Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC) Vol. 7 No. 1, June 2020
ISSN: p. 2354-354X e. 2354 – 3515

Open Access Journal, Available Online

Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC)

Vol. 7 No. 1, June 2020

A Publication of the Department of Mass Communication, College of Business and Social Scienes (CBSS), Covenant University.

Editor-in-Chief: Oladokun Omojola, PhD
(Associate Professor)
ola.omojola@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Managing Editor: Edwin O. Agbaike
me@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

URL: ***http://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjoc***

It is a condition of publication in this journal that manuscripts have not been published or submitted for publication and will not be submitted or published elsewhere.

Upon the acceptance of articles to be published in this journal,the author(s) are required to transfer copyright of the article to the publisher.

ISSN: p. 2354-354X e. 2354 – 3515

Published by Covenant University Journals,
Covenant University, Canaanland, Km 10, Idiroko Road,
P.M.B. 1023, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

Printed by Covenant University Press

URL: ***http://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjoc***

Articles

Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC) Vol. 7 No. 1, June 2020
ISSN: p. 2354-354X e. 2354 – 3515

Open Access Journal, Available Online

Hashtag Activism: Exploring *The Church Must Vote* Campaign in Nigeria

Temple Uwalaka[1], Bigman Nwala[2] & Confidence Amadi[3]

[1]University of Canberra, Bruce Campus, ACT 2617, Australia
[2]Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
[3]Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
temple.uwalaka@canberra.edu.au

Received: 2 Feb. 2020 Accepted: 15 May 2020 Date of Publication: June 2020

Abstract: Socio-political activism and its relationship with digital media diffusion is an on-going subject of considerable debate among observers and scholars globally. This work creates a research trajectory on Nigeria by investigating the contributions of social media in the implementation of *The Church Must Vote* campaign. It examines the effects of connective action and clicktivism on political mobilization and evaluates how Christians used social media to increase their civic vitality during the 2019 general elections. A total of 6,951 online content, including 42 YouTube videos posted by the users of the hashtag, *#thechurchmustvote*, were explored via social networking analysis. Findings show that social media played a significant role in the success of the campaign and served as education channels to advise Christians on the need to participate in the elections. The impressive outcome elicits the recommendation that Nigerians should consider hashtag activism or clicktivism as a valuable political engagement system.

Keywords: Clicktivism, social media, hashtag activism, collective action, connective action, Nigerian elections

Introduction

The hashtag *#thechurchmustvote* represents a campaign in Nigeria by The Church Must Vote (TCMV) - a civil society group. It is a non-partisan movement of committed Christians aimed at influencing decision making outcomes through participation in the civic process (TCMV, 2019). The two Nigerian co-founders, Ikechukwu Nmor and Peter Smith Obasi, want to enhance the church's civic vitality and make Christians the leading voices in nation-building. This objective could be achieved if Christians were active in the democratic process and ready to uphold their civil rights obligations (TCMV, 2019). The group's strategy is to mobilize voters from around Nigeria by targeting church leaders and members online and on the ground. This approach was demonstrated when the founders announced their intention to rally no fewer than 10 million eligible voters for the country's 2019 general elections to ensure a visible Christian representation (TCMV, 2019). The group created a *Facebook* group and *Twitter* handle that have thousands of members. It has considerable traction in *Nairaland*, a popular online forum dedicated to Nigerians, and has posted several videos on *YouTube*. Moreover, it has a dedicated website that enunciates its modus operandi and highlights its goals and achievements. The group's significant online presence shows a composite display of the traditional civil society engagements and contemporary online activism.

Problem of the Study

There are findings in Nigerian digital activism literature suggesting that Nigerians use social media for activism and political participation (Hari, 2014; Uwalaka, 2015, 2017, 2019, Forthcoming; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017, 2018; Folayan, et al., 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that The Church Must Vote group tried to harness Nigerians' innovative use of social media for election mobilization purposes during the 2019 national elections.

The use of digital networks for activism and political participation is a source of debate in political communication and digital activism literature. For example, some scholars remain critical of the role of social media in political participation. White (2010) asserts that online participation is ruining activism, while Fenton and Barassi (2011) argue against the effectiveness of social media use to enhance political participation. Clicktivism has derogatorily been referred to as 'slacktivism' (Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2014), 'micro-political action' (Vromen, 2017, p. 9), 'unproductive, ephemeral' (Gladwell, 2010, 2011), and 'activism for the lazy' (Morozov, 2009a, p. 1; 2014).

However, the argument exists that contemporary political participation and activism, though carried out at the individual level or even as a solitary action, do benefit political groups, as such political action, though individualistic, are usually situated around a shared concern (Uwalaka, Forthcoming; Halupka, 2014, 2016, 2018; Karpf, 2010). In the case of the Church Must Vote, they are interested in the participation and fair representation of Nigerian Christians in the electoral process. Clicktivism can be conceptualized as a "…low risk, low-cost activity via social media, whose purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity" (Rotman et al., 2011, p. 821). In its purest form, clicktivism maybe just a 'like' on Facebook or a 'share,' 'tweet,' or even a 'retweet' (Halupka, 2014; Karpf, 2010; Lee & Hsieh, 2013). Due to its online domain and types of activities that characterize it, clicktivism is usually conceived as kit and kin of the logic of connective action. At the center of the logic of connective action, 'is the recognition of digital media as organizing agents' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 34). In this logic, taking action becomes an act of personal articulation and reaction attained by communicating concepts and activities in trusted relationships (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

The use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and even YouTube videos by Nigerian youths to galvanize the voting population during the last election campaign has hugely been understudied in the study of digital activism and political mobilization in Nigeria. Invisible in all of this is a study that interrogates the contributions of innovative use of social media to the success of The Church Must Vote, a campaign that targets about 50 percent of the voting population in Nigeria. Researchers (Hari, 2014; Kombol, 2014; Uwalaka, 2017, 2019; Uwalaka, Rickard, & Watkins, 2018) have studied the use of internet in social movement in Nigeria and the use of the internet for political participation. However, invisible are studies that evaluate the use of the internet and its technologies for mobilization during the election by a religious civil society group. Some studies have looked at how internet use has helped in monitoring elections in Nigeria (Bailard & Livingston, 2014; Uwalaka & Amadi, 2016), but none have studied specific groups' use of social media infrastructure for election mobilization. This paper is an attempt to bridge that gap and to extend the theorization of clicktivism.

Research Questions

This paper interrogates the effect of connective action in political mobilization in Nigeria by evaluating how Christians in Nigeria used social media to boost The Church Must Vote (#thechurchmustvote) campaign during the 2019 national election in Nigeria. Consequently, this paper sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of social media use to #thechurchmustvote campaign during the 2019 national elections in Nigeria?
2. What are the themes of social media content regarding the #thechurchmustvote campaign in Nigeria?

Rationale for the Study

This study can bridge the gap in digital activism and political communication literature in three specific ways. First, it helps to test the novel logic of connective action theory with empirical data. At the nucleus of the logic of connective action, “is the recognition of digital media as organizing agents” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 34). In this logic, taking action becomes an act of personal expression and acknowledgment attained by communicating concepts and activities in trusted relationships (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Results from this study will lend its voice to the debate relating to this theory, and especially as it concerns the literature in Nigeria.

Second, many of the existing studies about clicktivism are either studied in legacy democracies or autocratic regimes. Consequently, overlooking the unique case of nascent democracies such as Nigeria is contestable. A communication hypothesis or theory is inadequate without being tested in all possible scenarios and backgrounds. This study interrogates the influence of clicktivism in Nigeria as a means of ascertaining the validity of the claims made by scholars (e.g., Halupka, 2018) while espousing the prominence of clicktivism in the modern political process.

Third, this study utilizes an innovative research design to study a new research problem. The study adopts social networking analytic technique to evaluate contents from a Nigerian religious civil society group. This analytic technique used in this study introduces communication scholars to social networking analysis research design.

Literature Review

This literature review section concentrates on social media and political engagement, and how it relates to the study at hand. It also appraises the logic of collective and connective actions.

Social media and Political Participation

Existing literature in political communication holds that the ‘political’ is intrinsically bound to traditional modes of political engagement (Hirst, 1999; Schmitt, 2008). The ‘political’ is usually voting, government, democracy, political parties, and legislature. These are traditional approaches to political participation and are considered as the arena definition of politics. The definition is in contrast to a process definition of politics which sees politics ‘occurring more broadly in society, both within and outside formal institutions and processes’ (McCaffrie & Marsh, 2013, p. 114). Marsh and colleagues (Marsh & Akram, 2015; McCaffrie & Marsh, 2013) support a broader definition of political participation. To them, a process definition of politics is required to understand the changing nature of political participation occasioned by innovation in internet technologies, a view also supported by Omojola (2009). A process definition of politics and political participation recognizes that contemporary political participation has diversified in terms of ‘agencies, the repertoires, the targets’ (Norris, 2002, pp. 215-216) and also acknowledges other popular forms of political participation that is not within the political arena. A process definition of politics and political participation accepts the use of memes, social buttons and social media to engage in political participation. One example of this type of political participation is clicktivism. Here, people engage in small, impulsive, non-ideological, political actions such as clicking a like on Facebook, in an attempt to bring about social change through raising of awareness (Halupka, 2014; Karpf, 2010; Kristofferson et al., 2014).

There are increasingly forms of political participation that are underpinned by engagement norms rather than duty norms (Bang, 2011). As such, the emphasis is on engaging with particular problems rather than taking action, which is ideologically driven. A process definition of politics permits researchers to recognize action based on engagement norms, which at some stage spill into the political arena, as another way to participate in politics. More importantly, a process definition of politics and political participation understands and acknowledges the changing nature of society, given that the internet has helped unfasten citizens from their political groups.

This development has empowered these citizens to seek political change on their own, engaging on their terms and in their ways (Halupka, 2016).

However, these changes in political engagement norms have forced critics of the process definition of politics and political participation to argue that process definition will lead to a 'study of everything' as politics and 'every action' political participation (Hirst, 1999; Schmitt, 2008,). Also, Hay (2014) argues that the engagement pattern of process definition of politics and political participation marginalizes the political arena, thereby undermining the arena-based definition of politics and democracy. The above critique is flawed by a narrow focus, evaluating the relationship between acts of clicktivism and the desired political outcome in isolation (Dennis, 2019). By conceptualizing participation as a process, a new set of questions emerge regarding the value of social media as a tool for deepening knowledge, for public discussions and action (Dennis, 2019). Based on the foregoing, scholars have warned that clicktivism should not be written off as an ineffective feel-good tool that young people utilize but rather as a legitimate form of social and political action (Piat, 2019). It has been demonstrated that online petition creation and signing play an essential role in citizen's engagement in politics (Bosch & Mutsvairo, 2017; Halpin, Vromen, Vaughan, & Raissi, 2018; Leijendekker & Mutsvairo, 2014; Mutsvairo, 2013; Mutsvairo & Sirks, 2015). The argument also exists that the educational potential of online social media groups helps members deepen their understanding of democracy and confidence to take action (Schroeder, Currin, Washington, Curcio, & Lundgren, 2019) and that clicktivism helps participants in their political and civic engagements (Literat & Markus, 2019). Hashtag activism or clicktivism has also been argued to be used to express popular internet culture, resistance, and solidarity during crisis events such as terror or to participate in a protest. For example, scholars have noted how "Brussels will land on its feet like a cat' memes during the terror attack in Brussels, Belgium, presented a forum for solidarity building that helped the people to overcome fear (Jensen, Neumayer, & Rossi, 2020). Others (Hari, 2014; Ibrahim, 2013; Uwalaka et al., 2018) have noted how clicktivism helped educate and motivate Nigerians during the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest. In all of these, it is visible that rather than reduce political participation as anticipated by its critics, clicktivism or digital activism enhances and broadens political participation and engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical anchors are the *Logic of Connective Action* and *Clicktivism*. The logic theory, proffered by Bennett and Segerberg in 2012, contends that the rise of a personalized digitally networked politics in which various individuals address the common problems of their time usually comes from a contentious political perspective. According to its coiner, White Micah (2010), the key tenet of clicktivism is that it is the process of equating political power with clicks. These theories have led to fierce debate in political communication.

The debate about the logic that necessitates collective action is one that has evolved as digital technologies evolve. On the one hand, are scholars who believe in the logic of collective action. They argue that a collective action capable of impacting political participation has to be a joint enterprise, involving the development of strong, thick, deliberative ties between participants (Hay, 2007; Stoker, 2006). Hay and Stoker, and some communication and digital activism scholars (Gladwell, 2010, 2011; Morozov, 2009a, 2009b, 2014; Putnam, 2000) agree that the shift in late-modernity towards the atomization and personalization of politics stands in contrast to the thick collective capacity a healthy democratic system requires. From their perspective, just like those of the arena definition of political participation, the new social trends which prefer thin, loosely organized forms of engagement can be disadvantageous to effective governance, and in many ways, echo the growth of neoliberalism which defends a negative view of the state and its interventionist role.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012, 2013), Bennett, Segerberg, & Walker (2014), and Segerberg & Bennett (2011) contend that communication, and the means of communication, can facilitate the development of organizational structures. According to them, communication organizes, and in this way, permits the development of connective action frames. Digitalized technology results in loosely interconnected, interpersonal networks to create outcomes that 'resemble collective action, yet without the same role played by formal organizations or the need for exclusive, collective action framings' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 35). This point is crucial, as it highlights how online forms of engagement can reflect the function of their traditional counterparts.

Also, Bennett, Breunig, and Givens (2008) found that personal networks diversity provided a far more cogent explanation for predominantly reliance on digital media than simple association with organizations sponsoring the demonstrations. This means that those who are not 'loyal' to an organization are more likely to use digital media. This has a significant ramification for the logic of connective action. Bennett and colleagues' logic of connective action is similar to the intriguing inquest of other scholars (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005). Terms such as 'self-organizing groups' and 'private-public lives' are synonymous with Bennett's and colleagues' 'loose networks' and 'personal action frames.' These logics, like the definitions of what is 'political,' are, related but also different.

In contrast to earlier models of submissive citizenship based on a one-way communication managed by authorities, the current generation particularly, young adults, are embracing more expressive styles of actualizing citizenship defined around peer content sharing and social media (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011). Therefore, communication aimed at promoting civic engagement is becoming problematic. In an analysis of 90 youth websites operated by diverse civic and political organizations in the United States, results revealed uneven conceptions of citizenship and related civic skills, suggesting that many established organizations are out of step with changing common styles (Bennett et al., 2011).

Also, in proposing the theory of reflexive modernization, Beck and Colleagues (Beck, 1994, 1997; Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994), used the term 'sub-politics' to explain politics beyond those tenets that have been espoused by scholars of collective action type of political participation and political system. In explaining the 'sub-politics' concept, Beck (1997) hinged his argument on the concept of 'individuation.' He believes that through sub-politics, individualism has returned to society. His explanation of individuation aligns not only with the process definition of politics but also to the theory of connective action.

Beck and his colleagues (Beck, 1994, 1997; Beck et al., 1994; Giddens, 1991, 1999) define sub-politics to mean the shaping of society from below. They state that when "viewed from above, this results in the loss of power, the shrinkage and minimization of politics" (Beck et al., 1994, p. 23).

They argue that in the wake of "sub-politics" (Beck et al., 1994, p. 23), there are growing opportunities to have a share and a voice in the society even for groups hitherto uninvolved in the substantive "technification and industrialization process" (Beck et al., 1994, p. 23). This development brings further opportunities for courageous individuals to "move mountains" in the nerve centers of development (Beck, 1994, p. 23). The rise of sub-politics indicates a weakening of bureaucratic, state-oriented politics, thereby suggesting a tilt towards the process definition of politics or connective action. Giddens' argument about the usefulness of sub-politics critically recount shifts in democracy and political participation. His definition of sub-politics as 'politics that has migrated away from parliament towards single-issue groups in the society' (Giddens, 1999, p. 49) strengthens the arguments that citizens engage in solitary political action that are situated around a common concern. This has helped to stimulate the idea of collective togetherness through comradeships that comes from such participation.

Overall, with evidence from contemporary studies and the changing patterns of political participation, it will be erroneous to perceive politics and political participation as something that happens only in the political arena; neither does it benefit the research community to see it as ubiquitous (Marsh & Akram, 2015). The need exists to evaluate the relationship between the social and the political carefully. That is the thrust of this paper, particularly as it relates to Nigeria.

Method of the Study

This study adopted a qualitative content analysis technique (Bryman, 2012, 2016). Specifically, it utilized social media network analytics. According to Khan (2017), this is the art and science of extracting, constructing, analyzing, and understanding social networks. The researcher analyzed tweets and YouTube videos from the hashtag, "#thechurchmustvote," to ascertain the number of tweets and evaluate the themes from the tweets and videos about the campaign during the period leading to the 2019 general election in Nigeria. Researchers are attracted to social media platforms because they can harvest thousands of content using freely and publicly available and easily configurable tools (Bosch, 2017; Bosch & Mutsvairo, 2017; Marwick & Boyd, 2014; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018).

A large amount of data that can be gathered from social media platforms has given rise to the use of data science tools to analyze "big data" (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). Researchers are growingly using techniques such as social networking analysis (Bosch, 2017; Literat & Markus, 2019) to make sense of big data. Hashtags are underrated as a sampling approach in big data analytics (Rafail, 2018), but they remain a powerful system for capturing topic-specific data in social media, particularly on Twitter and Facebook (Bosch, 2017; Jensen et al., 2020; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017).

This paper analyzed 6,951 social media contents, including 42 YouTube videos by users of the hashtag, "#thechurchmustvote." These posts, tweets, and videos were collected between December 1st, 2018, to April 30th, 2019. Posts and tweets were scraped using Netlytic, while YouTube videos were searched out using the YouTube search function. These posts and tweets were subsequently imported first into an excel and then transferred to an NVivo 12 Pro for analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that helps the researcher come up with themes and other relevant trends as well as graphs in qualitative data. The researcher preferred this software because the aim was to develop common themes from the tweets. This method has been used by other studies to analyze their data (Bosch & Mutsvairo, 2017; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018). The aim here is to categorize users' tweets and retweets as well as posts and comments regarding the #thechurchmustvote campaign. The videos were described and transcribed verbatim in Microsoft word and copied to NVivo for thematic analysis.

Results

As stated above, social media (Facebook and Twitter) contents relating to #thechurchmustvote were analyzed to understand how users phrased their tweets and posts during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The total number of tweets and posts analyzed was 6,909. Of these, 4,851 were tweets and retweets, while 2,058 were Facebook posts and comments relating to the hashtag, "#thechurchmustvote."

Figure 1 and Table 1 below show that of the 4,851 tweets from Twitter and 2,058 comments from Facebook that were analyzed, 41 percent (2,003) of tweets and 35 percent (711) of posts and comments used education and logos themes to communicate to the audience. These tweets utilized logic to convince their followers. It appeared that they were educating their followers with hard data on the need for them to participate in political affairs. These tweets, comments, and even the videos are arguments that appeal to their audiences' sense of logic or reason. They cite data, methodically walk through the line of reasoning behind their argument, or precisely recounts historical events relevant to their argument. The logos or education theme is the most popular theme in the tweets, posts, and even the video commentaries that were analyzed.

Table 1: Themes of Users Posts and Tweets

Themes	Twitter n (%)	Facebook n(%)
Education	2,003 (41)	711 (35)
Orison	1,200 (25)	520 (25)
Impel	805 (17)	407 (20)
Approbation	670 (14)	380 (18)
Others	173 (3)	40 (2)
Total	4,851 (100)	2,058 (100)

For example, in one of the videos analyzed, the narrator said, "did you know that more than 50 percent (90 million) of Nigerians are Christians? 45 million of the 90 million Christians in Nigeria are eligible to vote by age. Yet, we don't see them". Here, the group is playing to the audience's sense of reasoning and using that reason to lure the audience into voting during the election, an instance noted by some authors (Omojola, 2008; Nelson, Loto and Omojola, 2018, Morah and Omojola, 2018). The narrator ended by using historical data from the United States of America to rouse his audience. He recalled, "in 2016, Donald Trump won the election in the USA because the majority of evangelical Christians voted for him…" The group here used historical data and statistics to appeal to the logic or reasoning of their audience as a persuasion strategy.

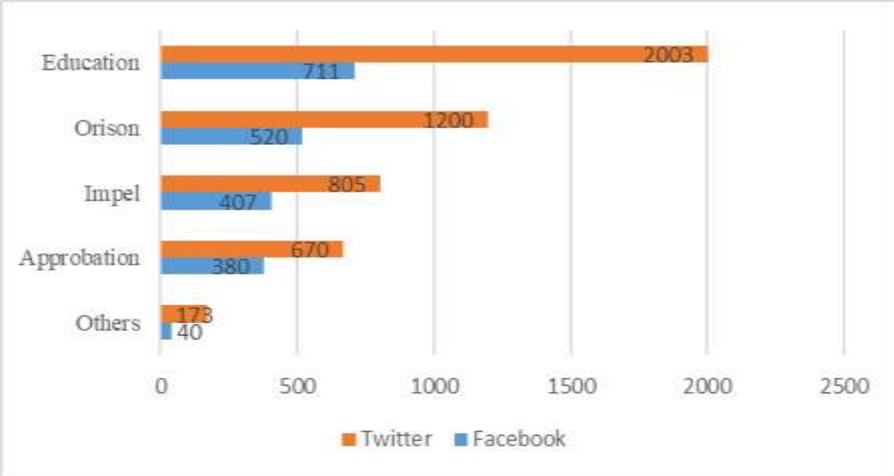

Figure 1: Themes of Users' Posts and Tweets

Of the 4,851 tweets and 2,058 comments analyzed, about 25 percent (1,200) of the tweets, and 25 percent (520) of the comments were prayers. The orison or pathos theme was an essential one as it appealed to the emotion of their audience. Here, social media users tried to persuade their friends and followers by appealing to their emotions. For example, in another video, a narrator prayed:

> Father, we pray for every Christian watching us right now that does not have a voter's card. We pray that every spirit of laziness in them dies right now in Jesus Name. Daddy, we pray that every flimsy excuse not to register die right now. We ask that your angels put fire in their heart in the Name of Jesus.

In this video commentary, the narrator used prayer to appeal to the emotions of those watching him who may not have registered to vote. It is meant to scare the audience into taking the desired action. This theme was used a lot by the Church Must Vote group leaders. It is designed to subtly coerce people into registering and collecting their Permanent Voters Card (PVC). Based on data from the previous election cycle, these tactics worked as more people collected their PVC in the Christian states in southeast Nigeria, in 2019 than during previous elections.

Of the 4,851 tweets and 2,058 comments analyzed, 17 percent (805) of the tweets, and 20 percent

(407) of the comments encouraged Christians to participate in the 2019 elections. The Church Must Vote group leaders based their authority on Christ. They used ethos a lot to persuade their followers to participate in the election. They attempted to appeal to their audience by emphasizing Christ's credibility and authority and why their followers must participate in the election to keep the word of God. For example, a Twitter user used ethos to induce her followers to participate in the election. She notes that

> righteousness exalts a nation, and we, the church are the righteousness of God. Therefore, we exalt this nation, Nigeria! It is our responsibility and calling to legislate better leadership in Nigeria. There is a will for change, and there will be change'.

Similarly, another Facebook user admonishes: "don't waste the work of Jesus on the cross. Have you not read the Scripture that says, 'faith without works is dead?'. See, Nigeria does not need 92%. If 50% of Christians vote for one candidate, that candidate will win the election". Social media users here are trying to encourage their followers to participate in the election using Christ as their credibility source.

Of the 4,851 tweets and 2,058 comments that were analyzed, about 14 percent (670) of the tweets and 18 percent (380) of the comments were tweets and comments of approbation and satisfaction that this time, 'Christians will hold their destiny in their own hands.' This is a crucial aspect of how The Church Must Vote group and their followers approached their mobilization. They believed that their service is celestial and that the gains of participation outweigh the comfort of not participating. The leaders of the group quoted bible passages to buttress their points and usually ascribed their success to divine power. Other times, they predicted that the supernatural would decide the election. For example, one Facebook user posted that, 'in 2019, the vote will be decided not by the cabals, not by the powers that be, but by Jesus'. The Facebook user derided the influence of other factors which she saw as potent, in elections in Nigeria and proclaimed that Jesus Christ would decide the election.

Although the YouTube videos that were analyzed followed similar themes of the tweets and comments and posts, they represented different stages and actors during the campaign. From Figure 2 and Table 2, about 47 percent of the videos were advertisements aired online and television. These commercials used logos, pathos, and syllogism to make their case in the videos. These elements helped the video to persuade and mobilize Christians to not only participate in the campaign but also in the elections.

Table 2: Types of YouTube Videos Supporting TCMV

Types	n (%)
Advertising TCMV	20 (47)
Pastors Reflect about TCMV	15 (36)
Church Presentation	5 (12)
Others talk about TCMV	2 (5)
Total	42 (100)

Furthermore, 36 percent were self-made videos, and video remix by famous pastors' speeches about the Church Must Vote campaign. These videos are endorsement videos that are positioned to convince followers of that individual pastor. These videos are about the most-watched videos on Twitter and Facebook. Another 12 percent were videos from leaders of the Church Must Vote groups in churches in Nigeria 'selling' their idea and recruiting new members.

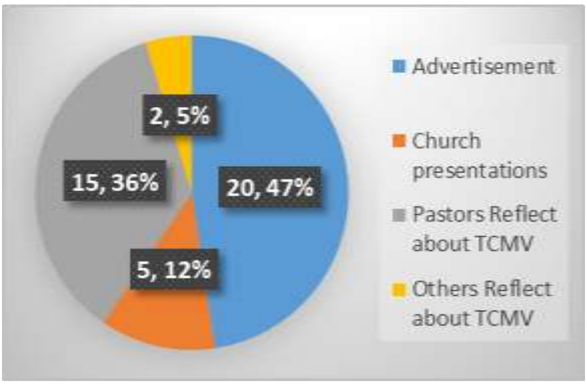

Figure 2: Types of YouTube Videos Analysed

Discussion

This paper evaluates how Christians in Nigeria used social media to boost the Church Must Vote (#thechurchmustvote) campaign during the 2019 national elections in Nigeria. The paper evaluated themes from the social media posts regarding the #thechurchmustvote campaign in Nigeria, and the influence of social media use during the campaign. Data reveal that the themes coalesced around Christians' education regarding the electoral process. The Church Must Vote campaign group leaders utilized logos to appeal to their followers' principle of reason and judgment by using a lot of statistics to communicate the need for Christians to participate in elections. The leaders also impelled their users and used pathos, that is, emotional appeal to convince their followers to participate in the elections.

