

The Role of the Mass Media in the Fight Against Police Brutality: A Case Study of the #EndSARS Protest in Nigeria

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The thesis titled “The Role of the Mass Media in the Fight Against Police Brutality: A Case Study of the #EndSARS Protest in Nigeria” submitted by Suleiman Muftau Olanrewaju (22303067) of Spring 2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English.

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Abstract

Public concern over police brutality in Nigeria has increased before and during the 2020 #EndSARS protests, making it crucial for this study to investigate the role of the mass media in addressing police brutality during these protests. Using a mixed-method approach, it integrates quantitative analysis of print, broadcast, and social media with qualitative interviews to investigate how media coverage shapes public perception and influences the protest narrative. While previous research has examined the media's role in social movements and activism, this study emphasizes the significant contributions of the mass media during the #EndSARS protests. Agenda-setting theory was employed as the study's theoretical framework to understand the dimensions and the narrative used by the media in framing police brutality as a central concern. The study's findings reveal the crucial role of the mass media, particularly the effectiveness of social media in mobilization, documentation, public awareness, and its watchdog role during the #EndSARS protests. Moreover, it highlights significant challenges, which include harassment, censorship, and journalist intimidation, limiting traditional media effectiveness. In conclusion, with its surveillance and advocacy function, the media served as a transformative force during the protests.

Keywords: Mass Media, #EndSARS Protests, Police Brutality, Human Rights Advocacy, Social Media Activism

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to myself for the perseverance and commitment that made this journey possible and, my parents' continuous support, guidance, and encouragement during this academic journey. Lastly, to the lost lives seeking justice during the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria and the 2024 Bangladesh Quota Reform Movement.

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“الحمد لله الذي بنعمته تتم الصالحات”

“All praise is to Allah Who by His blessings all good things are perfected.”

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Chapter 1

1.1. Introduction

The human rights record of Nigeria has drawn significant attention and concern both domestically and internationally. According to the Amnesty International rating, Nigeria is rated highly among countries that violate human rights, which has further raised concerns among prominent organizations such as Civil Rights Defense, Anti-Slavery International, the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI). The public outrage over the violation of human rights is due to the actions of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Nigeria. SARS is a specialized unit of the Nigerian Police Force that is responsible for fighting against criminal activities in society. One of the primary catalysts for the 2020 protests conducted by disgruntled Nigerians was the rampant infringement on human rights. As an organ meant to carry out surveillance in society, the mass media in Nigeria were expected to fulfill this role with the utmost effectiveness. The media serves as a check on the government's excessive action towards the citizens; to bring about change, the media is the first to report when things go wrong in the nation. The main essence of this is to guarantee the freedom of individuals from any form of infringement against their rights, as explicitly stated in the Nigerian constitution. Also, the duty to safeguard the people's rights is vested with the Nigerian police force. However, there have been instances where the Nigerian police force has been involved in the brutalization and unlawful killing of innocent people. Despite the role of the mass media, there has been little to no change in addressing police brutality. This led many to believe that the media, as the last court of common man on matters of human rights and surveillance, has failed in its duty. Therefore, this study aims to investigate

how the mass media established its role of surveillance during the #EndSARS protests against police brutality in Nigeria.

1.2. Background of the Study

The mass media operate as channels for disseminating information to a large and diverse population. Nwosu (2004) noted that mass media are the means of communication on a large scale, implying that mass communication can only be done through the mass media. Thus, mass communication differs from other types of communication because of its ability to reach and engage a wider audience than a limited number of people. Through mass communication, the media enables the general public to be informed of the events in society. Nwosu (2004) added getting to people in different socio-cultural, political, religious and even intellectual contexts is possible through the mainstream media. Such messages are intended to help the targeted individuals modify their attitudes and behaviour in the right manner.

Newspapers were the first form of print media in Nigeria. The country launched its first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba*, in 1859, under the direction of Rev. Henry Townsend (Salawu, 2004). The newspaper featured Yoruba people and was published twice a week. Initially, newspapers were published in print format, offering a mix of news, entertainment, education, and social events in an organized manner for the readers. However, advancements in technology and the increasing competition in the media industry have led to the rise of online versions, reflecting the evolving landscape of media consumption (Olley and Chile, 2015).

The second mass medium was the invention of the radio. Radio is a form of mass media that transmits information through the use of electromagnetic systems. According to Ahmad and

Isyaku (2023), radio began in Nigeria in 1933 during the period of the British Colonial masters, who utilized the Department of Post and Telegraphs to distribute radio in Lagos. Also, it is important to note that Ibadan station was commissioned in 1939, followed by Kano station. The Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) was created in 1950 following a re-appraisal of the objectives of radio broadcasting. NBS broadcasts its programs in Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano, and Enugu through shortwave and medium-wave transmitters. The Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was created in 1959 by the House of Representatives Act. The NBC was thus responsible for broadcasting radio in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Umeh (1989) added that television transmission was first performed in western Nigeria on October 31, 1959. It was financed by a regional government, thus making it the first one of its kind in the country and the entire African continent. Television has been the subsequent conventional mass medium and a more effective one, it uses both auditory and visual signals to convey information. According to Owuamalam (2008), television falls under the classification of electronic media as mass communication, which has come to be of immense worth in the current world as much as it adds to the aspect of audiovisuals.

Mass media as a social institution serve certain functions, such as information, surveillance, cultural integration, social activism, education and entertainment. This study will focus more on the functions of surveillance and social activism, for which mass media have long been viewed as major institutions in society as a result of their ability to drive societal change. Mass media shape opinion, promote human rights and serve as social transformation agents in any society. The mass media have long conveyed political will and ideology, such as the Nigerian nationalist press. Through the nationalist press, Nigeria's independence was delivered (Anyanwu et al., 2019). Also, the police activities were one of the most recent instances of

human rights violations that the media in Nigeria reported. The police are the executive body tasked with the duty to prevent and control criminal activity and societal violence. They are vested with functions such as apprehending, detecting and prosecuting individuals who commit crimes and violence in the country (Alemika, 2000). In a report by the Nigeria Police Watch (2011), it is stated that the Nigerian police is also responsible for conventional police functions and internal security.

Moreover, the significance of mass media lies in its connection to police force activities. Hence, it functions as a central point for both the mass media and the police. The police are responsible for ensuring that criminals are held accountable for their actions, while the media play an important role in publicizing such incidents to guarantee safety in society and expose wrongdoers. Thus, the mass media and police perform surveillance functions. Ales and Mesko (2006) emphasized the significance of the media's portrayal of police activities and crime, highlighting its broader implications beyond just the police organization. However, the Nigerian police force has in recent times been in the news for their poor conduct involving cases of extrajudicial killings on the youths (yahoo boys) who are alleged to be involved in cybercrimes. The #EndSARS protests came into being due to a number of cases of police brutality across the country.

