

**ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT DURING THE 2020
ENDSARS PROTEST IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

MAY, 2025

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**BEING A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE
STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENTS OF
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS (M.A) DEGREE IN
MASS COMMUNICATION**

MAY, 2025

DECLARATION

This Dissertation is based on a study undertaken by me, **Esther Osawese Iyonawan** of the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Prof F.P. Olise. All findings and analysis in the study were products of my personal research and were the views of others have been used and expressed, they were duly acknowledged.

Esther Osawese Iyonawan
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation was duly carried out by **Esther Osawese Iyonawan** with matriculation number PG/ART1611303 in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award Master of Arts (M.A) Degree in Mass Communication.

Prof. F.P. Olise
Supervisor

Date

Dr. D.O. Ekhareafo
Head of Department

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, from whom every good gift comes.

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ABSTRACT

The researcher investigated the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 EndSARS protest in Benin City, Edo State. The rationale of the study was to establish the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 EndSARS protest among residents of Benin City, Edo State. The objectives of the study were to determine the role of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest, find out how social media was used to spread information during the protest, identify the strengths of social media in managing conflicts during the protest and the weaknesses of social media in managing conflict during the EndSARS protest in Benin City, Edo State. The study was grounded in the agenda-setting theory and the social responsibility theory.

The research employed a survey research design, using structured questionnaire to collect data from 384 internet users in Benin City, Edo State using the purposive sampling technique from the total population of 5,880,824 while descriptive statistics was used in analysing the gathered data in order to provide answer to the raised research questions.

Findings revealed that social media served as a vital communication tool ($M = 4.08$), mobilising support ($M = 4.06$) and providing victims with a platform to share their experiences of police brutality ($M = 4.15$), among others. Findings also showed that social media strengths during the protest were that it facilitated peaceful organisation ($M=3.93$), amplified protest voices ($M=4.06$), enabled international solidarity ($M=3.97$), disseminated timely updates (4.09) and helped manage rumours ($M=3.78$) while chief among the notable weaknesses are the spread of false information ($M=4.03$), hate speech and inciting content ($M=4.06$), unverified media contents ($M=4.03$). The researcher concluded that social media has become an indispensable tool in modern conflict scenarios and its ability to inform, connect, and mobilise people makes it a powerful instrument for both protest and peace, especially during EndSARS protest in Edo State. Based on the findings and conclusion, recommendations made were that government agencies and civil society organisations should develop and implement digital literacy programmes focused on conflict-sensitive communication to empower citizens to use social media constructively during periods of social unrest, among others.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

Social media is a global platform used for many purposes, including handling conflicts, most especially now that technology is growing so fast. It is considered the newest form of mass media, and most of its definitions focus on its technological features. Social media emerged as a vital tool for community solidarity, awareness-raising, and protest coordination in Edo State and throughout Nigeria. Scholar such as Akintunde (2021), opines that social media platforms provided essential outlets for protestors to express their complaints, gather support, and film events in real time, building a more cohesive collective identity among participants. Furthermore, the immediacy and visibility provided by these platforms allowed grassroots movements to attract national and international attention, resulting in increased lobbying for reform.

According to Nwabueze (2015), social media includes communication tools that help people interact with each other and with different types of content. These online platforms allow people to share their opinions, express grievances, and organise peaceful discussions or protests. Its ability to quickly spread information makes it useful for addressing disputes, gathering support, and calling for change. Social media's widespread use in the twenty-first century has drastically changed how people communicate, especially in areas where there is conflict and civil unrest. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (X) have become essential instruments for mobilization, information sharing, and conflict resolution, and their function goes well beyond simple social connectivity. Social media's special ability to promote quick communication and community involvement has given people and organizations a strong toolkit for influencing public opinion and managing social conflicts. Dow (2012) asserts that social

media essentially refer to a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking and bookmarking online. That is Social media are the various online platforms that are used for social interaction.

