

Impact of social media on youth mobilization and the use of twitter for the 2020 #endsars protest In Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was carried out to examine the impact of social media on youth mobilization and the use of twitter for the 2020 #EndSARs protest in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. A total of three hundred and seventy one (371) Nigeria youths were randomly selected as sample for the study. A researcher's designed questionnaire was design and was present with Google form. Three research questions were answered using mean analysis. Based on the findings, the social media platforms used for mobilization of youths includes Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Blogs, Snapchat and Google Meet. However, Twitter has the highest usage(90.9%) while Google Meet has the least usage (28.3%). Also, majority of the respondents agreed that twitter was utilized: to share locations of where to begin protest (56.3%); to inform foreign organizations of the happenings in Nigeria (37.7%); to share information on the deeds of the SARS members and a need to join the protest (48.0%); to share e-flyers and videos showing the atrocities committed by SARS members (49.3%); and to reach out to celebrities in Nigeria and outside the country in participating for the protest(47.4%).The study recommended that efforts should be made by the government in subjecting police recruits to several test before being qualified to be trained as a law enforcement agent. This test will ensure that those to be trained are physically, mentally and socially fit for the duty.

Keywords: Social Media; Twitter; Mobilization; #ENDSARS; Nigeria; Digital Activism; Protest

1 Introduction

Mobilization is a strong tool for collective action, enabling people, communities, and organizations to effect significant social change. Mobilization has a long-term influence because it encourages involvement and fosters a sense of ownership. Agbedo(2020) found that involving various stakeholders in face-to-face interaction and effective communication is critical for raising awareness and desire for good change. Mobilization allows community networks, organizations, and groups to work together to increase their effect by reaching out to specific audiences with clear and compelling messages. This strategic strategy promotes long-term social transformation by leveraging the power of

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collaborative action. In conventional contexts, mobilization has been accomplished through grassroots techniques, typically with limitations in place to assure participation.

Mobilization supports societal and systemic transformation by unifying communities behind common goals, which match with the community's vision and values (Nworgu, 2020). According to Agbedo(2020), mobilization is an effective instrument for decentralizing policies and programs, building people and institutional capabilities, and encouraging efficient resource utilization at the local level.

The Internet's widespread adoption has led to the growth of social media as a powerful tool for mobilization. This believe was emphasized by Asenah (2011), who reiterated that the liberation of any society begins with the access to the internet. Thus, youths use social media to gather knowledge and share their thoughts on national issues. Rainie (2012) also found a considerable growth in the use of social media platforms among youths. In accordance with Rainie (2020) social media studies, Twitter, blogs, Facebook, instant messengers, emails, Skype, WhatsApp, YouTube, and other platforms are medium used for communication, interaction, and education. In Nigeria, these mediums has been used to ensure the mobilization of youths for the year 2020 End SARS protest.

The #EndSARS protest aimed to dissolve Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) who owes to human rights violations and extrajudicial killings. The EndSARS protest gained traction in 2020 on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, as young people uploaded horrific photographs and videos of SARS crimes. The internet movement morphed into street protests, with social media, specifically, Twitter, utilized to raise, mobilize, and organize demonstrators. Strategic places for the protest were identified online, and thousands of people reacted to calls to demonstrate, causing substantial unrest and forcing government leaders to face the demonstrators. The #End SARS protest united Nigerians, especially young people, to achieve a common goal, highlighting the power of social media in mobilizing and sustaining mass action.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the social media platforms used by youths to mobilize for the End SARS protest?
2. How does the youths used Twitter to mobilized for the End SARS protest?
3. What are the responses of the government on youth mobilization for the End SARS protest?

