



AWKA RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF FAMILY VALUES IN THE ERA OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Apart from the civil war that was pronounced, Nigeria has never had it so bad in terms of insecurity and violence. In searching for a solution to this wedge to our national development, all factors, including family life of Nigerians became subject of examination. In pursuit of this, the researchers studied Awka resident's perception of social media representation of family values in the era of insecurity in Nigeria. The study was anchored on social learning and agenda setting theory. Employing a survey research method, a sample size of 399 was arrived at. Questionnaire was also used as an instrument for data collection. From the data analysed, the researchers found that a greater percentage of Awka residents use social media. That they perceive social media representation of family values as negative. Concluding, the researchers observed that despite the positive roles of social media, that it also serves as an "evangelization ground" for new converts into violence and criminality which culminates in insecurity. The researchers recommended that efforts should be made to promote virtuous contents on social media. Also, that the family institution should intensify the inculcation of family values on their children who will grow to become responsible members of the larger society.*

KEYWORDS: Family Values, Insecurity, Awka Residents, Perception, Social Media



INTRODUCTION

Insecurity in Nigeria is a problem that seems to have defied all successive government's efforts to defeat. Instead of abating, it has continued to multiply in number of occurrences, severity, area of operation and brand (nomenclature). Prior to 2010 Independence Anniversary bombing at Eagle Square Abuja, Nigeria only suffered from the menace of Armed Robbery, Militancy in Niger Delta and Cattle Rustling in the North, just as it is in other peaceful 3rd world countries of the world.

In spite of all these existent forms of insecurity, our country Nigeria still found a way to contain them. It was after the 2011 general election in Nigeria which brought in President Goodluck Jonathan that insecurity in Nigeria started taking a more destructive dimension. From the build up to the 2011 election and swearing in of President Goodluck Jonathan on 29th of May 2011, Nigerians have known no peace till date.

Nigeria found herself in this precarious security situation when an Islamic fundamentalist group known as Boko Haram that was merely existing in Borno state became more pronounced and violent. From Borno state where it was born and festered, it extended its deadly operations beyond the entire North eastern states of Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi and Gombe, to North West and North central states of Nigeria.

Boko Haram claimed responsibility for Suleja church bombing (North-Central, 2011), Nyanya-Abuja motor park bombing (North Central, 2014), Kano Mosque bombing (North West, 2014). After the abduction of 276 Chibok school girls in 2014, Boko Haram also devised the use of teenagers as suicide bombers for attacking soft spots like markets, mosques, churches and other public places across the northern parts of Nigeria, by strapping improvised explosive devises (IED) on their bodies.

As Nigerians were busy seeking means of tackling Boko-Haram Insurgents' deadly onslaught against Nigerians, another group of vicious murderers that are specialized in killing and destroying lives and properties of any community they entered erupted. This group of marauders known as "Fulani killer herdsmen" also become a serious threat to the security of lives and properties of Nigerians. Presently, they are operating in North-Central, South-West, South-South and South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

Most cases of arson, rape, armed robbery, mass killing, kidnapping for ransom and many other heinous crimes in these areas of their operation have been attributed to them. These armed herdsmen as they are called in some other quarters are able to permeate the nooks and crannies of Nigeria because they disguise themselves as legitimate herders who have always lived in peace with the host communities of the areas where they ply their trade for many years.

In parts of the North west, another deadly group of armed men called Bandits are there wreaking havoc. They started their operation in the North western state of Zamfara, and have now extended their operations to Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, and many other states of Nigeria. These people started as mere cattle rustlers that were only interested in stealing and selling cows. But recently, they "diversified their operatio" into mass killing, arson and kidnapping for ransom.

Just recently, the kidnapping of students of Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Afaka-Kaduna State, Government Science Secondary School Kagara Niger State and Greenfield



University Kaduna State were all traced to the so-called Bandits. As they have communicated with the families of their victims, demanded and collected different amounts of money as ransom for the release of their Captives. They do not only engage in kidnapping, they have also destroyed properties, killed and maimed many residents of communities where they have attacked.

