



Content Analysis of Selected Newspapers' Coverage of #EndSARS Protest in Nigeria

Oyelola Oyewale Jacob

Department of Mass Communication, The Federal Polytechnic Ado, Ado, Nigeria

***Corresponding Author Email:** waleoyelola@gmail.com

Abstract

The #EndSARS protest in Nigeria was a clear case of digital activism that transformed into a physical demonstration across the country in 2020. This study adopted content analysis to examine coverage of the #EndSARS protest by four selected newspapers: The Punch, The Nation, Nigerian Tribune and Daily Trust. The total population of the study included published editions of four selected newspapers from 4th October to 31st December 2020, with 89 editions of each newspaper for a total of 352 editions. The researcher selected 39 editions of each of the four selected newspapers using a composite sampling method, making 156 editions. Findings revealed that four selected newspapers gave the #EndSARS protest in-depth coverage by providing accurate and adequate information on issues surrounding the protest. This study therefore recommended that Nigerian newspapers should provide and allot more space or adopt in-depth analysis of issues by undertaking interpretative analysis rather than news reporting.

Keywords: *Coverage, #EndSARS Protest, Newspaper*

1. Introduction

Activism is working or campaigning for political or social change. Activism is a way of raising awareness about societal ills and could be carried out in various means. Activism can also be defined as the doctrine or practice of vigorous action or involvement as a means of achieving political or other goals, sometimes by demonstrations, protests, etc. According to Cambridge dictionary (2021), activism is the use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result, usually a political or social one. The doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially, in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue. Activism has played a major role in ending slavery, challenging dictatorships, protecting workers from exploitation, protecting the environment, promoting equality for women, opposing racism, and many other important issues. Activism can also be used for aims such as attacking minorities or promoting war. However, the evolution of technology has changed the way activists and social change crusaders carryout their activism. This has led to the concept of digital activism which is a form of activism that uses the Internet and digital media as key platforms for mass mobilization and political action.

Digital activism has transformed the way events, protests and movements are organised. (Akhlaghpour & Vaast, 2018) Digital Activism is usage of tools such as the internet, social media, email and mobile phones are used for mobilization, political action and to incite change. Digital activism has transformed the way events, protests and movements are organized, helping to



mobilize supporters and raise awareness of a diverse range of causes. The #Endsars protest in Nigeria is a clear example of digital activism that transformed to physical demonstration across the country. It has existed in one form or another since the 1990s and has continued to grow with the advent of Web 2.0 and the social media boom. Today it is likely one of the first methods of activism that comes to mind because of how quick and easy it is to reach people on a global scale.

Activists deploy different tools and resources in digital activism that are constantly changing as technology evolves. Watters highlights online petitions, social media, mobile phones, blogs and crowd fundraising platforms as tools of digital activism. The most impactful activism overtime comes in the form of collective action, in which numerous individuals coordinate an act of protest together in order to make a bigger impact. Collective action that is purposeful, organized, and sustained over a period of time becomes known as a social movement.

In Nigeria, the #EndSARS Campaign started in 2017 but gained global momentum in 2020. The hashtag gained global traction with tweets and retweet from prominent personalities. On October 3, 2020 @AfricaOfficial handle posted a tweet to report a young boy's shooting by agents of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a Nigerian Police Force (NPF) unit, in Ughelli Delta State, Nigeria. (Vanguard, 2020). The tweet had claimed that the agents dropped his dead body on the road while making away with his car. The two weeks of protests across the globe were quite instructive concerning the debate on digital activism and its effectiveness in the age of the internet of things, as scholars explored the dynamics of symbolic activism (also referred to as clicktivism) and substantive activism that includes public mobilization (Cernat, 2012; Akhlaghpour & Vaast, 2018; Sesen and Seker, 2019).

Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was initially created to fight armed robbery and kidnapping but had been noted for the victimization of innocent citizens who are often victimized because of their appearances (growing dreadlocks) and property (owning iPhones, computers, and sports utility vehicles). Despite several reported cases of these abuses, the Government's responses have not been perceived as effective, with several inconclusive investigations and past attempts at reforms aborted. The latest report on the recommendation of a panel constituted to investigate abuses, further validates this claim. Mr. Tony Ojukwu, the Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission, headed the panel that indicted 35 police officers in 12 states for engaging in brutality and harassment of citizens and 33 were recommended for prosecution. (Adesomoju, 2020)

The lack of trust between Nigerian citizens and their Government, a fallout of which was the #EndSARS protests, is hinged on the persistence of symbolic gestures of setting up panels and commissions of inquiry, whose reports end up as white papers at best, without the substantive implementation of recommendations. The #EndSARS campaign has been riddled with controversy since the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos on October 20, 2020. The protests were reportedly peaceful until the reports of violence against protesters in Abuja, who were tear-gassed and beaten with batons by the police; and the killing of Jimoh Isaiaka and other persons in Oyo State by federal agents. The police were blamed for several deaths recorded across the country, notably in Kano, Ogun, and Plateau (Akanbi, 2020; Babatunde, 2020, Mac-Leva, 2020).



Newspapers primarily exist to inform, entertain and educate society about happenings within and around (Abdullahi, 2018). It derives the impulse to do so from people's natural inability to satisfactorily meet these needs themselves. Newspaper also exists to perform surveillance function. By this, it means that the newspaper, apart from informing, entertaining and educating its audience, also serve as watchdog of society (Halilu, Garba & Abdulmumin, n.d). Neale (2014) opines that media influence so many people's behaviour nowadays. Information can be spread after a few clicks of a button, whether it is true, false, speculation or gossip.

Bello (2015) posits that newspapers in fulfilling basic functions in the society; have always devoted attention to the coverage of various aspects of human endeavours. These include, but not limited to, politics, education, sports, business, conflict, economy, religion, arts and culture, entertainment and health. Notable communication researchers have examined how the news media can influence public perception or attitude towards certain issues through framing (see: Onwubere, 2016; Bello, 2015; Brown & Udomisor, 2015; Odoemelam, Ncube & Okoro; 2014; Olorede, 2011; Njoku, 2010; & Hassan, 2009). Frame, according to Lamidi and Olisa (2016) is a key organizing theme or idea that provides meaning to issues or events reported in a news story. Also, Kim et al. (2014) sees framing as an idea that packages an issue in a specific way, telling what the issue is all about. Media frames suggest how the public can interpret an issue or event reported by the media, and framing involves selection and salience. To this end, newspapers as one of the mass media platforms, can shape audience opinion in conflict situation like the nationwide #EndSARS protest in Nigeria in October 2020. The #ENDSARS social movement with online presence since 2017 was reignited following reports of the shooting of an unarmed young man by members of Nigeria Police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

This study examined issues framing in the #EndSARS protest and the potential of Nigerian newspapers in creating awareness, reinforcing people's pre-existing knowledge about protest through the frequency of coverage given to the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This study specifically focuses attention on the #EndSARS protest because of its sensitivity and the consequential social, political and economic implication it has on the country. The fact that certain issues are covered by the media gives credibility and credence to such issues, and further moves such issues from media agenda to public agenda (Nwabueze & Edegoh, 2010 cited in Olorede, 2013). Framing affects how a story is told and influences public perception. One reason for this is that, the public's lack of awareness, along with their reliance on media for information and decision-making make them more likely to be influenced by framing.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the coverage of #EndSARS protest in Nigeria by four selected newspapers; The Punch, The Nation, Nigerian Tribune and Daily Trust. This study will also examine the issues focused on by four selected newspapers in reporting and framing the protest. The specific objectives of this study include; This study examined issues framing in the #EndSARS protest and the potential of Nigerian newspapers in creating awareness, reinforcing people's pre-existing knowledge about protest through the frequency of coverage given to the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This study specifically focuses attention on the #EndSARS protest because of its sensitivity and the consequential social, political and economic implication it has on the country. The fact that certain issues are covered by the media gives credibility and credence to such issues, and further moves such issues from media agenda to public agenda (Nwabueze & Edegoh, 2010 cited in Olorede, 2013). Framing affects how a story is told and influences public perception. One reason for this is that, the public's lack of awareness, along with their reliance on media for information and decision-making make them more likely to be influenced by framing



To ascertain the depth of coverage given to #EndSARS protest by four selected Newspapers; To identify the dominant themes used in the coverage of #EndSARS protest by four selected newspapers; To examine the geographical coverage by four selected newspapers during the #EndSARS protest.