The enunciation of themes from the posts, tweets, and videos helped answer research question two (RQ2). In agreement with previous digital activism studies in Nigeria, social media has been argued to be used to spread enthusiasm and facilitating emotional contagion (Gerbaudo, 2016; Uwalaka, 2016, 2017; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017). The use of social media to rouse users' or followers' emotion helped these campaign organizers to tap into users' fears and anger for mobilization. This was used richly during the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest (Hari, 2014; Uwalaka, 2019; Uwalaka et al., 2018), and during the failed 2015 Social Media Bill in Nigeria (Uwalaka, 2016). Findings reveal that the Church Must Vote campaign group leaders used similar tactics and themes to galvanize their followers, particularly those in the church.

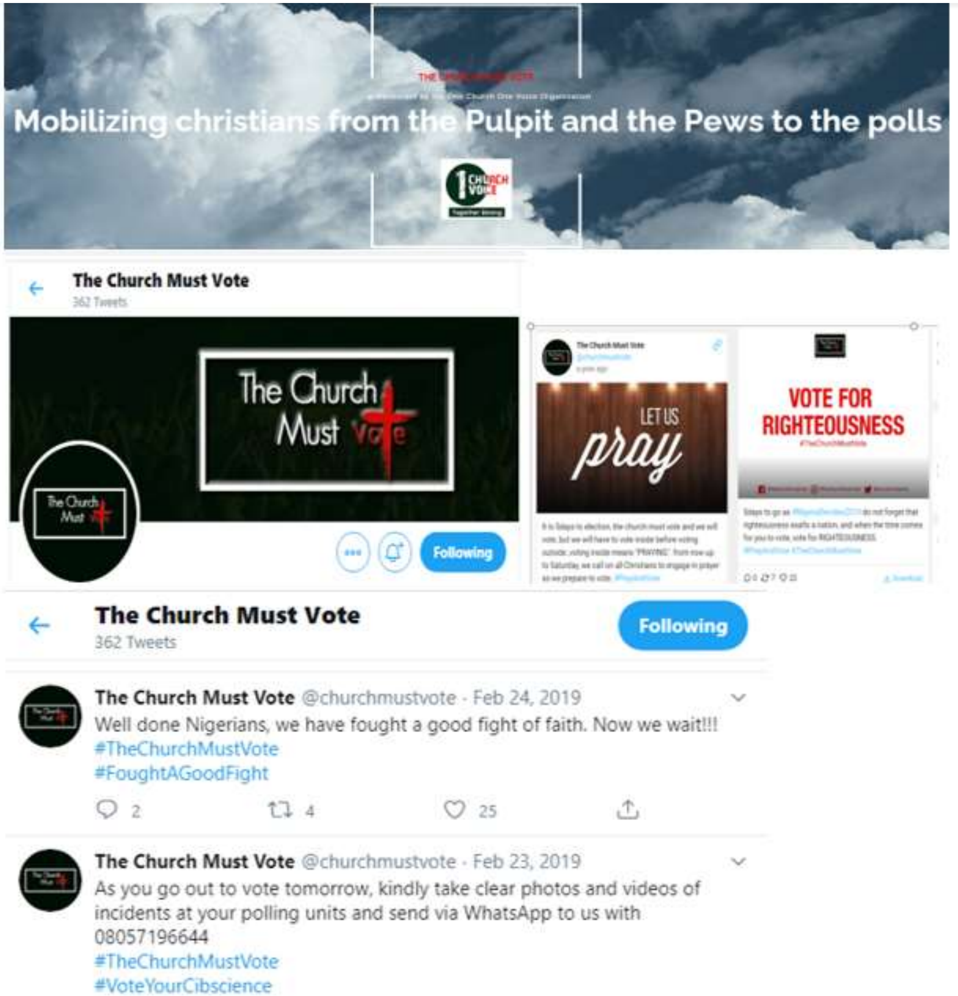

Figure 3: Sample Tweets from TCMV
(Source: The Church Must Vote Twitter Page)

Data further show that social media engagement played a powerful role in not only educating the people but also mobilized them to collect their PVC. This answers the research question one. It also means that social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube), helped the campaign spearheaded by the Church Must Vote, religious civil society group to achieve their goal. This finding suggests that scholars, particularly those that espouse arena definition to political participation as well as a collective action, cannot ignore the role of self-organizing groups and the modern way that people participate in politics. This paper argues that it will be difficult to see this new participation style as inauthentic, as is sometimes the case for mainstream analysts, because it does not happen in the political arena, or is not collective in nature. The paper reveals that clicktivism alone cannot bring all the changes that the people desire; it should be a mixture of both clicktivism and organisationally networked civil society groups with stated ideologies. Having said that, results here show that some of these new activism and participation styles such as clicktivism (Halupka, 2014), lead to more visible political action.

This paper reveals the need for scholars to move beyond the differences of the logics and embrace what they have in common as the advancement in communication technology has made it almost impossible to see political participation as something that occurs only in a strong, thick, deliberative ties between citizens; neither does it help to see it as universal. Rather, it should be seen as dualities where one helps the other. Marsh and Akram (2015) made this point when they argued that "connective action and personal action frames are becoming increasingly important, but if citizens are to effect change, this still usually involves collective action" (Marsh & Akram, 2015, p. 641).

From these findings, this paper argues that clicktivism is legitimate political participation. The findings show that rather than look at the variance in the logic of collective and connective action, researchers should examine their relationship and use that to inform their research. In effect, instead of studying one in isolation of the other, scholars should manage the two logics to see which best describe the result of their study. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) have started this dialogue in their 'when logics collide.' According to them, 'one might expect the ideal types of connective and collective action to appear in pockets, layers, and overlap within the same protest space' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 200). However, it usually is not that linear. It is more symbiotic than is reported in many research studies.

This paper considers the logic of connective and collective action in a continuum. Unlike other scholars, this study argues that when logics collide, it is salient that researchers show where their results lean. For example, the results of this study, as well as the nature of the

#thechurchmustvote campaign, show a crossover of ‘organizationally brokered networks’ and ‘organizationally enabled networks’ in the typology of collective and connective action network’ (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 45). When logics collide, this study suggests ‘conllective action’ to illustrate when a study leans more to connective action and ‘collnective action’ to represent studies that tilt towards collective action (Uwalaka, Forthcoming). In this study, the logics collided. However, the study leans more to organizationally brokered networks. This means that the study is ‘collnective action’ than ‘conllective action.’ Although there were individual users who used individual frames to support the #thechurchmustvote campaign, the campaign relied heavily on the Church Must Vote’s group ideology and thick ties to mobilize the people to participate in the elections.

Conclusion

This study found common themes from the tweets and posts from Facebook and Twitter. These themes were analyzed based on the data collected. The study found that The Church Must Vote campaign group leaders used logos and pathos to persuade the ‘Church’ to participate in the elections. They used emotional appeal to stimulate the spirit of togetherness, and of comradeship to achieve the campaign purpose. Based on PVC collection, it can be argued that they were successful.

Clicktivism influences political participation, but it does not supplant the more traditional form of political participation. Clicktivism embodies a vital aspect of all contemporary connective action movements, that is, the fusion of personal views, using personalized action frames, and project-based processes (Halupka, 2018). Irrespective of arena definition of political and participatory legitimacy, connective action more broadly, and clicktivism, in particular, has emerged as a feasible alternative to traditional avenues. Consequently, this study concludes that clicktivism is a legitimate political participation act in that it impacts the political. The study calls for tolerance of both collective and connective actions as both are salient political participation theories. This study notes that both logics are still essential in how people participate in political affairs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been delineated by the researchers as a contribution to existing research findings concerning digital activism in

Nigeria as well as future connective action studies. This study recommends that,

- hashtag activism or clicktivism be seen as a germane political participation and engagement act.
- Nigerian leaders should vigorously use social media for policy debates, education, and dissemination
- further examination of clicktivism and the logic of connective action in Nigeria can help to produce a body of research in the area of digital activism and political communication. One area to do this can be to conduct interviews with leaders and participants of campaigns such as the Church Must Vote. This attempt can help in deepening the theorization of connective action and clicktivism.

References

Bailard, C. S., & Livingston, S. (2014). Crowdsourcing accountability in a nigerian election. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 11*(4), 349-367.

Bang, H. P. (2011). The politics of threats: late-modern politics in the shadow of neoliberalism. *Critical Policy Studies, 5*(4), 434-448.

Beck, U. (1997). *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking modernity in the Global Social Order* (R. Mark, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U., Giddens, A., & Lash, S. (1994). *Reflexive modernization: Politics, tradition, and aesthetics in the modern social order. Cambridge*: Stanford University Press.

Bennett, W. L., Breunig, C., & Givens, T. (2008). Communication and political mobilization: Digital media and the organization of anti-Iraq war demonstrations in the US. *Political Communication, 25*(3), 269-289.

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society, 15*(5), 739-768.

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). *The logic of connective action: Digital* *media and the personalization of contentious politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bennett, W. L., Segerberg, A., & Walker, S. (2014). Organization in the crowd: peer production in large-scale networked protests. *Information, Communication & Society*, *17*(2), 232-260.

Bennett, W. L., Wells, C., & Freelon, D. (2011). Communicating civic engagement: Contrasting models of citizenship in the youth web sphere. *Journal of Communication, 61*(5), 835-856.

Bimber, B., Flanagin, A. J., & Stohl, C. (2005). Reconceptualizing collective action in the contemporary media environment. *Communication theory, 15*(4), 365.

Bosch, T. (2017). Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: The case of# RhodesMustFall. *Information, Communication & Society, 20*(2), 221-232.

Bosch, T., & Mutsvairo, B. (2017). Pictures, protests and politics: Mapping Twitter images during South Africa's fees must fall campaign. *African Journalism Studies 38*(2), 71-89.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. New York: Oxford university press.

Dennis, J. (2019). #stopslacktivism: Why Clicks, Likes, and Shares Matter. In *Beyond Slacktivism* (pp. 25-69). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fenton, N., & Barassi, V. (2011). Alternative media and social networking sites: The politics of individuation and political participation. *The Communication Review, 14*(3), 179-196.

Folayan, B.J., Omojola, O., Egharevba, M., Oyesomi, K., Yartey, D & Adeyeye, B. (2018). The use of ICT-rooted communication codes and slangs among Nigerian students. The *Journal of Social Sciences Research, 4*(12), 633-641.

Gerbaudo, P. (2016). Constructing Public Space| Rousing the Facebook Crowd: Digital Enthusiasm and Emotional Contagion in the 2011 Protests in Egypt and Spain. *International Journal of*

Communication, 10, 254-273.

Giddens, A. (1991). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1999). *The third way: The renewal of social democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gladwell, M. (2010). Why the revolution will not be tweeted. *New Yorker*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell?currentPage=all

Gladwell, M. (2011). From innovation to revolution-do social media made protests possible: An absence of evidence. *Foreign Aff., 90,* 153-200.

Halpin, D., Vromen, A., Vaughan, M., & Raissi, M. (2018). Online petitioning and politics: the development of Change.org in Australia. *Australian Journal of Political Science, 53*(4), 428-445.

Halupka, M. (2014). Clicktivism: A systematic heuristic. *Policy & Internet, 6*(2), 115-132.

Halupka, M. (2016). The rise of information activism: how to bridge dualisms and reconceptualize political participation. *Information, Communication & Society, 19*(10), 1487-1503.

Halupka, M. (2018). The legitimization of clicktivism. *Australian Journal of Political Science, 53*(1), 130-141.

Hari, S. I. (2014). The Evolution of Social Protest in Nigeria: The Role of Social Media in the "# OccupyNigeria" Protest. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, 3*(9), 33-39.

Hay, C. (2007). *Why we hate politics*. Cambridge: John Wiley and Sons.

Hay, C. (2014). Depoliticisation as process, governance as practice: what did the'first wave' get wrong and do we need a 'second wave 'to put it right? *Policy & Politics, 42*(2), 293-311.

Hirst, P. (1999). Carl Schmitt's Decisionism. In C. Mouffe (Ed.), *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (pp. 7-17). London: Verso.

Ibrahim, B. H. (2013). Nigerians Usage of Facebook during 2012 Occupy Nigeria Protests: a. Between Networked and Real Public Spheres. *Science Journal of Researcher, 5*(7), 55-64.

Jensen, M. S., Neumayer, C., & Rossi, L. (2020). 'Brussels will land on its feet like a cat': motivations for memefying# Brusselslockdown. *Information, Communication & Society 23*(1), 59-75.

Karpf, D. (2010). Online political mobilization from the advocacy group's perspective: Looking beyond clicktivism. *Policy & Internet*, *2*(4), 7-41.

Khan, G. F. (2017). Social media analytics. In *Social Media for Government* (pp. 93-118). Singapore: Springer.

Kombol, M. A. (2014). Uses of Social Media among Selected Labour Unions in Abuja during Nigeria's (January 2012)"Oil Subsidy" Removal Protests. *Studies in Media and Communication*, *2*(1), 102-114.

Kristofferson, K., White, K., & Peloza, J. (2014). The nature of slacktivism: How the social observability of an initial act of token support affects subsequent prosocial action. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *40*(6), 1149-1166.

Lee, Y., & Hsieh, G. (2013). *Does slacktivism hurt activism? The effects of moral balancing and consistency in online activism.* Paper presented at the Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Paris France.

Leijendekker, I., & Mutsvairo, B. (2014). On digitally networked technologies, hegemony and regime durability in authoritarian regimes: A Zimbabwean case study. *Information, Communication & Society*, *17*(8), 1034-1047.

Literat, I., & Markus, S. (2019). 'Crafting a way forward': online participation, craftivism, and civic engagement in Ravelry's Pussyhat Project group. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1-16. DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2019.1573910

Marsh, D., & Akram, S. (2015). In conclusion. *Policy Studies*, *36*(6), 640-643.

Marwick, A., & Boyd, D. (2014). 'It's just drama': teen perspectives on conflict and aggression in a networked era. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*(9), 1187-1204.

McCaffrie, B., & Marsh, D. (2013). Beyond mainstream approaches to political participation: A response to Aaron Martin. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *48*(1), 112-117.

Morah, D.N. & Omojola, O. (2018). Social media use and entrepreneurship development in Nigeria: Lagos and Onitsha in focus. *International Journal of Advance Study and Research Work, 1* (5), 15-26.

Morozov, E. (2009a). From Slacktivism to Activism. Retrieved from http://neteffect.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/09/05/from_slacktivism_to_activism

Morozov, E. (2009b). Iran: Downside to the" Twitter Revolution." *Dissent, 56*(4), 10-14.

Morozov, E. (2014). *To save everything, click here: The folly of technological solutionism*: PublicAffairs.

Mutsvairo, B. (2013). *Power and participatory politics in the digital age: Probing the use of new media technologies in railroading political changes in Zimbabwe*. (PhD), Leiden University Institute for History, Faculty of Humanities, Leiden.

Mutsvairo, B., & Sirks, L. (2015). Examining the contribution of social media in reinforcing political participation in Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Media Studies, 7*(3), 329-344.

Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Okorie, N., Loto, G. & Omojola, O. (2018). Blogging, civic engagement, and coverage of political conflict in Nigeria: A study of Nairaland. com. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences 39* (2), 291-298.

Omojola, O. (2009). English-oriented ICTs and ethnic language survival strategies in Africa. *Global Media Journal* (African Edition), 3 (1). Retrieved May 12, 2020 from https://globalmedia.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/18.

Omojola, O (2008). Audience mindset and influence on personal political branding. *Journal of Social Sciences, 16*(2), 124-137.

Piat, C. (2019). Slacktivism: Not simply a means to an end, but a legitimate form of civic participation. *Canadian Journal of Family, 11*(1), 162-179.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rafail, P. (2018). Nonprobability sampling and Twitter:

Strategies for semibounded and bounded populations. *Social Science Computer Review, 36*(2), 195-211.

Rotman, D., Vieweg, S., Yardi, S., Chi, E., Preece, J., Shneiderman, B., Glaisyer, T. (2011). From slacktivism to activism: participatory culture in the age of social media. In *CHI'11 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 819-822). Vancouver, Canada: ACM.

Schmitt, C. (2008). *The concept of the political: Expanded edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schroeder, S., Currin, E., Washington, E., Curcio, R., & Lundgren, L. (2019). "Like, Share, comment," and learn: Transformative learning in online anti-trump resistance communities. *Adult Education Quarterly, 70*(1), 234-789.

Segerberg, A., & Bennett, W. L. (2011). Social media and the organization of collective action: Using Twitter to explore the ecologies of two climate change protests. *The Communication Review, 14*(3), 197-215.

Stoker, G. (2006). *Why politics matters: making democracy work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

TCMV. (2019). The Church Must Vote Retrieved from http://thechurchmustvote.com/index.php

Uwalaka, T. (2015). *Nairaland and the Reconstruction of the Public Sphere in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association conference: Rethinking communication, space and identity, Queenstown, New Zealand.

Uwalaka, T. (2016). *Muzzling the Fifth Estate: An Analysis of the 2015 'Social Media' Bill in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference: Creating Space in the Fifth Estate, Newcastle. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318671787_Muzzling_the_Fifth_Estate_An_analysis_of_the_2015_'Social_Media'_Bill_in_Nigeria

Uwalaka, T. (2017). *Mobile Internet and the rise of digital activism among university students in Nigeria*. (PhD), University of Canberra, Canberra, Australia. Retrieved from http://www.canberra.edu.au/researchrepository/file/84213

231-ce41-4573-b0fa-4d8008004e96/1/full_text.pdf

Uwalaka, T. (2019). Social media and the rise of digital activism among students in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, *11*(2), 11-26.

Uwalaka, T. (Forthcoming). Clicktivism and political engagement in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 17(1).

Uwalaka, T., & Amadi, C. (2016). *Revoda and Election Monitoring in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the Australia and New Zealand Communication Association Conference, Creating Space in the Fifth Estate, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318671790_Revoda_and_Election_Monitoring_in_Nigeria

Uwalaka, T., Rickard, S., & Watkins, J. (2018). Mobile social networking applications and the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest. *Journal of African Media Studies*, *10*(1), 3-19.

Uwalaka, T., & Watkins, J. (2017). Social Media vs. Mainstream Media: An Analysis of the 2012 Occupy Nigeria Protest. In L. Allen (Ed.), *6th Annual International Conference on Journalism & Mass Communication* (pp. 59-68). Singapore: Global Science and Technology Forum.

Uwalaka, T., & Watkins, J. (2018). Social media as the fifth estate in Nigeria: An analysis of the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest. *African Journalism Studies*, *39*(4), 22-41.

Vromen, A. (2017). *Digital citizenship and political engagement*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

White, M. (2010). Clicktivism is ruining leftist activism. *The Guardian*. http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/clicktivism-ruining-leftist-activism

Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC) Vol. 7 No. 1, June 2020
ISSN: p. 2354-354X e. 2354 – 3515

Open Access Journal, Available Online

Media Convergence and Broadcasting Practice in Nigeria: Three Broadcast Stations in Focus

Osakpolor Emwinromwankhoe

University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
osakpolorgregory@yahoo.com

Received: 26 Dec. 2019 Accepted: 24 April 2020 Date of Publication: June 2020

Abstract: The debate about media convergence and its relevance in Nigeria is on-going. This study contributes to the discussion by examining how this critical construct impacts the broadcasting practice in Edo State, one of the country's 36 political subdivisions. The work adopts the mixed research method to investigate 100 survey respondents and interview three discussants, which helps to generate the requisite data. Findings reveal that convergence has significantly influenced broadcasting practice, and this influence is more positive than negative. The findings also show that media convergence creates additional and better opportunities, as more distribution channels for broadcast content emerge. These developments, however, may remain unsustainable if the stakeholders do not address the identified challenges appropriately. The government of Edo State can play a leading role in addressing those challenges.

Keywords: Broadcasting practice, convergence, new media, Edo State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Homo sapiens do communicate to meet needs and maintain relationships (Baran, 2012; Biagi, 2012; Dominicks, 2015). They have, over time, devised various means to sustain this activity (Sambe, 2005; Gbam, 2017; Turow, 2017). Information dissemination has gone through seven phases since the discovery of the Egyptian papyrus at Mesopotamia in 3000 BC. These are the invention of language, typing/printing, the radio, television, computers, information/communication technologies (ICTs), and the internet (Emwinromwankhoe, 2018a; Turow, 2017).

The third and fourth phases birthed broadcasting, which, in its basic form, is the business of disseminating information to a broad, scattered and heterogeneous audience through electromagnetic waves. The traditional broadcast media (radio and television) indisputably held sway for decades as many persons from various parts of the globe relied heavily on them to keep abreast of current information (Biagi, 2012; Ngomani, 2016; Olowofela & Peter, 2018). For instance, it was a common sight to find scores gather in a house to watch the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Network News at 9:00 p.m. or listen to the 7:00 a.m. news on the network service of Radio Nigeria. When major sports competitions such as the World Cup or Olympics were on, it was common to see persons converge on strategic locations to catch the sights and sounds of the games.

Suffice it to say that going by the ephemeral nature of these media, the audience found it an incredibly impossible task to record the disseminated messages for future use. It was such that if one missed the 9:00 p.m. NTA Network News, then one had missed a whole lot as there were very slim chances of watching it in future – except the station, for some reason, decided to air it again. The dictum - '*the radio only speaks once*' - was famous at the time. The content of these traditional media was mostly linear and unidirectional as the audiences became dumping grounds for news and reports.

In recent times, however, the *status quo* has changed. With the introduction of new media technologies such as the internet, laptops, smartphones, tablets, iPhones, iPods, Xbox, to name a few, as well as the proliferation of digital devices, there have been tremendous disruptions in the nature, structure, and landscape of broadcasting across the globe (Pavlik, 2005; Pavlik, 2015; Kalamar, 2016; Kipkirui, 2016). The old (or traditional) broadcast media and the new media have fused, giving birth to what is technically known as media convergence. As a consequence, the audiences of broadcast messages are no more dormant and have become citizen journalists or broadcast news 'produsers' (Erdal, 2007; Chao-Chen, 2013; Kalamar, 2016).

Today, there are no clear distinctions between private (telecommunication) and public (broadcasting) communication, nor are there distinctions between the character of the message or the equipment used to produce, transmit or receive the message (OECD, 2013). This development exists because such devices as the smartphone, an iPhone, or tablet are capable and available to record, edit, package, and disseminate a broadcast content.

Broadcast audiences also do not have to stay close to the "box" (radio set) in order to receive radio messages anymore, neither do they need to stay glued to their television sets in order to watch television programs (Adeyeye et al., 2020) With just a click on a device such as a smartphone, they can live stream the broadcast program online – even when they are miles away from their houses. The dictum that "*the radio only speaks once"* has been demystified as the news consumer can simultaneously listen to and record a broadcast, or download it and reuse it. The consumer in question can also visit *YouTube* weeks, months, or even years later, to access the uploaded content.

Uba (2017), a one-time Director-General of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission captures the changes mentioned above succinctly with his remark:

> I have witnessed incredible developments and changes. From queuing at a NITEL phone booth to make an international call, to waiting on NTA after school to commence broadcast at 4 p.m., … to watching television on my cell phone, while my Netflix tells me what to watch next after *The Wedding Party*. I am incredibly lucky to be a witness to this new world, and it keeps growing even as it gets smaller and closer … The world has changed, and it was televised. Digital innovation, changing social norms and the evolution of consumer behavior have revolutionized the audiovisual markets globally (p. 7)

It is worthy of note that of all the new technologies which have made those developments described above possible, the internet particularly stands out. The internet is unarguably the springboard for the transformations. It is the New Media's main circuitry (Olise, 2012; Olise &Tabakaemi, 2015).

This multimedia information superhighway, as Agba (2002) describes it, has completely revolutionized the entire process of producing and distributing broadcast content. The internet's capability of distributing information usable for broadcast programs is awe-inspiring (Owuamalam, 2008; Mathew, Ogedebe & Abaya, 2013).

Taylor (2015), the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization, sums it up this way:

> The internet today has become a viable delivery mechanism for audio and video broadcast services, whether it is live programs, social media, or on-demand services … It provides consumers today with unprecedented opportunities – to choose how they watch the programs – either through traditional 'linear' broadcast of a news bulletin or by instant access to individual news items as may be determined by the user rather than the news editor. (p. 14)

The internet, therefore, has made convergence possible. It has blurred the differences that exist between the old broadcast media and the new broadcast media and created a meeting point or an alignment for them. Thus, we not only have traditional radio and traditional television stations, but we also have internet radio and internet television. With convergence, local, national and international broadcast stations not only engage in traditional linear broadcasting but also have links through which their audiences can access their broadcast messages online.

Convergence has also triggered significant changes in the way and manner in which broadcast audiences consume content with the availability of new platforms and portable devices. Nowadays, broadcast messages can be provided on multiple platforms such as analog or digital terrestrial broadcasts, satellite, cable or Internet Protocol (IP), and Over-the-Top (OTT) television (Olley, 2009; OECD, 2013; Kipkirui, 2016). With convergence, the definition of broadcasting is rapidly changing (Erdal, 2007; Obaje, 2018).

As a result of the enormous transformations that convergence has brought to broadcasting, the attention of media scholars across the globe has increasingly been drawn to the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice (Pavlik, 2005; Khan, Shalid& Ahmad, 2014). The debate is two-sided. Some scholars (Adoni &Nossek, 2001; Menezes & Carvalho, 2009; Chao-Chen, 2013; Turow, 2014; Taylor, 2015; Uba, 2017) argue that convergence has a positive influence on broadcasting practice. The premise of their argument is that convergence has led to more fabulous markets and higher profits for broadcast operators.

Some other scholars (Deuze, 2003; Pavlik, 2005; Khan, Shalid & Ahmad, 2014; Kalamar, 2016; Kipkirui, 2016; McEwan, 2017), however, think that the influence convergence is negative. They contend that factors such as hyper-competition and increased consumer choices have led to a continuous decline in the profits of broadcast operators as a result of convergence. To this end, this study sought to investigate the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice in Edo State, one of Nigeria's 36 states.

Statement of the Problem

Convergence has triggered tremendous changes in the business and practice of broadcasting across the world, and Nigeria is not an exception. Its influence can be seen and felt in every facet: newsgathering, news writing and reporting, news packaging and design, and news dissemination. For instance, in a study carried out on *Brila 88.9 FM*, a Sports Radio in Kaduna State, Ogwuche (2017) discovered that convergence has tremendously influenced how programs are packaged and disseminated in the station. The broadcasting practice in Edo State of Nigeria is an archetype of these developments.

