82.6%)	1.17	.379
6.	*YouTube*	311(77.2%)	92(22.8%)	1.77	.420
7.	*TikTok*	261(64.8%)	142(35.2%)	1.65	.478
8.	*Telegram*	268(66.5%)	135(33.5%)	1.67	.473
9.	*WeChat*	59(14.6%)	344(85.4%)	1.15	.354
10.	*Snapchat*	279(69.2%)	124(30.8%)	1.69	.462
11.	*Skype*	75(18.6%)	328(81.4%)	1.19	.390
12.	*Pinterest*	86(21.3%)	317(78.7%)	1.21	.410
13.	*Reddit*	36(8.9%)	367(91.1%)	1.09	.286
14.	*Tumblr*	29(7.2%)	374(92.8%)	1.07	.259
15.	*Baddo*	41(10.2%)	362(89.8%)	1.10	.303
16.	*Line*	25(6.2%)	378(6.9%)	1.06	.242
17.	*Meetup*	43(10.7%)	360(89.3%)	1.11	.309
18.	*Vero*	24(6.0%)	379(94.0%)	1.06	.237
			Weighted mean = 1.40		

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Table 2 presents the use of social media platforms for online discussions on security challenges by The Polytechnic Ibadan Students. The table revealed that only eight (8) social media platforms were majorly and frequently used by the majority of The Polytechnic Ibadan students (mean scores greater than the weighted mean of 1.40).

In summary, the major social media platforms used by the Polytechnic Ibadan Students are as follows: Facebook 375 (93.5%) mean 1.94; WhatsApp 377(98.1%) mean 1.93; Instagram 347(86.1%) mean 1.86; YouTube 311(77.2%) mean 1.77; Snapchat 279(69.2%) mean1.69; Telegram 268(66.5%) mean 1.67; TikTok 261(64.8%) mean 1.65 and Twitter 247(61.3%) mean 1.61 among others.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of The Polytechnic Ibadan Students' social media engagement through online discussion on Security challenges in Nigeria?

Table 3: Level of Engagement in Online Discussions on Security Challenges (N=403)

S/N	Social Media Platforms	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	*Facebook*	297(73.7%)	69(17.1%)	18(4.5%)	19(4.7%)	3.60	0.784
2	*Instagram*	232(57.6%)	92(22.8%)	37(9.2%)	42(10.4%)	3.28	1.005
3	*Twitter*	167(41.4%)	73(18.1%)	53(13.2%)	110(27.3%)	2.74	1.254
4	*WhatsApp*	339(84.1%)	24(6.0%)	9(2.2%)	31(7.7%)	3.67	0.855
5	*LinkedIn*	47(11.7%)	32(7.9%)	37(9.2%)	287(71.2%)	1.60	1.049
6	*YouTube*	169(41.9%)	107(26.6%)	44(10.9%)	83(20.6%)	2.90	1.160
7	*TikTok*	161(40.0%)	71(17.6%)	37(9.2%)	134(33.3%)	2.64	1.303
8	*Telegram*	142(35.2%)	74(18.4%)	52(12.9%)	135(33.5%)	2.55	1.275
9	*WeChat*	44(10.9%)	28(6.9%)	32(7.9%)	299(74.2%)	1.55	1.022
10	*Snapchat*	147(36.5%)	79(19.6%)	41(10.2%)	136(33.7%)	2.59	1.285
11	*Skype*	29(7.2%)	29(7.2%)	41(10.2%)	304(75.4%)	1.46	0.909
12	*Pinterest*	34(8.4%)	42(10.4%)	43(10.7%)	284(70.5%)	1.57	0.981
13	*Reddit*	18(4.5%)	32(7.9%)	28(6.9%)	325(80.6%)	1.36	0.812
14	*Tumblr*	22(5.5%)	16(4.0%)	26(6.5%)	339(84.1%)	1.31	0.788
15	*Baddo*	21(5.2%)	14(3.5%)	32(7.9%)	336(83.4%)	1.31	0.772
16	*Line*	17(4.2%)	15(3.7%)	29(7.2%)	342(84.9%)	1.27	0.726
17	*Meetup*	19(4.7%)	24(6.0%)	23(5.7%)	337(83.6%)	1.32	0.788
18	*Vero*	13(3.2%)	16(4.0%)	26(6.5%)	348(86.4%)	1.24	0.676
				Weighted mean = 2.11			