Research Questions

- i. How deep was coverage given to #EndSARS protest by four selected newspapers?
- ii. What are the dominant themes used in the coverage of #EndSARS protest by selected newspapers?
- iii. How did the selected newspapers reflect the geographical coverage during the #EndSARS protest?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Review

Newspaper as a Medium of Communication

Newspapers generally contains varied topics of interest which are meant for a broad spectrum of audience among who are school children, youths in their impressionable years, elites and educated adults, semi-illiterates and stark illiterates, etc. They are published in order to disseminate diverse kinds of information that are of interest to the reading public, both young and old. There are different columns in the newspapers devoted to different areas of life. For instance, majority of Nigerian newspapers contain local news column, sports column, entertainment column, arts column, advice column which can be divided into personal, medical, automobile, household, educational, and so on.

Similarly, Aliagan cited in Akinola (2014) emphasizes that “newspapers relates news, provides information, entertains, provides comments on passing events, makes a critique of current problems, have cartoons, features and advertisements”. Newspapers are among the most accessible texts available to the vast majority of people – literate, illiterate, young and old, students, workers, elites and peasants – in any community. This is because every category of reader mentioned above can find something that interests them inside newspaper pages.

Buttressing the above assertions, *Academic American Encyclopaedia* (2009) describes newspaper in a broad sense as an unbounded printed publication, issued at regular interval that seeks to inform, analyze, influence and entertain. Corroborating this statement, Ewuola (2010) opines that “Newspaper is a journal that reports daily occurrences, and is published and circulated daily”. Today’s newspapers use design elements – story placement, typeface, and graphics – to make information easily accessible to the reader. Important stories are usually placed at the top of the page

Roles and Functions of Newspaper in the Society

Similarly, Isamuko (2014) maintains that the press, which includes newspaper and magazine performs the following specific functions. To serve as the watchdog on government. That is performing the check and balancing function. This means that the press should work on behalf



of the people to expose corruption in government and among the governed, so as to bring desired changes in the society.

To perform community and public services by publishing birth or birthdays of people without any form of gratification. However, the Nigerian press has been performing this function for commercial gains.

To promote social consciousness: The press should mobilize the people and involve them in planning, policies and programmes in the society. This function can be carried out through editorial and feature article writing.

The newspaper can warn the society of dangers and hazards: such as outbreak of epidemics, disasters, wars and emergency situations.

It provides the forum for decision making: This includes providing forum for debates on social, economic and political issues facing the people. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan debate in the Nigerian press under the regime of General Ibrahim is a perfect example.

Overview of #EndSARS Movement

The #EndSARS is a decentralized social movement, and series of mass protests aimed at ending police brutality, especially as perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad. The protest (Movement) started as a Twitter campaign in 2017 using the hashtag ##EndSARS. There was resurgence in October 2020 as more abuses by the police unit were revealed (Ige & Ige, 2021). To achieve its objective of massive mobilization of especially youths, for achievement of its objective, the methods, according to Ige and Ige (2021) included protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience and online activism. However, of all its methods; the online activism set the movement apart from all previous protests organizers in Nigeria on Twitter alone, the movement accumulated about 28million tweets. Through a deft use of online activism, the movement got Nigerians in Diaspora involved in its demonstration while sympathy demonstrations also took place in some major cities of Europe and America.

Successes like disbandment of the police unit by the Nigerian Inspector General of Police, massive participation by hundreds of thousands of youths and global support prompted the movement to up the stakes by demanding for good and accountable governance in Nigeria. Under the above hostile environment, media professionals are still expected to perform their functions of informing, educating, entertaining and helping to transmit society culture. A key element in journalist's quest to not only do these, but also to be seen doing them is to be objective in his reportage of events. At the infant stage of the ##EndSARS protests, the organizers accused a section of the Nigerian media of either not reporting, under reporting or misrepresenting their activities. Put simply, they accused the media of lack of objectivity in both its coverage and reportage of the protests. When the protests began, it was low-keyed and about the same time Nigeria was battling with upsurge in security challenges occasioned by increased kidnapping for ransom. These events attracted more media attention than the protests when they initially began.



Conflict Reporting in Nigerian Newspapers

The word “conflict” connotes quarrel, fight, struggle, different idea or opposing aims. It refers to a wide range of argument, tension and violent act that occurs both within and between states. Ogbuoshi, Oyeleke & Folorunsho (2019) asserts that, conflict is a struggle over value or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the claims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Conflict emerges wherever at least one party or person perceives that one or more of his goals or purpose or preference or means for achieving such goals or performances are being threatened or hindered by the intention or activities of one or more other parties.