For some scholars (Adoni & Nossek, 2001; Menezes & Carvalho, 2009; Chao-Chen, 2013; Turow, 2014; Taylor, 2015; Uba, 2017; Ogwuche, 2017), the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice is positive as broadcast operators now have access to wider audiences and profits. Other scholars (Deuze, 2003; Pavlik, 2005; Khan, Shalid & Ahmad, 2014; Kalamar, 2016; Kipkirui, 2016; McEwan, 2017) hold tenaciously to the view that the profits of broadcast operators keep plummeting, pointing to convergence as the primary cause of the problem. An investigation on the trends in Edo State of Nigeria presented an opportunity to explore further the context of convergence on broadcasting practice.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions that guided the study:

1) What is the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice in Edo State of Nigeria?
2) Does convergence promote the distribution of more broadcast content by practitioners in Edo State of Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

This study is vital to broadcast practice in Edo State, the academia and the indigenes of Edo State. For broadcast practitioners, it will help them be in the know of the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice in Edo State. The knowledge gained on the subject could empower these broadcast practitioners to adequately adjust to the significant changes triggered by convergence and ultimately harness the potentials for seamless and improved broadcasting.

For academia, the study would update available literature, including the empirical studies carried out on the topic. It also would help keep Edo State indigenes abreast of the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice. If they are knowledgeable about the influence of convergence, they would be able to make informed decisions on how to access broadcast messages on different platforms.

Literature Review

Understanding Convergence

Convergence has been a central concept in contemporary broadcasting. As such, it has attracted definitions from numerous scholars and practitioners in the field of mass communication. Suffice it to say that each definition is invariably shaped by each writer's perception as convergence, as a term, is very broad with multiple meanings and elusive. This diversity is why Latzer (2013) avers that convergence is an ambiguous term used by various disciplines to describe and analyze processes of change towards uniformity or union. Thus we have media convergence, industry convergence, legal convergence, economic convergence, socio-cultural convergence, payment method convergence, energy consumption convergence, software convergence, amongst others (Chiariglione, 2013).

The word "convergence" is the nominalized form of the verb "converge," which is defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (7^{th} ed.)* as "to move towards each other and merge at the same point." For instance, when we say persons have converged on a place for an event, it means that such persons have gathered or met at the same spot for the event (Okon et al., 2018). Etymologically, the word 'convergence' has its roots in the Latin words *com*, which means 'towards' and *verger*, 'to bend' or 'lean.'

Jonas (2004) defines convergence as a combination of many telecom technology and services in order to maximize market and industry barriers. Also, Killebrew (2005) sees convergence as a movement in the field of mass communications that binds previously competitive media delivery formats (platforms) to another.

According to Biagi (2012), convergence describes two developments taking place simultaneously. First, it means the melding of the communications, computer, and electronics industries because of advances in digital technology. Second, convergence means the economic alignment of different types of media companies with each other to make sure they can offer a variety of services that technical advancements demand.

Turow (2017, p. 44) adds his assertion, stating that “convergence is a phenomenon which takes place when products typically linked to one medium show up on many media.” Turow accentuates this point, stating that it is like when you can get a Red Box baseball game broadcast in Boston to show up on your laptop computer and your android phone, or when you can transfer an Adele music album from your laptop to your iPod, iPhone, iPad, or Xbox. Similarly, Okoroafor (2016, p. 25) describes convergence as “the coming together of two or more distinct entities or phenomena, thereby removing entry barriers across the IT, telecoms, media and consumer electronic industries.”

The above definitions point to one basic fact: convergence is the blending, melding, and merging of different media technologies and contents which were hitherto disparate and separate from each other. For example, when an Android phone is used in the production of text, video, and voice for broadcast purposes, or used in reading newspapers and magazines online, it is convergence.

However, as it pertains to the field of broadcasting, Taylor (2015, p. 14) offers a very comprehensive and acceptable definition. He says convergence “is the blurring of the hitherto three distinct industries of telecommunications, computers, and broadcasting.” Emwinromwankhoe (2018b, p. 127) agrees with Taylor’s stance and describes convergence as “the merging of the traditional media such as radio and television with new media technologies such as the Internet, satellite, mobile phones, etc. into one.”

Convergence in broadcasting is of different types. Technological convergence is the ability of any infrastructure to package, process, and transport any type of data – text, picture, audio, and video. Market convergence is the coming together of the telecommunications, computer, and broadcasting industries. Consumer convergence is the ability of a broadcast consumer to access content using a multiplicity of devices. Cultural/visual convergence means the capacity to merge voice and video with texts and photographs. Newsroom convergence is the process whereby news, features, news commentaries, and other related resources are shared within and between broadcast organizations. Regulatory convergence is the merging of the regulatory bodies for the telecommunications and broadcasting industries for efficient management processes.

Convergence and Broadcasting Practice

Media scholars the world over are unanimous in their views that convergence is shaping, affecting, and redefining the world's broadcasting landscape. For instance, Dominicks (2015, p. 263), after taking an in-depth look at recent trends in broadcasting in the United States of America, concludes that "broadcast television is in a state of change." According to Biagi (2012), Pavlik (2005), Jenkins (2006), Baran (2012), Pavlik (2015), and Kipkirui (2016), convergence has led to the reshaping of broadcasting in terms of content, nature, structure, organization, and delivery. Biagi (2012) notes that:

> Within the last 30 years, the emergence of the internet as a media delivery system has transformed the structure and the economics of the media business in the United States and throughout the world … Today, the internet delivers all types of media using a single delivery system without barriers. You can receive all types of media just about anywhere you want, delivered by many different types of companies, carried on invisible electronic signals you can't see (p. 187).

Convergence has led to the erosion of the differences that once existed among the media of communication (Pavlik, 2005; Fagerjord & Storsul, 2007; Latzer, 2013; Baran, 2015). It has brought the hitherto disparate fields of telecommunications, broadcasting, and computers together and blurred the differences that exist among them (Pavlik, 2005; Turow, 2017; Taylor, 2015; Ngomani, 2016). According to Baran (2015), convergence in broadcasting is fueled by three elements which have come together almost simultaneously:

(a) Digitization of nearly all information, which provides a standard means to represent all forms of communication.
(b) High-speed connectivity; networks are becoming faster and more pervasive – wired and wireless.
(c) Seemingly endless advances in technology in which speed, memory, and power improvements allow a device to do more. That redefines the limits to what is possible.

Baran (2015) and Turow (2017) posit that convergence in broadcasting has necessitated the blurring of the differences between content producers and content consumers. Traditionally, the producer in the broadcast business was a large, hierarchically structured broadcast organization such as CNN, Pixas Studios, NTA, and others. Today, however, blogs, social networking sites, websites, and the like have made broadcast consumers double as producers; hence the coinage *produsers* (Latzer, 2013; Baran, 2015; Turow, 2017). Baran (2015, p. 41) remarks that "today, 37% of Internet users have contributed to the creation of news, commented about it, or disseminated it via postings on social media sites."

Oyero (2007), and Olowofela & Peter (2018) assert that with convergence, radio and television stations have broken barriers in Nigeria as most smartphones used in the country have pre-installed radio and TV apps on which the audience access their content. The internet and social media are not left out of the equation as the stations also upload various online audio and videos which users can easily access.

In recent times, broadcast stations across the world deliver content via multiple platforms, which some scholars (Petersen, 2002; Fagerjord & Storsul, 2007; Cordeiro, 2012) refer to as *cross-media*. As Turow (2017) notes, not only do broadcast audiences consume content on different sites, they listen to and view content using different services. Turow (2017) emphatically states that:

> If you subscribe to cable or satellite television, you probably know that the companies give you the possibility to view a variety of channels live or even on-demand just about anywhere through various devices – your TV set, your desktop computer, your laptop, your tablet, your smartphone, your Xbox video game console, your Apple TV, and more (p. 42).

For instance, an international broadcast station like the BBC not only has channels through which its audience can live stream content via a multiplicity of media devices but has also made it possible for the audience to view and download its content on *YouTube*. Aside from these, the stations' reporters now produce both broadcast and print content (meant for posting on the stations' website) simultaneously.

The situation is not any different in Nigeria. Broadcast operators across the country now disseminate their messages using multiple platforms (Bisola et al., 2018; Oyero 2007; Emwinromwankhoe, 2018b; Ja'afaru, 2018; Olowofela & Peter, 2018). Stations such as ITV, NTA, Raypower FM, Silverbird Radio, Channels Television, TVC Nigeria, amongst others, have links through which consumers can access content online using a multiplicity of devices. These devices include smartphones, iPhones, iPad, tablets, laptops, advanced video game consoles, and lots more. Also, most of these stations simultaneously broadcast on digital terrestrial TV and cable TV.

Convergence is an ineluctable phenomenon in today's broadcasting practice. Convergence has come to stay, to transform, to reshape, redefine and restructure the practice of broadcasting. Broadcast operators in Nigeria in general and in Edo State, in particular, cannot afford to turn a blind eye to this hydra-headed giant whose influence on broadcasting is massive. This development is the reason Okoroafor (2016) strongly advocates the inclusion of special lectures on convergence in the curriculums of institutions that have mass communication or media studies disciplines in the country.

Convergence and its Influence on Broadcasting Practice

Convergence has significantly affected every aspect of broadcasting across the globe. Its influence is visible right from the process of gathering broadcast information through to the dissemination of such information to members of the public. Pavlik (2005) specifies such areas to include acquisition, production, distribution, display, and storage. Convergence has made it possible for broadcast practitioners to use sophisticated cameras and microphones in information gathering. Pavlik (2005) notes that this has two advantages: (a) recordings do not degrade over time (b) information can be compressed for faster dissemination.

Today, broadcast practitioners use wireless and powerful microphones coupled with 3-D high-resolution cameras. The implications are that sounds and pictures are brighter, sharper, and can be stored for centuries without degradation. Many of the cameras used today are miniaturized, thereby making them very portable. Many microphones and cameras have editing capabilities as they capture and edit sounds and videos simultaneously. Also, broadcast reporters can use technological devices such as smartphones and tablets to record sounds and videos when they stumble upon newsworthy events when covering their beats. Those devices also come in handy when such broadcast reporters are miles away from their stations and deem it necessary to be the first to report the event to members of the public.

Convergence has also made it possible for broadcast practitioners to get first-hand news from news *produsers*. Albeit most scholars (Erdal, 2007; Biagi, 2012; Emwinromwankhoe, 2018b, Omojola, 2008a; Omojola, 2008b) argue that such news needs to be checked, double-checked, and triple-checked for accuracy, fairness, balance, and objectivity, the truth remains that news by these *produsers,* especially scoops, are vital to broadcast professionals. Furthermore, digital cameras can be attached to robots and remotely controlled for newsgathering operations. This proficiency saves time, reduces costs, and increases operational efficiency.

Also, broadcast production and post-production processes (such as editing) have witnessed an unprecedented transformation as a result of convergence. Nowadays, the processes of producing and editing broadcast programs are faster and more effective. For instance, newsroom convergence enables a broadcast journalist in a branch station to write, edit, and send news stories to the editor of another station for inclusion in the news bulletin. Also, powerful technological devices such as smartphones and tablets can be used to quicken the editing process as many of such devices have powerful editing tools.

Convergence has equally created more distribution channels for broadcast stations across the globe. Contents can be distributed via boundless means at higher speed and cheaper costs. For example, a station like ITV in Edo State distributes its contents via digital terrestrial broadcasting, cable TV (*Startimes*), and live streaming via various technological devices such as iPhones.

Convergence has also significantly affected the display of broadcast contents. The multimedia feature of convergence has now made it possible for a radio or TV station to combine audio, video, and texts as content (triple play). Some TV stations now display a combination of audio, video, text, and data (quadruple play). An international broadcast station like CNN, for instance, relays videos, audio, texts, pictures, and animations (where necessary) for each news item on its online platform. With regards to storage, convergence has made it possible for broadcast contents to be stored on a variety of devices such as flash drives, DVDs, personal and digital video recorders, as well as online. Such contents can be stored for a long time without degradation.

Challenges of Nigerian Broadcast Practitioners in the Era of Convergence

Owing to convergence in broadcasting, Nigerian broadcast practitioners now grapple with some challenges. First, there is a lack of training on the use of new media**.** Many broadcast practitioners in Nigeria do not have an in-depth knowledge of how to use the new media for broadcast purposes. Nwanne (2016) notes that many Nigerian broadcast journalists were trained on typewriters and other analog devices, while some are not digital enthusiasts. Moreover, there are erratic power supply problems in many parts of Nigeria. The privatization of the electricity industry has not led to an improvement in energy supply. Since virtually all new media need a stable or uninterrupted power supply to function, inadequate power supply constitutes a significant impediment to broadcast professionals in the era of convergence.

The high cost of acquiring new media systems constitutes another challenge. Poverty is still a problem in Nigeria and other developing countries (Olise, 2012; Nwanne, 2016). Most new media such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops are sold at high prices with little or no subsidization from the federal or state governments. The recession did not help matters as it made the already high costs to escalate further. Consequently, many broadcast practitioners are unable to afford new media devices.

Inadequate Internet facilities is another challenge. Many a broadcast professional considers it a Herculean task to access information using an Internet network that does not fluctuate (Morah & Omojola, 2014). Even with the introduction of the 4G network by the majority of the network service providers in the country, the situation has remained uninspiring as many broadcast practitioners can hardly get 3G workable on their new media devices, let alone 4G. Since broadcasting is time-bound and much more with convergence, inadequate Internet facilities constitute an impediment to breaking the news.

Furthermore, there is the difficulty in verifying the authenticity of the news source(s). Because converged broadcasting has opened the door for citizen journalists or news *produsers* to thrive, verifying the authenticity of the news source(s) is a challenge for many broadcast practitioners in Nigeria. This is so because the internet is continuously laden with several broadcast contents about people, events, and places. Therefore, it has become tough knowing which report is accurate and which is false (Okorie, Loto & Omojola, 2018; 2011; Folayan et al., 2018).

Lastly, it is not fitting that many broadcast stations, particularly those owned by the federal and state governments, are bereft of new media technologies. In the very few stations where such new media are available, they are either outdated or inadequate. Even with the endless calls by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON) that all broadcast stations in the country should fully embrace digitalization, many government-owned stations still operate the analog broadcasting systems. This is a great challenge because it is only when new media technologies are available that broadcast professionals can put them to good use.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Several empirical studies exist concerning the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice. For instance, Dupagne & Garrison (2003) carried out a study to investigate the effects of convergence on Media General's Tampa News Center in Florida, USA. The researchers found that jobs and roles in the center have changed due to convergence and that staff members think more about how to disseminate information than before.

Olley (2012) also conducted a study to find out the influence of new media technologies on broadcasting practice in four stations in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. Findings showed, among others, that new media technologies have tremendously influenced the practice of broadcasting in the stations. Similarly, Mwaura (2011) conducted a study to ascertain the impact of the new media on radio broadcasting on Capital FM radio, Kenya. Findings revealed that the staff of Capital FM Kenya significantly used new media platforms during the gathering, processing, and broadcasting of content, and the station's audience now has more options as to how to consume these contents. Mwaura's findings were corroborated by Adigwe (2012), whose study, among other things, revealed that information and communication technologies (ICTs) had affected news processing, reporting, and dissemination in broadcast stations in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Meier, Bracker &Verhovnik (2016) embarked on a study to unravel the challenges faced by the over 5,000 employees of Bavaria's Public Broadcasting Service, one of Germany's largest media organizations, in the era of convergence. The researchers found that the absence of networking (particularly cross-media), absence of flexible workflow design possibilities; problems with the use of mobile devices in media production; and insufficient integration of social media in research constitute challenges faced by the employees in the era of convergence.

In the same vein, Ngomani (2016) conducted a comparative study to ascertain radio listening habits among young people in Cape Town, South Africa, in the era of convergence. The study focused on three stations in Cape Town – *Assembly Radio*, *Cliff Central*, and *Balls Visual Radio*. Findings from her study revealed that radio listening habits among young people living and studying in township significantly differ from the practices of those who attend school in rural areas.

Theoretical Framework

Technological Determinism Theory

The term "technological determinism" was coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), an American sociologist-cum-economist. Technological determinism revolves around the proposition that technology in any given society defines the society's nature as well as culture (Nwanne, 2016; Asemah, Nwammuo & Uwaoma, 2017; Uwawah, 2018). As noted by Nwanne (2016) and Ja'afaru (2018), technological determinism theory rests on the underlying assumption that technology is what determines, shapes and influences how people in a society think, believe and behave. Technological determinism theory sees the media as the main force behind social and cultural changes in society. Technologies shape our society. They sure determine how we think, how we talk, how we act, how we socialize, how we produce, package, deliver, and consume information. The theory helps to relate this study to the situation in Edo State of Nigeria, which is the focus of this study.

Mediamorphosis Theory

Roger Fidler propounded Mediamorphosis theory in 1997. The theory is a convergence and technology-based theory (Uwawah, 2018). Mediamorphosis theory claims that media, technology, and communication practices are all interconnected and that it is the technology that drives development in the field of communication. Elucidating the mediamorphosis theory, Fidler (1997) cited in Uwawah (2018) remarks that:

> New media do not arise spontaneously and independently – they emerge gradually from the metamorphosis of old media. Older forms do not die; they continue to evolve and adapt. Established forms must change in response to the emergence of a new medium – their only option is to die (p. 20).

The fundamental principles of the theory include: (a) co-evolution and co-existence of all new and old media (b) the mediamorphosis of old media into new ones (c) survival of old media amid new ones (d) opportunities presented by new media and the needs they meet.

The theory is pertinent to this study because it would help explain how the traditional broadcast media in Edo State have metamorphosed into new broadcast media. It would also help describe the influence this metamorphosis (or convergence) has on broadcasting practice in the state.

Methodology

The study adopted the mixed research method, which comprised both the quantitative (survey) and the qualitative (interview) methods. It used the questionnaire and an interview guide as research instruments. The test-retest technique was employed to ensure the reliability of the instruments. The population of the study comprised the staff of the three broadcast stations – NTA, Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS), and ITV/Radio – that were studied. From the information obtained from the stations' management, there are 84 staff members in NTA; 145 in EBS; and 150 in ITV/Radio, totaling 379. This figure formed the population of the study, and nearly all of them had a good understanding of the subject matter.

A sample size of 100 staff was arrived at, using the Taro Yamane's (1967) formula. Still going by the same formula, 22 staff received a questionnaire in NTA, Benin; 38 did so in EBS while 40 did so in ITV. Simple random sampling was adopted in selecting the 100 staff members who received the questionnaire in the three stations. In contrast, the purposive sampling technique was used in selecting three notable broadcasting experts who were interviewed. They included the Manager of Programs, NTA Benin; the Public Relations Officer, EBS; and the Controller of Programs, ITV. The questionnaire was administered on a person-to-person basis. In effect, the completed questionnaire (100 in number) was collected on the spot from each of the respondents.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Bar charts are used to illustrate the results of the analysis. The choice was necessitated by the need for the researcher to make the outcome of the investigation vivid.

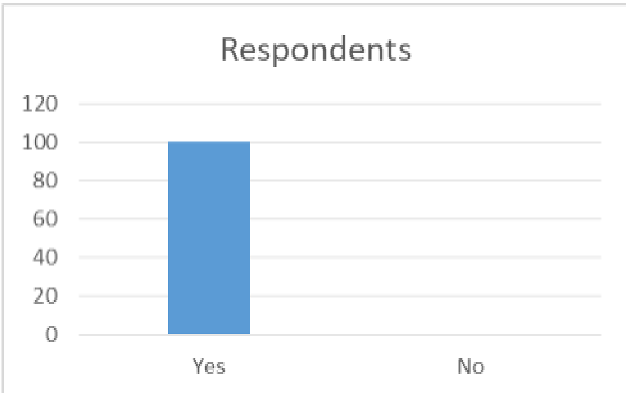

Figure 1: Whether convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State

Figure 1 indicates that convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State as all of the respondents (100%) answered “Yes” to the question.

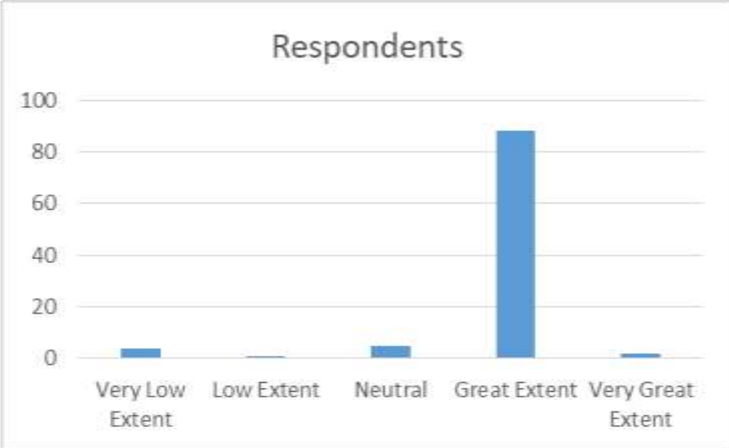

Figure 2: Extent to which convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State

The data in Figure 2 reveal that convergence has influenced broadcasting practice to a great extent (88%) in Edo State.

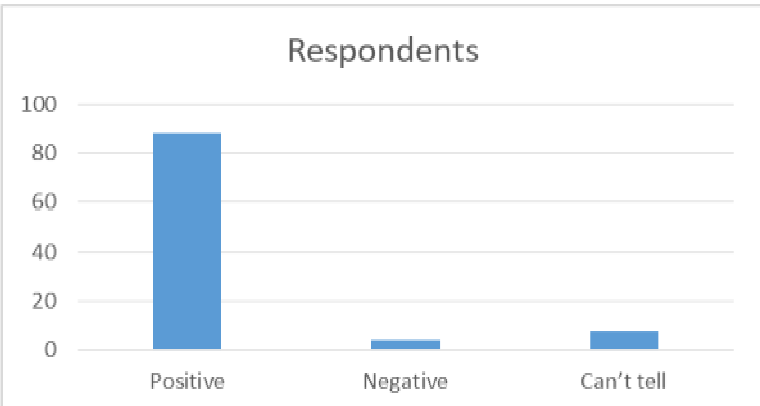

Figure 3: The kind of influence convergence has on broadcasting practice in Edo State

The data in Figure 3 indicate that convergence (88%) has a positive influence on broadcasting practice in Edo State.

Figure 4: Areas in which convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State

The data in Figure 4 reveal the areas in which convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State. The data show that convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in all of the above ways (90%).

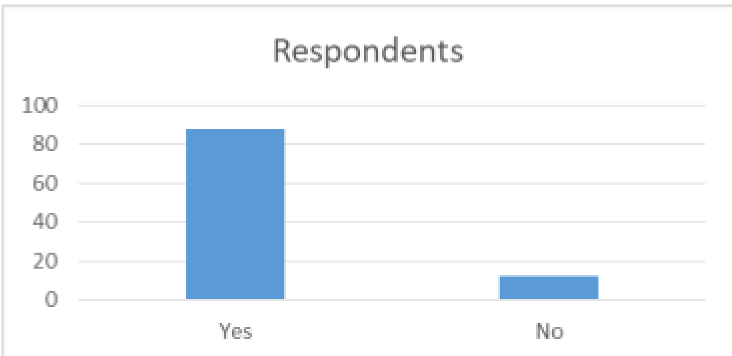

Figure 5: Whether convergence has led to more avenues for the distribution of contents by practitioners in Edo State

The data in Figure 5 indicate that convergence (88%) has led to led to more avenues for the distribution of contents by broadcast practitioners in Edo State.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the influence of convergence on broadcasting practice in Edo State?

The study shows that convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State to a significant extent. This is evident in Figure 2, where the majority (88%) of the respondents showed up in that light. The three interviewees were also unanimous in their views that convergence has greatly influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State. While making useful references to the practice in their broadcast stations, the interviewees strongly asserted that convergence has enormously influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State.

This finding is in tandem with those of Dupagne & Garrison (2003), Olley (2009), Mwaura (2011), Adigwe (2012), Ngomani (2017) and Ogwuche (2017). It also upholds the central tenets of the technological determinism as well as mediamorphosis theories. The influence the new media exert on the broadcasting practice in Edo State is such that the traditional broadcast media are rapidly *mediamorphosing* due to convergence.

The areas in which convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State include the gathering of information for broadcast purposes, production and editing of programs, relay of programs, display of programs, and storage of broadcast programs. From the in-depth interviews conducted, there was a convergence of opinions that convergence has influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State in many areas. The interviewees also agreed that some such areas include speed, editing, relay, and storage of broadcast contents. The Controller of Programs, ITV asserted that:

> With convergence, an editing suite is no longer a room or building as a smartphone can constitute an editing suite. Convergence has also impacted on storage as the hard drive, DVD tapes, etc. are now used to store broadcast contents. These devices are an improvement on the VHS tape, which was very much in vogue years ago.

This finding aligns with the views of some scholars (Pavlik, 2005; Pavlik, 2015; Ja'afaru, 2018), it also upholds the findings of Olley

(2009), Mwaura (2011), Adigwe (2012), Meier, Bracker & Verhovnik (2016) and Ogwuche (2017). Suffice it to say that the finding also supports the underlying assumption of the technological determinism theory that technologies shape and affect everything about the mass media from newsgathering to the storage of media contents.

The findings also show that convergence has a positive influence on broadcasting practice in Edo State. This conclusion is based on the opinions of most of the respondents (88%) who agreed that convergence has positively influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State. The three experts interviewed first noted that convergence has both positive and negative influences on broadcasting practice before concluding that the influence is more positive than negative. The following are the words of the Public Relations Officer of EBS:

> Convergence has both a positive and negative influence on broadcasting practice in Edo State. For instance, broadcast stations now have wider access to information, enriched content, as well as enhanced feedback. Negatively, however, there is acculturation as many persons in the state in particular and the country in general have and are still copying the culture of the west, such as indecent dressing, drug use, gangsterism, watching of pornographic movies, rape, kidnapping, militancy, etc. However, I think convergence has more of a positive influence than a negative one on broadcasting practice.

These findings do strengthen the assertions of some scholars (Adoni &Nossek, 2001; Menezes &Carvalho, 2009; Chao-Chen, 2013; Taylor, 2015; Turow, 2017; Uba, 2017) and corroborate those ofDupagne& Garrison (2003), Meier, Bracker &Verhovnik (2016) and Ogwuche (2017).

Research Question 2: Has convergence led to more avenues for the distribution of contents by broadcast practitioners in Edo State?

The study shows that convergence has led more avenues for the distribution of content by broadcast practitioners in Edo State. This is because 88 percent of the respondents answered in that light. Similarly, all the experts interviewed agreed that convergence has led to more avenues for the distribution of contents by broadcast practitioners in Edo State. The Controller of Programs at ITV/Radio notes that:

> Convergence has opened more windows for the distribution of contents to Edo State broadcast stations, particularly private stations like ITV. With convergence, broadcast stations now generate more profits as their contents, aside from being accessed on radio and TV sets can be live streamed and relayed on Satellite or Cable TV.