Similarly Greendhow (2009) note that social media use highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques and include the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the internet to share information and resources. While Ward (2013), note that the greatest potential of social media lies in the opportunity they bequeath to mankind → a chance to be engaged and engage others. Social media has developed into a potent instrument that greatly influences public opinion and encourages civic participation, especially in periods of social unrest. It enables the organization of collective action, the quick distribution of information, and the amplification of underrepresented voices. Social media platforms give people a forum to discuss political and social topics, share their experiences, and voice their opinions.

Agba (2012) explains that social media, as a communication tool, has given people a space to express themselves in different areas of life, including politics, economics, social issues, and business. This has been possible due to the rapid growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and digitalisation in Africa. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), WhatsApp, and Instagram have become very popular because they are easy to access, allowing people to communicate and express themselves freely. Photos and videos shared on these platforms give viewers a look into people's daily lives, interests, activities, and personal experiences. By showing the world their daily struggles and experiences, individuals can effectively communicate their grievances and seek solutions.

Asemah & Edeogho (2012) explain that social media platforms available to Nigerian youths give them the freedom to choose the type of content they want to engage with. Some people use social media to stay updated on current events and to use their "online voice" to speak out against injustices and address conflicts. From the beginning, social media has been a powerful tool for people to share their thoughts and opinions on various issues. However, Maya (2023) highlights that social media can have both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, it helps people connect and raise awareness about social problems, making it a useful tool for managing conflicts. However, it can also be a distraction for young people who may spend hours online without achieving anything productive.

Furthermore, Social media has become a powerful tool for social movements, organisations, businesses, and individuals to connect and share information with their intended audiences. It allows people to communicate their messages quickly and widely, making it easier to raise awareness about important issues or promote certain causes. For example, during conflicts or protests, social media platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram provide a space for people to share their experiences, express their concerns, and gather support from others worldwide. It is also useful for spreading government policies, decisions, and announcements, allowing citizens to stay informed and react accordingly. According to Oyelade (2020), the social media played a significant role in how Nigerian youths organised the #EndSARS protest. The protest was a peaceful demonstration against police brutality and unlawful acts by the police. It also served as a wake-up call to the government to address the illegal activities carried out by certain officers. Nigerian youths used social media platforms to showcase their fight against police brutality, which eventually influenced the government's actions concerning special anti robbery squad (SARS) and security policies.

The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was established in 1992 during Nigeria's military regime to tackle the growing problem of armed robbery across the country. Initially, it was created to protect citizens and maintain law and order. However, over the years, SARS became known for abusing its power, with numerous reports of illegal killings, harassment, and extortion, especially targeting young people who appeared successful or owned valuable items like iPhones, laptops, and cars. These incidents sparked anger and frustration among the public, who felt unfairly targeted and oppressed by the very group meant to protect them. This led to the massive #EndSARS protest in 2020, where thousands of young Nigerians took to the streets and social media to demand an end to police brutality and the complete disbandment of SARS (Agbalajobi, 2022). Although the government attempted to address the problem by officially dissolving SARS and introducing new policies aimed at reducing police violence, the complaints of brutality and misuse of power continued, making many people believe that the government's actions were merely superficial and not genuine efforts to bring about real change.

Malumfashi (2020) argues that the hashtag #EndSARS was first used on Twitter (X) in 2017 as a call for the government to end SARS due to their brutality. Over time, the hashtag gained popularity and became a social movement, when a video went viral showing SARS officers shooting a young boy, stealing his car, and leaving him dead on the road. Clue (2020) explains that social media, particularly Twitter (X), played a crucial role in making the #EndSARS protest of 2020 popular and effective. The protest started online when the hashtag #EndSARS began trending, driven by celebrities and ordinary people voicing their anger and frustration against bad governance, illegal stop-and-search operations, and police brutality that mostly targeted young people. Social media provided a powerful platform for spreading awareness and gaining support both locally and internationally. As the movement grew, the

phrase †SORO SOKE,‡ which means †Speak louder‡ in Yoruba, became a rallying cry, urging people to speak up boldly against injustice and oppression. Social media acted as a conflict management tool by allowing protesters to communicate their grievances, share real-time updates, and organise peaceful demonstrations effectively. It also helped in gathering evidence of police brutality through photos and videos shared online, making it easier to present their case to the world.

