

Social Media and Youths Engagements and Mobilisation for the 2020 #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria

Kenneth Adibe NWAFOR, Ph.D & Michael Nnabundo Nwabuzor, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

This study investigated how social media served as instrument for youth engagements and mobilisation during the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Structured questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents drawn from three major cities where the protests took its roots (Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt). Cluster multi-stage and simple random sampling techniques were employed. The study was anchored on the Uses and Gratifications theory. Data generated were analysed using simple percentages and frequency tables. Findings show high level of Internet penetration among young people, particularly in the city centres across the country. There was significant relationship between online and offline participation in the protests. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube were the most widely used social media platforms during the 2020 #EndSARS protests. The study however, recommends introduction of social media education at certain levels of our educational systems to engender more media literacy, particularly on the web, for a more responsible use of the new technology for the betterment of the human society.

Key words: Social Media. Youths. Engagements. Mobilisation. #EndSARS Protests

INTRODUCTION

One of the major breakthroughs in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the 21st century is the emergence of social media. The development has greatly enhanced human communication. Nwafor, (2015) observes that the coming of social media has barely made everyone who can use them a mass communicator because, by merely tapping a button on the cellphone or personal computer, one can easily access, create and share information around the world. Social media are interactive, web-based media. They belong to the new genre of media that focus on social networking, allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends, share personal information, as well as publish their own views on the Internet. Scholars such as (Theocharis, & Quintelier 2014) observe that the advent of social media represents a shift in how people discover, read, create and share information content, and that this represents to a large extent, democratisation of information, as the development is rapidly transforming people from content readers into content creators and publishers. Reasoning along this line, Nwafor, (2015) describes social media as the media of the people, by the people and for the people. A term he referred to as ‘mediacracy’. Meanwhile, many studies, among them, Ahmad, (2018) and Augustine & Nwaizugbu, (2018) have shown a link between social media and citizens engagements and mobilisation for protests and civil unrests. Proponents of this view make haste to cite the Arab spring in North Africa which began in Tunisia in 2010 as a case study. During the North African experience, citizens demonstrated against “government corruption, inequality, censorship and joblessness”. The agitations were largely mediated through the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs. The new arsenal of social media helped accelerate Tunisia’s revolution, driving the country’s ruler for 23 years, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, into humiliating exile and igniting a conflagration that spread across the Arab world at breathtaking speed (Nwafor, Okoro, & Chibwe 2013).

The successful overthrow of Tunisia’s Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, motivated protests in Egypt and later, Libya, succeeding in the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak’s 30-year rule

and that of Muammar Gaddafi's 42 year rule of Egypt and Libya respectively.

Between that time and now, several social media mediated protests have been witnessed in many nations in Africa, including Nigeria. One of the earliest of its kind in the country was during the Occupy Nigeria January 2012 protests over removal of fuel subsidy by the President Goodluck Jonathan's government. The protests were organised via Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, etc. In Lagos, Kaduna and Kano where the protests took roots and later went violent, citizens relied on social media platforms to capture and report cases of police brutalities and manhandling of citizens. Cell-phone SMS/calls, Facebook posts, Twitter handles and other social media platforms were used to mobilise crowds for protests at the Ojota Gani Fawhemi Square (a scenario very similar to that of the Tahrir Square in Egypt during the Arab spring); pictures and videos of the intimidating crowds were uploaded to Facebook, Youtube and Twitter for the whole world to see and to spur up Nigerians in other cities to follow suit (Nwafor, 2015).

Another similar example of social media use for civic engagement in Nigeria was in the case of a group known as '#BringBackOurGirls Campaigners'. The group is led by Nigeria's former Federal Minister of Education and Vice President of the African division of the World Bank, Obiageli Ezekwesili following the abduction of 276 girls by the radical Boko Haram sect from their school dormitories in Chibok, Borno state in 2014. Ezekwesili and her team demanded urgent government intervention towards bringing back the abducted girls alive soonest. It spread to social media via the millions of Nigerians and Nigerian-Americans on Twitter who were joined by social justice advocates all over the world. They launched the social media hashtag '#BringBackOurGirls'. It soon went viral and sparked off international condemnations, with world leaders and celebrities supporting the social media campaign: #BringBackOurGirls. Former U.S. first lady Michelle Obama, ex-British Prime Minister David Cameron and humanitarian Malala Yousafzai were among those to lend their support to the campaign.