The finding aligns with the assertions of many scholars (Adoni &Nossek, 2001; Menezes & Carvalho, 2009; Chao-Chen, 2013; Taylor, 2015; Turow, 2017; Uba, 2017). It is also parallel to the findings of Dupagne & Garrison (2003), Olley (2009), Mwaura (2011), Adigwe (2012), and Ogwuche (2017). This supports one of the critical principles of the mediamorphosis theory – *opportunity and need*. This is because converged broadcasting has unarguably created better opportunities (or avenues) for broadcast stations in the state to distribute content to their various audiences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Convergence has significantly influenced broadcasting practice in Edo State. This influence is evident in all areas of broadcasting practice, which range from the acquisition of information to the storage of content for future use. Since convergence has led to more avenues for the distribution of contents by broadcast practitioners in Edo State, the implication is that convergence has a positive influence on broadcasting practice in the state.

Nevertheless, convergence – like the proverbial rose flower – has come with some thorns in the form of challenges faced by many a broadcast practitioner in Edo State. Therefore, to ensure seamless and enhanced broadcasting in the era of convergence, these challenges should be adequately tackled. The following recommendations proceed from these discussions and findings:

- Edo State Government should make efforts to ensure the provision of stable power supply in the state. This is important because virtually all new media depend on power supply to function effectively. The Government could partner with the Federal Government in this regard.
- Edo State Government should help subsidize the prices of new media such as smartphones, iPads, and the like so that Edo State broadcast practitioners can easily afford them.
- Owners of broadcast stations in Edo State should make it a

point of duty to upgrade their facilities with new media technologies.

- The management staff of broadcast stations in Edo State should, from time to time, conduct training and skill acquisition programs for their employees on the use of new media.
- Broadcast practitioners across Edo State should make tenacious efforts to verify information obtained from the internet, social media as well as those from citizen journalists before relaying them. They should check, double-check, triple-check, and even quadruple-check them in order to sieve the facts from fictional information.

References

Adeyeye, B., Amodu, L., Odiboh O., Omojola, O., Adesina, E. & Ben-Enukora, C.A. (2020). A SWOT analysis of indigenous language use in agricultural radio programming in Nigeria. In N. Okorie (ed), *emerging trends in indigenous language media, communication, gender, and health.* Hershey, PA: IGI Global, pp. 188-209.

Adigwe, I. (2012). The impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on news processing, reporting and dissemination in broadcast stations in Lagos, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (E-Journal).* Retrieved from http://www.digitalcommons. unl.edu/libphilprac.

Adoni, H.&Nossek, H. (2001). The new media consumers: Media convergence and the displacement effect. *The European Journal of Communication Research, 26* (1), 59-83.

Asemah, E., Nwammuo, A. &Uwaoma, A. (2017). *Theories and models of communication*. Jos: Jos University Press.

Baran, S. J. (2012). *Introduction to mass communication: Media literacy and culture (7th ed.).* New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.

Biagi, S. (2012). *Media/Impact: An introduction to mass media (10th ed.).* Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Bisola, K.B., Omojola, O., Oyero, O., Okorie, N., Adedeji-Kayode, T. (2018).

Leveraging entrepreneurship for innovation in a developing economy. Proceedings of the 31st International Business Information Management Association Conference, IBIMA 2018: Innovation Management and Education Excellence through Vision 2020, pp. 6978-6983.

Chao-Chen, L. (2013). Convergence of old and new media: New media representation in traditional news. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, *2*(6), 103-201.

Chiariglione, L. (2013). The future is more media convergence. *The Journal of the Institute of Image Electronics Engineers of Japan*, *42*(3), 336-339.

Cordeiro, P. (2012). Radio becoming r@dio: Convergence, interactivity and broadcasting trends in perspective. *Participations – Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, *9*(2), 492-510.

Deuze, M. (2003). The web and its journalisms: Considering the consequences of different types of new media online. *New Media and Society*, *5*(2), 203-230.

Dominicks, J. (2015). *Dynamics of mass communication: Media in transition (12th ed.).* New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.

Dupagne, M. & Garrison, B. (2003). *A case study of media convergence at Media General's Tampa News Centre*. A Paper Presented at the Expanding Convergence: Media Use in a Changing Environment Conference, University of South Carolina, November 6-8.

Emwinromwankhoe, O. (2018a). Perception of Internet news among undergraduates of mass communication in University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria. *Novena Journal of Communication*, *8*, 198-207.

Emwinromwankhoe, O. (2018b). An appraisal of issues confronting the Nigerian broadcasting sector in the era of convergence. *Benin Mediacom Journal*, *12*, 125-135.

Erdal, I. J. (2007). Researching media convergence and cross media in news production: Mapping the field. *Nordicom Review*, *28*(2), 51-56.

Fagerjord, A. &Storsul, T. (2007). Questioning convergence. In T. Storsul & D. Stuedahl (Eds.). *Ambivalence Towards Convergence: Digitalization* *and Media Change* (pp. 19-31).

Folayan, B.J., Omojola, O., Egharevba, M., Oyesomi, K., Yartey, D & Adeyeye, B. (2018). The use of ICT-rooted communication codes and slangs among Nigerian students. The *Journal of Social Sciences Research, 4*(12), 633-641.

Gbam, B. N. (2017). The challenges and prospects of new media in public service broadcasting in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, *5*(3), 1-7.

Hornby, A. S. (2005). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary (7th ed.).* Oxford: Oxford university Press.

Ikpefan, O.A., Ibinabo, H., Osuma, G.O., & Omojola, O (2020). relationship marketing and deposit mobilization in five deposit money banks in Nigeria. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal, 18* (6), 1-15.

Ja'afaru, S. G. (2018). Level of utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) tools for newsgathering by journalists in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. *Novena Journal of Communication*, *8,* 158-167.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jonas, L. (2004). *The convergence hype cycle: Usage in management practice during an impending market redefinition*. A Paper Presented at the ITS Biennial Conference, Berlin, September 5-7.

Kalamar, D. (2016). Convergence of media and transformation of audience. *Informatol*, *49,* 190-202.

Khan, G. A., Shalid, M. K. & Ahmad, S. F. (2014). Convergence in broadcasting and telecommunication regulatory framework in Pakistan. *International Journal of Management and Commerce Innovations*, *2*(1), 35-43.

Killebrew, K. C. (2005). *Managing media convergence: pathways to journalistic cooperation.* ` Ames (IA): Blackwell Publishing.

Kipkirui, K. (2016). The benefits and challenges of converged journalism in the Kenyan media industry. *Scholarly Journal of Science Research and Essay*, *5*(2), 36-42.

Latzer, M. (2013). *Media convergence*. A Working

Paper of the Media Change & Innovation Division, University of Zurich, Switzerland. Retrieved from http://www.mediachange.ch/ media/pdf/publications.

Mathew, J., Ogedebe, P. & Abaya, F. (2013). Internet usage among broadcast media practitioners in Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 17, 42-48.

McEwan, R. (2017). Renegotiating radio work in the era of media convergence: Uncertainty, individualization and centrality of brands. *The Political Economy of Communication*, *5*(2), 45-66.

Meier, K., Bracker, I. & Verhovnik, M. (2016). Technological innovation and convergent journalism: Case study of the transformation process of Bavaria's Public Broadcasting Service. *Mediterranean Journal of Communication, 8*(1), 33-44.

Menezes, E. &Karvalho, R. (2009). Impacts of new technologies on free-to-air TV industry: Lessons from selected country cases. *Journal of Technology Management and Innovation*. Retrieved from http://www.dx.doi.org.

Morah, N. & Omojola, O. (2014). *D*igital large screens as a community medium: interactivity and community relevance in focus. *In A. Ojebode (Ed.) Community Media in Nigeria. Ibadan: John Archer Publishers, pp. 385-402.*

Mwaura, J. (2011). *The impact of new media on radio broadcast: Case study of Capital FM (Kenya)*. Germany: Green Verlag.

Ngomani, N. (2016). *Radio Convergence: Young people's radio listening habits in Cape Town*. An Unpublished M.A. Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town.

Nwanne, B. (2016). Journalism and new media in Nigeria: Issues, challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection*, *4*(3), 86-92.

OECD (2013). *Competition issues in television and broadcasting*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Ogwuche, P. O. (2017). *Adoption of convergence technology for sports journalism: A study on*
Brila 88.9 FM. An Unpublished M.A. Dissertation submitted to the School of Postgraduate

Studies, Ahmadu Bello University.

Okon, P.E., Ajiboye, E., Ekanem, T. & Omojola, O. (2018). Gendered News Reportage? A study of The Guardian and The Sun newspapers, Nigeria. I*nternational Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications, 4*(3), 21-35.

Okorie, N., Loto, G. & Omojola, O. (2018). Blogging, civic engagement, and coverage of political conflict in Nigeria: A study of Nairaland. com. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences 39* (2), 291-298.

Okoroafor, O. (2016). Media convergence: A paradigm shift in journalism education in Nigeria. *Review of Journalism and Mass Communication*, *4*(1), 19-42.

Olise, F. P. (2012). Computer-mediated communication and the challenges before users in Nigeria. In M. Mboho& H. Batta. (Eds.). *The Companion to Communication and Development Issues* (pp. 373-391). Uyo: Department of Communication Arts.

Olley, O. W. (2009). *New media technologies and their challenges to broadcasting in Nigeria*. An Unpublished M.A. Dissertation Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Nigeria.

Omojola, O. (2008a). Toward Global Ethics: Exploring the Perspectives of Local Media Stakeholders. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 29 (2), 173 – 187.

Omojola, O. (2008b). Audience Mindset and Influence on Personal Political Branding. *Journal of Social Sciences (of India),* 16 (2), 127-134.

Omojola, O. (2011) The press and the multi-level determination of public interest in a developing Society. In A. Alao and R. Taiwo (eds.) *Perspectives on African studies*: Munich: Lincom Academic Publishing, pp. 350-365.

Olowofela, A. D. & Peter, A. S. (2018). Radio broadcasting and political development in Nigeria. *Novena Journal of Communication*, *8*, 177-186.

Owuamalam, E. (2008). *Elements of broadcasting*. Owerri: Top Class Agencies Ltd.

Oyero, O. (2007). The implications of internet on the media and the practice of mass communication. *International Journal of Communication*, *6*, 169-174.

Pavlik, J. V. (2005). Understanding convergence and digital broadcasting technologies for the 21st century. *NHK Broadcasting Studies*, *4*, 131-138.

Pavlik, J. V. (2015). Transformation: Examining the implications of emerging technology for journalism, media and society. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*, *1*(1), 9-24.

Sambe, J. A. (2005). *Introduction to mass communication practice in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.

Taylor, S. (2015). Why convergence of broadcasting, telecommunication shouldn't be ignored, *Nigerian Guardian*, 14 September.

Turow, J. (2017). *Media today: Mass communication in a converging world (6th ed.)* New York: Routledge.

Uba, E. (2017). Broadcasting and convergence: The future of TV and regulatory policies. *Signal*, 14 July.

Uwawah, A. (2018). Information communication technologies and theatre for development: Availability and use of modern tools. *Benin Mediacom Journal*, *12*, 18-29.

Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC) Vol. 7 No. 1, June 2020
ISSN: p. 2354-354X e. 2354 – 3515

Open Access Journal, Available Online

Crisis Communication and Ghana's Financial Sector

[1]Fortune Tella, [2]Alidu Suraya, [3]Modesta A. Bonsu & [4]Albert A. Anani-Bossman

[1,2,3]Christian Service University College, Kumasi, Ghana.
[4]Pentecost University College, Accra, Ghana
ftella@csuc.edu.gh

Received: 7 April 2020 Accepted: 19 May 2020 Date of Publication: June 2020

***Abstract*:** This study explores the place of crisis communication in Ghana's financial sector. It identifies and analyzes the various approaches that practitioners adopted to save the country from the brink of disaster a few years ago. In-depth interviews with eight public relations consultants and evidence from literature show stakeholders' dissatisfaction with the communication strategies implemented by some financial institutions. The combination of reactive/proactive and leadership communication/provocation approaches to managing the crises produced both positive and negative outcomes. Findings also show that if practitioners have the requisite knowledge and training as well as operate from a department wholly dedicated to public relations, crisis communication can produce the desired effect. The effectiveness can increase if the top management of the financial institutions gives the necessary support to the department. Ghana's crisis is proof that not recognizing public relations officers as central role players during a crisis can escalate the crisis rather than lessen it.

***Keywords*:** Crisis, crisis communication, organizations, financial institutions, public relations, communication management.

Introduction

Crises pose threats to people and organizations (Coombs, 2010). A crisis can cut off the expectations of stakeholders (Heath, 2010) and undermine the integrity of a business. Customers lose trust even as the reputation of the organization ebbs. The Global financial crises of 2008 posed severe challenges for banks and other institutions in the financial services sector, such as mortgage credit institutions and mutual fund companies (Fredriksson, 2014). According to Mitchell (2017), the crisis is regarded as the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression in the 1930s. The crisis brought many economies to the brink of financial turmoil. Most developed and emerging markets suffered the effects beyond the United States, where it originated from (Mitchell, 2017).

The Global financial crises of 2008 posed severe challenges for banks and other institutions in the financial services sector, such as mortgage credit institutions, mutual fund companies, and other financial institutions (Fredriksson 2014). According to Mitchell (2017), the 2008 financial crisis is regarded as the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression in the 1930s. The crisis brought many economies to the brink of financial turmoil. Despite originating from the U.S., most developed and emerging markets suffered the effects (Mitchell 2017).

Ghana has had its share of financial crises in the last three years. The financial services sector went through severe financial challenges and crises between 2017 and 2019. The Bank of Ghana implemented regulatory reforms at the beginning of 2017 to clean up the banking sector and strengthen the operations of financial institutions in Ghana (PwC, 2019). The reforms led to the total number of banks being reduced from 34 to 23 (PwC, 2019). Eleven banks exited the sector, including the five that were declared insolvent (PwC, 2019).

The five banks, namely UniBank Ghana Limited (UGL), The Beige Bank (TBB), and The Royal Bank Limited (TRB), Sovereign Bank Limited (SBL), and The Construction Bank Limited (TCB) had their licenses revoked. The reasons for the revocation include low capital funds, high levels of Non-Performing Loans (NPLs), suspicious and non-existent capital, corporate governance gaps, poor management, and poor credit analysis of customers (PwC, 2019; Amuakwa-Mensah & Boakye-Adjei, 2015). The Ghanaian

Minister of Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta, is reported to have said that the cost of the reforms to the government and taxpayers is estimated between $3 billion and $4 billion (Ghana Joy Business, 2019).

The Bank of Ghana reforms shook the confidence of many customers and stakeholders of banks. The financial sector is heavily dependent on the trust of investors and customers. As a result, information regarding financial services and operations is considered essential by customers and stakeholders. Stakeholders of financial institutions look forward to receiving information from these institutions, particularly in times of a financial crisis. The way crisis information is handled and managed contributes immensely to the restoration of normalcy and reputation for organizations (Zuzak & Konigova, 2009, p. 50-55). Effective crisis management can potentially strengthen stakeholders' trust and enhance the reputation of organizations (Šontaitė-Petkeviciene, 2014, p.4531; Motarjemi, 2014, p.1053). How an organization uses communication before, during, and after a crisis is vital in determining the organization's ability to recover from the crisis (Zaremba, 2010). Communication failures during crises pose a danger to stakeholders (Lanard & Sandman, 2014; Levinson, 2014; McKay, 2015).

The Problem Statement

Many of Ghana's financial institutions wounded up between 2017 and 2019. During the dissolution, several frustrated customers lamented the inadequate or lack of accurate information on their savings and investments. The Central Bank of Ghana, Securities, and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the affected financial institutions were accused of leaving them in the dark (Dodoo & Simons, 2018; Sasa, 2018). There were no clear directives to customers on the actions to take to recover their losses (Ayitey, 2019). Some customers expected the Ghanaian government to provide information on steps put in place to secure their investments (Sasa, 2018; Ayitey, 2019). Customers and other stakeholders also expressed angst at the communication approaches and messaging of these financial institutions during the crisis. Some of these institutions were criticized for poor customer relations and inadequate response to crises. Those criticisms were visible in the cases of the Midlands Savings Loans Company press statement in connection with an assault on a customer by a police officer; and the Menzgold Company's directive to customers on repayment schedules for customers' funds (Graphic.com, 2018; Sasa, 2018).

Many of these criticisms targeted the public relations departments of the financial institutions as PR practitioners were denounced for not doing enough in using communication to respond to issues stakeholders considered crucial. Mensah (2018) points out that practitioners should have, on behalf of their institutions, engaged and explained to stakeholders, the role their institutions played in the crisis. The need to engage with the customers existed, but that need was not satisfied.

The lack of trust by stakeholders in organizational communication during and after a crisis is a challenge the Ghanaian financial sector must adequately manage. The approach to communication management during a crisis seems to be weak and not strategic. It appears that in some of these financial institutions (mainly banks), public relations officers are not considered part of the core decision-makers during crises. The need to ascertain the nature and approach to crisis communication management within the financial services industry of Ghana elicited this study.

Research Questions for the Study

In order to ascertain how communication is handled and managed in crises associated with the financial services sector of Ghana, the following research questions were set for the study:

1. What communication approaches do Ghanaian financial institutions use during a crisis?
2. How effective are the communication approaches deployed by Ghanaian financial institutions in the management of crisis?

Review of Literature

Crisis and Crisis Situations

Crises generate interactions, information exchanges, and engagements between organizations and stakeholders. A crisis is explained as "a specific, unexpected and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threatens an organization's high – priority goals" (Seeger et al. 2012, p.33).

The concept of crisis has been described generally as unpredictable and dangerous (Austin, Lin & Jin 2012; Fearn – Banks 2011; Baron, 2010). For example, Sellnow et al. (2013) describe a crisis as an event that is characterized by threat, surprise, and limited time for response. The way a crisis is handled and managed contributes immensely to the restoration of normalcy and reputation to the organization (Zuzak & Konigova, p. 2009, p.50-55). Effective crisis management can potentially strengthen stakeholders' trust and enhance the reputation of organizations (Petkeviciene, 2014, p.4531; Motarjemi, 2014, p.1053).

Crisis Management

When a crisis hits an organization, measures must be adopted to lessen the damage from the crisis (Coombs, 2015). The concept of crisis management is visible in literature. Crisis management "seeks to prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the organization, stakeholders, and the industry from harm" (Coombs, 2015). Crisis management strategies can potentially strengthen stakeholders' trust and enhance the reputation of organizations (Petkeviciene, 2014, p.453; Motarjemi, 2014, p.1053).

One crucial strategy in crisis management is the use of communication. The inability to communicate effectively during a crisis can be fatal for organizations (Lanard & Sandman, 2014; Levinson, 2014; McKay, 2015). Villines (2011, p.10) points that crisis management includes crisis communication – acquiring and publicizing information. Fearn-Banks (2016, p.2) explains crisis communication as a communication plan that is designed to enable organizations to manage potential crises and actual crisis events, and involves gathering and disseminating crisis-related information to stakeholders.

Crisis management strategies, when deployed, are purposively geared towards protecting the reputation of the organization. The attainment of corporate goals and credibility recognition is dependent mainly on reputation (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman & Toth 2012, p.362). According to Coombs & Holladay (2008), crisis response messages that provide instructive information result in higher post-crisis reputation evaluation. Furthermore, organizations that show concern in their crisis responses are perceived more favorably (Dean, 2004). That is why the subject of crisis communication is critical in the crisis management process.

Crisis communication

Crisis communication is explained as involving a communication plan that seeks to ensure that an organization is well-positioned to manage potential and actual crises and events, includes gathering and disseminating crisis-related information to stakeholders (Fearn-Banks, 2016 p.2).

Patashnick (2016, p.15) asserts that crisis communication is a decision of top management. Simons (2014) points out that there are two broad categories in crisis communication, thus, managing information and managing meaning. The management of information involves collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information during a crisis. The management of meaning has to do with using messages in an attempt to shape how people perceive the crisis and the organization facing the crisis (Simons, 2014). When stakeholders are adequately informed about the crisis management efforts deployed by the organization, stakeholders are reassured that the organization is trustworthy, and the organization can also achieve something positive for its reputation.

The Issue Reputation

Reputations have become a critical resource and concern for organizations (Ikpefan et al., 2020). Therefore, the need for every organization to have a positive reputation cannot be overemphasized. Organizations with good reputations can attract customers, investment, motivate employees, attract top employees, and ultimately have improved financial performance (Davies, Chun, da Silva, & Roper, 2003). Reputation is how stakeholders perceive an organization (Roberts & Dowling 2002; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Coombs (2010) asserts that reputations are created through direct and mediated contact with an organization - where direct experience includes buying a product, visiting a store, or using a service. Mediated contact has to do with messages from the organization, (word – of - mouth communication, online messages, and the like) as well as news media coverage about the organization. All the various points of contact with an organization are fused in a stakeholder's mind to create a mixture that is the organization's reputation (Coombs, 2010).

2.5The Ghanaian banking crisis: the role of practitioners in the crisis resolution

Ghana's financial sector has, in recent times, faced numerous financial challenges (Cann, 2017). Cann (2017) submits that key financial indicators such as capital adequacy ratio, liquidity ratio, and non-performing loans (assets) of some financial institutions in Ghana deteriorated to unacceptable levels. He adds that the most reasonable solution was to declare these institutions as insolvent. The Bank of Ghana implemented some measures to bring sanity to the financial sector. At the end of the implementation of the measures, two banks, Capital Bank and UT Bank, were liquidated in 2017 and five others (BEIGE Bank, Sovereign Bank, Construction Bank, UniBank, and Royal Bank) were declared insolvent in 2018. The insolvent banks were later combined and brought under the banking umbrella known as Consolidated Bank Ghana (CBG) (Benson 2019). Key findings from KPMG's report on the situation indicated severe corporate governance, risk management, compliance, and management flaws, as well as unlawful transactions involving shareholders related parties and connected parties.

In 2019, the Bank of Ghana revoked the licenses of 386 financial institutions. These include 347 microfinance companies and 39 microcredit companies (Ibrahim, 2019). The Bank of Ghana stated that the licenses had been revoked as a result of poor lending culture and risk management systems, poor governance practices, and undercapitalization (Ibrahim, 2019). The Governor of the Bank of Ghana intimated that the core objective of the exercise was to stabilize the financial industry and protect the funds of depositors (Ibrahim, 2019).

Reactions to the actions of the Bank of Ghana were both positive and negative. Public relations practitioners of these institutions were expected to play critical communication roles to manage the crises. Public relations academics and professionals agree that the best way to deal with a crisis is to be proactive (Schmitz, 2009). Hussaini and Mohammed (2008) assert that the proactive mode of public relations approach means the ability of public relations to anticipate problems ahead of time and put measures in place to solve them correctly. Igben (2008) refers to this same process as preventive public relations, thus, taking action ahead of time. Amodu (2011, p.118) states that "an organization's skill in handling itself amid crises will have a bearing on the way its various publics perceive it for years to come." Heath & Millar (2004, p.6) also acknowledge that a proactive approach to communication can help an organization satisfy two functions: a search for possible crises and ways of mitigating the crises when they occur, and second, an organization is put in readiness to manage a crisis. Effective crisis communication management is essential for protecting the reputation of financial institutions. Reputation is a valuable asset, and a crisis can threaten it. It is the responsibility of PR practitioners to protect the reputation of their organizations (DiStaso, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical foundation is supported by James Grunig's excellence theory propounded in 1984. This theory focuses on ensuring effective and efficient public relations practice. The excellence theory provides a descriptive and prescriptive role of public relations in strategic management (Kim, Hung-Baesecke, Yang & Grunig, 2013, p.198). The theory provides a framework on how public relations should be structured and practiced. The theory characteristically is designed to enable public relations to:

- contribute to the attainment of organizational objectives through the application of strategic decision-making processes
- operate independently as a department and separate from other departments
- run on a program designed to achieve public relations goals
- rely on skills and competencies that can help public relations practitioners to be successful with their craft
- apply different communication models to engendering positive stakeholder relationships
- value relationships and seek the commitment of the dominant coalition towards integrating stakeholder relationships in the planning and evaluation of public relations programs ((Kim et al., 2013).

The excellence theory suggests that if public relations can help build sustainable relationships with key stakeholders, then public relations is effective (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992, p.86). The theory helps to anchor this study because it advances the need for public relations to be used and managed strategically. If public relations practitioners participate in strategic decision-making activities of an organization, the role of the public relations department towards organizational goals will be useful. The public relations department will be well-positioned to design programs that value organization-stakeholder relationships (Kim et al., 2013, p.202).

As described in sections 1.1 and 2.5, respectively, of this study, the public relations departments and officers of financial institutions were criticized for lack of efficiency and effectiveness in crisis communication. The theory argues that excellent public relations allows practitioners to be strategic with communication and also independent in program design and implementation. When the public relations department operates independently, communication functions are well coordinated.

The two-way symmetrical model is strongly emphasized in the excellence theory (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995). Fearn-Banks (2010:2) asserts that organizations stricken by crisis must dialogue with stakeholders. The dialogue must be directed towards information awareness and exchange so that both the organization and stakeholders benefit. As two-way symmetrical communication is designed to ensure mutual understanding between organizations and stakeholders, applying the excellence theory to this study is relevant. The excellence theory, if supported and applied, can ensure communication excellence. Public relations must get the dominant coalition of the organization to endorse its approach to excellent communication. As the dominant coalition directs strategy in the organization, practitioners must seek the support of top management in public relations and communication initiatives (Dozier et al., 1995; Amodu et al., 2019; Odiboh et al., 2017). Swart (2010) adds that the dominant coalition's support can enable practitioners to identify issues that potentially can become a crisis. Practitioners can then educate and counsel the dominant coalition on ways for managing and engaging with stakeholders.

The theory is useful for crisis communication management as it is in line with public relations practice at the strategy level. This can prove useful to organizations primarily in crises. Top management will be prepared to support crisis communication strategies geared towards engendering positive organization-stakeholder relationships and organizational reputation.

Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative approach, which enabled the researchers to explore and gather in-depth information on the crisis communication approaches of public relations practitioners working in the financial services sector of Ghana. Qualitative research approach explores and seeks to understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013 p.5). The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013, p.5).