Succinctly put, conflict is the pursuit of incompatible or at least seemingly incompatible goals such that gains to one-side come about at the expense of the other. Conflicts and crises are manifest behaviours which take the forms of internal disagreement, open fight, arson, abuse, murder, blackmail, litigation, and all sorts of negative actions, which tend to threaten a society and thus undermine the safety and stability of the citizenry inhabiting that society.

2.2. Theoretical Review

Framing and agenda setting theories were adopted for this research due to their relevance. Framing Theory is quite similar to the agenda-setting tradition, but expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand, rather than on a particular topic. American Anthropologist, Gregory Bateson is credited to have firstly worked on framing in 1972, but the theory was put forth in the sociological context by Ervin Goffman in 1974 and it rests on the basic assumptions that;

- People interpret and use expectations to make sense of what is going on around their world through their primary framework,
- News content is typically shaped and contextualized by journalists by understanding the words, images, phrases and presentation styles used in the media outlet about an issue; thus, the choice of these words depends on the content producers, media outlet and their perception about an issue.
- Media select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular issue.
- How information is presented to the audience (frame) influences the choices people make about how to process that information (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).
- Media focus attention on certain events and then place them within a field of meaning and interpretation to the masses.
- Frame building is a systematic process that occurs over time. They are reinforced every time they evoked; whether positively or negatively.

However, the theory has widely been criticized McQuail (2005) argues that framing cannot be seen as a theory on its own, but rather a part of agenda setting theory or better said, framing is just second-level of agenda setting theory. Thus, he sees it as a repetition of agenda setting theory. Thus, this theory is relevant to the study under review because, it explains how newspapers covered the ‘#EndSARS’ protest in Nigeria, and how various issues in the protests were framed.



Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972/1973. The theory among others rests on the core assumptions that: the mass media sets agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues, project issues for discussions, mass media reflect social reality because news is filtered, chosen and shaped by newsroom staff. Few media agenda which were chosen by professional gatekeepers lead people to perceive given issues as important and the media make us to think about certain issues, they make us to think or feel that certain issues are more important than others in our society.

Among major criticisms of the theory, as posited by Davis (2012), cited in Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017) People may not be well-informed, deeply engaged in public affairs, thoughtful and sceptical; instead, they may pay only casual attention to public affairs and remain ignorant of the details.

These theories are relevant to this study that provides an understanding of #EndSARS' protests in the sense that persistent newspaper coverage and discussions on it turned it to a public agenda, therefore raising it to the level of public discussions and debates. The frequency of reportage on 'EndSARS' protests, make it too important to be ignored.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted content analysis method to analyze the contents of *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers between 4th October and 31st December 2020 on the issue of #EndSARS. Content analysis method is employed in this study as a result of the nature of the research which is social-scientific and thus seeks to explore the way Nigerian newspapers reported the ##EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This method is often used to describe and compare media contents, and deduce the influence of such contents with a view to discerning patterns and making statements. The selection of the four newspapers was based on the following reasons:

- They have maintained visibility in print and online for a considerable period of time, and listed on the Nigerian Press Council website among notable newspapers in Nigeria which command wide readership.
- These newspapers have sustained publication during the period of the study (4th October to 31st December 2020).
- The four are newspapers registered in Nigeria.
- They are available on the newsstand nationwide, and also available to the researcher for the purpose of this study.
- The newspapers have libraries, thus; they can be assessed in any of their state correspondents' offices

The population of study for this research is four selected newspapers (*The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers) published between 4th October and 31st December 2020. The total editions of the four newspapers for three months were purposively selected for analysis in this study. The sampling procedure that is adopted for this research work is the



composite week sampling technique. Composite week sampling technique is a method of picking several individual samples at regular and specified time periods (Ponte, 2015). Composite sampling method was used to over the selected months in 2020 for each of the selected four newspapers. Monday, Wednesday and Sunday editions in order to cover week days and weekend publications in the study. This implies that 39 editions of each of the selected newspaper were used as sample making total 156 editions. The units of analysis included; newspaper identification, days, depth of coverage, theme, and geographical coverage of news, opinion articles/columns, editorials were analysed.