Perhaps the biggest of its kind in the country was the #EndSARS youth protests of 2020. Although, the first attempt at protesting police brutalities on citizens was in 2017 when Nigerian activists, youths and celebrities across the nation first took to the streets in a peaceful protest to spread awareness of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) brutality and extortions, using the hashtag #EndSARS to demand the disbandment of SARS by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was a branch of the Nigeria Police Force under the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (SCIID). The unit was set up in 1992, by the former police commissioner, Simeon Danladi Midenda to curb a spate of armed robberies in Nigeria. The squad was created as a facemask wearing Police unit that performed undercover operations against crimes associated with armed robbery, car snatching, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and crimes associated with firearms. It then grew within two decades to a large and powerful unit, and its focus expanded beyond armed robbers to Internet fraudsters. Members of the unit were licensed to carry guns, drive unmarked cars and operate without badges or uniform. They however, allegedly became known for "violent harassment of innocent young Nigerians".

The second attempt by youths to protest for disbandment SARS was in October 2020 shortly after a purported revitalization, a video trended on social media showing a SARS officer shooting a young Nigerian in front of Wetland Hotel, Ughelli, Delta State, and taking the young man's white Lexus sport utility vehicle away. The video caused public outcry on social media, especially on Facebook and Twitter, with the #EndSARS hashtag.

Just as the #EndSARS began to trend on social media, on Monday 5 October 2020, another report surfaced of SARS officers killing a 20-year-old upcoming artist named Chibuike Daniel Ikeaguchi, popularly called Sleek, who was said to have visited his friend at Elenwo area of Obi Akpor, Rivers State. Sleek was said to be sitting in front of a hotel with his friend when the SARS officers approached them, prompting them to flee. According to an eye witness, the SARS men pursued the pair, shouting "thief", before shooting Sleek as they ran through a supermarket and his friend was arrested (Ogundipe, 2017).

Nigerians shared both stories and video evidence of how members of SARS engaged in kidnapping, murder, rape, torture, unlawful

arrests, humiliation, unlawful detention, extrajudicial killings, profile youths based on fashion choices, tattoos and hairstyles, mount illegal road blocks and searches, extort young Nigerians for driving exotic cars and using laptops and iPhones. As the video spread on Social media, the hashtag #EndSARS started to garner momentum as more young people demanded an end to the brutal police unit that has for years brutalized young Nigerians. On Thursday, 8 October 2020, after weeks of outcry and anger with videos and pictures showing police brutality, harassment and extortion in Nigeria, mass demonstrations occurred throughout Nigeria in major cities, and the hashtag accumulated up to 28 million tweets.

The human rights abuses were documented in trending videos on social media. Within a few days of renewed protests, the Nigerian Police Force announced that it was dissolving SARS on Sunday, 11 October 2020, a move that was widely received as a triumph of the protests. However, many noted that similar promises had been made in recent years, and that the government planned to reassign and review SARS officers to Medical Centres rather than remove them entirely. Protests continued accordingly, and the Nigerian states maintained a pattern of violent repression, including what is today referred to as the Lekki shootings of civilian peaceful protesters which has continued to attract condemnations both locally and internationally ((Ogundipe, 2017). This study investigates how social media served as instrument for youth engagements and mobilisation during the said 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria.

Research Problem

Citizens' demand for better treatment by governments and her agencies has remained a global phenomenon. Here in Nigeria, accusations of the police of extortions, unwarranted torture of citizens and extrajudicial killings has remained perennial. This was brought to the fore in October 2020, when young people across the country protested in their numbers demanding for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and for better governance of the country in general.

The protest which was dubbed #EndSARS was largely social media mediated. It began in Lagos and Abuja, but rapidly spread to other cities across Nigeria, particularly in the South. Meanwhile, many studies exist on responsible policing in Nigeria (Kazeem, 2020), Police public relations, (Amobi 2012) and police brutality (Olabamiji, 2014), however, there is a gap in the narratives surrounding the influence of social in the rapid conflagration of the recent #EndSARS protests across the country, and in the uses and abuses of the technology, as well as, the need for better media literacy for a more responsible social media use among citizens in similar future agitations. Attempt at filling this academic gap and knowledge lacuna has prompted this study.

