



# The Impacts of Social Media on National Security: A View from the Northern and South-Eastern Region of Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The social media (SM) platform has reengineered social interaction among peers, businesses, governments and so on. SM platforms are used in advancing social and national insecurity, such as the situation in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. For some years now, terrorism and propaganda have engulfed the northern part of Nigeria by insurgent groups while separatist groups have also carried out demonstrations in the south-east. Each of these groups is using various kinds of online media to propagate their agenda, and the general public also uses SM platforms to escalate this propaganda, which sometimes is fake news. However, there is no comprehensive study on the role of SM towards the challenges of insecurity confronting the northern and south-eastern regions of Nigeria. This study deployed a quantitative research method through online questionnaires to determine the impacts of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp as SM tools on the security challenges confronting the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. The study found that Nigeria's security climate is very poor, SM is not a threat to Nigeria national security, the participants are uncertain whether Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp have increased insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria and many more.

**Keywords:** Social Media, New Media, Nigerian Security, Northern and South-Eastern, Insecurity, Security Challenges, Social Media

**JEL Classifications:** F50, H55, H56, O55

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, social media (SM) can be seen as the most widely accepted technological invention in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. SM is now a social communication norm in developing countries. SM promotes positive and negative agendas. Globally, terrorists, separatists, political organisations, religious groups, individuals and so on are using SM to spread their information and ideas. In this case, Nigerian national security is under threat by the activities of Boko Haram (BH), Fulani Headmen, Niger Delta avengers, agitation of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and others. SM is an open world of communication platform with little control by government agents. BH and IPOB groups are noticeably using SM in advancing their activities. However, there are few or no empirical studies to justify whether the general public using SM believes that the platform impacts on national security, in this case the insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. Then, this study aims to uncover the missing empirical research on the role and impacts of SM in the insecurity confronting the northern and south-eastern corridor of Nigeria.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Generally, media plays a very important role in the global fight against terrorism (Ngige et al., 2016). In the same manner, media (SM) can be used to fuel different kinds of terrorism and other criminal activities. In recent years, Nigeria's national security has been threatened by different forms of terrorism challenges, which has affected lives and properties worth billions of Naira. Among the 21<sup>st</sup> century internet inventions, SM has defined and changed social and political interactions and communication across nations. Terrorist and other criminal groups are using SM to pass their information to the general public, because the platform is cheap and readily accessible (Ngige et al., 2016). While the general public also uses SM to understand, and keep in touch with different kinds of socio-economic, political and social events, SM is no longer a new invention for the Nigerian society, whereby many young, old, private and public organisations make use of the platform on a daily basis. The high level of SM penetration in Nigeria increased its use in discussing terrorism-related issues and any other form of social, political or religious attacks and

rumors (social and religious security issues). This study aims to discover the impacts of SM platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp on the contemporary security challenges in the northern and south-eastern part of Nigeria. The problem here is that little is known empirically about the impacts and the role of SM usage by the general public on the insecurity challenges confronting the northern and south-eastern corridor of Nigeria.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1. Accessing the SM and Nigerian Security Challenges A Historical Overview

The concept of security is no doubt a complex phenomenon. This is the case because the issue of security continues to pose a serious challenge to nations and the global community at large. Without a doubt, issues bordering on maintaining or tackling security challenges across the globe have taken centre stage in the international political system. To this end, policy-makers across the globe and decision-makers and leaders, particularly in Nigeria, have come to the realization that security remains an unequivocal policy challenge in governance. Apart from these, the dynamics of contemporary global security challenges, including terrorism, equally influence and inform the crescendos of security challenges in Nigeria today. Intrinsically, Nigeria, as a subsisting global entity, inherited some of her internal security challenges by virtue of this status (Ani and Onyebukwa, 2016). A security challenge, such as terrorism in Nigeria, which premised originally as a global phenomenon and was inherently alien to the country, is a handy example.

Since independence in 1960, the country has struggled to contend the concerns of serious ethno-political and religious challenges. The country had co-existed as a heterogeneous entity since independence, following the colonial amalgamation of 1914 (Adamu and Ochaeni, 2016). This colonial arrangement saw over 500 ethnic groups of people, with the largest including the Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, who speak more than 1,500 dialects and practice divergent socio-cultural and religious beliefs as well as an estimated population 170 million people, faced with the challenge of peaceful cohabitation (ibid). To date, this scrappy arrangement precipitated an insidious lack of national identity and integration among Nigerians (Adamu and Ochaeni, 2016; Akwara et al., 2013; Ashley, 2007). Accordingly, each ethnic group remains preoccupied with how best not only to identify but express these traditional distinctiveness within Nigeria, which culminated into huge security challenges manifesting in various religious, ethnic and political conflicts across the nation for many years (Akwara et al., 2013). To this end, Nigeria brawls to subsist under this array of herculean security challenges as a political entity. Unfortunately, national security as a very fundamental aspect of governance in Nigeria remains progressively vulnerable under consistently threatened national existence and cohabitation.