The formation of this special security squad can be attributed to the reign of armed robbers in Lagos State in 1992, whereby the Special Anti-Robbery Squad was formed (Midenda, 2017). This was formed as a faceless unit of the police force to carry out undercover operations against armed robbers. Within a short period of time since its inception, the unit has expanded across states within the country. The adoption of the unit throughout the country, which lacks a well-defined framework, contributes to its lawlessness. According to Ini (2021), the protest

started in 2017 when the campaign was created through the Twitter platform. They began through a social media campaign as people in Nigeria used the hashtag #EndSARS on Twitter (X) to protest against police brutality. This movement was borne out of the activities of the Nigerian police force, particularly the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), accused of extrajudicial killings, extortion and arbitrary arrest of people with no cause. Thus, the #EndSARS movement was initiated by Segun and published; it was popular in the year 2020 but started in the year 2017. It was within this period that several high-profile cases of police misconduct ignited discussions on Twitter, mainstream media and other public forums.

The protest was fueled by a video of a SARS officer shooting dead a young man in Delta State on October 3, 2020. The incident provoked outrage among the youths. As a result, young people nationwide staged a demonstration against police brutality on October 20, 2020 (Aljazeera, 2020). The recent study on #EndSARS indicates the trend about police brutality on Twitter helps to raise public awareness on the topic. Although the internet campaign addressing police brutality is relatively new, several Nigerian pop singers have spoken out about their concerns, fears, and experiences with such incidents in the past. However, the mass media played a central role in reporting the struggle, focusing on human rights violations, and raising awareness among the public.

The #EndSARS movements had an impact on both the Nigerian police and the government. Due to the outcry of the public to some allegations of police brutality and corruption linked to SARS, the Nigerian government disbanded the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on October 11, 2020 and formed the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) shortly after the protest gained recognition. Also, the protest eroded public trust and credibility in the Nigerian police. The widespread documentation of abuses revealed structural faults within the

force, prompting calls for police reform. By using verified evidence like videos and images that violate human rights, the public has rallied behind the cause of exposing human rights violators in the country, and the way to substantiate and verify such cases is through the mass media (Abosede, 2020). The government on its own side had to deal with a lot of pressure domestically and internationally. The extent of the protests, which received support from around the world and intense coverage of social media, clearly put the demands of the protesters to the government in the spotlight. This led to the call for police reforms, setting up of judicial panels of inquiry across the states to look into cases of police brutality as well as discourse on further reforms in governance and human rights in the country.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The media are powerful tools for projecting and protecting citizens' rights. It serves as a check on the government's excessive action towards its citizens, and when things go wrong in the country, the media is the first to report actions to be taken against it. More so, the Nigerian police have the mandate of protecting citizens from human rights abuses. However, there have been some cases in which the Nigerian police force has been accused of extrajudicial killings and the use of excessive force on innocent citizens. Despite the role of the mass media, there has been little to no change in addressing police brutality. This led many to believe that the media, as the last court of common person, on matters of human rights and surveillance, has failed in its duty. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how the mass media fulfilled its role of surveillance during the #EndSARS protest against police brutality in Nigeria.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the forms of coverage adopted by the mass media against police brutality during the #EndSARS movement.
- ii. To evaluate the mass media's effectiveness in fulfilling its surveillance functions and its contributions to human rights reporting of the #EndSARS protests.
- iii. To pinpoint the specific achievements of mass media regarding police brutality throughout the #EndSARS protests.

1.5. Research Questions

- i. What are the forms of media coverage adopted by the mass media against police brutality during the #EndSARS movement?
- ii. What role does mass media play in human rights reporting of the #ENDSARS protests?
- iii. What are the challenges faced by the mass media in reporting police brutality during the #EndSARS protests?

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria, showing how mass media can aid the fight against police misconduct. The study also looks at the extent to which the mass media played the role of a watchdog in reporting different crimes during the #EndSARS protest. Although the protest was conducted across the country, the study is interested in areas such as Abuja and Lagos which were also areas of protest.

1.7. Significance of the Study

The study is significant as it investigates the role of the mass media in fighting police brutality during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. This study highlights how the media's surveillance function to report human rights violations can influence public awareness and foster social transformation. Also, the study analyses the media's coverage of the protests to gain insights into how effectively the media hold law enforcement accountable and advocate for the protection of citizens' rights. Furthermore, the study is significant for the general public as it enhances their awareness of the media's role in advocating for justice and human rights. This study also adds to academic research because it analyses the interplay between the media, public opinion, and social activism in Nigeria.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Review

The conceptual review of this study will focus on the following key areas: mass media, overview of the Nigeria Police Force, issues regarding the Nigeria Police Force, and the emergence of EndSARS protests.

2.1.1. Mass Media

The history of mass media in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era through the missionary efforts of Reverend Henry Townsend. The Reverend introduced Nigeria's first-ever newspaper, *Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba* (Salawu, 2004). The newspapers were used to fight against the slave trade and propagate Christianity. Furthermore, the emergence of electronic media began in 1935 with the establishment of the radio distribution service. According to Nwosu (2004), British colonialists established the Radio Distribution Service to facilitate communication between the British government and the colonial territories. In 1951, the Nigerian government established the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. In 1959, Chief Obafemi Awolowo launched Africa's first television station, Western Nigeria Television (WNTV). This marked the beginning of a new era in Nigerian broadcasting due to the fascinating nature of the medium.

Asemah (2020) has defined broadcasting as the transmission of electronic and magnetic energy to be communicated to the public. Phelan (2022) noted that broadcasting is the distribution of radio and television signals to a large and diverse population. These signals

contain messages that the audience interprets when receiving them. However, broadcasting does this systematically to entertain, inform or give instructions to the intended large number of people. Radio is often stated as one of the most effective means to disseminate information worldwide, regardless of location. According to Sarmah and Lama (2017), radio has proven to be a valuable educational tool in various countries, supporting many subject areas in formal education. Consequently, radio plays an important role in today's world. Radio encompasses more than announcements, songs, and news. It is about companionship and emotional connection with listeners (Gibraltar Regular Authority, 2020).

Furthermore, radio functions as a communication instrument that emphasizes advocacy and watchdog functions in society based on the actions of leaders who may act against the interests of the public through investigative reporting. Also, through objective reporting, radio ensures the protection of the governed (Sarmah & Lama, 2017). Udeze and Chuckwuma (2016) argue that the purpose of radio surveillance is to serve as an observer, which is an important component of political, cultural, and economic stability.