4. Data analysis and discussion

Data collected by the researcher in the course of the study. In order to achieve the set objectives, one hundred and fifty-six (156) newspaper editions from *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers were selected. These selected editions include publications from 4th October- 31st December, 2020. The total of 156 editions of the four selected newspapers were content analyzed in this study.

Table 4.1: Total Editions of Newspaper under Coverage

	Newspaper	Frequency	Percent
Valid	The Punch	124	30.5
	The Nation	87	21.4
	Nigerian Tribune	118	29.0
	Daily Trust	78	19.2
	Total	407	100.0

The above table indicates that a total of 407 stories (contents) were covered by *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers within the study period. However, *The Punch* newspaper had the highest with 124 stories representing 30.5%, followed by *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper with 118 stories representing 29.0%. The *Nation* newspaper had 87 stories representing 21.4% while *Daily Trust* newspaper had the lowest number of stories covered on #EndSARS protest.

Table 4.2: Depth of Coverage Given to #EndSARS Protest

		Newspaper				Total
		Nigerian				
Type of Story		The Punch	The Nation	Tribune	Daily Trust	
Valid	News Story	75	51	73	55	254
		29.5%	20.1%	28.7%	21.7%	100.0%
	Editorial	14	3	21	9	47



	29.8%	6.4%	44.7%	19.1%	100.0%
Feature	25	24	15	10	74
Story/Interviews	33.8%	32.4%	20.3%	13.5%	100.0%
Columns/Opinions	10	9	9	4	32
	31.3%	28.1%	28.1%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	124	87	118	78	407
	30.5%	21.4%	29.0%	19.2%	100.0%

In order to determine the depth of coverage given to #EndSARS protest by the selected newspaper, the researcher firstly categorized the stories according to the types of stories. Stories reported in news type are considered as those with low depth while stories written in editorial, feature story/interview, column and opinions are seen as those given much of depth. Table 4.2 revealed that majority of the stories covered on #EndSARS protest in the selected Editions of *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers were covered mostly in news format. The newspapers gave an average depth to coverage of issues on #EndSARS protest as a substantial amount of stories were reported with editorial, feature story/interviews, columns and opinions etc.

Table 4.3: Depth of Coverage Given to #EndSARS Protest by Individual Newspapers

		Newspaper				Total
Depth of Coverage		The Punch	The Nation	Nigerian Tribune	Daily Trust	
Valid	1-5 Paragraphs	6	9	15	3	33
		18.2%	27.3%	45.5%	9.1%	100.0%
	5-10 Paragraphs	50	35	45	31	161
		31.1%	21.7%	28.0%	19.3%	100.0%
	11-15 Paragraphs	42	22	31	31	126
		33.3%	17.5%	24.6%	24.6%	100.0%
	16-20 Paragraphs	15	13	15	7	50
		30.0%	26.0%	30.0%	14.0%	100.0%
	21-25 Paragraphs	9	6	8	3	26
		34.6%	23.1%	30.8%	11.5%	100.0%
	26 Paragraphs and above	2	2	4	3	11
		18.2%	18.2%	36.4%	27.3%	100.0%
Total		124	87	118	78	407
		30.5%	21.4%	29.0%	19.2%	100.0%

A further break down of the data also shows the depths of coverage given to #EndSARS protest in each of the selected newspapers. However, table 4.4 shows that most of *The Punch*



newspaper's stories on #EndSARS were written in 11-15 paragraphs followed by those with 5-10 paragraphs. *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper on the other hand focused more on stories with 1-5 paragraphs with 45.5%. *The Nation* newspaper also reported most of her stories with 5-10 paragraphs with 21.7% while *Daily Trust* newspaper had most of her stories also in 5-10 and 11-15 paragraphs. This implied that each newspaper deal majorly with reportage of the issues on #EndSARS protest and thus create much space for reporting the issues within the study period.

