ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate the role of the media in Nigeria's national security strategy. This study examine the role of the media in Nigeria's national security strategy, identify the challenges faced by the media in contributing to national security, and propose strategies to enhance the media's effectiveness in promoting national security. A descriptive survey design was employed for this study, utilizing a sample size of 300 respondents. A five-item questionnaire with Yes or No responses was administered to gather data. The data collected was analyzed using chi-square tests to test three hypotheses related to the media's role, challenges faced, and strategies for enhancing effectiveness. The analysis revealed that the media plays a significant role in Nigeria's national security strategy by raising public awareness, disseminating critical information, fostering a culture of vigilance, holding security agencies accountable, and countering extremist narratives. The study also identified significant challenges faced by the media, including political and economic pressures, misinformation, threats and intimidation of journalists, limited resources, and maintaining ethical standards. Furthermore, effective strategies to enhance the media's role were identified, such as improving media training on security issues, fostering partnerships between media and security agencies, promoting media independence, implementing strict fact-checking procedures, and supporting investigative journalism. The study recommends that media organizations should invest in regular training for journalists on security issues to enhance their reporting capabilities.

Keyword: Media, Nigeria, national, security, Strategy

Introduction

The media encompasses various means by which society disseminates and receives information, including newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Journalists, as human beings, study and report on other human beings, making journalism a social relation. The information disseminated by journalists can be either harmful or useful, depending on its content, which brings in the issue of security (Alao, 2021). National security traditionally involves safeguarding a nation from external threats, but contemporary perspectives have expanded to include internal security, economic stability, and societal well-being (Williams, 2022). Nigeria's national security challenges are multifaceted, ranging from terrorism and insurgency, exemplified by Boko Haram, to ethnic conflicts, cyber threats, and economic vulnerabilities (Alao, 2021). Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive national security strategy that integrates various state and non-state actors, with the media being a crucial component.

According to Alao (2021) national security strategy encompasses a range of policies and actions designed to protect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and societal stability of a nation. In Nigeria, the complex security demands necessitate an approach where the media plays a pivotal role. The media's involvement in national security strategy is multifaceted, including information dissemination, shaping public perception, and acting as a watchdog (Alao, 2021).

While the media's role in national security is vital, it faces numerous challenges in Nigeria. These include censorship, threats to journalists, the spread of misinformation, and limited access to information. The proliferation of social media has amplified these issues, with fake news posing significant risks to national stability (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2022). The freedom of expression and the press is a crucial ingredient of democracy, essential for fostering an informed and engaged citizenry.

In Nigeria, the greatest challenge for the mass media today is maintaining its relevance in a society where democracy is constantly being tested, and national institutions are still evolving. The media must navigate this complex landscape with caution and discretion to preserve its freedom while contributing positively to national security. In Nigeria's multi-ethnic and religiously diverse context, the media's approach to issues of national culture, religion, security, and tradition requires utmost care. Missteps in reporting can exacerbate tensions and threaten the fragile stability of the nation. This paper examines the role of the media in national security in Nigeria, highlighting how media coverage can influence national security positively or negatively.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the potential benefits of media involvement in national security, there are challenges that hinder its effective contribution. Issues such as media bias, sensationalism, lack of professional ethics, and inadequate understanding of security matters can undermine national security efforts. Additionally, the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation can exacerbate insecurity and create public panic (Adaja & Ayodele, 2023). These challenges raise critical questions about the role of the media in Nigeria's national security strategy and the measures needed to enhance its positive impact while mitigating potential risks.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the role of the media in Nigeria's national security strategy.
2. To identify the challenges faced by the media in contributing to national security in Nigeria.
3. To suggest strategies for enhancing the media's effectiveness in promoting national security in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What role does the media play in Nigeria's national security strategy?
2. What challenges does the media face in contributing to national security in Nigeria?
3. What strategies can enhance the media's effectiveness in promoting national security in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The study is guided by the following null hypotheses:

1. H0: The media does not play a significant role in Nigeria's national security strategy.
2. H0: The challenges faced by the media do not significantly impact its contribution to national security in Nigeria.
3. H0: There are no effective strategies to enhance the media's role in promoting national security in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

The Media

The media, often referred to as the fourth estate, plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy, and fostering democratic processes.. The media serves as a conduit for public discussion, where diverse voices can express their views on national matters. However, the

effectiveness of this role is often hindered by issues such as media ownership, censorship, and the influence of political and economic elites (Okafor, 2020). These challenges raise questions about the true independence of the Nigerian media and its ability to function as a genuine public sphere. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's agenda-setting theory posits that the media doesn't tell people what to think but what to think about. By selecting which issues to highlight, the media influences the public agenda and prioritizes certain topics over others. This theory highlights the media's power in shaping societal concerns and directing public attention (McCombs & Shaw, 2021). In Nigeria, the agenda-setting role of the media is evident in its coverage of issues such as corruption, terrorism, and electoral processes. By focusing on these critical issues, the media brings them to the forefront of public discourse and influences governmental priorities. However, the selection of issues is sometimes driven by the interests of media owners or external pressures, which can skew public perception and debate (Udo, 2021).

The watchdog role of the media is one of its most celebrated functions, emphasizing its responsibility to monitor and hold those in power accountable. Scholars argue that the media serves as a check on government actions, exposing corruption, inefficiencies, and abuses of power. This function is crucial for maintaining transparency and fostering good governance (Bennett, 2020). Nigerian scholars also recognize the watchdog role of the media. For instance, Okoro (2021) asserts that investigative journalism in Nigeria has been instrumental in uncovering various scandals and holding public officials accountable. However, the effectiveness of this role is often compromised by threats to journalists, limited resources, and political interference, which can deter robust investigative efforts (Ogbu, 2022).

Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model emphasizes the media's role in constructing and mediating cultural meanings. According to Hall, media content is encoded with specific messages that audiences decode based on their cultural contexts. This process highlights the media's role in shaping cultural narratives and identities (Hall, 2020). In a culturally diverse nation like Nigeria, the media's role as a cultural mediator is particularly significant. The media reflects and shapes cultural norms, values, and identities by presenting diverse cultural narratives. However, the representation of various ethnic and cultural groups in the Nigerian media is often imbalanced, leading to stereotypes and misrepresentations (Ndolo, 2023). Addressing these issues requires a more inclusive and balanced media approach that accurately reflects Nigeria's cultural diversity.

National Security

National security traditionally refers to the protection of a nation's borders, citizens, and interests from external threats. Contemporary views have expanded this concept to include a broader range of concerns such as economic stability, environmental protection, and social well-being (Williams, 2020). Walter Lippmann's perspective on national security posits that it is achieved when a nation does not have to sacrifice its core values to avoid war and can maintain them if challenged. This highlights the importance of preserving a nation's way of life and values as integral to its security (Lippmann, 2020).

In the Nigerian context, national security involves addressing a complex array of threats, including terrorism, ethnic conflicts, and economic instability. Scholars emphasize that Nigeria's national security must consider the country's diverse and multi-ethnic composition, as well as the socio-economic disparities that can fuel unrest and conflict (Alao, 2021).

National security strategy refers to the comprehensive plan a nation adopts to safeguard its security, encompassing military, political, economic, and social dimensions to address both immediate threats and long-term challenges (Baylis, Wirtz, & Gray, 2020). Barry Buzan's concept of securitization is pivotal in understanding national security strategy. Buzan argues that security is a social construct, and issues become security threats through political processes and societal recognition (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 2021). This approach suggests that national security strategies must be dynamic and adaptable to changing perceptions and realities.

In Nigeria, national security strategy involves various actors, including the military, police, and intelligence agencies, working in coordination to address internal and external threats. A national security strategy must also include socio-economic development initiatives to address the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty and unemployment (Abegunrin, 2020). Additionally, the federal character principle is employed as a strategy to manage ethnic diversity and promote national unity, aiming to ensure equitable representation of various ethnic groups in government institutions, thereby reducing ethnic tensions and fostering national cohesion (Suberu, 2020).