Despite the emergence of new media technology and other related technological inventions, television is still seen as a vital concentration of mass communication. Television has been an audiovisual medium up to this time, and it is one of the most effective means of reaching out to a broad audience. Television messages are conveyed in different programs, and the recipient on the receiving end is called the viewer (Olalekan, 2003). Agbamuchue (2012) notes that television has significantly impacted people; it extends its reach to individuals from all walks of life, whether they are part of the public or private sector. According to Dominick (2012), the instrumental surveillance role enables television stations to broadcast valuable and beneficial information to the public. Udeze and Chukwuma (2013) explained that warning or

beware surveillance occurs when television educates the community or public on an impending danger about their safety.

Newspapers serve as outlets for news and a means of communication between people worldwide. According to Nwosu (2004), numerous newspapers exist worldwide. The newspaper is an essential news source for those seeking information on events happening in distant corners of the world. Also, Ndolo (2005) argues that newspapers serve as watchdogs by alerting the public to subsequent political intimidation and increasing the quality of public discourse. Chimezie (2010) stated that newspapers play an essential role in national security through their surveillance function, which informs the public about the extent of security measures. In recent years, social media has proven very useful in mass communication, complementing traditional media like print and electronic media. Instant messaging on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook offers a real-time information relay platform, which was critical during the #EndSARS protests. Through these social media platforms, citizens document police brutality and share information with the world, functioning as a form of surveillance system (Abosede, 2020). Also, social media made social activism easier by enabling grassroots movements to gain global attention, amplifying the voices of the protesters, and forcing the government into action (Ini, 2021). Therefore, social media not only extends surveillance capabilities but also promotes public engagement in social issues and strengthens the role of social media in contemporary activism.

2.1.2. Overview of the Nigeria Police Force

Policing is important in providing order and ensuring the laws are observed. In order to maintain peace, there needs to be a police force responsible for internal security. The Nigeria

Police is the primary police force and leading security agency in Nigeria, with a workforce of nearly 371,800 policemen (Nigeria Police Watch, 2020). The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is a large institution that is made up of thirty-six state commands, which are divided into twelve zones and seven administrative organs. The current Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, has been acting as the organization's leader on an interim basis since June 19, 2023 (Nigeria Police Watch, 2024).

The establishment of the Nigeria Police dates back to 1820. During the colonial period, most police were associated with the local government. (Nigeria Police Force, IGPSEC). Under the First Republic, these forces underwent nationalization during the 1960s. The NPF carried out conventional police functions and was accountable for maintaining internal security. Its primary role involved assisting in prison, immigration, and customs services and fulfilling military tasks. Also, police officers were not usually armed but were supplied with weapons when necessary for specific missions and often deployed nationwide. However, in 1989, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida announced that a significant number of officers would be assigned to their respective regions to enhance community relations.

2.1.3. Issues in the Nigeria Police Force and Police Brutality

Police brutality can be traced back to the colonial period in the history of Nigeria. The main objective behind establishing the police force during this period was to advance the economic and political interests of the colonial rulers (Human Rights Watch, 2005). In any region where colonial rulers faced opposition, the police employed violent tactics to suppress their resistance. The same basic structure was maintained after Nigeria's independence from Britain in 1960 (Human Rights Watch, 2005). At this point in history, the use of force by the

police to maintain colonial control had already shaped the public's view of the police, for instance, the suppression of dissent in the late 1920s, workers' strikes in the 1940s, and communal violence in the 1950s were all carried out by the police force. Post-independence, successive military regimes used the police to enforce authoritarian rule, promoting the culture of violence and preventing the growth of democratic institutions.

The general public views the police as betraying their trust by attacking civilians for financial gain rather than carrying out their fundamental duty of protecting lives and property. Based on reports by international, local, and non-governmental groups, police assault, wrongful detention, arrests, and exploitation define the relationship between the police and the citizens they were meant to protect. There have been incidents of police officers compelling drivers to stop at checkpoints and threatening to shoot at those who did not pay a bribe of as little as N500 (George, 2024). Furthermore, dishonesty and corruption were pervasive, thus lowering public trust, making people reluctant to report crimes, and increasing the chances that people would resort to self-defense. There were several reports of police officers working with criminals, and officials urged police to be more honest and fair with the public and to stop engaging in corrupt practices. Many detainees are shot while trying to escape or die in police custody because NPF is said to be following the "Fire for Fire" policy. Extrajudicial killings have become more common due to decades of corrupt police officers and inadequate training for police officers.

2.1.4. The Emergence of the EndSARS Protest

The Twitter campaign was initiated on December 2, 2017, following the circulation of online footage depicting the shooting and subsequent death of a man by police officers. The campaign aimed to address issues of police brutality, SARS injustice, and corrupt practices. The

campaign became a trending topic on Twitter, generating over 400,000 tweets in just twelve hours (Oloyede & Elegba, 2020). Nigerians used this as an opportunity to recount their horrible encounters with the NPF in response to the pervasive issue of police brutality in Nigeria. Also, the campaign revealed the extent of corruption within the police unit and showed that the police failed to recognize a structured system. Thereby, officers act based on their discretion, not considering citizens' fundamental human rights.

According to a BBC report, the footage showed that the police and the SARS unit had acted irrationally against the civilians, which contributed to the protest's widespread notice. The media started tweeting about the hashtag regularly as it gained traction. Prior to the demonstration, incidents of police violence were often reported separately and not as significant news stories. However, the Twitter hashtag turned the issue of police brutality into a topic of national discourse (Oloyede & Elegba, 2020). Despite the collective efforts of Nigerian groups led by EndSARS convener Segun Awosanya, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) persisted in their attacks on youths. In response to persistent complaints of human rights abuses by the unit, Nigeria's acting president, Yemi Osinbajo, directed the Inspector General of Police to overhaul SARS on August 14, 2018 (Mutum, 2018).

2.1.5. The Surveillance Role of Mass Media in Society

The media have played a significant role in conflict coverage, which can be seen from the surveillance lens. This is accomplished by keeping a close eye on SARS activities and their reporting of police actions, which allows the global audience to observe and form opinions. Udomisor (2015) recognizes the importance of the media in reporting human rights issues in society. Owens-Ibie (2002) highlights the media's function in resolving conflicts by promoting

accountability and transparency. In a democratic system, effective governance requires politicians at all levels to be held responsible for their actions and outcomes. However, the best way for the government to reach out to the governed is through the media. Ini (2021) highlights that the media have become an essential element of democratic politics by publicizing the current administration's activities to citizens and monitoring the government to ensure that it fulfills its promises.

Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) state that in emerging democracies like Nigeria, where democratic institutions are weak and under political pressure, it is important to have an effective and successful watchdog. The press's role as a watchdog is crucial, especially when the legislature and the courts have neglected their monitoring responsibilities, rendering them ineffective as mechanisms of social control. The media often serves as the sole check against abuses of power, criticizing corruption to promote transparency, accountability, and the development of new democratic institutions (Agbo & Chukwuma, 2017).