Source: Fieldwork 2022

Table 3 presents the level of engagement of Polytechnic of Ibadan students in online discussions on security challenges. The table revealed that the Polytechnic of Ibadan students engaged in online discussion to a great extent via the use of WhatsApp 339(84.1%), Twitter 167 (73.7%), Facebook 297 (72.3%) and Instagram 232 (57.6%) (Mean scores ranging from 2.55 to 3.60 greater than the weighted mean of 2.11)

However, the level at which students engaged in other social media such as LinkedIn 47(11.7%), WeChat 44(10.9%), Skype 29(7.2%), Pinterest 34(8.4%), Reddit 18(4.5%), Tumblr 22(5.5%), Baddo 21(5.2%), Line 17(4.2%), Meetup 19(4.7%) and Vero 13(3.2%) was at low extent (mean

scores less than weighted mean of 2.11). The implication of this is that, students were not only using these eight (*WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Telegram, TikTok and Twitter*) social media, but also were using them to a very great extent in online discussion on security challenges.

H_o1: There is no significant relationship between social media engagement and security challenges in Nigeria

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Level of Engagement of the Polytechnic Students Based on Course of Study

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	793.021	3	264.340	2.582	.053
Within Groups	40849.550	399	102.380		
Total	41642.571	402			

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2022)

Table 4 presents the ANOVA of the level of engagement in online discussions on security challenges by The Polytechnic Ibadan students based on the course of study. The table revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of engagement in online discussions on security challenges by the polytechnic students based on the course of study (p-value of 0.053 greater than 0.05 level of confidence.

The implication of this is that course of study does not determine the level of engagement in the use of social media. In other words, the level of engagement does not depend on the course of study of the individual or student.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on the first research question revealed that eight (8) social media platforms were majorly and frequently used by The Polytechnic Ibadan students. The major social media platforms used by the Polytechnic Ibadan Students are rated as follows: *Facebook (93.5%), WhatsApp (93.1%), Instagram (86.1%), YouTube (77.2%), Snapchat (69.2%), Twitter (61.3%), TikTok (64.8%), Telegram (66.5%),* was the most frequently used by the students. Majority of the students *used Facebook (74.5%)* and *WhatsApp (72.0%)*. This finding corroborates the findings in a study on the use of social media for knowledge sharing among students by Omotayo and Salami (2018) which reported high prevalence of student using *Facebook* and *WhatsApp.*

Findings on the second research question revealed that The Polytechnic Ibadan Students engaged in online discussion to a great extent via the use of *WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Telegram, TikTok* and *Twitter.* The implication of this is that, students were not only using these eight *(WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Telegram, TikTok and Twitter)* social media, but also were using them to a very great extent in online discussion on security challenges.

Findings on hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of engagement in online discussions on security challenges by the polytechnic students. This supports the findings that neither *Facebook, Twitter* nor *WhatsApp* can be regarded as the root cause of social or national insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria which is similar to a study on the impacts of social media on national security carried out by Chukwuere and Onyebukwa (2018). Also, the findings prove that social media contributes to various kinds of rumor attacks, promoting hate speech, tribal clashes, and terrorism attacks. These led to high levels of insecurity and threats to lives and properties in the region and the country at large.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the majority of The Polytechnic Ibadan Students use social media platforms often and The Polytechnic Ibadan Students' social media use does not have any influence on security challenges in Nigeria and the findings could serve as a theory for further research on the topic.

Recommendations

1.   The use of other social media platforms should be encouraged in order for all Nigerian tertiary education students as youth who are major stakeholders in the Nigerian state to have wider access to information.

2.   Proper orientation on the use of social media to reduce security challenges in Nigeria should be explored by students as the spread of fake news can lead to insecurity.

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