Moreover, the contemporary Nigerian security challenges stem from a plethora of national queries bordering on ethnic, religious, socio-political and cultural issues. More specifically, the BH Islamic sect, the militia from the oil-rich Niger Delta, the renewed clamor for secession in the south-eastern part of Nigeria, initially

from the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and recently from the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as well as the Fulani herdsmen killings across the country (Akov, 2017; Adamu and Ochaeni, 2016; Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016; Ani and Onyebukwa, 2016; Badiora, 2015; Ogedebe and Jacob, 2012), are at the crux of Nigerian security challenges contemporarily. Consequently, the country has consistently grappled with various levels of ethnic, religious, socio-political and cultural security challenges. By extension, the contiguous upshots of the activities of these groups precipitated the incessant spate of instability, destabilization and wanton destruction of lives and property in Nigeria today.

#### 3.2. The Overview of SM (New Media)

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has created advanced technological knowledge with the help of Web 2.0 powering SM platforms. Our world today is filled with advanced technological knowledge and skills that have redefined human communication and interaction in modern society. SM can be regarded as a 21<sup>st</sup> century technological invention and innovation. SM, with its attributes, brings knowledge, skills and events closer to the people and has revolutionized access to information. SM can be defined as internet-based services that allow a person to connect to the general public, to understand what others are doing and thinking, as well as their connections (Trottier and Fuchs, 2014). Furthermore, SM is an online-based application built on the Web 2.0 platform with the idea to create and share individual contents (Sajithra and Patil, 2013). Web 2.0 can be seen as a platform through which individuals create content and allow the continuous sharing of information modifications by others (Sajithra and Patil, 2013). In this study, SM is regarded as a Web 2.0 platform that connects people in sharing information, knowledge and many more.

To Trottier and Fuchs (2014), SM is very broad and difficult to define. The difficulties are as a result of the fact that SM encompasses networked tools and applications that allow connection between two or more people. SM, like any other computer technology, facilitates cognitive systems because they collect individual and societal values (Trottier and Fuchs, 2014). It is a communication tool because it allows the hooking up and formation of new friendships, society, personal and corporate connections and the maintenance of existing ones. Cann (2011) also states that SM is internet based-services that allow users to generate their own contents for service and others. This means that SM is meant for the formation of social virtual communities ("social aggregation") based on the web/internet in facilitating societal discussions and events.

There are different forms of SM networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google Plus, Yahoo Messenger, Instagram, Wikipedia and the list continues. Presently, SM tools and their applications have affected the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of human endeavors. Events and information associated with these aspects are virtually discussed, which gather very large audiences. The tools have also promoted rumors and fake news in the recent past.

Today, millions of SM users across Nigeria and those in the diaspora are connected to events happening in Nigeria, while

some use this medium to promote fake news, propaganda and events. Examples can be found in the case of BH, Biafra agitation and Fulani Herdsmen. Then, the presence of SM in Nigeria sometimes threatens the peace and stability of Nigeria and gives rise to security challenges across the country. Facebook is mostly used and mentioned when talking about social networking platforms, including WhatsApp and Twitter (Cann, 2011). SM has empowered users to become social communicators and content originators (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017).

## 4. THE NORTH-EAST PERSPECTIVE

### 4.1. The BH, Terrorism and Security Challenge in North-Eastern Nigeria

Terrorism under BH remains a fundamental security challenge facing Nigeria today. The insurgent group became a terrorist organization in 2013 following the style of its activities in Nigeria (BBC News online 24 November 2014). According to a CNN online publication on 2 February 2018, BH started its heinous activities in Nigeria in 2002 with the worse hits carried out between 2014 and 2015. Moreover, from inception up to the present, BH has remained consistently resolute in perpetrating its callous activities in the country. Unfortunately, their nefarious engagements have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and destruction of properties across the country and most particularly in the north-eastern part of the country. It is on record that approximately 20,000 lives have been lost and more than 2.3 million people are displaced due to attacks by the BH (ibid). The activities of this terrorist group, especially in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, endeared the United States of America to list the country as one of the terrorist prone countries of the globe in 2010 (ibid). Apart from the globally condemned abduction of approximately 276 teenage girls from a secondary school in Chibok, also known as the Chibok girls, on 14 April 2014, the group had recently, on 19 February 2018, attacked Government Girls and Technical College Dapchi and abducted yet another 110 students of this institution (Vanguard Newspaper online 02 March 2018; SABC News online 14 March 2018). Although they have since been released, a great deal of controversy still surrounds the story of their abduction and subsequent release.

Although BH has not abated in its almost daily assassination and kidnapping spree, the insurgent group in recent times has advanced from its original strategic guerrilla form of attack into a new type of threat that engages women and child suicide bombers to unleash their mayhem on soft targets (Knoope and Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). The federal government of Nigeria has grappled with curbing the security challenges originating from the activities of BH. The almost daily loss of lives and properties resulting from the activities of this group has defied several security strategies advanced against them by the federal government. Ironically, Nigerian security services have employed a number of counterproductive strategies and tactics to defeat BH (Walker, 2012). Unfortunately, the group continues to carry out its despicable terrorist activities in the north-east with no end in sight.