Furthermore, the watchdog concept is a fundamental principle in journalism, where the media serves as a means to control government. Edmund Burke reportedly coined the phrase "fourth estate" in England in the late eighteenth century (McQuail & Deuze, 2020). It was used to describe the press's political power, which was considered equal to the other three 'estates' of power in the British realm: lords, church, and commons. The press was seen as a 'watchdog' that would keep the government in check. McQuail considers the press the fourth estate of the realm, with the executive, legislature, and judiciary being the first, second, and third estates, respectively. As previously said, the legislature and courts appear to have disregarded their oversight responsibilities, while the fourth estate (the press) acts as a watchdog, exposing government misconduct. According to Akinfeleye (2003), "the press is to the watchdog,

check-on-to unearth, and never to cover up corruption and/or wrongdoings by the other three estates."

The significance of the watchdog function is emphasized in the assertion that "watchdog journalism can result in the voluntary resignation of power holders," as exemplified by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's investigative journalism for The *Washington Post* on the Watergate scandal and President Richard Nixon's subsequent resignation in 1974 (Mojare, 2006). The imprisonment and forced retirement of the Philippines' President Joseph Estrada in 2001 is another relevant example. Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) highlight the Hon. Patricia O. Etteh scandal, among numerous cases in Nigeria. She stepped down from her position as Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives following the allegations of financial misconduct. Despite attempts to retain her in office, she was left with no option but to quit, leading to the election of Hon. Dimeji Bankole as the new Speaker of the House during that period. In this regard, the press has maintained its watchdog role.

Media independence holds major significance (Amodu et al., 2016). Media freedom enhances the media's role as a watchdog, monitoring and evaluating the performance of the government and officials. The media must check the excesses of the government, influence its actions, and act in the interest of society. It is for this reason that scholars believe that for democratic systems of government to hold the fort, citizens must be informed and be able to share the received information. Also, Amodu et al. (2016) highlight the social responsibility theory that citizens will only be upward in their societal responsibilities when constantly reminded by the media. This theory arose from discussions about whether the media should be authoritarian (censored) or libertarian (uncensored). In the long run, the media is assumed to

protect both the individual and society, especially the state's officials, and support the adaptation and sustainable continuation of democracy.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of this study. It explains the research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative elements to highlight the role of the mass media in addressing police brutality during the #EndSARS protests. The design aimed to balance a numerical data-based investigation of the scope and patterns of media coverage with qualitative insights into the views and narratives of key protest actors.

The qualitative component of this study involves in-depth interviews with participants in the #EndSARS protest. These interviews highlight the role of the mass media in the fight against police brutality, offering personal accounts and reflections that are crucial for understanding the media's role in reporting human rights violations. In addition, the quantitative aspect of the research analyzes media reports from print, broadcast, and social media using content analysis. This analysis looks at the distribution, amount and type of media coverage to evaluate the extent of the media involvement in this #EndSARS protest. The study's objectives fit directly with this approach: to explore the different forms of media coverage selected and how the media manage

to fulfil their surveillance role. In this light, the mixed method approach gives a holistic view of the role of mass media in the #EndSARS protest, thus making it appropriate for the study.

3.3. Population and Sampling

The study focuses on mass media and social media content, particularly on Twitter (X), which was crucial in documenting and mobilizing the protests. Additionally, this study focuses on the media content created between October 8 and October 20, 2020, when mass demonstrations intensified. Respondents were selected using the purposive sample method—the sample includes those who were actively participating in online and offline #EndSARS protests. Specifically, three key respondents were chosen for the interview to ensure that the selected individuals were actually involved in the movement as they provided important insights. The three key respondents were selected based on specific parameters they meet to obtain a representative viewpoint on the dynamics of #EndSARS movement. Each participant, protest organizer, activist, and journalist contributes valuable insights into the protests, media roles, and difficulties of activists and journalists. The selection choice reflects the conceptual and practical dimension of the movement in showing the experiences of individuals who both initiated and documented the #EndSARS protests, thus being representative of the media communities and, more widely, of the activists. Findings from this sample will be used to draw broader conclusions about media engagement with the #EndSARS protest. Also, the study centers on Lagos State, where the demonstrations were most fervent, leading to the tragic events at the Lekki Toll Gate on October 20, 2020.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Data for this research was collected, collated and analyzed using a mixed-methods approach to address the research questions comprehensively. The online interviews and visual data acquired from online and offline media, as well as social media content and protest footage, served as primary data collection tools. Interviews with participants were conducted through Google Meet, which allows accessibility and open dialogue during interviews. Also, the duration of the interviews ranged from 30–60 minutes, and they were recorded with the participants' consent.

In addition, visual data cut across print, broadcast, and social media coverage. However, the study focuses more on Twitter, where most online activism occurred. Multimedia content from protest events, including protest images and news footage, were collected and analyzed as visual data. The visual element further contextualizes the qualitative findings gathered through interviews.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data for this study was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify and categorize recurrent themes and patterns concerning media coverage of the #EndSARS protests. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of both qualitative interview data and visual content from media reports and social media platforms, offering a comprehensive view of key issues such as media bias, reports of human rights abuses, and the role of social media in mobilizing the protests.

The process began with the verbatim transcription of the interviews to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses and the context in which they were provided. During the

analysis process, familiarization with the data through repeated reading facilitated the identification of initial codes. The codes "police brutality," "social media activism," and "media credibility" were used to cluster the data into meaningful categories. The codes were also derived from deductive and inductive approaches from the relevant literature and the data. Coding the protest experience and media discourses gained a better comprehension of the participants' experience. The emerging themes were then discussed and modified to ensure they accurately captured the essence of the data. For example, the media's watchdog role theme helped to indicate how the power of media as a form of surveillance to monitor government action during the protests. The interrelated themes presented an extensive picture of how media coverage affected the protest and its effects. The visual data was also examined through the same thematic framework to compare news footage and protest images. It offered a structured analysis that linked the interview findings with the visual media content, making it easier to understand the media's role during the #EndSARS protests.

Furthermore, media reports from print, broadcast, and social media were content analyzed to measure the distribution and frequency of specific terms, themes, and narratives related to the #EndSARS protests were distributed. This consisted of finding keywords about police brutality and human rights to quantify the amount and intensity of media reports. Quantitative analysis was necessary in accessing patterns in media coverage, specifically reportage in high instances of significant events, such as the Lekki Toll Gate incident.