2 Intellectual Context

2.1 The Use of Twitter for the EndSARS Protests

Nigerian youths used social media sites like Twitter to organize protests against the SARS brutality. The protest grown from sharing graphic photographs of alleged atrocities on Twitter to becoming a nationwide movement. The initiative acquired international attention, with about 28 million tweets with the #ENDSARS hash tag accumulated on Twitter alone. This has prodded a widespread protests in Nigeria's main cities. The campaign prompted solidarity marches in major cities throughout the world, with leaders around the world decrying Nigeria government's merciless reaction.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted descriptive survey research design that allows quantitative assessment of a particular phenomenon with views from the respondents.

3.2 Population of Study

The population projections of the Nigerian youths by the United Nations is 31,352,051 which indicates a significant number (16%) of the entire population. Therefore, the population size of the research work covered the entire population size of youths in Nigeria.

3.3 Sample size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for this study was calculated using Yamane's formula, which is;

$n = \text{sample size}$

N = population size

e = margin of error (5)

$$n = \frac{31,352,051}{1 + 33,827,663 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{31,352,051}{1 + 33,827,663 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{31,352,051}{1 + 84,569.1575}$$

$$n = \frac{31,352,051}{84570.1575} \quad n = 371$$

Thus, the sample size for this study is 371

4 Results

4.1 Social Platforms youths used to Mobilize for the ENDSARS protest

Table 1 Response on Social Media Platforms Used

S/N	Platforms	Used	Not Used	Rank
1	Facebook	300 (80.9%)	71 (19.1%)	2 nd
2	Instagram	201 (54.2%)	170 (45.8%)	5 th
3	WhatsApp	247 (66.6%)	124 (33.4%)	3 rd
4	Twitter	334 (90.0%)	37 (10.0%)	1 st
5	Google Meet	105 (28.3%)	266 (71.7%)	8 th
6	YouTube	245 (66.0%)	126 (34.0%)	4 th
7	Snapchat	143 (38.5%)	228 (61.5%)	7 th
8	Blogs	171 (46.1%)	200 (53.9%)	6 th

Field Survey, 2024.

Analysis: as shown in table 4.1, the social media platforms used includes Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Blogs, Snapchat and Google Meet accordingly. However, Twitter has the highest usage(90.9%) while Google Meet has the least usage (28.3%).

4.2 How did youth used Twitter to mobilize for the End SARS protest?

Analysis: as shown in table 4.2.1, 56.3% of the respondents strongly agreed while 0.3% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that youths utilized Twitter to share locations of where to begin protest.

Table 2 Youths utilized Twitter to share locations of where to begin Protest

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	209	56.3%
A	154	41.5%
D A	7	1.9%
S D	1	0.3%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 Twitter was used to inform foreign organizations of the happenings in Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	140	37.7%
A	102	27.5%
D A	112	30.2%
S D	17	4.6%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024.

Analysis: as shown in table 4.2.2, 37.7% of the respondents strongly agreed while 4.6% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that Twitter was used to inform foreign organizations of the happenings in Nigeria.

Table 4 The youths used Twitter to share information on the deeds of the SARS members and a need to join the protest

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	178	48.0%
A	175	47.2%
D A	17	4.6%
S D	1	0.3%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024

Analysis: as shown in table 4.2.3, 48.0% of the respondents strongly agreed while 0.3% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that twitter was used to share information on the deeds of the SARS members and a need to join the protest.

Table 5 The use of e-flyers and videos showing the atrocities committed by SARS members was share through Twitter

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	183	49.3%
A	165	44.5%
D A	10	2.7%
S D	13	3.5%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024

Analysis: as shown in table 4.2.4, 49.3% of the respondents strongly agreed while 3.5% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that the use of e-flyers and videos showing the atrocities committed by SARS members was share through Twitter.

Table 6 Twitter helped to reach out to celebrities in Nigeria and outside the country in participating for the protest

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	176	47.4%
A	158	42.6%
D A	37	10.0%
S D	0	0%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024

Analysis: as shown in table 4.2.5, 47.4% of the respondents strongly agreed while 0% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that Twitter helped to reach out to celebrities in Nigeria and outside the country in participating in the protest.