### 4.2. Biafra Agitation as a Security Challenge in the South-Eastern Region of Nigeria

The secession story of Biafra in the eastern part of Nigeria has progressed along a violent and non-violent trajectory. While the Nigerian civil war, which lasted from 1967 to 1970, was a violent representation of declaration of state of Biafra, the MASSOB and recently IPOB represent the non-violent angle of the struggle. The end of the civil war in 1970 marked the end of violent approaches to the struggle. A new era of non-violent agitation for Biafra self-determination was born following the formation of MASSOB in September 1999 (Sändig, 2015). Unfortunately, various forms of clampdown from the government diminished the activities of this group (Ibeanu et al., 2016). However, in 2014, the IPOB emerged as a renewed non-violent Biafra agenda under a new leadership following the diminished relevance of MASSOB to the struggle and its improbable possibility of actualizing Biafra sovereignty.

Notwithstanding IPOB's claim of a peaceful organization, the Nigerian government had, however, accused it of being violent and insisted that secessionism is treasonable, and therefore constitutes a threat to the country's national security interest and is unacceptable. The Nigerian government premised its accusation against this group on violent reactions prompted by provocative military onslaught against members of IPOB on 2 December 2015 at Onitsha. Equally, many more IPOB protesters were reported killed during various protests at Owerri, Aba, Asaba, and Port Harcourt by different forms of continued military clampdown on its activities across the south-eastern part of Nigeria between 2015 and 2017 (Johnson and Olaniyan, 2017). At this time, it became obvious that security fears and tension were heightened and this exerted pressure on the Nigerian government to deal with the agitation in the area.

To further affirm the level of perceived security challenge posed by IPOB, the group was labelled a militant terrorist organization by the armed forces of Nigeria. In the words of the armed forces spokesman, according to Reuters 15 September 2017: "The Armed Forces of Nigeria wishes to confirm to the general public that IPOB from all intent, plan and purpose as analysed, is a militant terrorist organization". This move further escalated security proclivity of IPOB and forced President Buhari to declare that the unity of Nigeria was "not negotiable" (Ibeanu et al., 2016).

Although the IPOB differs in their protest behaviour with BH, the philosophical aspirations of both movements are viewed as potential security threats to the cooperate existence of the country. Overall, the insurgent groups emerged with feasibility of rebellion or escalated rebellion within the political and economic context of Nigeria. In other words, both movements possess covert or overt rebellion, which constitutes existential security challenges to the country in their activities. They are also fuelled by people's discontent with inequality and equally have been subjected to various levels of indiscriminate repression capable of radicalizing their followers and pushing them into violent resistance (Sändig, 2015).

### 4.3. SM Effects on the Nigerian Social Security Condition

The United States of America's September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre has geared up security threats around the globe. These threats are affecting many countries, including those on the African continent, where many have lost their lives and personal belongings, including governments and its agents (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). Nigeria is facing insecurity, similar to countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and others on the African continent. According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), ethno-religious and political conflict in Nigeria between 1999 and 2005 has occurred more than 90 times. Different forms of conflicts have occurred from 2005 to the present, with the increase in terrorism by Boko Harm, Fulani Herdsmen and many others. Directly and indirectly, SM is affecting these conflicts; for example, in March 2017, BH released a 27-min video featuring the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, vowing to continue his insurgency until he establishes an Islamic caliphate across west and central Africa (The Associated Press, 2017).

### 4.4. The Role of Social or New Media in Escalating Security Challenges

As indicated earlier, SM can be described as online-based tools and services connecting people, and enabling interaction with each other over the internet. The new media has increased social and political interactions through WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other platforms (Chukwuere and Onyebukwa, 2017). Social networking sites are used by terrorist groups with dedicated servers and websites to spread their propaganda (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). They use the medium for recruitment, fund raising, training mechanisms and other forms of cybercrime. This platform helps in promoting local and international terrorist groups and the insecurity associated with it. International and local terrorist groups deploy SM to organize or strategise attacks and ways of escape (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). The authors further alluded to the fact that they use the medium to increase their presence and to spread propaganda. Locally, Nigerian insecurity is increasing and lives and properties are threatened on a daily basis. This insecurity is affected by the penetration and diffusion of SM. SM cannot be easily controlled or censored from the general public as a result of social freedom and a lack of cyberspace law (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). The social freedom of speech associated with SM makes it free for users to generate contents at any time and post them online.

SM is not only used by terrorist groups to challenge the peace and stability of a country; the citizens themselves are using the medium to render terror on each other by means of fake news and fake postings, which promote propaganda and fear. An example is the increased number and differing nature of unverified news or information surfacing on SM platforms, emanating from the corridor of northern and south-eastern Nigeria. Furthermore, Kenya's national security has been implicated in the misuse of SM (Kimutai, 2014). Most times, this news and information are neither confirmed nor verified, which results in the dissemination of fake news. However, at the broadcast of any kind of attack or terrorist news, thousands and millions react immediately, attacking one another based on ethnicity, religion, and tribe. At the same

time, such news immediately creates fear, tensions and violence in the society.

Therefore, the insecurity situations in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria are being affected by the presence of SM in the following manners (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017): Terrorist and other criminal groups use the platform to execute attacks, kidnaps, rape, robbery and many more. According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), the medium is also used to combat terrorism and other forms of crimes in developed countries. A study has revealed that SM platforms such as Facebook have been used in Nigeria to fight human trafficking, and many more (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). At this point, insecurity is regarded as an impediment towards social development in Nigeria.