3.6. Research Ethics

In conducting this research, strict adherence to ethical standards was followed to protect participants' rights and privacy. Before their involvement, participants received a detailed and

informed consent email before they participated, informing them about the subject, scope, and purposes of this study. Participants provided consent with electronic signed forms to ensure that this was a clear and documented agreement to participate. Also, participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they had a right to be withdrawn from the study without consequence. Data obtained through the interviews was securely stored and, at all times, handled most confidentially. Participants were guaranteed that any personal information would remain confidential and would not be revealed in a way that may identify them.

In addition, the visual data employed in the study, especially media reports and images about the #EndSARS protests, were chosen carefully to protect the anonymity of participants and the ability to reference persons. Thus, this study prioritizes participant respect and protection through adherence to ethical practices, ensuring sensitive and ethical reporting of all findings.

3.7. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the agenda setting theory, proposed by Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs in 1972/1973 (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The theory posits that the media significantly impacts public perception by deciding which issues are worthy of discussion. Based on this theory, the media does not dictate individuals' thoughts but instead influences their focus and attention. The media can shape public discourse by selectively choosing topics to cover. The public's attention and perception will be influenced by what issues are relevant. This theory emphasizes the impact of media as a gatekeeper, whereby a few media agendas or topics chosen by media professionals are given prominence, driving the audience to perceive these topics as more significant than others.

The agenda-setting starts with an account of how the media can change the pattern of political behaviour during elections (Cohen, 2015). After that, many studies have been made to examine mass media's effect on audiences and their awareness and comprehension of several issues. It stresses that what people hear in the news broadcast on the radio or read in newspaper publications decides a lot about their views and opinions. These media-framed problems then become fodder for public discussion, which further helps the media push the agenda they want, build, and frame. Media studies, especially agenda-setting theory, are crucial to the media's power to direct public consciousness and set social priorities. This is key to understanding the power relationship between the media, the public, and policymakers. It also shows how the media can boost its visibility on one issue and sacrifice its visibility on another.

In this regard, the #EndSARS movement used the agenda-setting theory to establish how the media could draw national and global attention to police brutality. The protests in Nigeria generated a lot of media coverage about police violence with protesters and awareness. This paper uses the agenda-setting theory to closely examine how the print, broadcast and social media impact the #EndSARS movement, the mobilization of support, and the pressure to get the government to act. Therefore, by applying this theory, we can understand the extent to which the media influenced protest coverage, shaped the narrative, and how it affected the people's perception and government actions on the issue of police brutality.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the results of the study, which applied a mixed-method approach to explore the role of the mass media in the #EndSARS protests. The findings help answer the research questions by identifying the forms of media coverage used, the effectiveness of the media's surveillance role, and the overall impact of mass media during the protests. The research design of this study combines both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The quantitative results obtained from the content analysis of print, broadcast, and social media indicate the frequency and theme-related trends of reports. Qualitative data from in-depth interviews with participants and visual data from the media added to these findings by giving different perspectives and contextual depth. Finally, the findings are integrated to provide a holistic understanding of the media's role to shape the protests narrative.

This section presents the quantitative analysis of the study. The data sources for the quantitative analysis were drawn from three media types: print media, broadcast media, and social media. A total of 40 articles were analyzed for print media, 30 segments for television coverage, and 40 social media posts. This analysis helps to identify the frequency trends and

patterns across all three forms of media, categorizing each item into themes related to the study's research objectives.

4.2. Quantitative Data Presentation and Analysis

4.2.1. Print Media Coverage (Online Newspaper)

Forty newspapers were analyzed, and the articles were selected based on coverage of the #EndSARS protest occurring between 8th October and 20th October 2020. These articles were categorized into the following topics: Human rights abuses and police brutality (38%), updates about the protest (43%), updates about the government response (13%) and other topics (8%).

Newspaper	No. Of Editions Coded	Human Rights Issues and Police Brutality	Protest Updates	Government Responses	Other Themes
<i>The Guardian</i>	16	6 (38%)	7 (44%)	2 (13%)	1 (11%)
<i>The Punch</i>	14	5 (36%)	6 (43%)	2 (14%)	1 (10%)
<i>Vanguard</i>	10	4(40%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	1 (11%)
Total	40	15 (38%)	17 (43%)	5 (13%)	3 (11%)

Most of the print media coverage was on protest updates (43%), with daily protests, protesters' actions, and key events like the Lekki Toll Gate massacre. The updates became real-time narratives of the movement and facilitated the print media's role in informing the public. Also, police brutality followed closely with (38%), which highlights the main reason that

triggered the protests, with reports frequently highlighting incidents of sexual harassment, attempted extortion, and extrajudicial killings, with protestors emphasizing the demand for justice. However, government responses comprised only 13% of the coverage, focusing on official statements and policy changes. Finally, 8% of the articles covered broader themes, such as youth mobilization and international solidarity.

4.2.2. Broadcast Media (Television Coverage)

The data in the table shows that the selected television news outlets, *Channels TV*, *AIT* and *Arise TV*, broadcast thirty segments relating to the #EndSARS protests between October 8 and 20, 2020. Themes like police brutality (30%), updates on protests (43%), government responses (17%) and others (10%) were identified in these segments.

News Channel	No. of Segments Aired	Human Rights Issues and Police Brutality	Protest Updates	Government Responses	Other Themes
<i>Channels TV</i>	12	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)
<i>AIT</i>	10	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
<i>ARISE TV</i>	8	2 (25%)	4 (50%)	1 (13%)	1 (12%)
Total	30	9 (30%)	13 (43%)	5 (17%)	3 (10%)

Broadcast media coverage correlates with print media in emphasizing protest updates (43%), using live broadcasts, interviews, and panel discussions to provide real-time insights into the protests. Police brutality made up (30%) of the segments and was examined using investigative reporting, testimonies, and visual documentation of abuses. Government responses

(17%) were conveyed through press briefings and interviews with officials, facilitating state narratives. Additional themes (10%) encompassed youth activism and international support for the protests, showcasing the broader engagement of broadcast media.

4.2.3. Social Media Coverage

The data presented shows that forty posts on social media on the #EndSARS protests were analyzed for this study and shared between 8th October and 20th October 2020. Themes included police brutality (38%), updates about the protests (43%), actions taken by the government (13%), as well as other topics (8%) were identified in the posts.

News Channel	No. of Posts Analyzed	Human Rights Issues and Police Brutality	Protest Updates	Government Responses	Other Themes
Twitter	18	7 (39%)	8(44%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)
Facebook	12	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)
Instagram	10	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
Total	40	15 (38%)	17 (43%)	5 (13%)	3 (8%)

Social media played an important role in recording and disseminating information during the protests. Protest updates (43%) dominated the posts, showcasing real-time footage, live streams, and user-generated content that called for immediate global attention. Police brutality (38%) was prominently documented through videos and hashtags like #EndSARS, which raised awareness significantly. Moreover, government responses, accounting for (13%), centered on critiques of official statements and policy announcements, often characterizing them as

insufficient. Additional themes (8%) encompassed international solidarity and youth empowerment, illustrating social media's ability to gain global attention and foster collective action.