Sampling

The target population includes financial institutions operating in Ghana. In the context of the study, financial institutions include banks and savings and loan companies. Based on the researchers' judgment (Denscombe, 2010, p.24-25), the availability sampling method was adopted in selecting the public relations practitioners working in the financial sector of Ghana and picked public relations consultants with expertise in crisis communication and reputation management. The selection of the consultants was to help in providing an independent view of crisis communication management in the financial services sector.

Similarly, the availability sampling system was implemented to select four public relations practitioners working for four top financial institutions in Ghana, namely: GCB Bank, Barclays Bank, Stanbic Bank, and Sinapi Aba Savings & Loans Ltd. The first three banks are among the top five banks in Ghana, with the largest market share in 2018 (PwC, 2019, p.47). Sinapi Aba Savings and Loans Ltd is one of the savings and loan companies declared by the Bank of Ghana as in good standing (Ibrahim, 2019). The use of the purposive sampling technique also allowed for the selection of four public relations consultants knowledgeable in crisis communication and reputation management. A purposive sample method refers to "the deliberate selection of specific individuals, events or settings because of crucial information they provide that cannot be obtained so well through other channels" Liamputtong (2013, p.14). Thus, a total number of eight (8) public relations practitioners were selected for the study. The four PR officials interviewed are the heads or deputy heads of public relations of their organizations. Their educational backgrounds are a mixture of public relations and marketing.

Data collection

The data for this study was gathered through the use of the semi-structured interview method. A semi-structured interview approach allowed the researchers to use pre-determined questions. This allows for a discussion to commence while the room is created for the researcher to pose further questions that emanate from responses given by participants (Rule & John, 2011, p.65).

Analysis and Findings

Crisis events that threatened the reputation of the financial institutions

Participants were asked if they have ever experienced a crisis that threatened the reputation of their organizations. Except for one participant, all the other respondents indicated that their organizations had experienced crisis events that threatened the reputation of their organizations. Most of the participants stated that the crisis events range from events that have minimal impact on the reputation of the organization to events that are serious and potentially harmful to the reputation of the organization.

The study also sought to find out from participants the nature of the crisis. The nature of the crises includes media misrepresentation of the organization and staff misconduct and financial malfeasance. A participant intimated that some of the crisis events were biased media reportage that created an unfavorable image about his organization. One participant mentioned that a staff of the organization took monies from customers and failed to deposit the monies into the bank's treasury. The participant had this to say:

> Another issue is during the Christmas period of 2018, a staff of the bank collected monies from customers of the bank, and she failed to pay the monies into the treasury of the bank. It became a huge issue around Christmas- there were about 200 people who had given her their monies. People got very worried whether their money was safe and all that - it became something we needed to deal with.

Communication approaches in managing crisis

This aspect of the study focused on finding out the communication approaches the organizations used in managing a crisis. Participants interviewed gave different views on their approach to communicating in times of crisis. Among the approaches include the deployment of a crisis communication management team that is expected to execute a reactive communication strategy, proactive strategy, bolstering, and leadership communication. A participant whose organization deploys a reactive communication strategy stated:

> The plan is that whatever happens if there is a crisis that affects us, our image and reputation, our managing director will be part of it, our communications director will be part of it, some key persons in the PR department will be part of it and other operations, people. Depending on the kind of situation, then we devise a strategy on how to address it.

Another approach involves leadership communication, which involves the head of the organization, taking up the lead role. According to a participant:

> The bank has to speak in one voice. We have a crisis management plan, and the plan is clear on who assumes the role of the spokesperson in crisis situations. Usually, the CEO is the lead person on strategic crisis issues such as relationship building and reputation management. Other key officers of the bank also contribute to the crisis communication strategies of the bank any time there is a crisis.

Another participant stated that they sometimes leverage the goodwill they have as a result of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. This serves as a bolstering strategy that enables the organization to enhance its crisis communication efforts during crisis events.

One participant described his organization's approach to crisis communication as proactive. He said:

> I believe that some principles must guide every crisis situation. One is preparation, so preparation means that you have anticipated the risk in your environment, and you would have put in place certain mitigating measures. You know what you are going to do if the crisis hits. Sometimes you get the impression that people are reacting by the minute- they would be better served if they had anticipated and better planned for the situation. The responses, the big one again in the middle of every communication, is how you build credibility- credibility is driven by two principal pillars- expertise and trustworthiness. And so those are very important to us that in even tough conversations, we make sure that there is no doubt in our credibility and we do that by ensuring we remain very open, transparent and truthful even when it does not immediately appear to inure to our benefit.

One participant described his organization's approach as 'localization.' He explained that when a crisis hits a branch of the bank, the crisis is managed within the local branch, and exposure of the crisis to the media and other relevant stakeholders is avoided. He intimated that such an approach protects the operations of the organization in other geographical locations. He adds that a team is constituted and sent to the branch to engage with crisis victims and establish ways of mitigating the crisis. He, however, admits a lack of strategic focus in the crisis communication approach of the organization. He stated:

> I think that we are not proactive enough generally as PRs, and then when a crisis does happen, most of the time I think that its management is a little bit all over the place, not structured. I think that we shouldn't be rushed by the media, we should have some kind of a laydown procedure, and expect in the worst-case scenario- what do you do?

The views of PR experts and consultants interviewed for the study are mainly critical of the lack of understanding and knowledge by these organizations of the vital role of public relations in communication management. They stated from experience, and on some public relations projects that they implemented on behalf of some financial institutions, the top hierarchy is usually focused on financial costs rather than reputational costs. One participant asserted that:

> Mostly, because the management of organizations don't have much of an idea of what PR entails and that serves as a setback for practitioners in their effort to manage crises, so until that changes, their contribution would be quite minimal…

Involvement of leadership in effective crisis communication management

A practical communication approach is keen on the management of crises (Coombs, 2010). Top management can play a critical role in ensuring an effective approach to crisis communication. The spearheading efforts of leaders in the attainment of goals, including communication goals, can ensure that organizational – stakeholder relationship works (Ruben & Giglioti 2017, p.17). In crises, leadership is critical in the management efforts to contain the crises (Zerfass, Tench, Vercic, Verhoeven & Moreno, 2014). Participants were asked whether top management provides the necessary support in the crisis communication efforts of the PR department. All the participants (PR practitioners) agreed that CEOs and other top directors provided the necessary support to ensure effective communication. One participant pointed out that:

> They provide us support in many respects; one- availability, because typically in such conversations you want it to be led from the top, that's when your chief executive and your other executives can be extremely handy.

> Beyond availability, is also the willingness of top management to apply themselves to best communication strategies, because when it comes to communication, everyone who has found himself in school believes that they are God's gift to communication and that may sometimes make it very difficult for practitioners. Let me say that we are blessed with the management that recognizes the professionalism of the team and is open to giving us the professional space to be able to do our job well, and so that is also a big plus.

Another participant indicated that:

> The PR outfit of this bank gets much support from the CEOs office and other key management members. The PR office submits its communication plan, including a crisis communication plan annually to the CEOs office. The plans are scrutinized, and suggestions are put across by the CEO for the effective implementation of a crisis communication strategy. Management also supports the PR office to attend training and seminars associated with strategic communication practice.

Crisis communication planning

A practical approach to crisis communication involves planning. Crisis planning is an approach designed to enable the crisis team, communication, and other crisis management activities effective in producing good crisis management outcomes (Wang & Ritchie, 2012). Participants (both PR officers of the financial institutions and PR consultants) agree that an effective approach to crisis communication is the use of a crisis communication plan. Two participants representing two of the financial institutions stated that they have a crisis communication plan. One participant acknowledged the value of a crisis communication plan, particularly for financial institutions:

> Having a plan has enabled the PR team to strategize appropriately and be effective in dealing and managing a crisis. The plan contains information on communication strategies specific to crisis situations and stakeholders. We even have pre-drafted messages that guide us on our approach to communicating during a crisis event. Our crisis communication planning has helped us a lot to minimize damage to the reputation of our company.

The view of another participant (PR consultant) on crisis communication planning is that:

> As a PR consultant, I will tell you that financial institutions should have put measures in place even before the crisis. Of course the loss of money, revenue, been affected by the macro-economic situations is something that banks should pre-empt before they take people's monies; therefore, they should have put together strategies to avert some of these before they even assume crisis proportions and if there is anything, I think that the people involved should be told. Therefore in managing crises, you don't allow things to degenerate before the people who gave you their trust would know. So for me, I don't believe in managing crises when the issues have blown up, but I think that they should have been nipped in the bud before they assume crisis situations.

Expertise in crisis communication management

As emphasized earlier in this study, customers of financial institutions that were declared insolvent expressed displeasure at the communication strategy of these institutions. Mensah (2018) also criticized the PR officers of these institutions for not engaging effectively with victims of the financial crisis. Thus, in this aspect of the study, the researchers set out to establish the crisis communication expertise of participants. All participants working for the financial institutions intimated that they have the required skills set in crisis communication. Some participants said they were skilled in issues mapping, stakeholder mapping, messaging strategies, crisis radar, and reputation management. One participant stated:

> I have, over the years, acquired relevant experience in crisis communication and reputation management. I have had the opportunity to manage and coordinate crisis communication efforts. It has not always been rosy and a walk-in-the-park managing crisis events, particularly in the financial services sector. There have been challenges, especially in stakeholder engagement. But my expertise and ability to lead my team have helped in mitigating crises. I understand the importance of pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis planning. My team and I regularly update our knowledge in crisis communication management.

The PR consultants were generally in agreement with the views on crisis communication expertise expressed by the PR officers. A participant acknowledged that though some PR practitioners have the expertise in crisis communication, the organization's interests more often than not are put first instead of the interests of the affected stakeholders:

> Of course, the expertise exists, but usually, a crisis is managed from the organization's perspective rather than the people who are affected, and that makes it a little less effective because if you take another person's interest into view, the crisis would have been well managed. But all in all, or in most instances, you realize that it's managed from the organization's benefits or interests. Therefore, in the end, they don't attain any benefits because the people who are affected are still affected, which shouldn't be so.

One participant was, however, not impressed with the crisis communication expertise of some PR practitioners. He argued that the public relations course curriculum taught in some universities in Ghana do not offer a comprehensive insight into crisis communication management:

> Again, I will say to some extent it does, but it's also limited as I said because looking at a number of the communication schools even coming up, not all of them even teach crisis communication, so a lot of them (trained PR practitioners) come out without much knowledge in crisis communication, and so sometimes they tend to be more reactive; sometimes they tend to go the way of management by not paying serious attention to crises or denying the existence of a crisis - instead of taking responsibility and ensuring that the organization takes responsibility. So to some extent, there is the expertise, but it is also limited by our understanding of crisis management and PR practice in general in Ghana.

Assessment of Crisis Communication during the Financial Sector Crisis

The financial industry in Ghana recently faced crises. The thoughts of participants were investigated to determine how the industry managed the various crises with communication and whether participants were satisfied with the approaches used. Participants (consultants) expressed divergent views on the communication approached deployed by the affected financial institutions. Two of the participants expressed dissatisfaction that the institutions reacted late in engaging with victims of the financial crisis and showed apathy towards communicating strategically. One participant stated:

> The financial sector didn't manage the crisis well. The financial issues were thrust into the public domain at the last minute when nothing could be done about them. When people could not get access to their funds from the banks, we all didn't understand what was happening. There were panic withdrawals because there were speculations and rumors that the banking sector was collapsing. Some people withdrew all their monies, and those people who could not withdraw looked forward to some form of communication from the institutions, and most of the affected institutions failed to provide relevant and adequate information to affected customers. The newspapers published most of the issues, and the radio stations took up the stories. It was more like a two-step flow information. Then most of them embellished it; most of them interpreted the information, particularly in their newspaper readership segment. That one caused much fear amongst the public and worry. I think it was not well managed by the PR practitioners, their organizations, and the industry regulators.

The other participant blamed the financial institutions' inability to be effective with communication on the exclusion of PR officers from high-level decision making. He stated that PR officers of some of the financial institutions are only called to sit in management meetings and have an attendance mark and not allowed to advise on matters such as reputation and communication management. He also asserted that his recent research on PR practice in the financial sector of Ghana revealed that a significant number of PR managers have backgrounds in other social science disciplines other than public relations and communication. He argued that if people manage public relations practice with no or limited exposure to public relations and communication training, then ensuring crisis communication effectiveness will be a challenge.

The two other participants held the view that the financial crisis was more of a regulatory problem than a communication problem. One participant pointed out that:

> What happened in the financial sector, they are crisis, yes, but one would ask to what extent can communications resolve it. These are regulatory issues. Bank of Ghana is supposed to regulate these banks, and they are supposed to meet certain things, and so the Bank of Ghana realizes that some number of banks have not maybe followed due process, and then they say we want to take certain measures like maybe collapse some of the banks. Some of those measures - they are regulation issues; it is not every crisis that is a communication issue per se even though communication can help to resolve, and then it is not the individual banks that were really handling it.

Discussion of Findings

This study provided insights into how public relations officials working in the financial institutions of Ghana approach communication during crisis events. Additionally, our study sought to establish the effectiveness of the various approaches used by public relations managers working for these institutions. From the various responses gathered, our study shows that participants' approaches to crisis communication management differ from one another. The selected institutions dealt with their various crises through the use of both internal and external communication. The PR officials of the institutions pointed out that in their line of operations, they encounter crises that have either minimum or maximum impact.

This study assessed the crisis communication approaches used by PR officers of selected Ghanaian financial institutions, and it emerged that PR officers used reactive, proactive leadership communication, and provocation approaches.

The use of reactive strategies to contain or manage a crisis may not be effective in managing the information expectations of customers. Stakeholders look forward to instantaneous, transparent, clear, and comprehensive information in times of crisis (Schanz 2009, p.263). The confidence customers and other stakeholders have in an organization can be severely dampened if the organization is unable to manage the crisis effectively (Weber, Erickson & Stone 2011, p.37). Customers commit to a financial relationship with financial institutions based on trust and confidence (DiStaso, 2010). When customers lose these fundamental values in their banks, they begin to view those banks with suspicion, cynicism, and disappointment (DiStaso, 2010). Crises come with chaos and confusion. If communication has not been planned for, the public relations managers' communication reactions on behalf of their organizations will likely not be executed in ways that satisfy the information needs of customers and stakeholders. Our position on the reactive approach to crisis communication is that it is not adequate, and there are chances that practitioners who use this approach can come under much pressure and emotional outbursts of customers and other stakeholders.

Proactive approaches enable practitioners to have in place a plan. As emphasized by one participant, a proactive approach to crisis communication allows his financial institution to prepare, anticipate, and better manage a crisis. Crisis victims and other stakeholders expect organizations to engage with them. A proactive approach enables openness and cooperation (Slabbert & Barker, 2011, p.445). Organizations that want to win the trust and confidence of stakeholders need to be proactive in their crisis communication approach. Benoit and Pang (2008, p.252) acknowledge that a proactive approach can enable organizations to avoid mistakes and reduce response time to crises. Additionally, proactive crisis communication can help organizations to avoid crises altogether (Bloom, 2008).

Some participants alluded to the importance of leadership in their approach to crisis communication. Leaders are expected to be influencers, interpreters of situations, negotiators, and debaters of views (Gold et al., 2016). Additionally, leaders must promote effective communication within their organizations (Gundersen, Hellesoy & Raeder 2012; Meng & Berger, 2011). When organizations encounter crises, the leaders of the response provide must be appropriate to improve stakeholder confidence in the organization (Coldwell, Joosub & Papageorgiou, 2012). Organizational leaders must provide inspired leadership. Undoubtedly, the involvement of organizational leaders in the crisis effort, particularly satisfying the information needs of customers and other stakeholders, can strengthen and make the crisis communication efforts of public relations practitioners effective.

The use of provocation can be both positive and negative during a crisis. Organizations must be well guided in using the crisis response approach of provocation.

According to Benoit (1995), provocation is when an organization assumes a position based on the actions of another party (Benoit, 1995). Public relations practitioners must be cautious in applying measures that alienate their organizations from essential stakeholders such as the media. For instance, a participant argued that the media could be blamed for aggravating crises as the media sometimes have an agenda to tarnish the reputation of the organization. The criticism of the media role must be handled effectively. The media are active interpreters of crises, and they can positively or negatively influence perceptions (Greve et al., 2010; Wiersem & Zhang, 2013). When a crisis hits, the media are active in creating initial awareness and also framing the narrative surrounding the crisis (Neuwirth, 2010; Schultz et al., 2012). Organizations must have a crisis communication approach centered on first satisfying the information needs of stakeholders, particularly crisis victims (Coombs, 2007). The media can play essential roles in serving as channels that deliver crisis relevant information to stakeholders.

Even though there are different motives in the use of these approaches, the communication effort must result in strategic communication. Strategic communication involves communication processes that are planned with the view to ensure the attainment of organizational goals (Falkenheimer & Heide, 2014b). Crisis communication is strategic if it is planned before the onset of a crisis and ends when normalcy is restored, and satisfaction is achieved (Palttala & Vos, 2012). Ghanaian PR officers of financial institutions need to approach crisis communication with strategic communication intent. A strategic communication approach creates communication opportunities with stakeholders. If stakeholders are left on their own to make sense of the crisis without the strategic intervention of the organization, stakeholders will find it challenging to understand the position of the organization (Vander Meer et al., 2017, p.435).

Conclusion

This study has some implications for crisis communication and the expected roles of public relations practitioners. First, this study highlighted the subject of top management support. Participants asserted that their CEOs supported their crisis communication management efforts. Leaders must motivate their communication managers to work towards positive communication outcomes, especially in crises. When communication managers have the support of the heads of their organizations, they will be confident and committed to implementing a crisis communication program that revolves around strategic communication.

Second, our study provides an insight into a communication management phenomenon described by a participant as 'localization.' This communication approach involves taking strategic measures to restrict access to crisis information by key external stakeholders. Crisis information is made available to only crisis victims and critical internal staff of the organization. The reasoning behind this strategy is to limit or prevent maximum publicity of the crisis. However, in the era of social media, this approach is not sustainable. Stakeholders, including crisis victims and the media, can frame crisis communication on social media, and their actions can further aggravate the crisis. The localization approach lacks a strategic communication focus. Public relations practitioners must be allowed to apply the right strategies with stakeholders when managing a crisis (Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2015).

Thirdly, our study revealed that some of the participants interviewed have qualifications and backgrounds that are not public relations-oriented. These revelations by some participants could be the reason why public relations consultants who participated in this study stated that some organizations lack the expertise to implement a crisis communication strategy effectively. A recent study on public relations practice in the Ghanaian banking sector revealed that out of the 22 public relations managers interviewed, 36 % have MBA in Marketing, and only 9% have MA/MPhil in Corporate Communication. Other participants have master's degrees in luxury management, marketing communication, among others (Anani-Bossman 2019, p.180). Anani-Bossman (2019, p.273) asserts that the marketing background of some of these public relations managers in the financial services sector influenced how public relations is practiced in these organizations. Some of these managers conceptualize public relations in terms of marketing and publicity (Anani-Bossman 2019, p.273). The consequences of such conceptualization of public relations could result in minimal attention to strategic communication and dialogic communication; and weak organizational-stakeholder relationship. Public relations managers or officers must be people with requisite qualifications and experience in public relations.

Finally, most public relations functions are subsumed under other departments, such as marketing (Anani-Bossman 2019, p.270). A public relations unit/department must handle public relations programs and activities. As strongly advocated by Grunig (1992) in his Excellence Theory, for public relations practice to be excellent and strategic to the goals of an organization, public relations must be a single department; public relations functions must not be integrated with other departments. As stated in the introduction section of this study, customers of Ghanaian financial institutions that were declared insolvent by the Bank of Ghana expressed dissatisfaction with the communication approach of these institutions (Dodoo & Simons, 2018; Ayitey, 2019; Mensah, 2018). If communication is used symmetrically and geared towards both the interests of stakeholders and the organization and not necessarily to support the marketing function, the customer crisis communication experience will be better. Slabbert and Barker (2011, p.451) argue that if communication is fully utilized as a management function, crisis communication will add significant value to the operations of organizations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, we recommend the following:

- The public relations departments of the financial services sector must be empowered and well-resourced to effectively manage a crisis.
- The management of crisis within the financial services sector must be approached proactively.
- Public relations officers working in the financial services sector must look beyond regulatory measures and get the top hierarchy to endorse the curation (i.e. collecting, selecting, and presenting) of crisis information.
- Public relations officers must be confident in deploying crisis communication strategies. Crisis victims must be provided with information on the crisis. They and other stakeholders must be provided with information that enables them to cope with the psychological effects of a crisis and uncertainty.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study has some limitations, including the number of study participants. As a result of the size of the study participants, the results of our study cannot be generalized to represent the population of public relations working in financial institutions. Also, only one savings and loan company was considered for the study. The views expressed by the participant from the savings and loans do not represent the population of savings and loan companies in Ghana. The outcome of this study does not extend to other financial services categories, such as investment houses and discount houses. Despite these limitations, our findings provide a good understanding of how public relations practitioners approach crisis communication.

Further research can be quantitative in approach and could assess the views of public relations practitioners working in all the categories of financial services in Ghana. Other researchers can explore into actual crisis communication challenges that the insolvent banks faced. Future research can also look into crisis communication on social media and the role expected of public relations practitioners in the financial services sector.

References

Amodu, L.O. (2011). Public Relations: The art and social science of crisis management. *Mass Communication-A Book of Readings*, pp. 110-124.

Amodu, L., Omojola, O., Okorie, N., Adeyeye, B & Adesina, E. (2019). Potentials of Internet of Things for effective public relations activities: Are professionals ready? *Cogent Business & Management*, *6*:1, DOI: 10.1 080/23311975.2019.1683951

Amuakwa–Mensah, F. & Boakye–Adjei, A. (2015). Determinants of non–performing loans in Ghana banking industry. *International Journal of Computational Economics and Econometrics*, *5*(1), pp.35-54.

Anani-Bossman, A. (2018). *Developing a framework for public relations practice: a study of the financial services sector in Ghana*. (Doctoral dissertation). Pretoria: University of South Africa

Austin, L., Fisher Liu, B. & Jin, Y. (2012). How audiences seek out crisis information: Exploring the social-mediated crisis communication model. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *40*(2), 188-207.

Ayitey, C. (2019). *Banking Consultant calls for stricter banking reforms to avert future crisis*. Myjoyonline. Retrieved November 22, 2019, from https://www.myjoyonline.com/business/2019/march-27th/banking-consultant-calls-for-stricter-banking-reforms-to-avert-future-crisis.php.

Baron, G. (2010). *Response suggestions and public participation the new norm in response management. Crisis Comm*. Retrieved December 12, 2018, from http://www.emergencymgmt.com/emergency-blogs/crisis-comm/Response-Suggestions-and-Public-111510.html.

Barton, L. (2001). *Crisis in organizations II*. Cincinnati: South-Western College Publishing, Thomson Learning.

Barton, L. (1994). Preparing the marketing manager for crisis: The use and application of new strategic tools. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 12 (11): 41-46.

Baxter, J., & Bartlett, P.L. (2001). Infinite-horizon policy-gradient estimation. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*, *15*, 319-350.

Benoit, W.L. & Pang, A. (2008). *Crisis communication and image repair discourse*. Boston: Pearson Allyn & Bacon.

Benoit, W.L. (1995). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*, *SUNY series in speech.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Benson, E. (2019). *Bank Failure in Ghana: What Accounted for the Collapse of Unibank?* (Doctoral dissertation). Accra: University of Ghana, Legon.

Bloom, E. (2008). Crisis readiness and disaster communication: Disaster management. *Enterprise Risk*, *2*(3), 26-27.

Cann, J.P. (2017). *The Collapse of UT Bank Ltd and Capital Bank Ghana Ltd – Root Cause Analysis*. Retrieved December 2, 2019, from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/collapse-ut-bank-ltd-capital-ghana-root-cause-analysis-cann/

Coldwell, D.A.L, Joosub, T. & Papageorgiou, E. (2012). Responsible leadership in organizational crises: An analysis of the effects of public perceptions of selected SA business organizations' reputations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *109*(2), 133-144.

Coombs, W.T. (2015). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing and Responding*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage Publishing.

Coombs, W.T. (2014). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage Publishing.

Coombs, W.T., & Holladay, S.J. (Eds.). (2011). *The handbook of crisis communication* (Vol. 22). Boston: John Wiley & Sons.

Coombs, W.T., & Holladay, S.J. (2008). Comparing Apology to Equivalent Crisis Response Strategies: Clarifying Apology's Role and Value in Crisis Communication. *Public Relations Review*, *34*, 252-257.

Coombs, W.T. (2007). Protecting Organization Reputations during a Crisis: The Development and Application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, *10*(3), 163-177.

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Davies, G., Chun, R., Da Silva, R.V., & Roper, S. (2003). Corporate Reputation and Competitiveness. New York: Routledge

Dean, D.W. (2004). Consumer reaction to negative publicity: Effects of corporate reputation, response, and responsibility for a crisis event. *Journal of Business Communication, 41*, 192–211.

Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects. Fourth Edition.* England. Open University Press, McGraw-Hill Education.

DiStaso, M.W. (2010). Industry in crisis: The communication challenge in the banking industry. *Public Relations Journal*, *4*(1), pp.1-17.

Dodoo, A. & Simon, B. (2018). *Ghana Banking Crisis – Cleaning financial sector through standards*. Retrieved December 11, 2019, from .https://www.myjoyonline.com/opinion/2018/october-10th/ghana-banking-crisis-cleaning-the-financial-sector-through-standards.php.

Dozier, D. & Grunig, L., Grunig, J.G. (1995). *Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management.* Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Falkheimer, J. & Heide, M. (2010). Crisis communicators in change: From plans to improvisations. *Handbook of crisis communication*, pp.511-526.

Fearn-Banks, K. (2016). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fearn-Banks, K. (2011). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fearn-Banks, K. (2010). *Crisis Communication*: *A casebook approach*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Fombrun, C.J. & van Riel, C.B.M. (2004). *Fame and Fortune: How Successful Companies Build Winning Reputation*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Fredriksson, M. (2014). Crisis communication as institutional maintenance. *Public Relations Inquiry, 3*(3), 319-340.

Graphic Online. (2018). *Midland Savings and Loans apologizes to brutalized customer*. Graphic Online. Retrieved November 13, 2018, from https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/midland-savings-and-loans-apologises-to-brutalised-customer.html.

Greve, H.R., Palmer, D., & Pozner, J.E. (2010). Organizations gone wild: The causes, processes, and consequences of organizational misconduct. *Academy of Management Annals*, *4*(1), 53–107

Grunig, L.A, Grunig, J.E. & Ehling, W.P. (1992). What is an effective organization? *Excellence in public relations and communication management*, pp.65-90.