## 5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the objective of this study (the investigation of the impact of SM on the security of the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria), the following study questions emerged:

- What are the impacts of SM on security challenges in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria?
- To what extent have SM networking sites contributed towards the escalation of security challenges in northern and south-eastern Nigeria?

## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the nature of this study, which aims to determine the impacts of SM on security in northern and south-eastern Nigeria, the study deployed a quantitative research method involving SM users on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter platforms. An online closed-ended questionnaire through Google Forms was used to determine the views and ideas of users with regard to the study topic and objectives. The questionnaire was sent to participants via email, Facebook, Twitter accounts and WhatsApp numbers. The questionnaire survey was open from 19th March to 2nd May 2018. A total of 168 questionnaires were received and analysed. The study comprises 14 questions. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and Microsoft Excel were used in analyzing the collected data.

## 7. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the study's data analysis and discussions.

### 7.1. Demographic Questions

The study findings show that 99 (58.9%) of the respondents were male, while females are 69 (41.1%). This implies that male respondents were more in number. The study also demonstrates that 10 (6.0%) are 18–22 years of age, 54 (32.1%) are 23–28, 44 (26.2%) are 29–33, 40 (23.8%) are 34–39 and 20 (11.9%) are 40 years and older. The findings show that respondents between 23 and 28 years participated more in the study, followed by 29–33 years. This shows that the majority of the participants are young adults who engage more in SM for different activities. To determine the academic qualification of the respondents, the findings show that eight (4.8%) are school certificate/WAEC

holders, 96 (57.1%) hold first degrees, 53 (31.5%) second degrees (master’s) and 11 (6.5%) third degrees (doctorates). The findings show that the majority of the respondents are first degree holders, which proves that most of them have higher tertiary education.

This study involved 22 states out of the 36 states in Nigeria; each state contributed the following participants: Imo (38), Anambra (28), Enugu (9), Osun (7), Abia (9), Delta (9), Lagos (7), Ekiti (5), Akwa Ibom (3), Rivers (3), Edo (3), Oyo (3), Ebonyi (2), Plateau (2), Kogi (1), Cross River (1), Ogun (1), Ondo (2), Gombe (1), Kaduna (1), Bauchi (1), Kwara (1). The findings show that participants from Imo state are the largest number involved. Furthermore, it indicates that 61.1% (n=22) of the states participated in the study.

**7.2. What are the Impacts of Sm on Security Challenges in the Northern and South-Eastern Parts of Nigeria?**

SM is believed to contribute towards social, national and personal insecurity. This research question seeks to understand whether participants agree that SM impacts on national security challenges confronting the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria.

Security threats remain a major challenge affecting peace and unity in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Figure 1 indicates that 134 (79.8%) of the respondents suggest that Nigeria’s current security is very porous (poor). The poor national security situation can be attributed to BH’s continuous assassinations, bombings and kidnapping sprees. The insurgent group in recent times has advanced its attacks into a new type of threat that engages women and child suicide bombers to unleash their mayhem on soft targets (Knoope and Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). The ongoing and continuous rise in the number of attacks by BH and other groups spread fear and terror in society, which also exposes the poor state of security in the country.

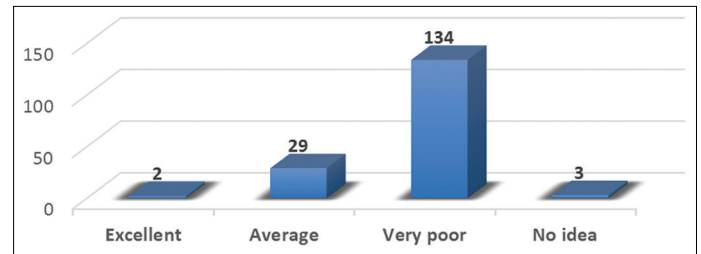
Social networking sites are used by terrorist groups with dedicated servers and websites to spread their propaganda (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). Furthermore, Kenya’s national security has been implicated in the misuse of SM (Kimutai, 2014). On the contrary, the study in Figure 2 found that 73 (43.5%) of the participants disagree (no) that SM is a threat to security in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. The finding implies that the effective use of SM in general does not promote insecurity or threat of a country. However, Ngige et al., (2016) suggest that terrorist and other criminal groups are using SM to pass their information to the general public because the platform is cheap and readily accessible. The finding also exposes the fact that the young people are not ready to happily accept any form of SM clamp down by the government for any reason (Figure 3).