In South-East and South-South, the menace of a group popularly known as Unknown GunMen is sending chills down the spines of all residents of the two regions. For now, they are focused on killing security agents, burning police stations and attacking prison facilities (Correctional Centres) within these regions. Owerri Correctional Centre, Zone 13 Police Command Ukpou, Anambra state, Police Station in Mkpanak, Akwa Ibom state, killing of Navy Officers at Awkuzu, Anambra State, Killing of Police Officers at Choba, Rivers state, and many other criminal acts have been attributed to this deadly group.

In addition to the activities of the terrorist\criminal groups mentioned above, there are also ethnic\religious based organisations that are engaged in one form of agitation or the other by threatening the nation with either secession or attack on their rival. We have Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), Eastern Security Network (ESN), Odua People's Congress (OPC), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and others. These Self Determination seeking organizations have been fighting in recent times to assert their interest on the people and government of Nigeria.

Government on the other hand has been making efforts through respective security agencies to contain the activities of all these groups, especially the violent ones. Successive governments at both federal and state level have employed different strategies to ensure that citizen's lives and properties are adequately protected. Both men and resources have been employed by the government to ensure that peaceful co-existence of citizens from all ethnic and religious leanings is achieved and sustained throughout the country.

However, in spite of all the efforts of the government to ensure that relative peace is achieved in all parts of the country, it seems as if the violence and general insecurity is multiplying. Reports of attacks on human and material resources that resulted in deaths have become a daily occurrence in all parts of the country. In many cases, the government or security agencies in particular have been accused of complicity in some of the attacks which many people perceive as more of ethno-religious induced than political or economic.

Fortunately or unfortunately, all these actions and inactions are the handiwork of men and women that were born into different families as children before they grew into adulthood. From the look of things in Nigeria of today, these violent acts are not only becoming more incessant, it is spreading like a wildfire across the nation. What it then means is that "the system is gaining new converts" as the day goes by.

In this Internet age, the use of social media as media of expression by individuals and groups is a normal occurrence that forms part of the information role of the media. In playing this role, social media does not sieve its content to choose for the consumers what to consume. For that reason, social media users are exposed to violent scenes, verbal attacks, insubordination to constituted authority, ethno-religious sentiments, and many other antithetical actions and comments that are churned out via social media. Hence, the study of this topic: *Awka Resident's Perception of Social Media Representation of Family Values in the Era of Insecurity in Nigeria*.



Statement of the Problem

Before 2010, Nigerians were managing the prevailing vices reported by the media, which they viewed as typical of most 3rd world countries in Africa and elsewhere in the world. There were news reports of armed robbery, political thuggery, communal clashes, kidnapping for ransom, corruption in government, embezzlement, misappropriation of public funds, farmers\herders clashes and many others. There was also agitation for better treatment by Niger Deltans and a subtle and non violent call for the restoration of the defunct Biafra Republic.

These occurrences were being handled appropriately by Nigerian security agencies and other relevant stakeholders, till recently when the social media and to some extent the conventional media reports started representing life in Nigeria as valueless and brutish. Killings, Suicide bombing, kidnapping, arson, ethnic clashes, hate speech, and general insecurity enveloped the entire Nation. The social media is daily flooded with pictures and video clips emanating from every part of Nigeria, reporting mass killings, teenage suicide bombings, abduction of 100s of students, invasion of villages, destruction of government properties, etc.

This ugly development has been posing a serious threat to the life of both the residents and government of the federal republic of Nigeria, taking cognizance of the involvement of our youths in the perpetration of these heinous crimes. Businesses, education, tourism, sports, farming and many other human activities have been affected adversely by this menace. Hence, this study, Awka Residents' perception of social media representation of family values in the era of insecurity in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate Awka residents' perception of social media representation of family values in the era of insecurity. Against the backdrop of the purpose of the study, the following are the specific objectives:

- i. To determine the extent to which Awka residents are exposed to social media.
- ii. To ascertain the level to which social media project insecurity in Nigeria.
- iii. To determine Awka residents' perception of family values in social media.
- iv. To determine Awka resident's perception of the relationship between insecurity and family value on social media.