Objectives

1. Determine the extent to which social media aided popularisation of the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria
2. Investigate the extent to which popularization/scheduling of the #EndSARS protests online influenced the offline (street) participation.
3. Identify the more viable social media platforms employed in youths mobilisation during the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria

Research Questions

1. To what extent did social media aid the popularisation of the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria?
2. To what extent did the popularization/scheduling of the #EndSARS protests online influence the offline (street) participation?
3. What were the more viable social media platforms employed in youths mobilisation during the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Background to the 2020 #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria

EndSARS is a decentralised social movement, and series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria. The slogan calls for the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notorious unit of the Nigerian Police with a long record of abuses (Omonobi, 2020). The protests which takes its name from the slogan started in 2017 as a Twitter campaign using the hashtag ENDSARS to demand the disbanding of the unit by the Nigerian government (Salaudeen,, 2017; *ThisDay*, 2018; & Ogundipe, 2017). After experiencing a revitalisation in October 2020 following more revelations of the abuses of the unit, mass demonstrations occurred throughout the major cities of Nigeria, accompanied by vociferous outrage on social media platforms. About 28 million tweets bearing the hashtag have been accumulated on Twitter alone (Kazeem, 2020). Solidarity protests and demonstrations by Nigerians in diaspora and sympathizers also occurred in many major cities of the world. The protests is notable for its patronage by a demographic that is made of entirely young Nigerians (CNN, 2020). The movement has since expanded to include demands for good and accountable governance.

SARS officers have been alleged to profile young Nigerians, mostly males, based on fashion choices, tattoos and hairstyles. They were also known to mount illegal road blocks, conduct unwarranted checks and searches, arrest and detain without warrant or trial, rape women, and extort young male Nigerians for driving exotic vehicles and using laptops and iPhones (Salaudeen, 2017). Nigerians have shared both stories and video evidence of how officers of SARS engaged in kidnapping, murder, theft, rape, torture, unlawful arrests, humiliation, unlawful detention, extrajudicial killings and extortion of Nigerian citizens. A large section of the victims of the abuses of SARS have been young male Nigerians (Kazeem, 2020).

The Amnesty International accused the SARS officials of regularly detaining young male Nigerians illegally and extorting money from their relatives (Salaudeen, 2017). In 2016, a human rights activist, Segun Awosanya popularly known as Segalink started EndSARS campaign on Twitter prompting police authority to announce reform of the police unit but nothing was achieved at the time (Bella, 2017). In 2018, Nigerian rapper Michael Ugochukwu Stephens professionally known Ruggedman joined the campaign to end police brutality by releasing a single titled, *Is Police Your Friend?* (BBC, 2017). In 2017, a petition signed by 10,195 people was submitted to Nigeria's National Assembly calling for a total disbandment of SARS. A few Senators backed the call for total disbandment of the unit. Consideration was given to reforming the force, rather than full disbandment due to the number of cases of failure (Erunke, 2017).

The campaigners moved from social media using the #EndSARS hashtag to organised, peaceful protests in Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, Osun, Benin, Ughelli, Warri, Ilorin, Ogbomosh, Owerri, Jos, Kaduna, Calabar (Aljazeera, 2020) and other Nigerian cities and states, threatening to continue if the government refused to disband the force (Okon, 2020; Lambo, 2020 and *Punch*, 2020). Not only were there campaigners in Nigeria utilising the hashtag and having protests but they were also done in London and some parts of America recognising this situation as a global event. In response to the campaign, Nigeria Police Force Public Relations Officer Jimoh Moshood accused the campaigners of being "criminals" (BBC, 2020). Despite this, Inspector General of Nigeria Police Force Ibrahim K. Idris ordered the reform and reorganisation of SARS.