4.3. Qualitative Analysis

This section presents the qualitative findings of the study, based on interviews with three participants: a political activist, a media journalist, and a protester, as well as media visuals. The study highlights the various roles of print, broadcast, and social media in informing the public.

4.3.1. Thematic analysis

The qualitative findings discover how the mass media impacted the #EndSARS protests through the insights gained from the interviews with key participants and content analysis of the visuals collected. These findings are categorized into themes that highlight effective media forms, public awareness, media challenges, media surveillance, and human rights reporting.

4.3.1.1. Effective Media Forms

According to the interviews, the participants had different views on the effectiveness of each mass media. However, most believed that they were helpful in the documentation and dissemination of information during the #EndSARS protests. Print media was recognized for its editorial depth and analyses. However, its slower pace in reporting limited its real-time impact; "Print media lagged due to the urgency and fast-paced nature of the protests" (Participant 2). In contrast, Participant 3 thought that broadcast media leveraged panel discussions and live reporting to reach out and access broader audiences, which is more appealing, especially to the elderly, "Broadcast media reached wider audiences, especially older Nigerians" (Participant 3).

However, social media was consistently referred to by the participants as the most impactful medium during the #EndSARS movement. Participant 1, an online activist, said, "Social media, especially Twitter, allowed immediate sharing of evidence, making police brutality impossible to ignore."

The accessibility and the fast-paced nature of social media platforms, which include Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, allowed protesters to share real-time updates. For instance, a viral image of unarmed protesters kneeling with their hands raised at the Lekki Toll Gate was extensively shared on social media (Twitter), which emphasizes police enforcement's severe response. In addition, the visual evidence disseminated through these platforms, including lifeless protesters who were shot by the police and injured protesters, lent credibility and urgency to the protest. All these helped expand the protests' reach and drew international attention and support.

4.3.1.2. Public Awareness

Public awareness was one of the major themes emerging from the interviews, where participants emphasized the emotional narratives and the global influence stemming from the protests. Participant 1 stated, "The graphic images and stories stirred outrage and empathy among diverse audiences. These visuals brought the harsh realities to life by making the world feel our pain and experience the reality of what was happening."

Also, visuals like the blood-stained Nigerian flag became significant symbols, eliciting outrage and empathy within the country and globally. Participant 2 noted, "International media amplified the protests, forcing the government to act." This claim was supported by the Lekki Toll gate footage showing the army shooting at unarmed protesters. These images and videos

were widely circulated, expanding the protests' reach and ensuring the message of police brutality continued to be at the forefront.

4.3.1.3. Media Challenges

During the intense protest, the media faces challenges, with participants recounting instances of harassment and intimidation. Participant 2, who happens to be a journalist, shared that "covering the protest was dangerous—There were moments we feared for our safety due to threats and confiscation of our equipment." He added that "safety concerns forced some journalists to rely on citizen-generated content." Also, major media outlets were charged with fines and restricted reportage due to disseminating information considered "fake" or "provocative." Participant 1 stated, "The government fined major networks for airing unverified footage of the protests," highlighting the significant challenges journalists faced in providing firsthand information and verified content.

4.3.1.4. Media's Watchdog Role and Social Media's Role

The participants noted that the mass media continues functioning as a watchdog despite the challenges faced, scrutinizing government actions, triggering judicial panels, and ensuring accountability through visuals. Participant 1 stated, "The media acted as a form of surveillance, exposing the government's response to the protest." As part of the media's watchdog role, constant updates on the protest and breaking news from media outlets prompted the establishment of judicial panels to investigate the issue. Participant 1 added, "The sustained judicial panel led to the establishment of the Lagos State Judicial Panel," emphasizing the media's role in driving accountability. Furthermore, Participant 3 noted that "Protest images and videos became evidence of police brutality and government inaction," highlighting how visuals

were useful in holding the government responsible. As seen in the visual representations, protesters hold placards with the slogan "EndSARS NOW #WE SAY NO TO POLICE BRUTALITY," highlighting the lack of accountability from authorities, demonstrating that the media is watching closely and forcing the government to respond to public pressure.

Furthermore, the role of social media in mobilizing protesters cannot be overemphasized. Participant 1, an activist, mentioned that "Social media unified us. Twitter hashtags and livestream unified the movement, encouraged mass participation, and helped to bypass censorship." Social media's role in documenting firsthand events, including police abuses and protest updates, was crucial for maintaining transparency. Images and footage shared online serve as evidence in judicial proceedings, which showcase the power of grassroots documentation in challenging institutional abuses.

4.3.1.5. Human Rights Reporting

The media's coverage of human rights became important during the protests. As stated by the participants, the mass media played a significant role in highlighting abuses. Participant 1 stated that "The media humanized victims, bringing public attention to police atrocities," which was helpful to shed more light on human rights issues. Additionally, the footage from the Lekki Toll Gate shooting evoked empathy and attracted international media support with emotional portrayals of violations, showcasing dead bodies and injured protesters. In this regard, the media played a crucial role in sustaining the protests' momentum and ensuring that demands for justice were heard. These themes capture how the media operated during the #EndSARS protests, raising awareness, challenging censorship, holding authorities to account, and documenting human rights abuse.

4.4. Discussion of Findings

This section discusses significant themes found in the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The study draws from the agenda-setting theory and contextualizes the themes to existing studies.

4.4.1. Role of Media Platforms

4.4.1.1. Social Media

The #EndSARS movement found social media the most effective medium because of its timely reports and accessibility. The quantitative results revealed that the 43% of the posts focus on the protest updates, and 38% highlighted police brutality. Meanwhile, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram provided space to stream events and use hashtags like #EndSARS, which united protesters and grab global attention. As stated by Abosede (2020), these platforms functioned as a surveillance system, enabling citizens to document police brutality and share real-time information globally. This function goes beyond simple documenting, as Ini (2021) noted, how social media supports grassroots movements by amplifying the voices of demonstrators, raising awareness globally, and exerting pressure on governments to take action. The qualitative findings also supported this, with participants emphasizing social media's role as an outlet for common people's voices and as a way to circumvent censorship. Participant 1 stated, "Social media unified us. Twitter hashtags and livestream unified the movement, encouraged mass participation, and helped bypass censorship," highlighting social media roles for mobilization and resistance against restrictions. Like the agenda-setting theory, social media establishes agendas and shapes public opinion, demonstrating the media's effect on public perception.