Research Questions

In order to aid investigation of the research problem, the following research questions were posed:

- i. To what extent are Awka residents exposed to social media?
- ii. To what level do social media project insecurity in Nigeria?
- iii. How do Awka residents perceive family values in social media?
- iv. How do Awka residents perceive the relationship between insecurity and family value on social media?



Conceptual Clarifications

Family Values

The corporate existence of every society lies on the values and ideals that bond them together and when these ideals and values are threatened or eroded, the security and development of such society becomes threatened as well. The family which according to Hilliard (1960) in Nnamene (2021) is the cornerstone and the basic unit of the social organization of every society, it is the custodian of values and ideals of the society. As such, it has a magnificent role to play in ensuring that these ideals are upheld, nurtured and passed on from generation to generation.

The family, according to Nem (2004), can be described as a social unit created by blood, marriage or adoption. As also described by the Population Reference Group (2000) in Patterson (2002), it is a group of people held together by birth, marriage or by adoption or by common residence or close emotional attachment. In a typical African context as posited by Nwobi (1997), the family is seen more as an extended family comprising a married couple, their offspring and immediate kith and kin-brothers and sisters of the bride, groom, parents, relatives, in-laws and any dependents.

Value as posited by Edang (2015), can be seen as some point of view or conviction which we can live with, live by and can even die for. Falade et. al., (2009) defined value as a coherent set of attitude, behaviour and action adopted and, or evolved by a person, organization, or society as a standard to guide its behaviour and preferences in all situations. In other words, values can be seen as the guiding principles which guide every individual in their day to day activities in their various fields of endeavor. Also, Awoniyi (2015), takes values to refer to the attitude, beliefs, behaviours and actions that are cherished and acceptable standards of behaviour which each society expects that the members should abide by. It differs from person to person and from one society to another because societies and individuals have various beliefs, attitudes and standards that form their value system.

Values, irrespective of type, are related to norms. Norms are rules and expectations that specify how people should and should not behave in various social situations. It is what a given society or institution regards as valuable and cherished that translates to the norms of the said society or institution. In other words, while values tell what a society sees as good and valuable, norms supply the rules, standards and guides for what ought to be done in specific situations (Ogbuja, 2014).

Family values are the fundamental and indispensable principles and beliefs that guide members of the family and determine how they act and interact with people in the larger society. They are fundamental because they are actually the principles upon which every family is founded. Family values promote the sound functioning of the home and strengthen the fabrics of the society. They feed the society and also, feed from the society. Typical Nigerian family values are such that believe in communality – doing things in common among kiths and kin – and the idea of “spare the rod and spoil the child”. It is believed that every child belongs to everyone in the society and as such, correcting a child’s misbehaviour is the responsibility of everyone in the society.



Social Media Use and Family Values: An Empirical Review

The notion as to how social media affects family values has continually been a contentious issue within the academic arena. While some believe that the social media have positive effects, some others believe that the effects are predominantly negative while yet, a few others believe that the social media merely re-depict what values the society or family represents and as such, have little or no effects whatsoever on family values.

Scholars like Solo-Anaeto et al (2015) while exploring social media as channels for sustaining African culture, discovered that social media is of great import in the sustenance of African culture. They banked on the global nature of social media to show how the social media helps in bringing African culture and values to the global arena; serving as archives for cultural materials and above all, building close interactions among users by facilitating greater connectedness among users of the same ethnic group and reinforcing existing ethnic links and ties.

Similarly, Undiyaundeye (2014) extols the positive effects of social media on family values when she opined that social media sites allow users to accomplish tasks that are considered important to them. Tasks such as staying connected with friends and family (especially distant relationship connections) , making new acquaintances and developing skills, according to the scholar, were all made possible through the use of social media. Findings reveal that Nigerians, especially the youths, no longer have regards for Nigeria's core values, as the youths now pattern their lives after the foreign culture. Many people in Nigeria have come to accept the Western culture as their own. This is made manifest in the way findings reveal that Nigerians, especially the youths, no longer have regards for Nigeria's core values, as the youths now pattern their lives after the foreign culture.