Gundersen, G., Hellesøy, B.T., & Raeder, S. (2012). Leading international project teams: The effectiveness of transformational leadership in dynamic work environments. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *19*(1), 46-57.

Heath, R.L., & Millar, D.P. (2004). A Rhetorical approach to crisis communication: Management, communication processes, and strategic responses. *In* D. P. Millar & R.L. Heath (Eds.), *Responding to crisis: A rhetorical approach to crisis communication* (pp. 1-17). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Heath, R.L., & O'Hair, H. D. (Eds.) (2010). *Handbook of risk and crisis communication*. New York: Routledge.

Hussaini, A., & Mohammed, S. (2008). Public relations and conflict management. In Mojaye, E. M., Arhagba, E., Soola, E. and Oso, L. (Eds). *Media, Dialogue, Peace Building and Reconciliation: Conference Proceedings*, 6-8 August, 2008 (pp.588-592). Abraka: ACCE, Delta State University.

Ibrahim, A. (2019). *Licences of 386 financial institutions revoked*. Myjoyonline. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from https://www.myjoyonline.com/business/2019/May-31st/licence-of-347-microfinance-companies-revoked.php.

Igben, H.G.O. (2008). Public relations, issues and conflict management in Nigeria. In *Media, Dialogue, Peace Building and Reconciliation: Conference Proceedings* (pp. 602-610).

Ikpefan, O.A., Ibinabo, H., Osuma, G.O., & Omojola, O (2020). relationship marketing and deposit mobilization in five deposit money banks in Nigeria. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, *18* (6), 1-15.

JoyBusiness. (2019). *Full List of licensed Savings and Loans companies as at August 16*. Myjoyonline.com. Retrieved December 5, 2019, from https://www.myjoyonline.com/business/2019/August-17th/full-list-of-licensed-savings-and-loans-companies-as-at-august-16.php.

Kim, J.N., Hung-Baesecke, C.J.F., Yang, S.U., & Grunig, J.E. (2013). A strategic management approach to reputation, relationships, and publics: The research heritage of the excellence theory. *The handbook of communication and* *corporate reputation*, pp.197-212.

Kleinnijenhuis, J., Schultz, F., Utz, S. & Oegema, D. (2015). The mediating role of the news in the BP oil spill crisis 2010: How US news is influenced by public relations and in turn influences public awareness, foreign news, and the share price. *Communication Research*, 42(3), pp.408-428.

Lattimore, D., Baskin, O., Heiman, S.T., & Toth, E.E. (2012). *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Levinson, D.R. (2014). *Hospital emergency preparedness response during superstorm sandy*. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General, Washington, DC, Retrieved January 15, 2019 from, https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-06-13-00260.pdf.

Liamputtong, P. (2013). *Qualitative research methods*. Victoria: Oxford University Press.

McKay, J. (2015). *Ebola response provides key lessons for risk communications: The CDC fumbled initial communications about Ebola transmission but recovered. What about next time?* Retrieved December 5, 2019, from http://www.emergencymgmt.com/health/Ebola-Response-ProvidesLessons-Risk-Communications.html.

Meng, J., Berger, B.K., & Heyman, W.C. (2011). Measuring public relations leadership in the trait approach: A second-order factor model in the dimension of self-dynamics. *Public Relations Journal*, 5(1), pp.1-24.

Mensah, I.A. (2018). *Shylock and the Failed Banks; What PR practitioners should do*. Writersghana.com. Retrieved November 28, 2019, from https://www.writersghana.com/2018/08/02/shylock-and-the-failed-banks-what-pr-practitioners-should-do/.

Motarjemi, Y. (2014). Crisis management. In *Food Safety Management*, pp. 1037-1063. Cambridge: Academic Press.

Neuwirth, K. (2010). Risk, crisis, and mediated communication. In R. L. Heath, & H. D. O'Hair (Eds.). *Handbook of risk and crisis communication* (pp.398–411). New York: Routledge.

Odiboh, O., Omojola, O., Okorie, N., & Ekanem, T. (2017). *Sobotone, Ponkiriyon, herbal marketing communication and Nigeria's healthcare* *system*. Proceedings of SOCIOINT 2017- 4th International Conference on Education, Social Sciences and Humanities 10-12 July 2017- Dubai, UAE. Retrieved May 22, 2020 from http://eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/10098/1/dr%20odiboh%20dubai%202.pdf

Palttala, P., & Vos, M. (2012). Quality indicators for crisis communication to support emergency management by public authorities. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 20(1), pp.39-51.

Patashnick, M.J. (2016). *Social media and crisis communication: Supporting best practice on university campuses*. (Doctoral dissertation). Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania.

PwC. (2019). *Ghana Banking Survey*. PwC. Retrieved January 5, 2020, from http://www.pwc.com/gh.

Roberts, P.W., & Dowling, G.R. (2002). Corporate reputation and sustained superior financial performance. *Strategic management journal*, *23*(12), pp.1077-1093.

Ruben, B.D. & Gigliotti, R.A. (2017). Communication: Sine qua non of organizational leadership theory and practice. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 54(1), pp.12-30.

Rule, P., & John, V. (2011). *Your guide to case study*. Van Schaik: Pretoria.

Sasa, T. (2019). *Latest news on Menzgold Ghana 2018 - crisis, big plans and payment issues*. Retrieved December 20, 2019, from https://yen.com.gh/118403-latest-news-menzgold-ghana-2018-crisis-big-plans-payment-issues.html.

Schanz, K.U. (2009). Maintaining stakeholder trust in difficult times: Some fundamental reflections in light of the credit crisis. *The Geneva Papers on Risk and Insurance-Issues and Practice*, *34*(2), pp.260-270.

Seeger, M.W., Sellnow, T.L., & Ulmer, R.R. (2012). Communication, Organization, and Crisis. *Communication yearbook 21*, 231.

Sellnow, T.L., & Seeger, M.W. (2013). *Theorizing crisis communication*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Slabbert, Y., & Barker, R. (2011). An integrated crisis communication framework for strategic crisis communication with the media: A case study on a financial services provider. *Communicatio*, *37*(3), pp.443-465.

Sandman, P. & Lanard, J. (2014). Commentary: When the next shoe drops–Ebola crisis communication lessons from October. *Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy*.

Schultz, F., Kleinnijenhuis, J., Oegema, D., Utz, S., & van Atteveldt, W. (2012). Strategic framing in the BP crisis; a semantic network analysis of associative frames. *Public Relations Review*, *38*, 97–107.

Šontaitė-Petkevičienė, M. (2014). Crisis management to avoid damage for corporate reputation: the case of retail chain crisis in the Baltic countries. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 156, pp.452-457.

Swart, Y. (2010). *An integrated crisis communication framework for strategic crisis communication with the media: a case study on a financial services provider*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Africa, Pretoria

Tench, R., & Yeomans, L. (2006). *Exploring Public Relations*. London: Pearson Education.

Tiffany, A. (2018). *Latest news on Menzgold Ghana 2018-crises, big plans and payment issues*. Retrieved December 5, 2019 from, https://yen.com.gh/118403-latest-news-menzgold-ghana-2018-crisis-big-plans-payment-issues.html

Van der Meer, T.G., Verhoeven, P., Beentjes, H.W., & Vliegenthart, R. (2017). Communication in times of crisis: The stakeholder relationship under pressure. *Public Relations Review*, 2(43), pp.426-440.

Villines, A.N. (2011). *Communicating During Crisis: A Case Study of the 2010 BP Gulf Oil Spill*. Retrieved August 20, 2018, from http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses/

Wang, J., & Ritchie, B.W. (2012). Understanding accommodation managers' crisis planning intention: An application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Tourism Management*, 33(5), pp.1057-1067.

Weber, M, Erickson, S.L., & Stone, M. (2011). Corporate reputation management:

Citibank's use of image restoration strategies during the US banking crisis. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, *15*(2), p.35.

Wiersema, M.F., & Zhang, Y. (2013). Executive turnover in the stock option backdating wave: The impact of social context. *Strategic Management Journal*, 34(5), pp.590-609.

Zaremba, A.J. (2010). *Crisis Communication: Theory and Practice*. ME Sharpe.

Zerfaß, A., Tench, R., Verčič, D., Verhoeven, P., & Moreno, A. (2014). *European communication monitor 2014: excellence in strategic communication-key issues, leadership, gender and mobile media: results of a survey in 42 countries*. BrusselsEACD/EUPRERA, Helios Media9783942263276.

Zuzák, R. & Königová, M. (2009). *Krizové řízení podniku* [Crises management of a company]. Praha: Grada Publishing.

Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC) Vol. 7 No. 1, June 2020
ISSN: p. 2354-354X e. 2354 – 3515

Open Access Journal, Available Online

Cyberbullying, Demography and Coping Strategies among Nigerian Students

Razak Owolabi (Ph.D.)

News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Lagos, Nigeria
razakowolabi@gmail.com

Received: 10 Dec. 2019 Accepted: 22 May 2020 Date of Publication: June 2020

***Abstract*:** Cyberbullying is a concern among the youth in many parts of the world. The highly visible literature on the subject demonstrates the disquiet. This work investigates the Nigerian dimension by examining the demographic implications of online coping strategies of 1,000 students from six Nigerian universities. Findings show that demography significantly influences the adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying ($F_{(1,814)}$ = 45.232, *Adj.* R^2=0.246, p<0.05). One of the recommendations made is that anti-cyberbullying messages and preventive campaigns from university authorities should focus on single students and students who are new on the campus as they are more vulnerable to attacks than older and married colleagues. The study underscores this measure as a way of putting in check the menace of cyberbullying and its devastating effects on the mental and physical development of young people.

***Keywords*:** Cyberbullying, demography, coping strategies, students, youth.

Introduction

Researchers working on social media engagements (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen, 1992; Wolke, Woods & Bloomfield, 2000, Okorie, Loto & Omojola, 2018) have identified two forms of bullying. First is direct bullying, which includes physical and verbal acts of aggression, and second, indirect bullying, which is characterized by social exclusion and rumor-mongering. The advent of the internet has led to the emergence of a new type called cyberbullying. The youth or children who are bullied physically can also be bullied online. Cyberbullying shares similar attributes with the traditional variety, but its online dimension means that perpetrators do sometimes hide their true identities. Cyberbullying can be perpetrated by sharing harsh or intimidating texts, fake profiles, e-mails, embarrassing or scandalous personal pictures or videos of a person, and rumors, through social media. Online ill-treatment and domination can happen in a few minutes and go for hours, days, weeks, months, or years!

Extant literature shows that generally, very little has been done in Nigeria on cyberbullying research and documentation, much less examining the influence of demographic features on how students cope with online attacks from bullies. This is a gap this paper seeks to fill by looking at students in selected Nigerian universities and how their demographic composition influences their responses to incidents of cyberbullying.

The risks associated with cyberbullying victims include fear, distress, psychosomatic problems such as recurring abdominal pain, headaches, and sleeping problems. Other risks are: the student feeling uncared for by teachers, emotional and peer problems, high level of perceived difficulties, somatic illness, high level of conduct problems, regular smoking, hyperactivity, drunkenness, and substance abuse (Sourander, Klomek, Ikonen, Lindroos, Luntamo, Koskelainen, Ristkari, & Helenius, 2010). According to Hinduja and Patchin (2010), cyber victimization has a linkage with suicide in some extreme cases. From these risk factors, cyberbullying is viewed as a severe social, psychological, and health problems by many researchers.

Objectives of the study

Objectives of the study are the following:

1. to examine the role of demography in the adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying by students in the selected higher educational institutions,

2. to identify coping strategies adopted against cyberbullying communication by students in the selected higher educational institutions.

Research Question

1. What types of coping strategies are being adopted against cyberbullying communication by students in the selected higher educational institutions?

Hypothesis

1. Students' demography does not significantly influence their adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying communication

Significance of the study

Generally, the study of demography, cyberbullying, and coping strategies among students of higher educational institutions in Nigeria would add to knowledge as not much has been done in this area of research. The study could be of considerable significance to university administrators as some of the strategies used in fighting cyberbullying, identified in the study could be adopted to curb the menace in the country's universities. The administrators will always want undergraduates to excel in academic performance, as such feat will add to the glory of their universities. Lecturers will not enjoy the company of undergraduates who may not concentrate during lectures or who cannot attend classes regularly all due to their exposure to cyberbullying and its concomitant debilitating communication.

Literature Review

a. The concept of Demography and Cyberbullying

One of the aggressive expressions noticeable in human interactions is physical bullying. Cyberbullying is the sharing or sending of insults, abuses, taunts, and other similar forms of messages through video, texts, and audio from a perpetrator who is the bully to a victim, usually by the internet and other electronic means. Demography is the study of the human population and how the population changes. Among the variables in demography are age, sex, race, level of income, level of education, and employment. The age group commonly involved in the cyberbullying attacks, whether as perpetrators, victims, or eyewitnesses, is the youth (Folayan et al., 2018; Omojola, 2009. The youth, especially undergraduates, are the most active population segment on the internet and are fond of cyberbullying. Studies have shown that they are heavy and most regular users of the internet when compared with the general population of people in society

(Amodu et al., 2019; Omojola, 2008; 2010; Jones, 2002; Kumar & Kaur, 2006,). Online forums such as social media are fertile destinations for young people to assault one another at any time of the day or night (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

The Cyberbullying Research Centre has been at the forefront, investigating cyberbullying among adolescents. The two directors of the center, Dr. Sameer Hinduja of Florida Atlantic University and Dr. Justin Patchin of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, have done much work on cyberbullying. The researchers have been studying the phenomenon since 2002 and launched their website for this purpose, *cyberbullying.org*, in 2005. They are authors of many publications and journal articles which are useful.

b. Emotions, demography, and cyberbullying

Concerning demography and cyberbullying, research by the Cyberbullying Research Centre has shown that females are more sensitive than males in responding to cyberbullying due to the emotional set up typical of the female gender. The 468 female students investigated in one of their studies were reported frustrated (39.6%), angry (36%), and sad (25.2%) more often than their male counterparts who had lower percentages, 27.5 percent, 24.3 percent, and 17.9 percent respectively. The study concluded that the result was not unusual as males are reluctant to admit weaknesses when it involves emotions. Males are expected to be rated higher in showing emotions having to do with anger and frustration. (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, Moran & Omojola, 2014).

The emotional repercussions of cyberbullying across age groups were the subject of another study conducted by the Centre. The result showed that anger and frustration remained the dominant responses among senior and junior high school students. However, students at the elementary level were more likely to feel sad as a result of being bullied online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). The Centre reported that the outcome of the study was so because, at a younger age, children were not battling with the same kind of competitive social hierarchy typically found within schools at a higher level. So, rather than feeling the need to prove themselves among their peers, students at the elementary level tend to keep bottled up within them, the initial emotional responses to bullying.

This is a pointer to the notion that younger children may keep their initial emotional responses to themselves rather than displaying outward actions. Sadly, enough, over time, the emotions are likely to develop to a level with serious health implications if not well managed. An increase in emotional distress related explicitly to cyberbullying was also reported in a 2003 extensive survey, which focused on the clinical effects of cyberbullying. In the study which brought together 512 professionals from psychology, psychiatry, and social work backgrounds, it was reported that for “one-third (34%) of the youth sampled; the internet problem played a primary role in the client’s treatment” (Mitchell, Finelhot & Becker-Blease, 2007, p. 48). This outcome shows that cyberbullying is having noticeable clinical effects on the youth.

c. Gender and Cyberbullying

According to some studies (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1991; Seals & Young, 2003; Borg, 1999, Omojola, 2014), gender plays a crucial role in traditional forms of bullying. For instance, males are more likely to be bullied than females (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Henttonen, 1999; Eslea & Mukhtar, 2000). Males also reported themselves bullying others at significantly higher rates than their female counterparts (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, Henttonen, & Almqvist, 1998; Hoover & Olsen, 2001). Furthermore, males with atypical or unusual gender-related behaviors are at a much higher risk for peer assault than other young males. Moreover, for females, those perceived to be less or more attractive than others are at the highest risk for harassment (Shakeshaft et al., 1995). In another study by Crick et al. (1999), gender differences concerning bullying were discovered in preschoolers as young as 3 to 5 years old. The study shows that, to a small extent, males are significantly more physically victimized than females, while females are more relationally victimized. In a similar vein, Wiseman (2002) found that concerning bullying other people, males used their fists and physical threats more. However, weapons used by females were words and behind-the-scenes school bully manipulation. The cases listed are on traditional bullying; as such, there is a need to also look at gender relations concerning cyberbullying.

In a study of cyberbullying as it relates to gender differences (Li, 2006), the researcher examined the level to which students from three junior high schools in Canada experienced cyberbullying. Also, the researcher looked at the experience of respondents on traditional bullying for a better understanding of cyberbullying. The result showed that close to half of the respondents were victims, while about one in four respondents had been bullied online in the past. It was discovered that over 34 percent of the respondents had bullied others in the traditional form, and almost 17 percent had bullied others using electronic communication tools. Also, 53.6 percent of the respondents sampled reported that they knew someone being bullied online. The researcher also looked at male and female respondents' experiences separately and discovered that over 22 percent of males and close to 12 percent of females were cyberbullied. However, 25 percent of males and 25.6 percent of females reported that they had been bullied online. Reporting incidents of cyberbullying to trusted persons or people in authority is a primary coping strategy identified by researchers. For the Li study, the question of when cyberbullying occurs, who will tell adults among male or female respondents, was examined. Moreover, the result showed that for cyber victims, females were more likely to inform adults than males.

d. Coping strategies and cyberbullying

In another study, Cassidy, Jackson, and Brown (2009) asked some students in Canada to mention whom they would tell when they experienced cyber victimization. From the responses, 47 percent mentioned school staff, 74 percent of the respondents reported that they would tell a friend, while 57 percent mentioned a parent or guardian. The researchers discovered that within the sampled respondents, their readiness to tell either school staff or a parent decreased with their age. Although these numbers looked reasonably encouraging, they, however, went down drastically when the victims of cyberbully were asked about what they did.

In a study of Dutch adolescents, Dehue, Bollman, and Vollink (2008) also asked victims what they did to cope with online attacks. Results showed that 13 percent told a friend, nine percent told their parents, seven percent did not tell anyone while just two percent told a teacher. In the case of Smith et al. (2008), the researchers discovered that 16 percent of victimized respondents in their study sought help from parents and nine percent from teachers. However, in the work of Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, and Ólafsson (2011), the researchers found that 77 percent of the cyber victims had talked to someone about their experience: 52 percent told a friend, 13 percent told a sibling, 42 percent talked to a parent, eight percent told another adult they trusted, and seven percent told a teacher. The samples were children aged nine to 16 years in 25 different countries According to Slonje et al., (2013), reporting a cyberbullying incident seems to be the last course of action the respondents took, that is if they took any action at all following such incidents.

Slonje and Smith (2008) discovered that students viewed adults as people who were unaware of the problem at hand. This could be interpreted to mean that they think adults will not be able to handle the problem well if they tell them. In short, students often talked about technical coping strategies such as blocking people online, changing one's password, username, or mobile phone number, when they were asked about steps they adopted in coping with victimization. However, most studies found that only a few of the students sampled sought help from other people. However, a consistent finding was that if at all these students decided to tell somebody, their first choice was usually a friend, followed by a parent and lastly one of their teachers.

On the reporting of incidents of cyberbullying by victims, a study showed that up to 80 percent of regular bullying incidences were not reported to the staff of educational institutions or schools (Rigby & Slee, 1999). A study by Li (2007) showed that the vast majority of the students who were bullied online or who knew someone being bullied online preferred to stay quiet rather than inform adults. The possible explanation in this regard might be that many students, over one-third of the students in the study sample, did not think that adults in schools would make an effort to stop cyberbullying brought to their notice. Owing to this belief that adults in schools were helpless, many students, feeling either scared or powerless, would not report cyberbullying cases. This substantiates the literature that adolescents' perceptions of their school environments relate to their bullying-related behaviors (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). It brings to the fore the importance of building, and further strengthening, a good relationship between students and school staff, made up of teachers, administrators, and others.

Another explanation may be students' lack of appropriate strategies to deal with the problems. As the data indicate, most victims and bystanders do not report cyberbullying incidents. Female cyber victims, however, are more inclined to inform adults about the incidents than male cyber victims, according to the findings. This is an exciting discovery, and it likely has to do with the gender differences identified in conversational styles (Tannen, 1994). In her work, Tannen indicated that "men are more likely to be aware that asking … for any kind of help, puts them in a one-down position" (p. 24). As a result, males tend not to ask for help or inform others about their troubles.

Many cyberbullying researchers direct their focus on young people aged 11 years and above. Estimates of prevalence among adolescents vary depending on methodology. However, in the UK, Smith et al. (2008a) reported that 6.6 percent of adolescents sampled in their study reported being bullied online 'often' and 15.6 percent 'once or twice.' Children under the age of 11 years also used the internet and mobile phones (Byron Review, 2008; Carphone Warehouse, 2006). Monks et al. (2009) asserted in their findings that 72 percent of seven to 11 years of age owned a mobile phone, and 87 percent had internet access at home. In the UK, two small-scale studies showed that children in primary schools reported that they were being bullied online. The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA, 2009) discovered that about 20 percent of children from 10 to 11 years of age were bullied online. Similar levels were discovered among seven- to 11-year-olds, five percent aggressors, and 23 percent victims (Monks et al., 2009).

e. Theoretical framework

The present paper is rooted in the Social Influence Theory propounded by Herbert C. Kelman (1958). The theory relates to an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and resulting behavior being greatly influenced by others through the three processes of compliance, identification, and internalization. Concerning compliance, this is when individuals embrace influence and the subsequent behavior in order to get approval or disapproval, reward or punishment as the case may be. Identification occurs when people adopt a behavior to maintain a good relationship with other people or groups. Internalization is assumed when individuals examine the content of induced behavior, and this makes them accept influence.

The theory's relevance to the paper could be seen in the situation that respondents' demographic characteristics significantly influenced their adopted coping strategies. Respondents' marital status, year of study, and level of studentship are demographic variables found in the study to have some level of influence on their exposure and response to cyberbullying.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research with a quantitative approach as its research design. Copies of questionnaires were distributed to undergraduates in six selected universities. A survey as a research method is "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160) to describe the behavior of the entire population towards the phenomenon under investigation. The survey research method provides an opportunity for the researcher to select participants from the population of interest, collect data from them utilizing any of the various methods of instrumentation (Ponto, 2015), and generalize on the whole population based on the responses of the sample. The quantitative approach, among other benefits, involves gathering numerical data, figures, and statistics, which enables for exactness of data. Figures are easily attached to issues when analyzing data. However, the approach neglects the dynamic nature of human beings and the hidden motives behind a particular behavior.

Concerning the study population, Ojebode, Onekutu and Adegbola (2010) affirm that the population of any study is the aggregate of people or objects that the researcher is studying. Members of a population must share at least one characteristic that differentiates them from non-members. The population of the study (81,415) consists of all undergraduates in the four public and two private universities of the two Nigerian states, Lagos and Kwara, selected for the present study. The universities are Lagos State University, Ojoo; University of Lagos, Akoka; University of Ilorin, Kwara State; Kwara State University, Malete; Pan Atlantic University, Lagos; and Al-Hikmah University, Kwara. The sampling formula of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) was used to determine the sample size of the study. It involved three stages that ultimately led to the actual sample size. The confidence level was 95 percent, thus making available five percent error margin. The sample size was 765. This figure was increased to 1,000 to align with the accepted sample size for this type of multivariate study, according to Comrey and Lee (1992), cited by Wimmer and Dominick (2011). The response rate of the instrument was 82 percent.

Analysis and Findings

Analysis of Demographic characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable		f	%
Age	16-20	155	19.0
	21-35	638	78.2
	26-30	19	2.3
	31-35	4	.5
	Total	816	100.0
Gender	Male	342	41.9
	Female	474	58.1
	Total	816	100.0
Year of study	100	52	6.4
	200	268	32.8
	300	215	26.3
	400	275	33.7
	500	6	.7
	Total	816	100.0
Religion	Christianity	342	41.9
	Islam	474	58.1
	Total	816	100.0
Marital status	Single	648	79.4
	Married	168	20.6
	Total	816	100.0
Institution	UNILAG	222	27.2
	LASU	73	8.9
	UNILORIN	299	36.6
	KWASU	175	21.4
	AL-HIKMAH	38	4.7
	PAN ATLANTIC	9	1.1
	Total	816	100.0

From Table 1, the majority of the participants were young because they were between the ages of 16 to 25 (97.2%). Female respondents (58.1%) were more than their male (41.9%) counterparts. Also, participants from 200 level and 400 level had 32.8 and 33.7 percent representation, while those in 300 level had 26.3 percent proportion of representation in the study. However, those with an advanced level of studentship had the lowest representation in the study (500 level, 0.7%). Participants who were Muslims were the majority (58.1%), Christians, on the other hand, were 41.9 percent of the study participants. Single respondents were the majority (79.4%), while those who were married constituted 20.6 percent. Finally, participants from UNILORIN (36.6%) were more than those from UNILAG (27.2%), KWASU (21.4%), LASU (8.9%) and Al-Hikmah University (4.7%); while respondents from Pan Atlantic University were the least represented (1.1%).

1. **Research Question:** What types of coping strategies are being adopted against cyberbullying communication by students in the selected higher educational institutions?

2. Table 2a: Cyberbullying Coping Strategies Adopted by Participants (Technical Strategies)

Items	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**U**	$\bar{x}$	**SD**	**AM**
	F	F	F	F	F			
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)			
Technical strategies								
I set my profile to private, so only my known friends will have access to me on the Internet	548 (67.2)	51 (6.3)	207 (25.4)	6 (0.7)	4 (0.5)	4.39	0.92	
I blacklist cyberbullies' number on my phone contact list	511 (62.6)	23 (2.8)	152 (18.6)	57 (7)	73 (8.9)	4.03	1.38	
I block cyberbullies' text messages from my phone inbox	504 (61.8)	25 (3.1)	157 (19.2)	57 (7)	73 (8.9)	4.02	1.38	
I track the Internet address of cyberbully and expose him to other people on the internet.	150 (18.4)	262 (32.1)	235 (39.8)	10 (1.2)	69 (8.5)	3.51	1.07	**Average Mean 3.89**
I bully (attack) the cyberbully back directly after hacking his Internet account.	169 (20.7)	242 (29.7)	231 (28.3)	174 (21.3)	-	3.50	1.05	

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, ***Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.49 Undecided; 1.5 to 2.49 = Strongly Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Disagree; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5= Strongly Agree

Table 2b: Cyberbullying Coping Strategies Adopted by Participants (Preventive Strategies)

Items	SA	A	D	SD	U	$\bar{x}$	SD	AM
	F	F	F	F	F			
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)			
Preventive Strategies								
I protect my password on Internet sites	633 (77.6)	87 (10.7)	6 (0.7)	-	90 (11)	4.44	1.26	**Average Mean 3.66**
I stay away from unsafe websites	632 (77.5)	86 (10.5)	4 (0.5)	4 (0.5)	90 (11)	4.43	1.27	
I avoid posting my personal information on Internet	409 (50.1)	198 (24.3)	11 (1.3)	100 (12.3)	98 (12)	3.88	1.44	
I change my phone password regularly	141 (17.3)	206 (25.2)	253 (31)	126 (15.4)	90 (11)	3.22	1.22	
I avoid putting my real pictures on the Internet	203 (24.9)	113 (13.8)	183 (22.4)	218 (26.7)	99 (12.1)	3.13	1.37	
I talk to known bully to settle any disagreement in time	109 (13.4)	179 (21.9)	131 (16.1)	307 (37.6)	90 (11)	2.89	1.25	

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, ***Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.49 Undecided; 1.5 to 2.49 = Strongly Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Disagree; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5= Strongly Agree.