The 2020 protests followed previous activism and government announcements that SARS would be demobilized in 2014, 2015 and 2017. And yet, SARS officers continued to act with impunity, committing armed robberies, rapes, other acts of torture and extrajudicial killings like the one in Delta State. Abosede (2020) notes that the hashtag #EndSARS which began trending (again) on social media on Oct. 4. was triggered by a video that showed a SARS officer shooting a young motorist in Ughelli, in Delta state, then pushing his body out of the car and driving off with the dead man's Lexus SUV. Within a few days of renewed protests, on 11 October 2020, the Nigerian Police Force announced that it was dissolving the unit with immediate effect. The move was widely received as a triumph of the demonstrations (Al Jazeera, 2020), but crowds of protesters grew bigger, even in the face of violence and intimidation by the security agents. However, it was noted in many quarters that similar announcements

had been made in recent years to pacify the public without the unit actually being disbanded, and that the government had merely planned to reassign and review SARS officers to medical centres rather than disband the unit entirely (Ademoroti, 2020). Protests have continued accordingly, and the Nigerian government has maintained a pattern of violent repression including the killing of demonstrators (Bella, 2020). There have been international demonstrations in solidarity with those happening in the country, and the movement has also grown increasingly critical of Muhammadu Buhari's government response to the protests (*Premium Times*, 2020).

However, as the protesters became more determined to press their demand home in the 2020 protest, the government became unwavering and allegedly infiltrated the protesters with thugs and bandits, making the peaceful protest violent and looting of private and public property permuted the protests across the country, especially the city of Lagos. Following the violence and looting that now characterized the social movement, the government came tough on the protesters, unleashing mayhem. Abosede (2020) notes that October 20, 2020, will forever be known as Black Tuesday in Nigeria. In a darkness broken only by the blue light of cellphone screens, the sound of gunshots rang out as the army and police fired into a crowd of young people who had gathered at Lagos's Lekki toll gate to protest the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notoriously abusive arm of the police. Amnesty International (2020) estimated the total number of death which resulted from security reprisal attacks on the protesters to 100 Nigerians. The socio-political and economic activities were also grinded to a halt for several weeks across the nation to quell the protests and its outcomes.

The Place of Social Media in the Protests

Agitations for scrapping of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) could be said to have started following a viral video of a young man who was allegedly shot in front of a hotel in Ughelli, Delta State, by men of SARS operatives. Before that time, there already had been some ill-feelings about the excesses of the special force unit. Many citizens, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations, particularly, the Amnesty International had also accused officers of the SARS department of orchestrating illegal and wanton arrests, which had led to detainment, torture and extortion of citizens and their relatives. Thus, the Ughelli shooting re-ignited the already tensed environment and existing #EndSARS slogan.

First, social media was used to galvanise over ten thousand people to sign a petition, demanding the immediate scrapping of the squad. A popular Nigerian musician, Naira Marley had on Twitter, called on the youths to embark on a peaceful protest with regards to the #EndSARS campaign. The protest, which was expected to hold on Tuesday, 6th of October, was later suspended after the Police Force responded to Naira Marley's tweet. The musician was reported to have said, "we need to stop protesting on twitter because that's all we've been doing. We need to protest in real life. Just say you are scared and you will rather tweet from home. The protest is a cry for change. Nigerian youths and citizens should feel safe. The government has promised to make changes. Whilst we anticipate their actions but it is important we stick together to sort the issues on ground. Protesting is never a disturbance of the peace; corruption, injustice, war and intimidation are disturbances of the peace."

Many other Nigerians immediately aligned with Naira Marley's tweet. For instance, one other Nigerian celebrity, Chibuike Nkaku, was reported to have said "every citizen possess the right to life, liberty and happiness. But in Nigeria, the very body tasked with ensuring the protection of life and property is the body denying these rights to our citizens. "Enough is Enough. The time to end SARS brutality is now."

As the protests went from online to offline, many social media influencers had pushed the EndSARS hashtags to some global figures to tap into larger, international platforms such that on the 9th of October 2020, the #EndSARS hashtag trended globally on social media. The campaign witnessed reactions on social media from international celebrities such as Cardi B, Rihanna, Trey Songz, Big Sean, Jidenna, John Boyega, Kanye West, Drake, Diddy, Lewis Hamilton among others including, including the international footballers, Marcus Rashford, Odion Ighalo and Mesut Ozil, and some Oscar-

winning Hollywood actresses also sharing the hashtag and lending their support on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. On Thursday, 15 October 2020, Google made a statement on Twitter in support of the #EndSARS protests as they condemned police intimidation, oppression and brutality.