Many people in Nigeria have come to accept the Western culture as their own. This is made manifest in the way In contrast however, scholars such Rehim et al (2020) and Hussain et al (2020) opined that social media are of greater negativity to family values. In their various studies, they showed how users, especially children and young adults are constantly exposed to various degrees of vices like cyberbullying, sexting, facebook depression and distorted sense of reality.

Even the ability of social media to help create connectedness among family members was faulted on the grounds that social media use diminishes physical contacts among members which in turn, undermine certain physical relationships among family members. Hussain et al (2020), however are quick to add that the reason is predominantly due to the social and economic pattern of members of the society in recent times. Furthermore, Rehim et al (2020) pinpoints the issue of greater access to pornography which endangers the privacy and security of family members.

Coming closer home, scholars are of the opinion that social media has greater negative effects on African family values. According to Chukwu and Chiemeka (2019), social media usage is an albatross on family value systems in Nigerian society. Most of Nigerian core values like dressing, mode of greeting, bearing names, honesty, hard work, morality and so on, are gradually being eroded as social media use among youths especially, escalates.

In the words of Asema and Olaniran (2013), Nigerian youths no longer have regards for Nigerian core values as youths now pattern their lives after foreign cultures. Orlu-Orlu and



Nsereka (2014) further laments that morality has taken flight, violence has taken center stage while hard work has become anathema in the society today all due to escalated social media use among Nigerian youths. Cybercrimes, laziness and inactivity, indecent dressing, sexual harassment and violence of different pedigrees are the bane of society today all thanks to social media representations. All these affect values negatively and harm family and society security.

Theoretical Framework

Due to rapid changes in the media landscape, extensive theoretical studies are needed to understand the dynamics of digital communication (Ezepuo, 2019). To achieve this feat, this study is anchored on these two communication theories; Social Learning Theory and Agenda Setting Theory.

The Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviour (McLeod, 2016). This theory also known as the Theory of Human Behavior or Observational Learning theory as postulated by Bandura (1986), posits that people cannot learn all of what they need to guide their development and behaviour from direct personal observation and experience alone, but also from indirect sources including the mass media (Ukaegbu, 2015; McQuail, 2005; Nnamene, 2021).

The theory exposes the socialization effect of the mass media in which the media are seen as both 're-enforcer' and 'combative agent' of other agencies of socialization. On the one hand, the media is seen as aiding the inculcation of values and norms while on the other hand, as a potential threat to the values set by parents, educators and other agents (McQuail, 2005).

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory was propounded by Maxwell McCombs & Donald Shaw in 1972. Agenda setting theory is one of the most popular theories of mass communication. The theory has its origin in the 1922 Walter Lippman's writing titled "The world outside the pictures in our heads". He wrote that the media creates pictures in our mind.

Agenda setting theory posits that there is a link between what the media consider important and what the general public consider important. McCombs and Shaw (1972) as recorded by Sheufele and Tewksbury (2007) said that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (Nwachukwu, Asak and Asadu, 2013).

Methodology

The research design employed in the study was the survey method. This method was adopted because it is suitable for examining studies that involve a large population and for eliciting appropriate responses that will be needed to achieve the objectives of this study. Survey research was therefore essential in collecting data for a population too large to be observed directly. Also, the study adopted the questionnaire as a measuring instrument.



The population for this study comprises all adult residents in Awka metropolis, which consists of Awka North and Awka South L.G.A(s). According to Census 2006 projected population figures of 2016, Awka North is 70,755 while Awka South is 198,254 totalling 198,254. A sample size of 399 was used for this study and was calculated through Taro Yamane formula for determination of sample size thus;

$$N = N/(1+N(e)^2)$$

Where ;

‘n’ signifies the sample size

‘N’ signifies the population of study

‘e’ signifies the margin of error(in this case,0.05)

DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Out of 399 copies of questionnaires administered to respondents in Awka metropolis 388(97%) were returned and found useful for data analysis, thus giving the questionnaire the mortality rate of 11(3%).