Different kinds of SM platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google Plus, Yahoo Messenger, Instagram and Wikipedia can be used by social commentators. A study has revealed that SM platforms such as Facebook have been used in Nigeria to fight against human trafficking and many more (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). In the same manner, 74 (44.0%) of the participants are not sure whether Facebook, Twitter or WhatsApp is used as a tool by different groups to increase and promote insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. The

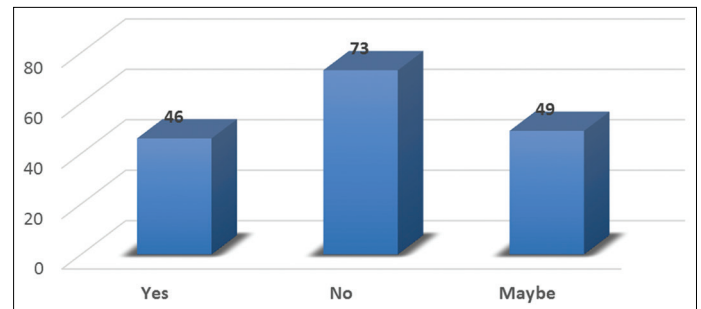
finding proves that participants are not sure whether SM usage can lead to insecurity increases.

On the African continent, Kenya’s national security has been affected by the misuse of SM platforms (Kimutai, 2014); while most times, SM news immediately creates fear, tensions and violence in the society. Nsudu and Onwe (2017) also believed that the northern and south-eastern regions of Nigeria are affected by national insecurity as a result of the misuse of SM. In these views, Table 1’s question seeks to understand how SM platforms

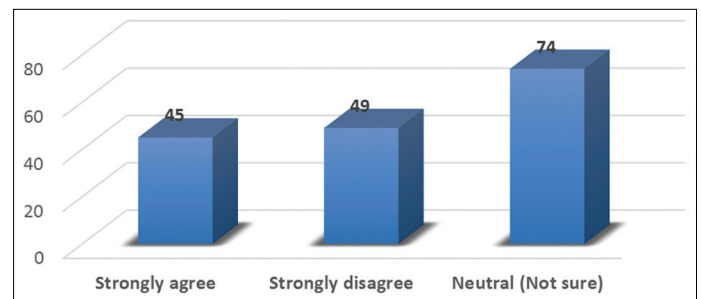
**Figure 1:** How would you rate the current state of Nigeria’s national security?



**Figure 2:** Is social media a threat to security in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria?



**Figure 3:** Do you think social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp) have increased insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria?



**Table 1: How do SM platforms contribute towards insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria?**

Constructs	Responses n (%)	Percentage of cases
Terrorism attacks	54 (16.1)	32.1
Rumour attacks	106 (31.6)	63.1
Hate speech	94 (28.1)	56.0
Tribal clashes	81 (24.2)	48.2
Total	335 (100.0)	199.4

SM: Social media

contribute towards the security challenges in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. Participants suggest that SM contributes towards rumor attacks (106; 31.6%), hate speech (94; 28.1%) and others. This finding proves that SM contributes negatively towards various kinds of rumor attacks, promoting hate speech, tribal clashes and terror attacks. These lead to high levels of insecurity and threats to lives and properties in the northern and south-eastern regions and the country at large.

Terrorist and other criminal groups are using SM to pass their information to the general public and to execute their strategies (Ngige et al., 2016). Figure 4 aimed to understand whether SM information and events update Nigeria’s security agents on the activities of BH. The findings show that 83 (49.4%) of the respondents are not sure whether SM platforms feed information to security agents on the activities and events of BH. However, according to Walker (2012), Nigeria’s security agents or services have employed a number of counterproductive strategies and tactics to defeat BH. The study finding could not verify whether SM tools are part of the counterproductive strategies deployed.

At this level, Figure 5 aims to deduce whether Nigerian security services are updated on the activities of IPOB because of SM platforms. The study found that 76 (45.2%) of the participants are not sure whether SM updates Nigeria’s security services on the current and future activities of IPOB, while 63 (37.5%) strongly believe it does. The findings in Figure 5 show that participants are not sure whether Nigeria’s security agents get information regarding IPOB activities on SM. The overall findings of Figures 4 and 5 indicate that participants do not know whether the Nigerian

security services strategise against the activities of BH and IPOB based on the information and events on SM domains.

### 7.3. To What Extent Have Sm Networking Sites Contributed Towards the Escalation of Security Challenges in Northern and South-Eastern Nigeria?

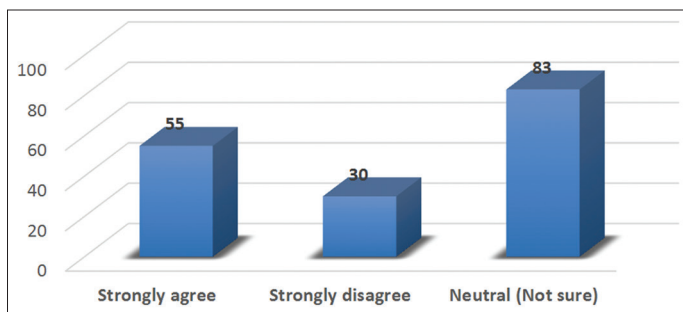
This section of the research question aimed to determine the extent that SM networking platforms have contributed towards the spreading of insecurity challenges in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria.

Internationally and locally, terrorist groups deploy SM to organize or strategies attacks and ways of escape (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). Figure 6 demonstrates that 72 (42.9%) of the respondents strongly disagree that SM promotes the advancement of BH activities in the northern and south-eastern part of Nigeria, while 50 (29.8%) strongly agreed. The study findings contradict an existing study by Nsudu and Onwe (2017), which implies that SM posts, comments and others are tools facilitating the advancement of BH terrorist activities and their propogandas. The study found that SM does not contribute towards the advancement of BH activities.