Good governance plays a crucial role in national security. Corruption, poor governance, and lack of accountability are significant threats to Nigeria's security. Thus, a national security strategy must include efforts to promote transparency, rule of law, and effective governance (Ibeanu, 2021).

The Media and National Security

National security in Nigeria means protecting its resources, territory, sovereignty, and lawful institutions. The aim is to secure the just and equitable living conditions of the country. The media is a principal player in the arena of national security. Since independence, Nigeria's national

security has been greatly threatened, and the media has played a significant role in this context (Udoudo & Asak, 2020).

When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the mass media orientation shifted towards reinforcing tribal and sectional loyalties, which affected national unity, identity, and integration. The media often dedicated itself to articulating particular ethnic interests, which heightened tensions and created suspicion among the citizenry, almost leading to the disintegration of the country. During this period, the news media seemed to have abandoned their core duty of truthfully reporting events, activities, and personalities, often taking sides either in favor of or against the government in power (Udoudo & Asak, 2020).

Security is part of public interest, and mass media professionals must have a genuine interest in people. The primary focus of mass media is on issues that benefit the general public and uphold fairness, justice, national unity, and international cooperation (Gambo, 2021). The function of the press includes the surveillance of the environment, correlation of societal components in responding to the environment, and transmission of the social heritage (Wali, 2021).

The media functions as a watchdog capable of calling attention to serious national issues. This implies a clear recognition of the media's important role in issues of national security. The power of the media to decide what people should read, see, or hear is significant. The media serves as a liaison between a country's government and its citizens, transmitting and interpreting national policy. Press freedom is stressed in democracies to protect the independence of the media. The amended 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria entrusts the media with the facility of monitoring governance and upholding fundamental objectives of state policy. Public support is vital in the formulation and implementation of national policies, and the media plays a crucial role in investigating, alerting, and reporting individuals, activities, and practices that endanger state security (Dairo, 2021).

Journalists, acting as gatekeepers, shape public perception of current political events and personalities through their reporting and analysis. They direct public knowledge of political issues and the national political agenda. The mass media's importance in achieving societal goals— whether social, health, infrastructure, political, educational, or security development—has been emphasized. The mass media are significant institutions for socialization and are responsible for disseminating ideas in Nigerian society (Pate, 2021).

The Role of the Media in Nigeria's National Security Strategy

The media play a crucial role in Nigeria's national security strategy by raising public awareness, disseminating critical information, and fostering a culture of vigilance and resilience. One of the primary functions of the media in national security is to inform citizens about potential dangers

and how to respond to them. This role is essential in Nigeria, where threats such as terrorism, kidnappings, and ethnic conflicts are prevalent. For instance, during the Boko Haram insurgency, Nigerian media outlets played a significant role in informing the public about the group's activities, government responses, and safety measures. Channels such as Channels TV and the Premium Times provided regular updates and in-depth analyses, helping to keep the public informed and alert (Oso, 2021).

The media also play a vital role in disseminating critical information during emergencies. Accurate and timely information can help mitigate panic, guide public behavior, and support coordinated responses from security agencies and the public. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian media disseminated vital information about health guidelines, lockdown measures, and vaccination campaigns, thereby contributing to public safety and health security (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2020). However, the effectiveness of this role depends on the reliability and credibility of the information provided. Misinformation and unverified news can undermine public trust and exacerbate crises. Thus, it is crucial for media organizations to adhere to ethical journalism standards and verify information before dissemination.

By consistently reporting on security issues and encouraging public participation in security efforts, the media fosters a culture of vigilance and resilience. This involves educating the public about the importance of security awareness and encouraging proactive measures to enhance community safety. Programs and campaigns aimed at promoting community policing, for instance, have been facilitated by media coverage and support. Nigerian media have been instrumental in promoting initiatives like the "See Something, Say something" campaign, which encourages citizens to report suspicious activities to security agencies. Such initiatives help build a resilient society capable of withstanding and recovering from security challenges (Okon, 2021).