Table 1: Awka residents’ exposure to social media

| Options | Scores (x) | Frequency (f) | Fx | % |
|-----------|------------|---------------|-------|-----|
| Very High | 4 | 146 | 584 | 38 |
| High | 3 | 113 | 339 | 29 |
| Low | 2 | 82 | 164 | 21 |
| Very Low | 1 | 48 | 48 | 12 |
| Total | | 388 | 1,135 | 100 |

From Table 1 above, the analysis shows the level of Awka residents’ exposure to social media. The result shows a mean score of 2.9 on a 4-point scale. This goes further to show 73% level of the respondents’ exposure to social media, which is very high.

Table 2; The level at which social media project insecurity in Nigeria

| Options | Scores (x) | Frequency (f) | Fx | % |
|-----------|------------|---------------|------|-----|
| Very High | 4 | 139 | 556 | 36 |
| High | 3 | 101 | 303 | 23 |
| Low | 2 | 90 | 180 | 15 |
| Very Low | 1 | 58 | 58 | 26 |
| Total | | 388 | 1097 | 100 |



From Table 2 above, the analysis shows the level to which the social media project insecurity in Nigeria. The result shows a mean score of 2.8 on a 4 point scale. This further revealed that the respondents' perception level of social media projection of insecurity in Nigeria as high as 71%.

Table 3: How Awka residents perceive family values contents in social media

| Options | Scores (x) | Frequency (f) | Fx | % |
|-----------|------------|---------------|-----|-----|
| Very High | 4 | 61 | 244 | 16 |
| High | 3 | 87 | 261 | 22 |
| Low | 2 | 109 | 218 | 28 |
| Very Low | 1 | 131 | 131 | 34 |
| Total | | 388 | 854 | 100 |

From Table 3 above, the analysis shows how Awka residents perceive family values in social media. The result revealed a mean score of 2.2 on a 4 point scale. This further affirms that the respondents' level of perception of family values contents on social media is as low as 55%.

Table 4: How Awka residents perceive the relationship between insecurity and family value in social media.

| Options | Scores (x) | Frequency (f) | Fx | % |
|-----------|------------|---------------|------|-----|
| Very High | 4 | 156 | 624 | 40 |
| High | 3 | 129 | 387 | 33 |
| Low | 2 | 62 | 124 | 16 |
| Very Low | 1 | 41 | 41 | 11 |
| Total | | 388 | 1176 | 100 |

Table 4 revealed how Awka residents perceive the relationship between insecurity and family values on social media. The result shows a mean score of 3.0 on a 4 point scale. Obviously, this is a very high rating because the finding also indicates that Awka residents' perception of the relationship between insecurity and family values on social media is as high as 76%.

Responses generated so far from this study have been quite revealing and relevant in the question for a lasting solution to the fast erosion of family values found in most young adults and teenagers of Nigeria. Astronomical increase in social media use since the launch of GSM Phone in Nigeria in 2001 have continued to soar despite many economic and political problems that Nigerians have been saddled with all these years. The platform has no doubt brought people closer, simplified learning, and made business transactions easier than it would have ever been in the absence of such technology.

If not for social media, virtual activities held throughout the world at the heat of covid-19 lockdown would not have been possible. The damage it would have caused the world would have been colossal. Save for the deployment of that virtual media platform, many schools would have lost more than one academic session which will be a difficult task to recover. National and international public\government functions were performed using these platforms.



In spite of all these advantages mentioned above, this study found that there is an existing relationship between social media use and erosion of family values which breeds insecurity. Thus, through social media, the gullible minds and merchants of vices and crime meet for further “evangelisation”. Because of the ready audience that is inherent on respective social media platforms, it has now been turned into a fertile ground where innocent minds are being disrobed of the family values they imbibed from childhood.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, social media representation of family values in the era of insecurity in Nigeria contributes to the upsurge of the social malady. Irrespective of the negative characteristics like immorality, hate speech, indecent dressing, fraud, promiscuity, deceit, and many others that are disseminated through social media, they are still veritable tools for integration, mobilisation, education, information, socialisation and so on.

Sequel to these reasons above, the researchers recommend that more positive messages that inspire social media audiences should be encouraged on various social media platforms to neutralise various negative contents that encourage insecurity. They further recommend that parents should intensify their teaching of family values to their children when they are younger. So that it will be very difficult for them to depart from that, no matter their exposure to social media content.

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