On Sunday 11 October 2020, Ayodeji Ibrahim Balogun, a Nigerian singer popularly known as Wizkid, Dipo Awojide, and many other Nigerians led a protest in support of the EndSARS at the Nigeria High Commission, Thai Square, London, United Kingdom. There were other influencers and International demonstrations organised by Nigerians in diaspora in Europe, the Americas, Oceania, and elsewhere in Africa. Many Nigerians and Nigerian diaspora celebrities gave supportive statements on social media and took part in protests, while demonstrators pledged to continue until the demands were met. The youths were so resolute on the matter such that, even when the Inspector General of Police announced the replacement of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) with the Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT), the hashtag for the protests quickly changed from #EndSARS to #EndSWAT on Twitter, Facebook and on other social media platforms, and it continued to trend.

Empirical Review

Many empirical studies exist on the powers of social media in rapid information dissemination and opinion formation. One of such studies was Ezech and Ono (2016). The study weighs the suitability of social media as a platform for discourse using the popular “There is God” video as a focus. The expression was associated with the wife of former President of Nigeria, Mrs. Patience Jonathan. Mrs Jonathan had repeatedly used the phrase while holding a stakeholders’ meeting on the abduction of about 276 female pupils of the Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State. The video footage went viral on major social media networking sites that about 30 million Nigerians downloaded it in two days; and Google rated it as the most watched non-musical video on YouTube within just 72 hours (Ezech & Ono, 2016 p.125).

Similarly, Ogunyombo (2017) evaluated Online Video Preferences of University Students in Lagos State, Nigeria. Findings indicate that Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter offer great opportunities of streaming events to a large number of persons for mobilization for a given course. The above study is in line with this present research work as both seek to agree that social media platform specifically; YouTube users tend to make videos go viral and being active contributors online. This was in the case of the 2020 #EndSARS protests whereby several videos of how SARS officers humiliate and kill innocent young Nigerians were shared on YouTube and other platforms like Facebook and Whatsapp.

Ekharefo, Uchenunu, and Nwazeapu, (2014) investigated “Influence of texting language on students’ communication skills and social relationship” Zaria Journal of Mass Communication vol.3 no. 1 February, 2014. Stated that texting has been used on a number of occasions with the result of the gathering of large aggressive crowds.

The 2011 fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, texting through social media was used to gather large support of the masses by individuals and bodies against the subsidy removal headed by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) which subsequently lead to the strike action and of course killings and violence in states all over Nigeria. Subsequently, Senate President David Mark warned Nigerians especially the younger generation on the use of the social media in regards to “false message dissemination” and aggravating the masses (Ekharefo, et al 2014, p.151).

This work tends to have common goals relating to the present research at hand, facts been that they both examine the levels of social media penetration among youths using same methodology but differs in theory. While the above used social constructivism theory, this research makes use of uses and gratifications media theory. Again, the work of Nwafor, (2019) in “Understanding the Dynamics of the History and Development of the Mass Media in Nigeria.” stated that the 2011 general elections had laid

the foundation for social media use for civic engagements and citizens' mobilisation. It observes that the 2011 general elections campaigns kick-started on Wednesdays, September 15, 2010 by President, Goodluck Jonathan when he announced his bid for the highest political office in the land on Facebook.

The teeming young social media users, politicians, electoral bodies, local and foreign observers, all got involved in active citizen reporting, using their various social media devices. Jonathan had informed his 217,000 fans on the world's most popular networking platform, Facebook, of his intent, Twenty four hours later, 4,000 more fans joined his page. By the day of the election, on April 16, 2011, he had over half a million followers. In addition to the approximately 3million registered Nigerians on Facebook and over 60,000 on Twitter as at that time, almost every institution involved in the elections conducted an aggressive social networking outreach, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties, candidates, media houses, civil society groups and even the police.