Table 2c: Cyberbullying Coping Strategies Adopted by Participants (Reactive Strategies)

Items	SA	A	D	SD	U	$\bar{x}$	SD	AM
	F	F	F	F	F			
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)			
Reactive Strategies								
I delete bully's messages on my phone or computer	482 (59.1)	88 (10.8)	131 (16.1)	10 (1.2)	105 (12.9)	4.02	1.40	
I close my account on the website/social media where I was bullied online	366 (44.9)	82 (10)	226 (27.7)	21 (2.6)	121 (14.8)	3.68	1.44	
I accept cyberbullying as normal situation	158 (19.4)	244 (29.9)	184 (22.5)	161 (19.7)	69 (8.5)	3.32	1.23	**Average mean 3.36**
I report cyberbullying to police or relevant authorities	105 (12.9)	157 (19.2)	241 (29.5)	202 (24.8)	111 (13.6)	2.93	1.22	
I report cyberbullying to my parents or guardians	114 (14)	101 (12.4)	280 (34.3)	213 (26.1)	108 (13.2)	2.88	1.21	

The average mean for all coping strategies is 3.64

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, ***Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.49 Undecided; 1.5 to 2.49 = Strongly Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Disagree; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5= Strongly Agree

Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c show that generally, respondents agreed that they adopted cyberbullying coping strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.64). Respondents adopted technical strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.89) on average more because it had the highest mean score, followed by the adoption of preventive strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.66). However, participants disagreed that they adopted reactive strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.36) as a coping strategy against cyberbullying. This suggests that participants adopted technical strategies and prevented cyberbullying more than using reactive means of coping with cyberbullying.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis: Students' demography does not significantly influence their adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying communication

Table 3: ANOVA & Model Summary Testing Significant Influence of Demography on Adoption of Coping Strategies

Model		**Sum of squares**	**df**	**Mean square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	9623.141	6	1603.857	45.232	0.000[b]
	Residual	28686.069	809	35.459		
	Total	38309.210	815			

R= 0.501
R Square =0.2. Adjusted R Square= 0.246

Table 3 shows the ANOVA and model summary computations with the test of the significant influence of demography on the adoption of coping strategies.

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Testing Significant Influence of Demography on Adoption of Coping Strategies

Construct	B	r	T	Sig.
(Constant)	74.376		43.827	**0.000**
Institution	-0.260	-0.048	-1.545	0.123
Gender	-0.130	0.009	-0.258	0.797
Marital status	-8.851	-0.522	-14..841	0.000
Age	-.865	-0.058	-1.768	0.077
Year of study	-2.272	-0.321	-8.607	**0.000**
Religion	0.218	0.016	0.486	.0.627
Criterion variable: Adoption of coping strategies				

Tables 3 and 4 indicate that demography significantly influenced the adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying ($F_{(1,\ 814)}$ =45.232, $p< 0.05$). From a relative perspective, participants' marital status ($r = -0.522$, $p<0.05$) had a moderate negative significant influence on the adoption of coping strategies. Year of study ($r = -0.321$, $p<0.05$) also had a negative, weak significant influence on the adoption of coping strategies. This suggests that participants who are single likely increase the adoption of cyberbullying coping strategies. Also, the analysis suggests that as participants' level of studentship reduces, there is likely to be increased adoption of cyberbullying coping strategies. Conversely, other demographic variables examined had no significant influence on participants' adoption of coping strategies.

The model indicates that demography explained 25.1 percent (Adj.R^2= 0.246) variation of adoption of coping strategies; hence, there were other factors not considered in this study. Therefore, the null hypothesis that students' demography does not significantly influence their adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying communication was rejected.

Discussion of findings

Strategies adopted by students in coping with cyberbullying

As earlier stated, the present study found that generally, participants agreed that they adopted cyberbullying coping strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.64). Respondents adopted technical strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.89) on average more because it had the highest mean score, followed by the adoption of preventive strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.66). However, participants disagreed they adopted reactive strategies ($\bar{x}$ =3.36) as coping strategies against cyberbullying. This suggests that participants adopt technical and preventive strategies more in coping with cyberbullying and reactive strategies to a lesser degree. The technical and preventive strategies include blocking the bully, tracking him through internet protocol address, blacklisting his number, staying away from unsafe websites, protecting passwords, bullying the bully back, ignoring the bullying by taking his action as something ordinary or unimportant, deleting bully's messages, and closing one's accounts.

The finding is similar to that of Parris, Varjas, Meyers and Cutts (2011), who carried out a study on how high school students perceived coping with cyberbullying. The respondents reported that among other strategies, they adopted preventive and reactive coping strategies. The reactive coping strategies included avoiding acts of cyberbullying, deleting messages, deleting online accounts, blocking bully's numbers, ignoring the situation as unimportant, accepting cyberbullying as a normal part of life that could not be stopped, and, letting it go. It is also justifying the cyberbullies' actions by focusing on his negative characteristics like his cowardice and lack of maturity; as such, he should not be a cause of worry; and reporting him to a person in authority to stop him. As for preventive coping strategies, they included talking in person with the bully if possible and increasing security measures online. Prescriptions by respondents under this strategy included talking or confronting the bully personally, increasing security measures like password protection, limiting identifying information otherwise known as self-disclosure, as well as overall awareness, such as knowing websites that might not be safe and staying away from them. These definitions form part of the ones used in this study.

An agreement also exists between the finding and that of Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell and Tippett (2008) in their studies in the UK, where the respondents recommended blocking/avoiding messages of bullies and telling someone about the incident, as the best coping strategies. Similarly, it aligns with that of Monks, Robinson and Worlidge (2012) in another study, where recommended coping strategies by respondents were blocking the cyberbullying messages and changing e-mail addresses or phone numbers. However, very few of these respondents (under 7%) prescribed fighting the bully back. A further breakdown of the suggested responses included, blocking messages (64.8%), changing e-mail addresses or phone number (57.0%), telling someone else (75.2%), ignoring it (47.9%), asking the perpetrators to stop (38.2%) and fighting back (6.7%). The participants were also sampled on whether they thought victims felt specific emotion while responding to cyberbullying. The researchers found that participants were most likely to state that they would feel stressed (48.2%), afraid/scared (57.6%), worried (58.4%), angry (39.8%), upset (56.6%), embarrassed (26.5%), depressed (39.8%) and not affected (15.7%).

Another study's findings in agreement with this study on different coping strategies are those of Slonje, Smith and Frisén (2013). The respondents in the study prescribed practical strategies such as changing numbers, blocking the bully, not giving out one's number, tracking IP addresses, or permanently blocking abusers by contacting administrators of affected websites.

Also in alignment are the works of other researchers (Aricak, Siyahhan, Uzunhasanoglu, Saribeyoglu, Ciplak, Yilmaz, & Memmedov, 2008; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Aricak et al., 2008) who examined children and adolescents on their coping strategies. The solutions prescribed by respondents consisted of blocking certain people from making contact with one online, changing one's passwords, user names or e-mail addresses, and deleting anonymous text messages without reading them.

Other coping strategies have been mentioned often by cyber victims in similar studies. Such strategies include switching one's name on online accounts or changing phone numbers (Juvoven & Gross, 2008; Aricak et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2008). Some of the respondents chose more aggressive ways of online coping such as responding online, telling the bully point-blank to stop harassing them (Aricak et al., 2008), or even bullying the bully back (Dehue, Bollman, & Völlink, 2008). There were expected cases of pessimism among some of the respondents with one, a 14-year-old girl, saying cyberbullying was "unstoppable."

Students' demography and adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying

As mentioned earlier, this finding shows that demography significantly influenced the adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying ($F_{(1, 814)} = 45.232$, $p < 0.05$). From a relative perspective, respondents' marital status ($r = -0.522$, $p<0.05$) had a moderate negative significant influence on the adoption of coping strategies. Year of study ($r = -0.321$, $p<0.05$) also had a negative, weak significant influence on the adoption of coping strategies. This suggests that respondents who are single likely increase the adoption of cyberbullying coping strategies. Also, the analysis suggests that as respondents' level of studentship reduces, there is likely to be increased adoption of cyberbullying coping strategies.

Conversely, other demographic variables examined had no significant influence on participants' adoption of coping strategies. The model indicates that demography explained 25.1 percent ($R^2 = 0.251$) variation of adoption of coping strategies; hence, there were other factors not considered in this study. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that students' demography does not significantly influence their adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying, was rejected.

This finding is in agreement with that of Agatston, Kowalski, and Limber (2007), which confirms that demography influences coping strategies adopted by the youth. The researchers discovered that coping strategies adopted by respondents varied with their age and sex. In the American study, the researchers examined responses from focus groups in two middle schools and two high schools made up of 148 students, with an age range between 12 and 17 years. In carrying out the focus group discussions, the scholars divided the respondents by gender. Results from the study showed that the students were familiar with technology and its use, with most of them having their mobile phones and access to the internet in their homes. Some respondents also signified that they did not think the adults at school could help them cope if they experienced cyber victimization. Instead, they were very likely to report to parents rather than adults at school, as a preferred coping strategy, especially if the bullying was threatening in nature.

Nevertheless, some affirmed that they were not very eager to tell parents because of the fear that parents might put an end to their online privileges. The question of who among the male or female students will tell adults when cyberbullying occurs (another type of coping strategy) was examined concerning gender differences (Li, 2006). Furthermore, the result showed that for cyber victims, females were more likely to inform adults than males.

The implication of this is that the demographic characteristic of the students matters a lot when they adopt coping strategies. What a female undergraduate will do to cope with cyberbullying is likely to be different from what a male will do.

Conclusion

Demography is an essential variable in students' adoption of coping strategies against cyberbullying as data showed it significantly influenced the adoption of the strategies. From the preliminary analysis of data obtained from the field, the two demographic characteristics that could be considered as having a significant influence on the adoption of coping strategies are marital status and year of study of the participants. Other demographic variables examined had no significant influence on participants' adoption of coping strategies. As earlier observed from a relative perspective, participants' marital status ($r = -0.522$, $p<0.05$)

had a moderate negative significant influence on the adoption of coping strategies. The keywords here are 'moderate' and 'negative.' This indicates that students who are married seem not interested in adopting coping strategies against cyberbullying because, in the first place, it seems they are not heavy users of the internet. This may be because they have family, marital, and community engagements that share available time, including internet time, with them as such they are more likely to devote less time to the internet. When one does not visit the internet, the possibility of encountering online bullies or adopting coping strategies against attacks is lower. The suggestion that single participants likely increased the adoption of cyberbullying coping strategies is, therefore, appropriate as the unmarried students will likely have more time to spend on the internet as they may not have external commitments like their married colleagues.

Year of study ($r = -0.321$, $p<0.05$) also had a negative, weak significant influence on the adoption of coping strategies. The keywords are 'negative' and 'weak.' The scenario suggests that as participants' level of studentship reduces, there is likely to be increased adoption of cyberbullying coping strategies. This means students who are in their earlier years of study, for example, from 100 and 200 levels, adopt more coping strategies as they surf the internet more. This could be a carryover from their high school or secondary school days when most were addicted to their smartphones. They also seem to have more time to browse the internet and social media as they are more involved in campus social life and merrymaking activities. However, as they get to their advanced levels of study, like 400 or 500 level students tend to devote more time to search for educational materials, which will add value to their studies and contribute to their final year research projects. They may not have time for social browsing or unproductive chats again at these levels. Furthermore, their constant visits to online educational sites mean less exposure to cyberbullies and less adoption of coping strategies. Cyberbullies are found mostly on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter, and these sites have little or no interest in scholarly and educational content.

Recommendations

- undergraduates should adopt appropriate coping strategies in fighting cyberbullying communication,

- ICT units of universities should design filters that would monitor the usage of campus internet bandwidth to prevent cyberbullying communication,
- anti-cyberbullying messages and preventive campaigns from university authorities should target more single students and students who are relatively new on campus as they are likely to be more involved in online bullying activities and adoption of possible coping strategies,
- cyberbullying is harmful communication; as such, students should avoid suspicious, harmful, and immoral sites but devote more time in search of educational materials, which will add value to their studies.

References

Agatston, P. W., Kowalski, R. & Limber, S. (2007). Students' perspectives on cyberbullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *41*, S59–S60.

Amodu, L., Omojola, O., Okorie, N., Adeyeye, B & Adesina, E. (2019). Potentials of Internet of Things for effective public relations activities: Are professionals ready? *Cogent Business & Management*, *6*:1, DOI: 10.1080/23311975.2019.1683951.

Anti-Bullying Alliance (2009). *New Research on Cyberbullying Highlights the Role of Parents in Prevention.* Retrieved from http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/press_centre/ news_archive/ New-research-on-cyberbullying.aspx.

Aricak, T., Siyahhan, S., Uzunhasanoglu, A., Saribeyoglu, S., Ciplak, S., Yilmaz, N., & Memmedov, C. (2008). Cyberbullying among Turkish adolescents. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior, 11*(3), 253–261. DOI:10.1089/cpb.2007.0016.

Bjorkqvist, K., Lagerspetz, K. M., & Kaukiainen, A. (1992). Do girls manipulate and boys fight? Developmental trends in regard to direct and indirect aggression. *Aggress Behavior*,*18*:117–27. DOI:10.1002/1098-2337(1992)18:2-117:AID AB2480180205>3.0.CO;2-3.

Borg, M. G. (1999). The extent and nature of bullying among primary and secondary school children', *Educational Research 41*(2), 137–53.

Boulton, M. & Underwood, K. (1992). Bully/victim problems among middle school children', *British Journal of Educational Psychology 62*, 73–87.

Byron Review (2008). *Safer children in a digital world: The report of the Byron Review*. Retrieved from http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/pdfs/Final%20 Report%20 Book marked.pdf.

Carphone Warehouse (2006). *Mobile life youth report: The impact of the mobile phone on the lives of young people.* Retrieved from http://www.mobilelife2008.co.uk/mobilelife2007/. http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERS0808/RS/ERS0808w.pdf.

Cassidy, W., Jackson, M., & Brown, K. (2009). Sticks and stones can break my bones, but how can pixels hurt me? Students' experiences with cyber-bullying. *School Psychology International, 30*, 383–402, DOI:10.1177/0143034309106948.

Check, J., & Schutt, R. K. (2012). Survey research. In Check, J. & Schutt. R. K. (Eds). *Research methods in education,* 159–185. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Comrey, A. & Lee, H. (1992). *A first course in factor analysis*. Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Crick, N. R., & Grotpeter, J. K. (1996). Children's treatment by peers: Victims of relational and overt aggression. *Development and Psychopathology,8*(2),367-380. DOI:10.1017/S0954579400007148.

Crick, N. R., Werner, N. E., Casas, J. F., O'Brien, K. M., Nelson, D. A., Grotpeter, J. K., & Markon, K. (1999). Childhood aggression and gender: A new look at an old problem. In Bernstein, D. (Ed.), *The Nebraska symposium on motivation: Vol. 45. Gender and Motivation,* p. 75-141. Omaha, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Dehue, F., Bollman, C., & Völlink, T. (2008). Cyberbullying: Youngsters' experience and parental perception. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, *11*, 217–223.

Eslea, M. & Mukhtar, K. (2000). Bullying and racism among Asian school children in

Britain. *Educational Research, 42*(2), 207–17.

Folayan, B.J., Omojola, O., Egharevba, M., Oyesomi, K., Yartey, D & Adeyeye, B. (2018). The use of ICT-rooted communication codes and slangs among Nigerian students. The *Journal of Social Sciences Research, 4*(12), 633-641.

Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2009). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2010a). Bullying, cyberbullying, and suicide. *Archives of Suicide Research, 14*(3), 206–221. DOI: 10.1080/13811118.201.494133.

Hoover, J. & Olsen, G. (2001). *Teasing and harassment: The frames and scripts approach for teachers and parents.* Bloomington: National Educational Service.

Jones, S. (2002). *The internet goes to college.* Pew Internet and American life project. Retrieved from http:/www.pewInternet.org/

Juvoven, J., & Gross, E. F. (2008). Bullying experiences in cyberspace. *Journal of School Health, 78,* 496–505.

Kelman, H. C. (1958). "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2:1), 51-60.

Kumar, R. & Kaur, A. (2006). Internet use by teachers and students in engineering colleges of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh states of India: An analysis. Electronic. J. *Academic Special Librarianship, 7*(1): 1-12.

Kumpulainen, K., Rasanen, E., Henttonen, I., & Almqvist, F. (1998). Bullying and psychiatric symptoms among elementary school-age children. *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal, 22*(7): 705–17.

Kumpulainen, K., Rasanen, E., & Henttonen, I. (1999). Children involved in bullying: psychological disturbance and the persistence of the involvement', *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal, 23*(12): 1253–62.

Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., & Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the Internet: The perspective of European children.* Full findings. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.

Li, Q. (2006). Cyberbullying in schools: A research of gender differences. *School Psychology International*, *27*, 157 – 170. doi: 10.1177/0143034306064547.

Li, Q. (2007). New bottle but old wine: A research of cyberbullying in schools. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *23*(4), 1777–1791. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2005.10.005.

Mitchell, K., Finkelhor, D., & Becker-Blease, K. (2007). Linking youth Internet and conventional problems: Findings from a clinical perspective. *Crimes Against Children Research*, *15*(2), 39-58.

Monks, C. P., Ortega, R., Robinson, S., & Worlidge, P. (2009). Cyberbullying among primary school-aged pupils. *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*, *4*, 167–181.

Monks, C. P., Robinson, S., & Worlidge, P. (2012). The emergence of cyberbullying: A survey of primary school pupils' perceptions and experiences. *School Psychology International*, *33*(5), 477–491. DOI: 10.1177/0143034312445242.

Morah, N. & Omojola, O. (2014) Digital large screens as a community medium: interactivity and community relevance in focus. In A. Ojebode (Ed.) *Community Media in Nigeria. Ibadan: John Archer Publishers, pp. 385-402.*

Ojebode, A., Onekutu, P. & Adegbola, T. (2010). *Audience research methods for campus radio stations*. Lagos: Institute for Media and Society.

Okorie, N., Loto, G. & Omojola, O. (2018). Blogging, civic engagement, and coverage of political conflict in Nigeria: A study of Nairaland. com. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences 39* (2), 291-298.

Olweus, D. (1991). Bully/victim problems among schoolchildren: Basic effects of a school based intervention program. In Pepler, D., & Rubin, K. (eds), *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression*, p. 411–48. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Omojola, O. (2008). Web Searching in a Nigerian Language: An Assessment of Google Yoruba. *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences*, 6 (2), 167-177.

Omojola, O. (2009). English-oriented ICTs and ethnic language survival strategies in Africa. *Global Media Journal* (African Edition), 3 (1). Retrieved May 12, 2020, from https://globalmedia.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/18.

Omojola, O. (2010) Exploring the impact of Google Igbo in southeast Nigeria. In R. Lekoko & L. Semali (eds) *Cases on developing countries and ICT integration: Rural community development*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global Publishing,

Omojola, O. (2014). *Women's Political Visibility and Media Access: The Case of Nigeria*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholarship Publishing.

Parris, L., Varjas, K., Meyers, J., & Cutts, H. (2011). High school students' perceptions of coping with cyberbullying. *Youth & Society, XX*(X) 1–23. DOI: 10.1177/0044118X 11398881.

Pellegrini, A., & Bartini, M. (2000). A longitudinal study of bullying, victimization, and peer affiliation during the transition from primary school to middle school, *American Educational Research Journal, 37*(3), 699–725.

Ponto, J. (2015). Understanding and evaluating survey research. *Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology, 6*(2), 168-171. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4601897/

Rigby, K., & Slee, P. T. (1999). Suicidal ideation among adolescent school children, involvement in bully-victim problems, and perceived social support. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, 29*(2), 119-130.

Saunders, M., Thornhill, A., & Lewis, P. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*, New Jersey: Prentice. Hall.

Seals, D., & Young, J. (2003). Bullying and victimization: prevalence and relationship to gender, grade level, ethnicity, self-esteem, and depression. *Adolescence.38*(152), 735-47.

Shakeshaft, C., Barber, E., Hergenrother, M., Johnson, Y., Mandel, L., & Sawyer, J. (1995). Peer harassment in schools. *Journal for a Just Education, 1*(1), *30-40*

Slonje, R., & Smith, P. K. (2008). Cyberbullying: Another main type of bullying? *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *49*, 147–154. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467 – 9450.2007.00611.x.

Slonje, R., Smith, P.K. & Frisén, A. (2013). The nature of cyberbullying and strategies for prevention. *Computers in Human Behavior*. *29*(1) 26 – 32.

Smith, P. K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S, Russel, S., & Tippett, N. (2008). Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *49*(4), 376–385. DOI:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007. 01846.x

Sourander, A., Klomek, A. B., Ikonen, M., Lindroos, J., Luntamo, T., Koskelainen, M., Ristkari, T. & Helenius, H. (2010). Psychosocial risk factors associated with cyberbullying among adolescents. A population-based study. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, *67*(7), 720-728. doi:10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2010.79.

Subrahmanyam, K., & Greenfield, P. (2008). Online communication and adolescent relationships. *Future Child*, *18*(1), 119-146. DOI:10.1353/foc.0.0006

Tannen, D. (1994). *Talking from 9 to 5*. New York: Quill, Harper Collins Publishers. *Teenager killed himself after being 'bullied on Snapchat'* Retrieved from

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2011). *Mass media research: An introduction* (9th ed.). Canada: Wadsworth, Centage Learning.

Wiseman, R. (2002). *Queen Bees and Wannabees*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Wolke, D., Woods, S., & Bloomfield, L. (2000). The association between direct and relational bullying and behavior problems among primary school children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*.*41*, 989–1002. DOI:10.1111/1469-7610.00687.

Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC) Vol. 7 No. 1, June 2020
ISSN: p. 2354-354X e. 2354 – 3515

Open Access Journal, Available Online

Trafficked Women, Patriarchy and Social Media: The Case of Benin City, Nigeria

Ngozi B. Ukachi[1] & Franca Attoh[2]

[1,2]University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria
nukachi@unilag.edu.ng

Received: 24 April 2019 Accepted: 22 Feb. 2020 Date of Publication: June 2020

***Abstract*:** Trafficking in women remains a global concern despite the local and multilateral efforts to curb it. This work explores a classic case of Benin City, Nigeria, by examining the role that social media and family pressure play in stoking the problem. A cross-sectional analysis of the relevant variables, interviews with government officials, and discussions by victims on the issue show that women are trafficked as a result of the patriarchal tradition that places a little premium on females. The patriarchate of human trafficking is well established in literature. What is surprising in this case is that the networking and interactive characteristics of social media have escalated the problem and emboldened the actors. Unless the authorities take adequate measures to monitor online job advertisements to determine their authenticity, and stock up public libraries with anti-trafficking materials to enlighten vulnerable persons, the problem may become compounded. It may also be more than what the traffic can bear if inter-government agencies do not put in place robust cross border policies to checkmate the activities of traffickers.

***Keywords*:** Human trafficking, women, social media, patriarchy, Benin City, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria is witnessing enormous changes in the way information is created, shared, and disseminated as a result of the adoption of mobile technologies, with the internet as the core of the communication processes. These technologies, which provide the platform for social networking using social media tools, have emerged with both positive and negative ramifications. While they enable effortless, quick, and wide circulation of useful information, on the one hand, they have also been found to facilitate the circulation of catastrophic or useless information on the other.

Before the social media came into the equation, news on women trafficking had been limited to the traditional media, which would report it with the narration on how patriarchy had been the main driver of the illegal activity (Omojola, 2014). Patriarchy in the context of this work simply means a scenario whereby the male child is accepted, recognized, empowered, and seen to be superior to the female counterpart. The patriarchal societal structure provided a platform for gender discrimination and the empowerment of men over women. The upshot, which is the feminization of poverty, now impels trafficking in women as more and more young women seek a better livelihood in the industrialized countries. They do this with the connivance of families and trafficking syndicates (Vieson, 2017). Osuigwe (2017) states that millions of Nigerian young women and girls are at risk of human trafficking due to gender imbalance, poverty, high rate of unemployment, gender-induced cultural bias, human deprivation, and other factors, a fact the media regularly reported.

However, indulgence and participation in trafficking are further influenced by social media or social networking, thereby paving the way for the widespread circulation of trafficking information (Folayan et al., 2018; Omojola, 2009; Okorie, Loto & Omojola, 2018). According to Johnson (2013), the latest battlefront of women trafficking is not on the streets or in a massage parlor, but now on social media. He asserts that girls are caught in the web of traffickers who do a few taps of the keyboard of their laptop computer, a tablet, or a cell phone to invite them to parties, or just to become friends and after that start manipulating them. Social media platforms such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, and the like, have made countless ideas, groups, organizations, and causes visible. One of those groups comprises women traffickers as well as their victims. Social media do significantly facilitate the environment to recruit naive girls from less industrialized cities and towns such as Benin City in Edo State, one of Nigeria's 36 states. These assertions need to be established, hence this study on the influence of social media and patriarchy on the trafficking of young women in Benin City, Nigeria.

Historical anchorage

The historical antecedent of Benin City concerning the phenomenon of trafficking in women relates to its prolonged pre-colonial contact with Mediterranean Europe, especially Portugal, Southern Italy, and Spain. This historical contact explains the migratory pattern of modern Benin City called *Igodomigodo* Kingdom many years ago. It was a conglomeration of small towns that developed and spread hinterland over the years. According to Wikipedia (2015), Igodomigodo was known for its healthy spiritual, philosophical, and organizational development. When Europeans came in contact with them in the 15th century, they had established an administrative system that baffled Europe and earned the kingdom the appellation of 'Benin City' The interaction with Europe which began in the 15th century resulted in the exchange of ambassadors between it and the Kingdom of Portugal. The Oba of Benin City sent an envoy to the palace of the King of Portugal during this period. This development was the origin of the interaction between Benin City and Europe, which has endured to date, albeit with a negative connotation.