4.4.1.2. Broadcast Media

Broadcast media had a wider coverage and an older audience reach through investigative reports and live broadcasts. Qualitative analysis showed that of all the segments aired on television stations, Channels TV and Arise TV devoted 43% and 30%, respectively, to protest and police brutality. People observed that the legitimacy of these platforms in their profession made the movement more credible and helped reach audiences who were not active on social media. Additionally, participants stressed the value of live broadcasts, investigative journalism, and expert discussions in retaining viewers and expanding the audience. Participant 3 mentioned, "Broadcast media reached wider audiences, especially older Nigerians," showcasing its appeal to the older demographic and its effectiveness in reaching a wider audience. Just as Agbamuchue (2012) and Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) mentioned, television positively affects people, exposing this entity to a diverse audience across society, hence the credibility of traditional media in validating social justice activism.

4.4.1.3. Print Media

Despite its slow response, print media offered in-depth analysis and historical perspectives that enhanced the discourse around the #EndSARS protest. Its coverage of police brutality (38%) and protest updates (43%) provided important background and depth despite little contribution to real-time activity. In support of Ndolo's (2005) argument, newspapers in this study played an advocacy role by informing the public of political threats during the protests, and the quality of the discourse was enhanced. Similarly, Chimezie (2010) pointed out the role of newspapers in informing the public about the extent of security measures and governmental actions. However, participants emphasized the declining usefulness of print media during

fast-moving events, reflecting the greater challenges that traditional media faces in the digital era. Participant 2 stated, "Print media lagged due to the urgency and fast-paced nature of the protests," emphasizing the limits of covering real-time updates. Despite the real-time interaction of new media, these findings indicate that print media remains relevant in enhancing public knowledge and providing contextual information.

4.4.2. Public Awareness and Emotional Engagement

Media coverage was central in shaping awareness with visuals and emotional narratives amplifying the movement's impact. These included the images of a Nigerian flag stained with blood and the videos of protesters kneeling at Lekki Toll Gate, which elicited anger and sympathy from citizens and the world at large. These visual elements became powerful symbols of resistance, widely shared across various platforms. Just as Anyanwu et al. (2019) and Sarmah and Lama (2017) mentioned, mass media have long been viewed as major societal institutions due to their ability to affect societal change through narratives. Mass media shapes opinion, promotes human rights, and serves as a social transformation agent. Also, emphasis should be placed on the role of symbolic media in fostering public engagement.

The interview findings also highlighted the focus of emotional narrative that resonated with the global audience. Participant 2 mentioned, "International media amplified the protests, forcing the government to act." For instance, the international solidarity protests staged in cities like London and New York further widened the movement's reach. Participants also highlighted the role of these visuals in pressuring the government and drawing attention to police brutality. Participant 1 stated, "The graphic images and stories stirred outrage and empathy among diverse audiences. These visuals brought the harsh realities to life by making the world feel our pain and

experience the reality of what was happening," which shows the power of visuals in evoking global awareness and emotional responses. This aligns with the agenda-setting theory because the media can prioritize and frame critical societal issues. During the #EndSARS protests, the media focused the public's attention on human rights abuses by extensively sharing visuals with media platforms, framing these symbols as crucial to the movement and eliciting empathy. Thus, the use of visuals and emotional narratives in media coverage rallied support by highlighting the global significance of the #EndSARS process. These features acted as powerful tools for driving local and international audiences to confront the reality of police violence.

4.4.3. Media's Watchdog Role

The media demonstrated the watchdog function in ensuring authorities were responsible for their actions and the revelation of various systemic issues. Social media, particularly, was instrumental to the cause by providing videos and images of police misconduct, most of which were used as evidence in the judicial inquiries. Also, broadcast media was added as it scrutinized government responses and encouraged public discourse on the issue of accountability. Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) mentioned that developing democracies such as Nigeria, where democratic institutions struggle to exist and may come under political pressure, require an effective watchdog. They assert that the media often serves as the sole check against abuses of power, criticizing corruption for promoting transparency, accountability, and the development of new democratic institutions (Agbo & Chukwuma, 2017).

The qualitative findings also confirmed these. Participant 1 noted, "The media acted as a form of surveillance, revealing the government reaction to the protest," and Participant 3 added, "Protest images and videos became evidence of police violence and the government's inaction." Nonetheless, print and broadcast media focus a meager 13% and 17% of their coverage on

government responses; this clearly illustrated an imbalance in favor of protest rather than governmental actions. However, by concentrating on police brutality, the media conforms to the agenda-setting theory by revealing how media focus determines public attention to certain matters.

4.4.4. Media Challenges

It was apparent that during the protest, media practitioners experienced significant threats such as censorship, intimidation, and harassment. The government restricted the access of traditional media journalists, fined them, and threatened to fire them, all of which limited their operations. One of the participants narrated incidents where equipment was confiscated. Media houses were sanctioned for broadcasting “unverified” footage. Participant 2 said it was risky to cover the protest as they were threatened, and their assets were confiscated. He added, "Some journalists were compelled to rely on citizen-generated content due to safety risks." However, social media emerged as an alternative way to navigate this process. Independent journalists and protesters applied it to avoid censorship and to disseminate information immediately. This resilience is secondary to the democratizing power of digital platforms, as pointed out in Ini's (2021) study on grassroots activism.

In conclusion, this chapter analyzed the role of mass media during the #EndSARS protests using a mixed-method approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis revealed that social media happens to be the most impactful platform, leveraging its accessibility and urgency to publicize police brutality and spread protest updates. This was evident by the broad adoption use of hashtags like #EndSARS and the viral sharing of images like the blood-stained Nigerian flag and the footage from the Lekki Toll Gate massacre. Also,

this was augmented by broadcast media that provided professional perspectives through investigations, live coverage, and expert conversations, reaching a larger audience. It also noted that the media served the role of a watchdog, documenting police misconduct and holding authorities accountable through traditional and social media. Traditional media faced challenges such as censorship, harassment, and restrictive access, hampered its activities. However, social media bypassed it, offering an avenue for grassroots mobilization and ensuring transparency. By focusing on police brutality and updates on protests, the media influenced public opinion, mobilized activism, and served as a tool for social change.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1. Summary

This chapter concludes the study on the role of mass media during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed-method approach to assess the media's surveillance role, thematic coverage and visual influence. The introductory overview and a general background to the study were presented in chapter one. Chapter two reviewed relevant literature on mass media, issues regarding Nigerian police, the mass media's surveillance role, and the agenda-setting theory's theoretical framework. Also, chapter three focused on the research methodology, while chapter four presented and analyzed the findings and discussed how the findings connect with existing studies. This chapter summarizes the entire research and presents key findings, limitations and recommendations.