Table 4.4: Dominant Themes used in the coverage of #EndSARS protest by selected newspapers

Dominant Themes	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent
Violence	70	17.2	17.2
Destruction	61	15.0	15.0
Death/Killing	26	6.4	6.4
Peace-making	12	2.9	2.9
Threat	9	2.2	2.2
Police brutality	7	1.7	1.7
Police extortion	2	.5	.5
Harassment	7	1.7	1.7
Abuse of power	3	.7	.7
Youth restiveness	12	2.9	2.9
Economic loss	14	3.4	3.4
Protest	37	9.1	9.1
Judicial panel	17	4.2	4.2
Lekki Shooting	50	12.3	12.3
Human Rights Abuse	18	4.4	4.4
Police Arrest	17	4.2	4.2
Palliative looting	25	6.1	6.1
Extra judicial killing	12	2.9	2.9
Curfew	8	2.0	2.0
Total	407	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

This table reveals that the majority of the stories covered on the #EndSARS protest in the selected newspapers were violent issues with 17.2%. This is followed destruction having 15.0% and Lekki shooting with 12.3% and protest with 9.1%, death/killing with 6.4%. The aforementioned constituted dominant themes used in the reportage of issues surrounding #EndSARS protest in the selected editions of *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. The dominance of the themes identified above may be as a result of the actions that followed the #EndSARS protest where various governmental and private properties were destroyed among various killings and brutalization. Palliative looting is another theme focused on by the newspapers with 6.1% of the stories reported on it. The usage of this theme



could be linked to happenings that came fought after the peaceful protest turned rowdy by thugs thereby leading to looting of warehouses and other properties. Other themes used by the newspapers in the coverage of issues surrounding the #EndSARS protest includes peace-making (2.9%), threat with 2.2%, police brutality (2.9%), police extortion (0.5%), harassment (1.7%), abuse of power (0.7%), youth restiveness (2.9%), economic loss (3.4%), judicial panel 4.2%), human right abuse (4.4%), police arrest (4.2%), extra judicial killing (2.9%) and curfew with 2.0%.

Table 4.5: Geographical Coverage of #EndSARS protest by selected newspapers

	Geographical Context	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	North Central	38	9.3	9.3
	North West	35	8.6	8.6
	North East	22	5.4	5.4
	South South	104	25.6	25.6
	South East	73	17.9	17.9
	South West	127	31.2	31.2
	Foreign Countries	8	2.0	2.0
	Total	407	100.0	100.0

Table 4.6 above shows that most of the stories reported on #EndSARS protest by *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers were from the Southern part of the nation with South West having the highest (31.2%), followed by South South (25.6%) and South East with 17.9%. However, North Central region of the nation had 9.3% stories reported on #EndSARS protest, North West had 8.6% while North East had 5.4%. Also, those from foreign countries or Diaspora were 2.0%. This could however be traced to the fact that most of the issues on #EndSARS protest occurred in the south and also involved most southerners than the northerners.

5. Findings and Discussions

Findings from this study revealed that the selected newspapers (*The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* newspapers) covered #EndSARS protest to a large extent. Having 39.6% of the stories reported 5-10 paragraphs justified the fact that most of the stories were covered in news format even as stories with 11-15 paragraphs had 31.0%. Also, it is noteworthy that the selected newspapers were dominated with violent themes (17.2%), destruction (15.0%), Lekki shooting (12.3%), protest (9.1%), and death/killing (6.4%). More so, the selected newspapers covered most of their stories from the Southern part of the nation. The summary of findings are thus presented as follows:



- The newspapers gave in-depth coverage to EndSARS protest as majority of the stories were presented in 6-10 paragraphs showing that they were majorly presented in news format.
- The dominant themes used in the coverage of EndSARS protest by selected newspapers include violent themes, destruction, Lekki shooting, protest and death/killing. This was so as a result of the way and manner in which the protest took place as well as further imbroglio that emanates as a result of the protest.
- Most of the stories covered on #EndSARS protest were from the Southern part especially the South West.

Based on the revelation of the data gathered and analyzed, it can be deduced that the newspapers covered the #EndSARS protest to a considerable extent. By constantly reporting issues revolving around the protest, the newspapers as one of the mass media platform did well in shaping audience opinion in conflict situation like the nationwide #EndSARS protest that happened in Nigeria in October 2020. Furthermore, it is the role of the newspapers in a democratic setting to keep the citizenry well informed. Unless citizens have adequate and accurate information on all issues and problems confronting them, they will not be able to take enlightened decisions on them.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, conflict sensitive-journalism otherwise known as peace journalism which combines journalism with peace as a central aim and understands itself as a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage of conflict that aims at contributing to peacemaking, peacekeeping, and changing the attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals, and audiences towards war and peace needed to be embraced while dealing with issues considered to be of conflicting interest such as the 2020 #EndSARS protest.