The above study is much related with the present study especially in terms of scope of the study. They both examined the extent social media would help to force government to bring positive actions on the demands of its citizens. However, both studies differ in type of research instrument used, specific objectives and geographical location. Extant literatures shows that social media has gained considerable attention as a factor influencing political sectors (Ahmed and Tehmina, 2011, and Asemah et al, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the uses and gratification theory. The theory is associated with the works of Elihu Katz, Jay Blumter and Micheal Gurevitch (1974). It belongs to the limited or indirect effect theories of mass communication. The theory according to Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008) is concerned with what people do with media instead of what media do to people. The assumption is that members of the audience are not passive but play active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. The theory suggests that people use media to fulfill specific gratifications. Folarin (1998) notes that the main thrust of the theory is that audience members have certain needs which make them to be selectively exposed to, attend to, and retain media messages because of the perceived gratifications derivable from such messages. Thus, this theory emphasizes the fact that people are important in the process of communication because they choose content, make meaning and act on that meaning (Akinwumi, 2011).

Applying the uses and gratification theory to this study, users of social media are intentional seekers of such messages. They are able to select and use the technology in ways that suit their purpose. Thus, they as the audience are active and not passive and were able to select and use the various social media platforms that best gratified their needs during the 2020 #EndSARS protests.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of youths. The choice of youths as the focus population was because they constitute the most active users of social media and they form the nucleus of the protesters during the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. The Nigeria National Youth Policy (2001, p. 2) defines youths as "all young persons between the ages of 18 and 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria". Multistage cluster sampling technique was adopted. First, Nigeria was grouped into three regions of north, east and west. One major city was purposely selected from each of the regions based on significance and relevance to the subject of investigation. Abuja, the nation's federal capital represented the north; the oil city of Port Harcourt represented the east, and the nation's commercial nerve centre, Lagos, represented the west. The 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey Report_1 indicates the following as the youth population of the selected areas: FCT (843,352), Lagos (3,287,969) and Rivers (2,368,051), amounting to 6,499,372. The Taro

Yamene's formula was employed to arrive at a sample size of 400. Using Bowler's proportional Allocation Formula of $n1 = \frac{n(N1)}{N}$.

Where n = Overall Sample Size, $n1$ = Population of each region, and N = The Total population, 52 samples were selected from the FCT, 202 from Lagos and 146 from Port Harcourt making a total of 400 respondents. Structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Data collected were analysed using frequency tables, percentage and chi-square with the use of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20.

DATA PRESENTATION

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	221	55.2%
Female	179	44.7%
Total	400	100

From the table above, the percentage of male respondents is 55.2 percent while that of female is 44.7 percent. The participation rate shows that there was no sentiment in the issuance of questionnaire for this research work since the differences between the two frequencies are not much.

Distribution of Respondents by Age

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-23years	166	41.5%
24-29years	132	33%
30-35years	102	25.5%
Total	400	100

The results of Table 2 indicated that the respondents that are within the age range of 18-23, have the highest frequency with 166 (41.5%), followed by those within 24-29 with 132 (33%), 30-35 with 102 (25.5%). The majority of the respondents are within the age range of 18-23 and 24-29years.

Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Civil Servant	68	17 %
Student	189	47.2%
Trader	71	17.7%
Artisan	72	18%
Total	400	100

For occupation of respondents questioned, Students had the highest percentage of 47.2% followed by Artisans with 18%. The next is Traders with a percentage of 17.7, while the lowest is Civil Servants with a percentage of 17.

Distribution of Social Media Platforms used by respondents during the #EndSARS protests

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
----------	-------------	-----------	----------------

Platform	Facebook	146	22.2%
	WhatsApp	132	20.0%
	Twitter	95	14.4%
	Instagram	87	13.2%
	Telegram	97	14.7%
	All of the above	101	15.3%
	None of the above	0	0%
Total		658	100

Table 6 above indicates the responses pertaining the structure of social media platforms adopted by the respondents. The majority 146 (22.2%) are users of Facebook, followed by WhatsApp users with 132 (20%). Those that used all of the above social media platforms are third with 101 (15.3%) of the respondents, followed by those using Telegram with 97 (14.7%), and those who used Twitter with 95 (14.4%) of the respondents, while the list respondents used Instagram with 87 (13.2%).