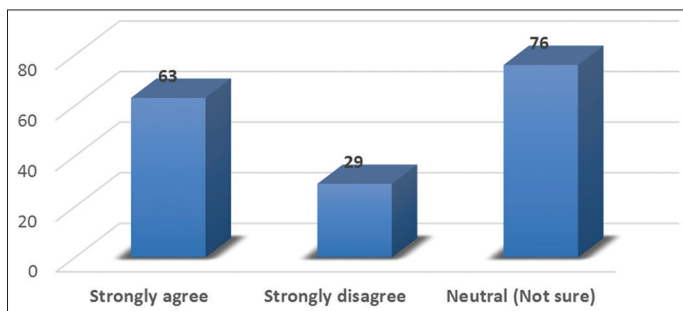
According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), SM platforms are used by separatists to spread their propogandas. This question seeks to determine whether SM contributes towards the advancement of IPOB activities. Figure 7 shows that 73 (43.5%) of the participants believe that SM contributes towards the progression of IPOB activities and events. The study found that SM advances the social movement and agitation of IPOB organisations.

SM affects different aspect of political processes. Figure 8 seeks to understand whether SM information influences the labelling of

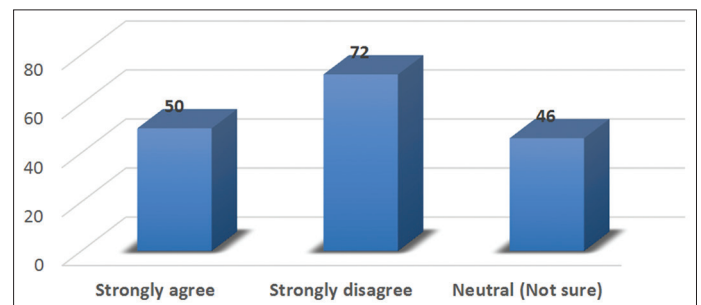
**Figure 4:** Do you think that social media information informs security reactions from Nigeria security agents with regard to Boko Haram activities?



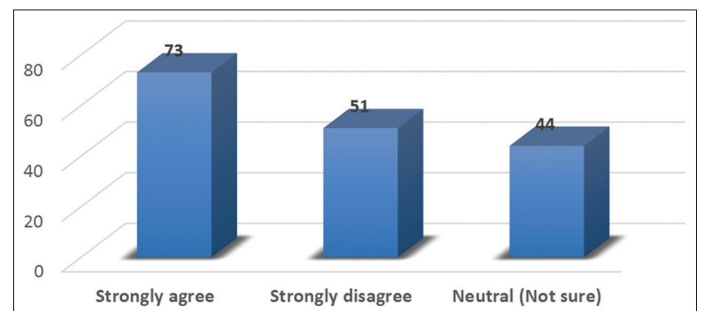
**Figure 5:** Do you think that social media information informs security reactions from Nigerian security agents with regard to Independent People of Biafra activities?



**Figure 6:** Do you think social media contributes to the advancement of Boko Haram activities?



**Figure 7:** Do you think social media contributes to the advancement of Independent People of Biafra activities?



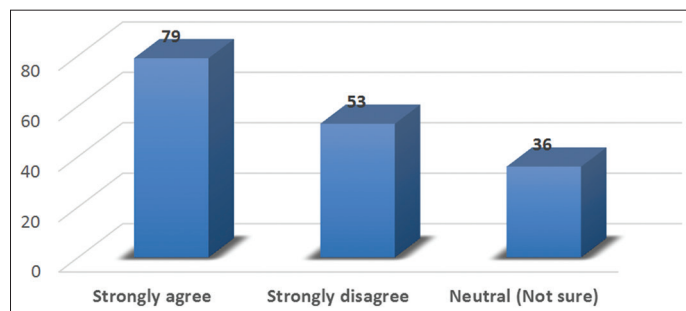
BH as a terrorist organization. The study found that 79 (47.0%) strongly believe that SM information influenced the decision of the Nigerian government to label BH as a terrorist organization. This implies that information and events displayed on SM could be seen as influencing factors pushing government and its security agents to proscribe and label any anti-government movement as a terrorist organization.

SM information promotes positive and negative views. According to Figure 9, 78 (46.4%) of the respondents felt that IPOB was labelled a terrorist organization due to information displayed and shown on SM. Overall, the study could summarize that SM information and events can be motivating factors towards the labelling of certain organisations (IPOB) as terrorist organisations or groups.