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Nigerian newspapers should ensure that they always provide and allot much space to cover issues that are considered pertinent to the society in a bid to provide the audience with in-depth interpretations on the issue rather than merely reporting the issue.
- Government and concerned bodies should use the mass media to communicate the masses and sensitize them on the need to avert issues that can disrupt the peaceful co-existence of the nation.
- The media should be structured to express the opinions of the populace on every situations.
- The populace should ensure that the newspapers and other mass media channels are employed to propagate development rather than using it to gang against its development.

7. References

Abiodun, T. (2020). Unlawful killings of civilians by officers of the special anti-robbery Squad



(SARS) unit of the Nigerian police in southwest Nigeria: Implications for national security. *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration*.

- Adesomoju, A. (2020). No evidence to prosecute 33 indicted SARS operatives – AGF. Sunday Punch published November 8
- Akhlaghpour, S. & Vaast, E. (2018). Digital Activism for Social Causes: Understanding Clicktivism and Substantive Actions. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3220833b> Google Scholar
- Asemah, E., Nwammuo, A., Nkwam-Uwaoma, A. (2017). *Theories and models of communication*. Jos: Jos University Press.
- Aliagan, I. (2015). Examining survival strategies employed by Nigerian Newspapers against loss of readership and revenues. *Journal of New Media and Mass Communication*
- Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K., (2012). *Mass communication theory: Foundation, ferment and future* United States: Thomas Wadsworth Publishing.
- Bello, S. M. (2015). Newspaper coverage of health issues in Nigeria: The frequency of reporting malaria, HIV/AIDS and polio and the effect of seeking health information on the health behaviours of newspaper readers. *University of Canterbury*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis.
- Brown, J.N, & Udomisor, I. (2015). Evaluation of political news reportage in Nigeria's Vanguard and The Guardian. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 3(1), 10-18
- Ewuola, P. O. (2010). *Essentials of editing and production in print journalism*. Lagos: Elyon Ventures.
- Halilu, B., Garba, A. & Abdulmunin, A. (2014). Media coverage of corruption in Nigeria: An analysis of the Sun and New Nigeria newspapers. Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, Bauchi State
- Hassan, H. (2012). Giving attention to prominence, frequency and adequacy in the print media coverage of the Boko Haram Crisis. *Journal of Religious Studies*, 34(3), 1-20.
- Ige, B., & Ige, T. (2021). Risk perception by journalists and coverage of #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. *African Scholar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21(6), 107-116.
- Isamuko, B. J., (2014). *Newspaper and magazine management and production*. Ibadan: Babs-Ventures.
- McQuail, D., (2005). *Mass communication theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Njoku, N. A., (2010). Print media coverage of religious crisis in Nigeria. *Journal of Religion and Conflict Studies*, 9(7), 51-67.
- Njoku, N.A. (2010). Print media coverage of religious crisis in Nigeria. *Journal of Religion and Conflict Studies*, 9(7), 51-67.
- Nwabueze, C., & Edegoh, L.O. (2010). Framing the agenda: Press coverage of the 2008 teachers' strike in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, 2(1), 113- 120.
- Odoemelam, C.C, Ncube, J.B., & Okrom E. (2014). Frames in news discourse on Nelson Mandela's illness and hospitalisation: A study of Nigerian and Zimbabwean newspapers. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 29(1) 24-32.



International Journal of Business and Technical Education
(A Journal of The School of Business Studies, The federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti)
Jacob et al., Vol 1. No. 1, (2025)

<https://sbsijbtefpa.com/index.php/ijbte>

- Ogbuoshi, L. I., Oyeleke, A. S., & Folorunsho, M. O., (2019). *Opinion leaders' perspectives on hate speech, and fake news reporting and Nigeria's political stability*. ACSPN Book Series IV, Ontario: Canada University Press.
- Olorede, J., Oyewole, A., & Azeez, L. (2013). Press reportage of President Yar'Adua's ill-health. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 9(1), 18-26.
- Onyebuchi, C., Obayi, P., & Nwagu, F., (2019). Newspaper coverage of Fulani herdsmen attacks on host communities: A study of three national dailies from January-April, 2018. *Egede International Journal of Multi disciplinary Studies*, 1(1), 183-197.
- Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, Agenda Setting and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 9-20.
- Tarrow, S. (1998). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Five demands from #EndSARS Protesters. Vanguard News. 12 October 2020