Level of Social Media use in participation in the #EndSARS protests

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	67	16.7%
Very High	93	23.2%
Moderate	101	25.2%
Can't say	139	34.7%
Total	400	100

Table 11 above shows the level of social media influence among the respondents. Out of the 400 respondents, 139 (34.7%) can't say the level of social media influence, 101 (25.2%) shows moderate, 93 (23.2%) said there was very high influence, while 67 (16.7%) said their influence was high.

Media of Scheduling Offline (Street) Protests

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Through Friend	69	19.4%
Mass media	22	6.2%
Social media	263	74.2%
Total	400	100

According to results in the above table showing knowledge about the scheduling of offline protests, the highest percentage of respondents is 263 (74.2%) that knew the scheduling through social media, followed by 69 (19.4%) of them who get to know through friend, while the least respondents with 22 (6.2%) said they knew through mass media.

Street Mobilisation of Protests was as a Result of Online Engagements via Social Media

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
True	240	60%
False	160	40%
Total	400	100

Data obtained in this table showed that out of 400 respondents, 240 (60%) acknowledged the fact that it was as a result of the online engagements via social media that impelled the street (offline) mobilisation protests. The remaining percent of 160 (40%) could not say anything.

Discussion of Findings

This study was guided by four research questions and objectives. This invariably yielded the major findings elucidated in this section. Research question/objective one sought to determine the extent to which social media aided the popularisation of the 2020 #EndSARS protests. Generated data indicate that majority of the respondents, 91.2% of them had followed the #EndSARS protests on social media. This indicates that social media indeed, aided popularization of the 2020 #EndSARS protests. This finding is consistent with Ezeh, and Ono, (2016) which explains social media as a digital village square for the congregation and dissemination of information. It also agrees with the assumptions of the public sphere theory which indicates that social media platforms play vital role in enabling citizens gain knowledge to issues of public significance. This is because, with social media, people's feelings are freely expressed and published as opinions through chats on websites and other platforms.

Research question two sought to determine the extent to which the popularization/ scheduling of the #EndSARS protests online influenced the offline (street) participation. Data obtained showed significant relationship between online and offline participation in the protests. Sixty percent of generated data support this. The finding is in line with that of Amobi, (2014) which suggests that social media is a major component of the new media revolution and has continued to evolve without relenting and is rapidly translating our online to offline experience.

Research question three appraised the more viable social media platforms employed in youths mobilisation during the 2020 #EndSARS protests. Findings ranks Facebook foremost with 22%, followed by WhatsApp with 20%, Telegram (15%), Twitter (14), Instagram (13), while 16% of data suggested combination of platforms. Many other studies are in agreement with the findings of this study that Facebook is the most populous and widely used social media platform, particularly among young people in sub-Saharan African. Obono (2016) for instance, observes that young people use Facebook because more number of persons are on the platform. Theoretically, this finding has a theoretical leaning on the assumptions of the Technology Acceptance Model which states that people accept new technology based on their attitude towards the technology.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that there is high level of social media penetration among young people particularly, in the city centres across the country; that there was significant relationship between online and offline participation in the protests; and that Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, in that order, were the most widely used social media platforms during the 2020 #EndSARS protests in the country. The study recommends introduction of social media education at certain levels of our educational systems to engender more media literacy, particularly on the web, for a more responsible use of the new technology for the betterment of the human society.

References

- Ahmad, J. M. (2018). The effect of social media on the undergraduate student's academic performance. *Library philosophy and practice (e-journal)*, P. 4.
- Ahmed, I. and Qazi, T. F. (2011). A look out for the academic impacts of social networking sites (SNSs): a student's based perspective. *African journal of business management*, 5(12): 5022-5031.
- Nwafor, K. A. (2015). Social media and political participation during the Nigerian 2011 and Ghanaian 2012 general elections. Ph.D thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, department of Mass Communication
- Nwafor, K. A. (2019). Understanding the dynamics of the history and development of the mass media in Nigeria; Abakaliki: L & D Chocho Ltd.