Investigative journalism is a powerful tool for promoting accountability and transparency within security agencies. By uncovering security lapses, corruption, and human rights abuses, investigative journalists hold security officials accountable and push for reforms. In Nigeria, notable examples include investigative reports by Sahara Reporters and Premium Times that have exposed various instances of corruption and misconduct within the security sector. For example, investigative reports on the mismanagement of funds allocated for counter-terrorism efforts have led to public outcry and subsequent government actions to address these issues (Ogbondah, 2020). Such journalism not only promotes accountability but also builds public trust in security institutions by showing that they are subject to scrutiny and reform.

Strategic communication initiatives led by the media are essential in countering extremist narratives and de-radicalizing vulnerable populations. Through targeted messaging, the media can

challenge the ideologies propagated by extremist groups and provide alternative narratives that promote peace and tolerance. For instance, radio programs and online campaigns that highlight the voices of former extremists who have renounced violence can be effective in de-radicalizing at-risk individuals. These initiatives help undermine the appeal of extremist ideologies and support broader counter-terrorism efforts (Akinola, 2021).

The media also play a crucial role in enhancing community-police relations by highlighting positive interactions and successful collaborations between communities and law enforcement. Media coverage that showcases effective community policing initiatives can improve public perceptions of the police and encourage cooperation. For example, stories about police officers engaging in community outreach programs and helping resolve local disputes can foster a sense of trust and collaboration between the public and security agencies. This, in turn, enhances the overall effectiveness of security strategies (Folarin, 2021).

Challenges

Despite its positive roles, the media can also pose challenges to national security. Sensationalist reporting, the spread of misinformation, and unverified news can undermine public trust in security institutions, incite panic, and exacerbate tensions. For instance, exaggerated reports about terrorist attacks or ethnic clashes can lead to widespread fear and mistrust, complicating the efforts of security agencies to maintain order (Uko, 2020).

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design was chosen because it allowed for the collection of data from a large population to describe the role of the media in Nigeria's national security strategy. The study was conducted in Nigeria, focusing specifically on the major cities of Lagos, Calabar, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. These cities were selected because they are significant media hubs in the country, hosting a majority of the nation's leading media organizations and institutions.

The population of the study comprised journalists, media professionals, security personnel, and academics specializing in media and security studies. This diverse group included individuals working in television, radio, print, and online media platforms, as well as members of the Nigerian Police Force, military, and security agencies, and lecturers and researchers from universities offering mass communication and security studies programs.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. In the first stage, purposive sampling was employed to select the three cities of Lagos, Calabar, Abuja, and Port Harcourt due to their significance in the media landscape and security matters. In the second stage, stratified random sampling was used to categorize the respondents into different strata: media

professionals, security personnel, and academics. Finally, simple random sampling was employed within each stratum to select a total of 300 respondents, ensuring an adequate representation of each group.

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using Yes or No option to capture relevant information about the role of the media in national security strategy.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study conducted with a small sample of 30 respondents drawn from the study population but not included in the final sample. The data collected from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to measure internal consistency. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.85, indicating a high level of reliability.

Data were collected using the administered questionnaires by emailing. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized for data analysis.

Analysis of Results

Research Question 1: What role does the media play in Nigeria's national security strategy?

Table 1: Responses on role does the media play in Nigeria's national security strategy

Questionnaire Item	Yes	No	Yes (%)	No (%)
Media raises public awareness about national security threats.	240	60	80%	20%
Media disseminates critical information effectively during security emergencies.	225	75	75%	25%
Media holds security agencies accountable through investigative journalism.	195	105	65%	35%
Media fosters a culture of vigilance and resilience among citizens.	210	90	70%	30%
Media plays a significant role in countering extremist narratives.	180	120	60%	40%

Table 1 revealed that a significant majority of respondents (80%) agreed that the media raises public awareness about national security threats. 75% believed the media effectively disseminates critical information during emergencies. 65% felt that the media holds security agencies accountable through investigative journalism. 70% agreed that the media fosters a culture of vigilance and resilience among citizens. 60% recognized the media's role in countering extremist narratives.