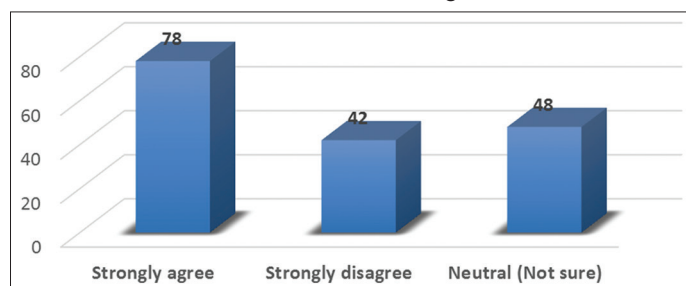
For some years now, terrorism and propaganda have engulfed the north-eastern parts of Nigeria by insurgent groups while separatist groups have also carried out demonstrations in the south-east. Table 2 presents different kinds of activities that SM can facilitate in the security situation of the northern and south-eastern corridor of Nigeria. Social networking sites are used by terrorist groups with dedicated servers and websites to spread their propaganda (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). They use the medium for recruitment, fundraising and as training mechanism and other forms of cybercrime. According to this study, Table 2 shows that 104 (17.2%) suggest that SM mainly facilitates propaganda, and threats of violence are suggested by 98 (16.2%). The IPOB displays their activities on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.

The activities of BH are displayed on different SM platforms by the media and individuals as they get hold of this information.

**Figure 8:** Do you think that information on social media networks influences or contributes to the labelling of Boko Haram as criminal or terrorist organisations?



**Figure 9:** Do you think that information on social media networks influences or contributes to the labelling of Independent People of Biafra as criminal or terrorist organisations?



Overall, participants suggest that the use of SM can facilitate propaganda, threats of violence, mobilizations, recruitment processes, radicalization of ideology, insecurity, training and many more. All these factors in return lead to social, economic and political insecurity, where lives and properties are endangered. However, according to Kimutai (2014), the misuse of SM affects national security, as in the case of Kenyan national security.

Although BH has not abated in its almost daily assassinations and kidnapping sprees, the insurgent group in recent times have advanced from its original strategic guerrilla forms of attack into a new type of threat that engages women and child suicide bombers to unleash their mayhem on soft targets (Knoope and Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). The federal government of Nigeria has grappled with curbing the security challenges originating from the activities of BH. Therefore, the insecurity situation in northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria has been affected by the presence of SM in this way (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). The question in Table 3 aimed to determine whether participants are aware of any kind of mechanism and machineries deployed by Nigerian security agents in getting information and combating SM threats to social and national security. Table 3 indicates that security agents mostly use news (online and printed), online surveillance, information sharing and many more to halt the challenges emanating from the abuse of SM usage by citizens. All these provide information and ideas to security agents, which they use to curb and avert terrorism (BH) and public protest by IPOB and other organisations. Then, the study found that Nigerian security agents use different information gathering techniques to retrieve information and ideas that lead to their counter-operation of SM threats and challenges.

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

Constructs	Responses n (%)	Percentage of cases
Radicalisation of ideology	87 (14.4)	51.8
Insecurity	71 (11.7)	42.3
Recruitment	89 (14.7)	53.0
Propaganda	104 (17.2)	61.9
Threats of violence	98 (16.2)	58.3
Training	63 (10.4)	37.5
Mobilisation	93 (15.4)	55.4
Total	605 (100.0)	360.1

SM: Social media

**Table 3: What mechanisms do you think are deployed by the Nigerian government in curbing security challenges emanating from social networking sites?**

Constructs	Responses n (%)	Percentage of cases
Public diplomacy	61 (11.9)	36.3
Counter propaganda	54 (10.6)	32.1
Online surveillance	73 (14.3)	43.5
Social networking tools	39 (7.6)	23.2
GPS technology	27 (5.3)	16.1
Intelligent monitoring	54 (10.6)	32.1
Information sharing	68 (13.3)	40.5
Informant	41 (8.0)	24.4
News	94 (18.4)	56.0
Total	511 (100.0)	304.2

Against all the threats emanating from wrongful use of SM by individual, terrorism and separatist organisations, it is crucial that individuals’ wellbeing is protected, which, in turn, improves national security conditions. Table 4 presents different ideas that participants believe will help in safeguarding SM users and improving social security conditions. Top of the suggestions is “Public enlightenment on the positive use of SM without hate speech” (137; 17.9%). Participants also suggest the blocking of sources that promote insecurity (85; 11.1%), creating laws and policies to control SM abuse (78; 10.2%) and the list continues. The findings show that different strategies can be implemented to curb the misuse or abuse of SM by individuals, insurgency groups, separatist organisations and many more. However, locally and internationally, terrorist groups deploy SM to organize or strategise attacks and ways of escape (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). Terrorist groups and individuals use SM to spread their events, which means much should be done to curb misuse. However, participants accepted that Table 4 highlights mechanisms suitable to curb the offensive use of SM by the general public as well as different agitation groups. The misuse of SM complicates national security as is the case of Kenya, where the platforms are used to promote propaganda, rumors, fake news and the list continues (Kimutai, 2014).

### 8. CONTRIBUTIONS AND FINDINGS

The following contributions and findings were drawn from the study:

- Empirically, the security situation in Nigeria is very poor, which is a matter of concern to the citizens.
- The activities of insurgent groups contribute to national security threats.
- The effective use of SM by citizens does not promote or contribute towards national security challenges in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria.
- The study found 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.
- The findings prove that SM contributes towards various kinds of rumor attacks, promoting hate speech, tribal clashes and terrorism attacks. These lead to high levels of insecurity and threats to lives and properties in the region and country at large.