- Nwafor, K.N., Okoro, M.N., & Chibuwe, A. (2013). Using the unfettered media in Africa's fragile democracy: Issues, dangers and the way forward. *EBSU journal of Mass Communication*, 1(1) 48-60
- Augustine, S. E. and Nwaizugbu, N. Q. (2018). WhatsApp utilization and academic performance of computer in education trainee teachers in university of Port Harcourt. *International journal of education, learning and development*, 6 (5): 15-25
- Odoemelam, C. C. & Nwafor, K. A. (2011). Political conflicts and political communication in Africa: An analysis of social media role. Paper presented at the ACCE, Covenant University, Ota. September 2011
- Ogundipe, Samuel (3 December 2017). #EndSARS: Police mum as Nigerians recount atrocities of Special Anti-Robbery Squad. Nigeria: Premium Times. Retrieved 2 January, 2018.
- Kazeem, Yomi. How a youth-led digital movement is driving Nigeria's largest protests in a decade. Quartz Africa. Retrieved 13 October 2020. Endsars:www.endsars.com
- Kazeem, Y. (2020). *How a youth-led digital movement is driving Nigeria's largest protests in a decade*. Quartz Africa. Culled from the original on December 18, 2020.
- Kazeem, Y. (2020). *Young Nigerians are leading protests yet again to disband a rogue police unit*. Quartz Africa. Culled from the original on December 22, 2020.
- Amobi I., Sunday O. (2012). Media and violence against women: Analysis of newspaper coverage of the assault. *Communication reviews*, 6(2): 1-27. University of Lagos
- Al Jazeera* (2020). #EndSARS: Nigeria says Special Anti-Robbery Squad dissolved. *Al Jazeera NEWS*. Culled from the original on December 18, 2020.
- Aljazeera News*. (2020). #EndSARS: Nigerians protest against police brutality. *Aljazeera Media Network*. Retrieved from Aljazeera.com. on 19 December, 2020.
- BBC* (2020). SARS ban: Two dead in Nigeria police brutality protests. *BBC News*. 12 October 2020. Retrieved 24 December, 2020.
- BBC*. (2017). End SARS or we go protest for January 2018' – Nigerian youths. *BBC Pidgin*. BBC. 3 December 2017. Retrieved 19 December, 2020.
- Bella, N. (2017). #EndSARS: Nigerians take to the Streets in Protest. *Bellanaija*. Culled from the original on December 22, 2020.
- CNN* (2020). Nigeria's youth finds its voice with the EndSARS protest movement. *CNN News*. Culled from the original on December 18, 2020.
- Erunke, J. (2017). #EndSARS: We won't scrap SARS, Police reply anti-SARS campaigners. *Vanguard Newspaper*. Nigeria. Retrieved 19 December, 2020.
- Folarin, B. (1998). *Theories of mass communication*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Sceptre Publishing.

- Ogundipe, S. (2017). *#EndSARS: Police mum as Nigerians recount atrocities of Special Anti-Robbery Squad*. Nigeria: Premium Times. Retrieved December 18, 2020.
- Okon, D. (2020). *Nigerians insist on disbandment of SARS as IGP bans killer police unit for third time*. Business Day Newspaper. Retrieved on 19 December, 2020.
- Olabamiji, O.M. (2014). Use and misuse of the New Media for political Communication in Nigeria's fourth republic. *Developing Country Studies*. 44.
- Omonobi, K. (2017). *Anti-SARS campaign: IG orders investigation of anti-robbery squad*. Vanguard Newspaper. Nigeria. Retrieved December 18, 2020.
- Salaudeen, A. (2017). *Nigerians want police's SARS force scrapped*. Aljazeera. Retrieved December 18, 2020.
- Premium Times (2020). *Another #EndSARS protester shot dead*. Premium Times Nigeria Limited. Culled from the original on December 22, 2020.
- The Punch* (2019). Social media, the new 'comforter' for Nigerians with heavy hearts. *Punch News*, www.punch.com. accessed on December 12, 2020
- Theocharis, G. & Quintelier, C. (2014). Stimulating citizenship or expanding entertainment? The effect of Facebook on adolescent participation. *New Media and Society*. 1-20
- Thisday Newspapers* (2017). *End SARS as a Mob Project*. Nigeria: Thisday Newspapers Limited Culled from the original on December 18, 2020.
- Thisday Newspapers* (2020). *Nigeria today*. Thisday Newspapers Limited. Retrieved December 18, 2020.