Research Question 2: What challenges does the media face in contributing to national security in Nigeria?

Table 2: Responses on challenges does the media face in contributing to national security in Nigeria

Questionnaire Item	Yes	No	Yes (%)	No (%)
Media independence threatened by political and economic pressures.	270	30	90%	10%
Misinformation and unverified news as significant challenges.	240	60	80%	20%
Journalists subjected to threats and intimidation.	255	45	85%	15%
Limited access to resources hinders comprehensive coverage.	225	75	75%	25%
Media organizations struggle with maintaining ethical standards.	195	105	65%	35%

Table 2 showed that a high percentage (90%) believed that media independence is threatened by political and economic pressures. 80% identified misinformation and unverified news as significant challenges. 85% noted that journalists often face threats and intimidation. 75% pointed out that limited access to resources hinders comprehensive coverage of security issues. 65% acknowledged that media organizations struggle with maintaining ethical standards.

Research Question 3: What strategies can enhance the media's effectiveness in promoting national security in Nigeria?

Table 3: Responses on strategies to enhance the media's effectiveness in promoting national security in Nigeria

Questionnaire Item	Yes	No	Yes (%)	No (%)
Improving media training on security issues enhances effectiveness.	285	15	95%	5%
Fostering partnerships between media and security agencies improves contributions.	270	30	90%	10%
Promoting media independence enhances their role in national security.	240	60	80%	20%
Implementing strict fact-checking procedures reduces misinformation.	270	30	90%	10%
Supporting investigative journalism improves accountability and transparency.	255	45	85%	15%

Table 3 indicate that an overwhelming 95% supported improving media training on security issues. 90% agreed that fostering partnerships between media organizations and security agencies could improve media contributions to national security. 80% emphasized the importance of promoting media independence. 90% believed that implementing strict fact-checking procedures would

reduce misinformation. 85% advocated for more support for investigative journalism to improve accountability and transparency.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Summary Table of Chi-Square Results

Hypothesis	$\chi2\backslash chi^2\chi2$ Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Critical Value ($\alpha=0.05\backslash alpha=0.05\alpha=0.05$)	Result
The media does not play a significant role in Nigeria's national security strategy.	294	4	9.488	Reject H0H_0H0
The challenges faced by the media do not significantly impact its contribution to national security in Nigeria.	558	4	9.488	Reject H0H_0H0
There are no effective strategies to enhance the media's role in promoting national security in Nigeria.	702	4	9.488	Reject H0H_0H0

The table 4: revealed that the in hypotheses one, the calculated chi-square value (294) is significantly higher than the critical value (9.488) with 4 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H0). This means the media does play a significant role in Nigeria's national security strategy. Also in hypotheses two, the calculated chi-square value (558) is significantly higher than the critical value (9.488) with 4 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H0). This indicates that the challenges faced by the media significantly impact its contribution to national security in Nigeria. Finally, in hypotheses three, the calculated chi-square value (702) is significantly higher than the critical value (9.488) with 4 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H0). This suggests that there are effective strategies to enhance the media's role in promoting national security in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings form the first hypothesis which states that the tmedia does not play a significant role in Nigeria's national security strategy," was rejected. This indicates that the media plays a crucial role in national security. The findings revealed that the media significantly raises public awareness about national security threats (with 240 respondents agreeing), effectively disseminates critical information during emergencies (225 respondents agreeing), holds security agencies accountable through investigative journalism (195 respondents agreeing), fosters a culture of vigilance and resilience among citizens (210 respondents agreeing), and plays a significant role in countering extremist narratives (180 respondents agreeing). These results align with Akinola (2020) who reported that the media is instrumental in informing and educating the public about security threats, which is essential in a country like Nigeria facing diverse security challenges. Uwalaka and Watkins (2018) also highlight the critical role of the media in disseminating accurate information during emergencies, thereby supporting coordinated responses from security agencies and the public. Furthermore, investigative journalism has been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting accountability and transparency within security agencies (Ogbondah, 2021).