- The study found that participants cannot tell whether Nigerian security services are updated through SM domains on the activities of BH and IPOB.
- The study also discovered that SM does not really advance the activities of BH against the state and humanity.
- It was found that SM promotes different forms of activities of IPOB.
- The study found that information and events displayed on SM could be an influencing factor pushing government security agents to proscribe and label anti-government movements as terrorist organisations. The study further revealed that BH and IPOB were labelled terrorist organisations with regard to the huge amount of information about their activities on SM. While BH is recognized internationally as a terrorist group, the IPOB’s activities differ greatly from the BH group.
- The findings prove that SM contributes towards various kinds of rumor attacks, promoting hate speech, tribal clashes and terrorism attacks (Table 1).
- The IPOB organization uses Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Overall, the use of SM can facilitate propaganda, threats of violence, mobilizations, recruitment processes, radicalization of ideology, insecurity, training and many more (Table 2).
- The study found that Nigerian security agents use different information gathering techniques such as news, online surveillance and others to gather and retrieve information and ideas on how to counter SM threats and challenges (Table 3).
- This study identified different mechanisms that can be adopted to curb the offensive use of SM by the general public as well as different agitation groups. The techniques include public enlightenment on the positive use of SM, blocking sources that promote insecurity on SM, as well as creating laws and policies to control SM abuse (Table 4).

### 9. IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The impact of SM on our daily lives and society at large cannot be doubted. The peace and national security of a country lie in the effective use of these platforms. This study discovered the impact and influence of SM on the peace and security of the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. The study found that Nigerians are aware of the implications of the misuse of SM on national security; however, the security condition in Nigeria is viewed as

**Table 4: What are your suggestions on how to protect ourselves against offensive use of SM in Nigeria and improve our security situation?**

Constructs	Responses n (%)	Percentage of cases
Public enlightenment on the positive use of SM without hate speech	137 (17.9)	81.5
Censorship and interception	47 (6.1)	28.0
Collaboration between government and SM site owners	61 (8.0)	36.3
Consistent monitoring of abuse of SM	57 (7.5)	33.9
Tools to trace SM instigators	64 (8.4)	38.1
Block sources that promote insecurity in the SM	85 (11.1)	50.6
Prosecute hate speech propagators	41 (5.4)	24.4
Shut down sites believed to be spreading security threatening information	62 (8.1)	36.9
Install software that monitors the spread of security threatening information	66 (8.6)	39.3
Respond to all gathered information with firmness and fairness	67 (8.8)	39.9
Create laws and policies to control SM abuse	78 (10.2)	46.4
Total	765 (100.0)	455.4

SM: Social media



very poor. The effective adoption of SM by individuals cannot affect or comprise national security, although SM is not the root cause of insecurity in Nigeria.

To curb the ongoing fake news, attack rumors, propaganda and so many others, the national security agents and others aligned agencies must be able to deploy different kinds of mechanisms to gather information, like through news gathering, online surveillance, information sharing, public diplomacy and many others. The findings of this study will enlighten the general public, Nigerian security agents and other stakeholders on the influence of SM on Nigerian security challenges. However, the study found that SM usage does not necessarily advance the activities of BH.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

The effective use of SM provides more positive stories than negative ones. This study recommends that individuals (citizens) should stop spreading, and promoting offensive, abusive, fake news (information), which advances social hatred, and terrorism attack rumors on SM platforms. The Nigerian government and individuals should stop drawing conclusions from the information they see and read on SM. Furthermore, government security agents should deploy proactive mechanisms to gather information through news (printed and online), and online surveillance to counter any misuse and abuse of SM comments and postings. All the participants use Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, and therefore it is recommended that they use these platforms devoid of abuse on anyone or the general public. Then, government and its security agents should implement effective enlightenment programmes to educate the public on how to be responsible while using SM platforms (Table 4). In future, researcher/s should study to determine the perception of government security agents on the impact of SM on national security situations. There should be a study to determine the link between SM use and national coherence.

## 11. CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined the impacts of SM on Nigerian security challenges. Despite receiving limited attention from scholarly research, its relevance as a burning socio-political issue within Nigeria, in particular, and the globe at large is not in doubt. The paper locates the ineffective use of SM within the scope of increased national security challenges in the northern and eastern parts of the country. To this end, this paper argues that the use of SM in spreading falsehood and negative information creates and amplifies unnecessary tension among citizens.

One of the fundamental empirical results of this paper is that there is a correlation between the ineffective use of SM and the promotion of security threats in the country. The connection was robustly accentuated as one of the fundamental avenues through which security challenges in the regions under study escalated. On the one hand, users of SM make ineffective use of the medium to spread negativity and raise false alarm. Secondly, it was also

an easy, accessible and cheap channel through which the BH terrorist and IPOB groups peddle undesirable information to the citizens. On the other hand, participants agree that Nigeria's security challenges are not escalated when SM is effectively used. Galvanizing these two scenarios confirms that the impacts of SM on Nigerian security challenges could be positive or negative, depending on the purpose, intention and reason attached by the user during usage.

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