Benin City has a preponderance of Edo speaking people (Bini, Esan, and Afemai) with a population of 1,495,800 persons, according to Nigeria's Population Commission. Of this number, women account for 543,122, which is over 50 percent of the population of Benin City. Okonofua (et al., 2004) asserts that young people of 10 to 25 years old account for 40 percent of the population. The city is poorly industrialized and lacks income-generating opportunities. He stresses that although the state has the highest rates of school enrolment in the country, it also has the highest rates of youth unemployment.

The migration of young women out of Benin City began in the 1980s as a result of the economic recession in the period and the marginalization (following the hierarchical family structure) they suffered in their families, including being used for domestic chores. The women were compelled to emigrate because they were not recognized as valuable contributors to the formal economy. Education opportunities were few, vocational skills were not accessible, and there was family pressure on the women. Lately, peer influence through social media interaction has added to the list. When they eventually arrive at the foreign countries, they are often employed in the sex industry where their labor and earnings are turned over to the trafficker or the 'madam' who facilitated their travel. These trafficked women must make remittances to their families back home in Benin City and these traffickers.

Statement of the Problem

Female trafficking, which became apparent since the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the military dictatorship of Babangida in 1986, is on the rise. The reason is that SAP, a so-called blueprint of the World Bank and IMF, meant to improve the economic situation in the countries, brought about untold hardship and rationalization of public service, leading to massive unemployment. The loss of employment by many males during the period pushed them into the informal economy, which hitherto was the domain of women, thereby depleting the income-generating opportunities for women. This development caused an increase in female poverty and joblessness.

The patriarchal societal structure, which accords the girl child a less significant position in the family, made the situation worse as many experienced a transfer of their means of livelihood to their male counterparts. The consequence of intense suffering of the female gender and the systematic ostracization of women from white and blue-collar jobs triggered a race to seek other means of livelihood. Commercial sex service turned out to be one of the means.

The ease of communication brought about by social media use is spurring a more significant number of women to engage in the trafficking business, the inherent dangers notwithstanding. It is worthy to note that several efforts have been made both at the national and international stages to avert trafficking. Such includes the signing of the Palermo Protocol in 2000 to combat the phenomenon. Nigeria is a signatory to the protocol and has equally domesticated it through an Act of Parliament in 2003, which culminated in the setting up of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffick in Persons (NAPTIP) and other related bodies. Unfortunately, the sex trafficking trade still thrives, and it appears that the efforts of these bodies are not bearing fruits. The conjecture that social media have been the force driving the trade is gaining scholarship traction and is a significant justification for the conduct of this study.

Literature search on this subject revealed that available studies concentrated on its causes and solution, the establishment of the relationship between trafficking in persons, human smuggling, and organized crime, trafficking migration information sources and the roles of the internet in trafficking (Ellis and Okpala, 2011., Braimah, 2013., Attoh, 2013., Johnson, 2013., Kigbu and Hassan 2015., Osuigwe, 2017 and Vieson, 2017). None of the studies linked the variables of social media influence and patriarchal behavior in their equation. This study does not only cover this gap but also zeros in on Benin City, regarded by observers as the epicenter of the problem in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to establish the influence of social media and patriarchy on the trafficking of young women in Benin City, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to;

1. Find out the nexus between patriarchy and trafficking of women in Benin City
2. Establish the influence of social media on the trafficking of women in Benin City
3. Find out measures that could be adopted to curb sex trafficking among Benin City women.

Research questions

The paper seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What is the nexus between patriarchy and the trafficking of women in Benin City?
2. What is the influence of social media on the trafficking of women in Benin City?
3. What measures could be adopted to curb sex trafficking among Benin City women?

The Rationale for the Study

The findings of this study can be of immense benefit to young women who are vulnerable to trafficking, the government, public libraries, and researchers. It should sensitize young women on some of the deceptive methods adopted by the traffickers in luring innocent females into the trade via social media. The findings of this study are expected to serve as knowledge and information sources that can empower victims to resist the traffickers.

The government would find this study very relevant as it would reveal factors that had continued to influence the escalation of this ill. The outcome of this study will present the government with practical information on the nexus between patriarchy and sex trafficking, likewise social media, thereby widening their knowledge base on this subject area. The recommendations made in the study would also help the government in the fight against trafficking in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Trafficking, according to Muskat-Gorska (2011), is the process through which an individual is brought into a situation of exploitation that can amount to forced labor. Sex trafficking, on the other hand, is seen by Hamdan (2019) as the action of illegally transporting people from one country or one area to another for commercial sexual exploitation. This situation is usually triggered by poverty and unemployment (Igbinoba et al., 2020). Sex trafficking in Braimah's (2013) terms, means the trafficking that involves moving people within and across local or national borders for sexual exploitation. Gender discrimination in Africa and specifically in Benin City has feminized poverty; hence, young women in a desperate search for greener pastures constitute the vulnerable group. Latonero (2011) affirmed that human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery and the grim reality of the 21st-century global landscape in developed as well as developing countries. It opens up the labor market for women who are more or less seen as commodities to be traded and re-traded in the global sex industry.

Some factors already listed as culprits include poverty, patriarchy, lack of empowerment for women, and globalization (Adeleye and Okonkwo (2010) cited by Braimah (2013) and Ojoh, 2012). In addition to this, Tapinos (2000) identifies the worsening economic inequality between the countries of the Global North and South, which exacerbates illicit migration. Nirmala (2014) submits that the significant complex factors that lead women to be trafficked are; poverty, illiteracy, lack of risk awareness, unjustified adventure craze for settling in the developed culture, value system, and negative impact of the media. The submissions of the above authors imply that most of these young ladies accept to be trafficked because they see prostitution in the developed nations as glamorous and a means of liberating themselves from poverty.

Similarly, Okonofua et al. (2004) and Onyeonoru, (2004) observe that in the context of Nigeria, unemployment, low socio-economic status of women, especially in parts of Edo and Delta states, are responsible for trafficking in young women. This assertion is buttressed by (Adepoju, 2006), who opines that poverty and ignorance force parents to traffick their children, hoping to benefit from their wages to sustain a deteriorating family income. Such parents tend to ignore the social stigma attached to prostitution and concentrate on the financial success stories told by families whose daughters had engaged in trafficking.

Another important trigger is the impact of remittances on the economies of source countries. It has been argued that remittances from nationals of Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Egypt, Eritrea, Lesotho, Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana have been on the increase and now equal Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) (Cross, Gelderblom, Roux & Mafukidze, 2006). Globally, it is estimated that $93 billion are remitted through official channels (IOM - UN Migration, 2018). Such remittances provide lifelines to low-income family members who use them to pay for essential services and education of siblings of the trafficked person. For Benin City, remittances from those trafficked are used to build family houses, provide boreholes for water, educate younger male siblings, invest in transportation businesses, hotels, and boutiques (Attoh, 2009). The investments are visible through the improved well-being of family members of those trafficked.

Traffickers use various channels to reach their victims. While traditional channels of trafficking, which include family, relatives, and friends remain in place, online technologies such as social media tools give traffickers the unprecedented ability to exploit a higher number of victims and advertise their services across geographic boundaries in an unsuspecting manner. Shekhar (2017) emphasizes that social media has turned into a happy hunting ground for sex traffickers as they can fly under the radar of authorities and prey on unsuspecting minors as well as job-seeking women under the garb of virtual anonymity. In affirming this assertion, Dixon (2013) explains that the techniques used by the traffickers to gain trust include the expression of love and admiration of the victim, promising to make the victim a star, and providing a ticket to a new location away from the victim's home.

Polaris (2019) reported that social media is being used by traffickers to recruit victims, proliferate their trafficking operations, and to control victims through restricting their social media access and impersonating them. Eze (2012), cited by

Omekwu, Eke and Odoh (2014), noted that social media and networking have become perilous as a result of the activities of criminals. The unlimited opportunities provided by social media elicit a reaction from Whiting (2012) who laments that traffickers can now reach out thousands of potential victims via Instagram, Facebook, Kik, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. It is recorded that the rapid increase in the use of social media among college students and youths between the ages of 18 and 29 makes them vulnerable to this attack (Griego, 2019**;** Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013)).

Theoretical Anchorage

Two theories are anchoring this study. They are the Radical Feminism Theory and the Social Penetration Theory

Radical Feminism

Radical feminists view women's oppression as the most fundamental form of oppression. This oppression is anchored on patriarchy, which organizes society into a complex network of relationships based on the assertion that the male gender is superior. Radical feminists posit that due to patriarchy, women have come to be viewed as the "other" to the male. As a result, they have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. They assert that the way to deal with the unequal power relations is through a reordering of the social structure as men are the primary beneficiaries of this oppression. They contend that men use social systems and other methods of control to subjugate women. The theory emphasizes the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges, and power primarily by gender, and as a result, oppressing women and privileging men (Lewis, 2017). This theory relates to this study, considering that in Benin City, the female gender is portrayed as a commodity (a non-person) owned by the family. Culturally she is inferior as society assigns her the twin roles of procreation and nurturing babies. The inferiority of the female gender is further reinforced in modern times through trafficking as young females are impelled by family heads to travel to Italy, Spain, The and Netherlands, among others, to prostitute and earn money to improve the family income and well-being.

The Social Penetration Theory

Irwin, Altman, and Taylor propounded the Social Penetration Theory in 1973. It submits that relationship and penetration goes through some stages, and that, as relationships develop, interpersonal communication moves from relatively shallow, non-intimate levels to deeper, more intimate levels. This theory states that relationship development is systematic and predictable and could expose vulnerabilities. This submission captures the relationship and interaction that take place between the traffickers and the victims via social media platforms. A trafficker can start a shallow relationship with a potential victim on the social media platform and nurse it to an intimate one such that personal and private discussions could take place between them. They usually start with liking a potential victim's page, sending friends' requests, making comments on her posts, and then graduate to having personal chats with her, which usually end up in invitation for physical visits and other offers.

Methodology

This study employed cross-sectional and qualitative research methods in order to acquire an in-depth understanding of the situation presented by the trafficked victims. Benin City was selected owing to its notoriety in the women trafficking saga. The cluster and snowball sampling systems were adopted respectively in identifying and selecting the respondents. The study sample comprised of 235 young women aged 15-25 years who were trafficked but deported. Due to the clandestine nature of the phenomenon, ten individuals, made up of immigration officers and NAPTIP officials, community leaders, and NGO officials, were identified and interviewed. These informants were selected based on their relevance to the study. The data collection methods were the Key Informant Interview (KII) and the Focus Group Discussion (Omojola, 2016; Omojola, Odiboh & Amodu, 2018). The interview items were semi-structured, with open-ended questions.

Twelve focused discussion groups made up of those who had spent a minimum of ten years abroad were conducted. Each focused group was made up of between 18 to 20 young women trafficked but deported. The researchers requested them to be truthful in the discussions as the study was aimed at making recommendations that could help in addressing the issues that pushed them into trafficking. The interviewees expressed their willingness to participate in the discussions. The interview period with each participant lasted an average period of forty-five minutes. Data collected were analyzed using both thematic and descriptive analysis.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Destination countries for the trafficked persons

During the FGD with the trafficked persons, the researchers tried to find out the trafficked persons' destination countries. They requested the respondents to be in groups based on their destination countries, after which members of each group were listed. This process was repeated during the entire twelve FGDs to be able to arrive at the exact total figure. The outcome is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Respondents Distribution by Destination Countries

Destination Countries	***f***	**%**
Italy	135	57.4
Spain	78	33.2
Others	22	9.4
Total	**235**	**100**

The information in Table 1 shows that the favorable destination country is Italy, with 57.4 percent, followed by Spain with 33.2 percent. The remaining 9.4 percent of the respondents were trafficked to other countries in Europe. The attraction for European countries as their preferred destination could be connected to their prolonged pre-colonial contact and interaction with Europe, which started in the 15th century. Confirming this result, Carling (2005) proclaimed that it was Italy's demand for low skilled labor in agriculture that sparked the migration of Nigerians, particularly, from Edo State. Cole and Booth (2007) support this opinion, stressing that women from Edo State were among the first generation of prostitutes in Italy. He explains that this first initially went to conduct legitimate businesses but later became compromised owing to living condition issues and started looking for ways to augment their meager earnings. Prostitution provided an opportunity. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI, 2004) has established this as a fact and noted that Turin and Verona are two cities with a large community of Nigerians and a strong presence of Nigerian prostitution.

Nexus between Patriarchy and Trafficking of Women in Benin City

The researchers also examined the roles played by victims' families to determine the nexus between society's patriarchal nature and the trafficking of women from Benin City. The victims were asked if their families linked them up with the traffickers. If otherwise, they should mention the level of support and encouragement received from their families. Their responses are captured under the following two sub-headings showing their areas of convergence and divergence.

Areas of convergence

- About 54 percent of the respondents stated that their channel of contact with their traffickers was their family members. They emphasized that the girls were not as valued or taken to be as important as the boys. As a result, their parents usually did not hesitate to accept the offer to traffic their female children whenever there was one.
- Another 37 percent stated that their families supported and encouraged them to follow the traffickers even though they did not initially link them up with them. They explained that the family support was evident in the oath swearing that the family members supported them to embark on before being flown to Europe by the traffickers.
- Surprisingly, the discussion with the trafficked persons revealed that every family in Benin City has a family member involved in trafficking either as a trafficked person, sponsor, or 'madam.'
- The ostentatious display of the properties acquired through the remittances from their trafficked daughters drove 84 percent of the young women into trafficking.

The entire 100 percent stated that the patriarchal cultural system in Benin City, coupled with the economic situation in the country which has left most young women hopeless, pushed them into trafficking. They emphasized that the knowledge and understanding that female children could never have any inheritance from their families, unlike their male siblings, compelled the females to accept trafficking as a way out of the quagmire.

Areas of Divergence

The areas of divergence are the following:

- The assertion that the patriarchal cultural system in Benin city made the young females accept trafficking as a legal business was not accepted by about 61 percent of the respondents
- About 56 percent of the respondents objected to the view that their families rejected women or girls who refused to join trafficking.

The result of the KII correlated with the outcome of the discussion with the trafficked persons. It revealed that many families supported their daughters and sometimes persuaded them into trafficking by emphasizing and pointing to houses, cars, boreholes, and other material things acquired through the remittances from their age and school mates.

Influence of Social Media on the Trafficking of Women in Benin City

Findings revealed that social media is having a significant influence on the trafficking of females in Benin City. It enables easy access between the traffickers and the potentially trafficked persons. Some of their statements are presented below under the areas of convergence and divergence, respectively.

Areas of Convergence

- The remaining respondents who were not linked to the traffickers by their families unanimously stated that social media chats, especially Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, made it very easy for them to connect with the traffickers. Sometimes too, their friends and relatives abroad also give their phone numbers to the traffickers to chat them up.
- About 71 percent of the respondents indicated that social media had contributed massively to escalating trafficking activities. They agreed that the motivation came via seamless and regular communication with the traffickers using social media platforms.
- They admitted that social media is influencing trafficking by serving as a platform that the traffickers use in circulating enticing false information that lured some of the trafficked persons. For instance, some people were initiated into the trade through frivolous online job advertisements

- Beautiful pictures of the environment and streets of the destination countries posted by already trafficked victims on social media also attracted the potential victims.

Area of Divergence

- There was a disagreement that social media advertisements for job opportunities was the main reason victims connected with the traffickers

The findings from KII also corroborate the statements made by the trafficked victims. They strongly show that social media is escalating trafficking activities by enabling easy access to potential victims and providing the platform for the traffickers to circulate false information lure young women and girls.

Measures towards Curbing Sex Trafficking among Benin City Women

The response generated on measures to be adopted to curb trafficking of women centers on the empowering of girls and the provision of sustainable means of livelihood for them. The summary of their responses are;

- Since the patriarchic tradition debars girls from family inheritance rights, the government should empower them by training them to acquire skills in different areas of their individual choices or provide them gainful employment.
- The government should build functional factories in Benin City so that the educated ones could be employed. Such a move, according to them, could dissuade families from prostitution.

Discussion of the findings

The research outcome on the nexus between patriarchy and trafficking of women in Benin City gives a clear picture of the influencing and supporting roles played by the family. It buttresses the assertion in extant literature that migration in whatever guise is never an individual decision. In the context of Benin City, it establishes that patriarchy influences the trafficking of women. This result agrees with the findings of Braimah (2013) that despite the existence of criminal syndicates, most traffickers were loose networks of family members. The revelation that families take pride in having at least a daughter in Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands is an indication that families without daughters in any of those European countries are considered inconsequential. The work of Ohonba and Agbobitaen-Eghafona (2019) also validates the findings of the study by revealing that many families in Benin City take pride in the projects executed from the remittances received from their trafficked daughters.

Regarding the influence of social media on the trafficking of women in Benin City, the study has established that social media significantly influence trafficking by enabling information access between the traffickers and potential victims. This finding is in agreement with Whiting (2012) and Richmond (2017) affirmation that traffickers which were once limited to luring victims in the street, can now reach thousands of people through social media tools such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. Shekhar (2017) also acknowledges that social media has turned into a hunting ground for sex traffickers. This outcome implies that while numerous benefits are attributed to the use of social media, the people and government should not lose focus on the fact that there are also inherent ills associated with it. The existence of both positive and negative influences implies the need to curb the unwholesome spread of information.

It is important to note that both patriarchy and social media are contributory factors for trafficking. The findings of this study have shown that the two factors complement one another as none of them can successfully cause the escalation of trafficking independent of the other. The point exists in the study that even when the contact point is social media, families induce or even compel their young women to sign an agreement before the traffickers send them abroad. The finding here agrees with the Catholic Relief Services' (2019) statement that the causes of human trafficking are complex and interlinked, and include economic, social, and political factors. The statement emphasizes the point that poverty alone does not necessarily create vulnerability to trafficking, but becomes potent when combined with other factors such as civil unrest, lack of access to education, unemployment, family disruptions or dysfunctions, and human rights violations.

Conclusions

This study has shown that both patriarchy and social media influence the trafficking of women in Benin City, Nigeria. In a bid to exit the systematic stigmatization and improve their well-being and that of their family through remittances, many Benin City women and girls accepted to be trafficked. Moreover, his study has also established that social media escalates the problem by enabling the unrestricted flow of information between the traffickers and potential victims. It appears that this technological advancement compounds the problem rather than ameliorates it.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended;

- Job opportunities should be created to absorb the army of the unemployed young girls especially, the secondary school graduates
- National policies should be instituted to enable law enforcement and civil society organizations to monitor closely frivolous online job advertisement sites that promote trafficking and checkmate their owners.
- The Nigerian government and relevant multilateral agencies institute cross-border collaboration efforts and activities aimed at stopping the menace.
- The traditional institutions in Benin City should be encouraged to modernize by doing away with those customs and beliefs that make the female gender inferior. Women, too, should be celebrated!
- Current printed information on trafficking should be repackaged into audio-visuals by the public libraries and made available and accessible to the rural people in Benin City.
- Public libraries should also join the anti-trafficking advocacy by displaying posters in the library and carrying out outreach programs focused on anti-trafficking. During such programs, they should enlighten the public on the dangers associated with trafficking.

References

Adepoju, A. (2006). Leading issues in international migration in Sub-Saharan Africa. In C. Cross, et al, (Eds.), *Views on Migration in sub-Saharan Africa*. South Africa: HSRC Press.

Attoh, F. (2013). Globalization, Air Travel and Trafficking in women: Insights from Benin City. In M. Sotunso & O. Yacob—Haliso (Eds.), *Women in Africa, contexts, rights, hegemonies*. Abeokuta (Ogun State): Babcock University Gender and African Studies Group (BUGAS).

Attoh, F. C. N. (2009). Trafficking of Women in Nigeria: Poverty of Values or Inequality? *International Journal of Social Sciences*, *1*9(3), 167 – 171. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2009.11892705.

Braimah, T. S. (2013). Sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: causes and solutions. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, *13* (3), 17-29. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2273039.

Carling, J. (2005) *Trafficking in women from Nigeria to Europe: Migration information source*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=10

Catholic Relief Service (2019). *7 Things you may not know about human trafficking, and 3 ways to help*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.crs.org/stories/stop-human-trafficking

Cole, J., & Booth, S. (2007). *Dirty work: Immigrants in domestic service, agriculture, and prostitution in Sicily*. Lanham: Lexington Books, p.123.

Cross, C., Gelderblom, D., Roux, N., & Mafukidze, J. (Eds.). (2006). *Views on migration in Sub-Saharan Africa: Proceedings of an African migration alliance workshop*. Cape Town, HSRC Press.

Dixon, H. B. (2013). Human Trafficking and the Internet and Other Technologies, too. *The Judges Journal*, 52 (1). Retrieved October 2, 2018 from http://www.americanbar.org/publications/judges_journal/2013/winter/human_trafficking_and_internet_and_other_technologies_too.html

Ellis, T., & Okpalla, J. (2011). Making sense of the relationship between trafficking in persons, human smuggling, and organized crime: The case of Nigeria. *Police Journal*, *84*, 13-34.

Folayan, B.J., Omojola, O., Egharevba, M., Oyesomi, K., Yartey, D & Adeyeye, B. (2018). The use of ICT-rooted communication codes and slangs among Nigerian students. The *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, *4*(12), 633-641.

Griego, K. (2019). *8 Facts about how social media affects human trafficking*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://borgenproject.org/fact s-about-how-social-media-affects-human-trafficking/.

Hamdan, S. B. (2019). *The impact of social media on human trafficking*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://prezi.com/p/bl4pfcle3yve/the-impact-of-social-media-on-human-trafficking/.

Igbinoba , A.O., Soola, E.O., Omojola, O. ,Odukoya,, J., Adekeye, O. & Salau, O.P. (2020) . Women's mass media exposure and maternal health awareness in Ota, Nigeria. *Cogent Social Sciences, 6*(1), DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2020.1766260.

International Organization on Migration (2018). *Fighting human trafficking in nigeria through awareness raising*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://medium.com/@UNmigration/fighting-human-trafficking-in-nigeria-through-awareness-raising-4cf6f39d794

Irwin, Altman, I., & Taylor, D. (1973). Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships. New York: Holt.

Johnson, A. (2013). Sex traffickers reach girls via social media. *The Columbus Dispatch*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2013/01/24/sex-traffickers-reach-girls-via-social-media.html.

Kigbu, S. K., & Hassan, Y. B. (2015). Legal framework for combating human trafficking in Nigeria: The Journey So Far. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 38. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JLPG/article/view/23682.

Latonero, M. (2011). Executive summary report on human trafficking online: the role of social networking sites and online. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://technologyandtrafficking.usc.edu/report/executive-summary/

Lewis, J. J. (2017) W*hat is radical feminism?* Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-radical-feminism-3528997.

Muskat-Gorska, Z. (2011). The role of the internet in trafficking for labour exploitation. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/internet_and_labour_trafficking.pdf.

Nirmala, H. P., & Yoganarasimhachari. (2014). Women trafficking: A challenge to women rights in India. *International Journal of Research in Engineering, IT and Social Sciences*, *4* (8), 9-14.

Ohonba, A., & Agbobitaen-Eghafona, K. (2019). Transnational remittance from human trafficking and the changing socio-economic status of women in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. *Women Studies*, *48* (5) 531-547. https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2019.1632609.

Ojoh, A. (2012). *Empowering Nigerian women in the 21st century: Measuring the gap*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.grin.com/document/192007.

Okonofua, F. E., Ogbomwan, S. M., Alutu, A. N., Okop, K., & Aghahowa, E. (2004) "Knowledge, Attitudes and experiences of sex trafficking by young women in Benin City, South-South Nigeria. *Social Science Medicine*, *59*(6), 1315-27. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2004.01.010.

Okorie, N., Loto, G. & Omojola, O. (2018). Blogging, civic engagement, and coverage of political conflict in Nigeria: A study of Nairaland. com. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences 39* (2), 291-298.

Omekwu, C. O., Eke, H. N., & Odoh, J. N. (2014). The use of social networking sites among the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal), 1195*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1195.

Omojola, O. (2016). Using Symbols and Shapes for Analysis in Small Focus Group Research. *The Qualitative Report*, *21*(5), 834-847. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol21/iss5/3.

Omojola, O., Odiboh, O. & Amodu, L. (2018). Opinions as Colors: A visual analysis technique for modest focus group transcripts. *The Qualitative Report*, *23*(8), 2019-2035. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss8/16.

Omojola, O. (2014). *women's political visibility and media* *access: The case of Nigeria*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholarship Publishing.

Omojola, O. (2009). English-oriented ICTs and ethnic language survival strategies in Africa. *Global Media Journal 3*(1), 33-45.

Onyeonoru, P. I. (2004). Pull factors in the political economy of international commercial sex work in Nigeria. *African Sociological Review*, *8*(2). Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.ajol.info/index.php/asr/article/view/23254.

Osuigwe, J. (2017). *Nigeria's fight against human trafficking: A call for action*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.icirnigeria.org/nigerias-fight-against-human-trafficking-a-call-for-action/.

Polaris. (2019). Human trafficking. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking-and-social-media/.

Richmond, J. C. (2017). *The root cause of trafficking is traffickers*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://www.traffickinginstitute.org/the-root-cause-of-trafficking-is-traffickers/

Shekhar, S. (2017). *Sex traffickers using social media to prey on victims*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/human-trafficking-social-media-women-minors-modern-slaves/1/935886.html.

Sponcil, M., & Gitimu, P. (2013). Use of social media by college students: Relationship to communication and self-concept. *Journal of Technology Research*, *4*, 1-13. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from www.aabri.com/manuscripts/121214.pdf

Tapinos, G. (2000). *Trends in International Migration*. New York: United Nations.

UNICRI (2004). *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy: The Data, the Stories, the Social Services*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from http://www.unicri.it/services/library_documentation/publications/unicri_series/trafficking_nigeria-italy.pdf.

Vieson, J. (2017). *The challenges of human trafficking in nigeria*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://afjn.org/the-challenges-of-human-trafficking-in-nigeria/.

Wikipedia (2015). *Benin City*. Retrieved October 2, 2018 https://en.m.wikipedia.org.

Whiting, A (2012). *How traffickers use social media to lure vulnerable teenagers into sex work*. New York: Thomson Reuter Foundation. Retrieved October 2, 2018 from https://venturebeat.com/2015/11/15/how-traffickers-use-social-media-to-lure-vulnerable-teenagers-into-sex-work/.