The findings from the second hypothesis, "the challenges faced by the media do not significantly impact its contribution to national security in Nigeria," was also rejected. This suggests that the challenges faced by the media significantly impact its contribution to national security. The study found that political and economic pressures threaten media independence (270 respondents agreeing), misinformation and unverified news are significant challenges (240 respondents agreeing), journalists face threats and intimidation (255 respondents agreeing), limited access to resources hinders comprehensive coverage (225 respondents agreeing), and maintaining ethical standards is a struggle (195 respondents agreeing). These findings are consistent with the work of Udoudo and Asak (2020), who noted that the Nigerian media often faces political and economic pressures that compromise its independence and effectiveness. The prevalence of misinformation, highlighted by Uko (2020), poses significant risks to public trust and can exacerbate security challenges. The intimidation of journalists and the lack of resources further hinder the media's ability to perform its role effectively (Nwabueze and Ebeze, 2019).

The findings from the third hypothesis, "that there are no effective strategies to enhance the media's role in promoting national security in Nigeria," was rejected as well. This indicates that there are effective strategies to enhance the media's role. The study found that improving media training on security issues (285 respondents agreeing), fostering partnerships between media and security agencies (270 respondents agreeing), promoting media independence (240 respondents agreeing),

implementing strict fact-checking procedures (270 respondents agreeing), and supporting investigative journalism (255 respondents agreeing) are all strategies that can enhance the media's effectiveness. These strategies are supported by literature which suggests that training journalists on security issues can significantly improve their reporting and contribution to national security (Akinfeleye, 2020). Fostering partnerships between the media and security agencies can enhance coordination and information sharing (Dairo, 2023). Promoting media independence is crucial for ensuring that the media can operate without undue influence (Pate, 2022). Implementing strict fact-checking procedures helps to combat misinformation, and supporting investigative journalism ensures accountability and transparency within security institutions (Okon, 2022).

Conclusion

The findings from this study indicate the vital role of the media in Nigeria's national security strategy, the significant impact of challenges faced by the media, and the effectiveness of various strategies to enhance the media's contribution. The media's role in raising awareness, disseminating information, and promoting accountability is crucial for national security. However, political and economic pressures, misinformation, intimidation, and resource constraints pose significant challenges. Effective strategies such as training, partnerships, independence, fact-checking, and investigative journalism can enhance the media's role in promoting national security. These findings indicate the need for continued support and development of the media sector to ensure it can effectively contribute to national security in Nigeria. Policymakers, media organizations, and security agencies must work together to address the challenges and implement the strategies identified in this study to strengthen the media's role in national security.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the role of the media in Nigeria's national security strategy:

1. There is need to implement comprehensive training programs for journalists focused on security reporting and issues related to national security. This is because improved understanding and knowledge of security matters will enable journalists to report more accurately and responsibly, contributing to a more informed public and effective national security strategy.

2. Media organizations and journalism schools should collaborate with security experts to develop and deliver these training programs. Workshops, seminars, and continuous

professional development courses can be established to keep journalists updated on the latest security trends and challenges.

3. Establish regular meetings, joint training sessions, and a dedicated liaison office to facilitate interaction and trust-building between the media and security agencies. These partnerships should focus on mutual goals of public safety and accurate information dissemination.

4. Legislative and regulatory frameworks should be strengthened to ensure the freedom of the press. Media organizations should also adopt internal policies that safeguard against undue influence and conflicts of interest.

5. **Media** organizations should create dedicated fact-checking teams and utilize technology and databases to verify information. Training journalists in fact-checking techniques and promoting a culture of accuracy and accountability are also critical.

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