4.3 What are the responses of the government on youth mobilization for the End SARS protest?

Table 7 The government released of all arrested protesters

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	77	20.8%
A	90	24.3%
D A	129	34.8%
S D	74	19.9%
Total	371	100

Analysis: as shown in table 4.3.1, 34.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed while 24.3% strongly agreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents disagreed that the government released of all arrested protesters.

Table 8 Victims and families of the victims were compensated

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	121	32.6%
A	96	25.9%
D A	139	37.5%
S D	15	4.0%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024

Analysis: as shown in table 4.3.2, 37.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed while 25.9% strongly agreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents disagreed that victims and families of the victims were compensated.

Table 9 SARS and police men found guilty of the atrocities against citizens were prosecuted

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	122	32.9%
A	114	30.7%
D A	114	30.7%
S D	21	5.7%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024

Analysis: as shown in table 4.3.3, 32.9% of the respondents strongly agreed while 5.7% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that SARS and police men found guilty of the atrocities against citizens were prosecuted.

Table 10 Disbanding of SARs from Operation

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
S A	158	42.6%
A	146	39.4%
D A	53	14.4%
S D	14	3.8%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024

Analysis: as shown in table 4.3.4, 42.6% of the respondents strongly agreed while 3.8% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that the government disbanded SARS from operation.

Table 11 Creation of a new unit police unit saddled with the responsibility of curbing insecurity

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	161	43.4%
Agree	141	38.0%
Disagree	37	10.0%
Strongly Disagree	32	8.6%
Total	371	100

Field Survey, 2024

Analysis: as shown in table 4.3.5, 43.4% of the respondents strongly agreed while 8.6% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that the government created a new unit police unit saddled with the responsibility of curbing insecurity disbanding of SARS from operation.

5 Discussion

The result of the analysis of collected data for this study provided some insight into the main objectives of the study, which was focused on examining the roles of social media on youth mobilization for the 2020 #EndSARs protest in Nigeria". The study included a sample of 371 respondents consisting of youths in Nigeria.

Result from analysis of demographic data showed that majority of the respondents (youths) that participated in the study were males (64.2%). Most of respondents were between age range 26-30 years (40.4%). Majority of the respondents had completed their tertiary education (77.6%) and most of the respondents were students (62.5%).

Research question one aimed to find out social media platforms used by youths for mobilization for 2020 End SARS protest. The major platforms used by the youths are Twitter (90.0%), Facebook (80.9%), WhatsApp (66.6%), YouTube (66.0%), Instagram (54.2%), Blogs (46.1%), Snap chat (38.5%) and Google meet (28.3%) accordingly. Hence, Twitter has the highest usage and Snap chat the least.

Research question two focused on how Twitter was used to mobilized the youth for the End SARS protest. Accordingly, Twitter mobilized the youths by being used to share locations and of where to begin protest. Also, Twitter was used to inform foreign organizations of the happenings in Nigeria. Twitter served as the platform to share information on the deeds of the SARS members and a need to join the protest and was being used to reach out to celebrities in Nigeria and outside the country in participating in the protest.

Research question three focused on the responses of the government on youth mobilization for the 2020 End SARS protest. Majorly, the response of the government includes disbanding of SARS from operation, creation of a new unit police unit saddled with the responsibility of curbing insecurity and compensation of victims and families of the protest. However, the respondents disagreed that the government released of all arrested protesters. It was also observed that the respondents disagreed that families and victims of the protest were compensated.

6 Conclusion

This study examined the 2020 #EndSARS protest in Nigeria and found out that Twitter was the primary social media platform used by youths for mobilization. Social media enabled location sharing, information dissemination, and outreach to celebrities and foreign organizations. The government responded by disbanding SARS, creating a new police unit, and compensating victims. The study recommends promoting social media for unity and growth, rigorous police recruitment testing, periodic officer assessments, and victim compensation. The study suggests further research on social media's role in youth mobilization, with potential for replication in other fields.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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