The objective of this study was to:

1. Identify the forms of media coverage adopted during the #EndSARS protests.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the media in fulfilling its surveillance role.
3. Examine the specific challenges and contributions of the mass media during the protests.

In achieving these objectives, the study examined the content and interviewed participants, answering the research questions and identifying research findings. The findings of this study revealed that mass media platforms play a crucial role in echoing public grievances, mobilizing support, and holding the government accountable. Social media was essential for disseminating and documenting real-time information, while print and broadcast media provided

in-depth analysis and reached a wider audience. Also, the study emphasized the challenges journalists face, including harassment, censorship, limited access to protest coverage, and the urgent need for institutional reforms to protect media freedom.

5.2. Implications

This study's findings provide a deeper understanding of how the media, particularly during the #EndSARS protests, shaped public discourse, mobilized activism and influenced governmental accountability. The findings have several implications for media practice, policy development, and academic research. The study emphasizes how important it is to use a range of media outlets to report on social movements. Broadcast media cleared the path for audience reach through real-time reporting and depth; print media helped offer depth and historical background, while social media enabled grassroots activism and fast information sharing, allowing media professionals to advocate for justice and act as watchdogs. In addition, the government and media regulatory organizations should prioritize media freedom when developing policies to allow reporters to conduct their work without fear of intimidation or suppression. The study revealed harassment and restrictions journalists encounter, emphasizing the importance of effective policies to promote transparency and safeguard journalists. Lastly, the study contributes to the broad discussion on media activism. Future studies can build on these findings to explore the long-term impacts of the media's role on human rights issues.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations

This study has limitations as it focuses on media coverage during the #EndSARS protests from October 8 to October 20, 2020. Although this period captures the intense moment of the protests, it may not capture all the aspects of media effects throughout the time. Future research

could extend this timeline and offer a comprehensive understanding of media roles and impacts. In addition, this study concentrates on three media types and was centered on Lagos State, which may limit the general view of the findings. Expanding the study scope by incorporating other media platforms and broader geographic regions could offer a more comprehensive view and enhance inclusiveness. Likewise, the data selected for this study is limited; the three participant interviews may not adequately capture the range of viewpoints in the movement. Researchers are encouraged to engage with more extensive and diverse samples to provide richer insights. Lastly, journalists need training in conflict-sensitive reporting, so their coverage of complex social issues does not worsen tensions. Such training could empower media practitioners with the skills to cover social unrest, effectively ensuring balanced and impactful coverage.

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List of Appendices

Table Showing the study participants details

Participants 1	Role played	Gender	Age Range
1	Activist	Male	27
2	Journalist	Male	32
3	Protester	Male	25

Presentation of study findings

Interview transcripts analyzed using the thematic analysis technique revealed a total of 16 codes. Codes sharing similar underlying concepts were grouped into 14 categories, from which six themes emerged, as presented in the table below:

Table showing the theme and categories:

Themes	Sub-Categories	Code
Effective Media forms	Role of Social Media	Real-time information sharing; Amplification of police brutality
	Impact of Broadcast Media	Reaching wider audiences, especially older Nigerians
	Print Media's Limited	Lagging behind due to the urgency of

	Role	the protests
Public Awareness	Emotional Narratives	Stirred outrage and empathy through graphic images and stories
	Global Influence	Amplified by international; Forced government responses
Media Challenges	Intimidation and Harassment	Journalists became victims of threats, harassment, and confiscation of equipment
	Censorship and Fines	Government reporting restrictions; fines for airing footage that is not verified
The Media Surveillance Role	Scrutinise Government Actions	Exposing the government's responses to protests; highlighting their lack of accountability
	Transparency through visual representation	Images and videos used as evidence of brutality and government inaction
The Social Media's Role	Mobilization of Protesters	Unifying the movement through hashtags; Promoting mass participation.

	Bypassing Censorship	Firsthand documentation of events; Prevention of governmental interference
Human Rights Reporting	Emotional Impact of Violations	Evoking outrage and fear through portrayals of violations
	Role in Highlighting Abuses	Humanizing victims; Drawing public attention to police atrocities

Six main themes emerged from the analysis as presented above.

Visual Data





Sample tweets from general authors on Twitter contributing to the conversation on the #EndSARS protest through their individual platforms.



JJ. Omojuwa
@Omojuwa • 3 days

The @PoliceNG are committing crimes against humanity killing peaceful protesters. #SackTheIG
#EndPoliceTerrorism #ENDSARS
#EndPoliceBrutality #SARSmustEnd



DeboMacaroni
@mrmacaronii • 4 days

The People In government probably think that we will soon get tired. That is why they are not saying anything!! That is why they don't want to do the right thing!! For the sake of all those that have lost their lives, we cannot give up!!! We must see this through!!! #EndSARS



Ebuka Obi-Uchendu
@Ebuka • 4 days

"aRtiCuLaTe YoUr DeMaNdS pRoPeRly" 🙏
What can be clearer than #EndSARS? It's literally 2 words.



ibukun ★
@IbukunJoyce_ • 4 days

Just woke up to a message from my boss saying he's in support of us joining the protests and asked us to draw up a schedule if we must during the week to try & balance our work. We are not backing down! Even our offices should show support. #EndSARS #EndSarsNow



Asa
@Asa_official • 4 days

#EndSARS is the people's movement, join or get out of the way.



EHIZOJIE
@SpecialSlim • 4 days

I hear some radio stations have told OAPs not to mention anything #EndSars on the radio it's as bad as if they do salaries get affected But this same radio stations did a full BLM jingle 🙄



ASISAT M.O.N
@AsisatOshoala • 4 days

You promoted #BLM but can't promote #EndSARS for your own country..... Na God go judge all of Una. HYPOCRITES 🙄🙄🙄



Frank Donga™
@frankdonga_ • 4 days

Tweeter algorithm is simple. If users ignore other hashtags and keep using #EndSARS it will show. I tweet in peace 🙏

end#SARS

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Theme	Sub-Category	Code
Public Awareness	Emotional Narratives	Protesters kneeling with hands raised at Lekki Toll Gate
	Global Influence	International solidarity protests in cities like London and New York
Human Rights Reporting	Emotional Impact of Violations	Blood-stained Nigerian flag
	Highlighting Abuses	Videos of police brutality used in judicial inquiries
Media's Watchdog Role	Accountability Through Visuals	Protest images and videos as evidence of police misconduct
	Scrutiny of Government Actions	Protesters holding placards with slogans like "End Police Brutality Now"
Social Media's Role	Mobilization of Protesters	Viral Twitter hashtag #EndSARS unifying the movement
	Bypassing Censorship	Videos and posts documenting events without government interference.