In the same vein, the †SORO SOKE‡ hashtag helped build a large online community, while bringing the world's attention to the problems in Nigeria. It also encouraged people to physically join the protests on the streets. In the same vein, Adisa (2021) notes that the protest had the largest number of young people protesting on the streets across all the 36 states of Nigeria and the FCT; Nigerians living abroad in countries like Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom also joined the protest, both online and in person. The global recognition of the protest highlighted the strength of social media as a tool for managing conflicts by creating awareness, gathering support, and pressuring authorities to address the issues raised.

Notably, the anti-police brutality protest in Nigeria created a powerful movement that seemed to shake the entire country and gave a voice to millions of Nigerian youths through street protests and online activism. While several factors contributed to the protest, Twitter (X) played a major role in bringing young people together for the #EndSARS protest. The movement was planned, organised, and carried out by the youths without any official leadership structure but was largely driven by social media. However, even though social media played a big role in organising youth→for the #EndSARS protest, its exact contribution to managing conflicts during the protest is still unclear. This study, therefore, aims to examine However, while social media→s role in organizing and mobilizing protesters is evident, its exact contribution to managing

conflicts during the protest is still not fully understood. Therefore, this study explored how social media played a role in managing conflicts during the 2020 #EndSARS protest, particularly by examining how it was used to share information, promote peaceful engagement, and influence government responses.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The way protests are organised has changed over time, with more social movements happening today than ever before. This change is mostly because of technology, especially social media, which has become the most powerful tool for organizing protests.

Social media played a major role in bringing Nigerian youth together to speak against police brutality and pushing for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). But, the EndSARS protest also had some bad outcomes, like loss of lives, destruction of public and private property, and damage to the reputation of the Nigerian government and its people. Problems like spreading fake news, editing photos to mislead people, and using hate speech were also common during the protests. Back in 2017, Twitter (X) became an important platform for spreading awareness, shaping public opinion, and encouraging social mobilization against the abuse of power by SARS officers. The EndSARS protest quickly spread across different social media platforms, with people constantly sharing updates about SARS activities, which caught the attention of the Nigerian government.

October 3rd, 2020, a video went viral on social media platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, showing SARS officers allegedly abusing a young man in Ughelli, Delta State, and taking his Lexus car. This event triggered protests in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria, with people demanding the end of the SARS unit. Although social media played an important role in raising awareness and mobilising youth to protest, its role in managing

conflicts during the protest is not well understood. Therefore, it became imperative to establish the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 EndSARS protest.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives for the study are to:

1. Examine the role of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Benin City, Edo State.
2. Find out how social media was used to spread information during the protest in Benin City, Edo State.
3. To ascertain the strengths of social media in managing conflicts during the protest in Benin City, Edo State.
4. Find out the weaknesses of social media in managing conflict during the EndSARS protest.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions raised for the study are:

1. What is the role of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Benin City, Edo State?
2. How was social media platforms used to spread information during the protest in Benin City, Edo State?
3. What are the strengths of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Benin City, Edo State?
4. What are the weaknesses of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Benin City, Edo State?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study thoroughly investigates the impact of social media in managing conflicts during protest like the EndSARS protest. The 2020 protest against police inhumane treatment clearly illustrated how digital media platforms have transformed the way individuals or groups mobilise demonstrations and manage disputes in the present day. This is because conflicts crisis are part of the human existence as well as its survival. This brings to focus the need for constructive communication practice and strategies that can remodel how crisis are handled in the Nigeria context. It showed how social media platforms, especially Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, were used to share information, organise protests, and create awareness about police brutality in Nigeria as well as the dangers such vices portend for Nigeria's image in the global stage. The core essence for this examination is due to the persuasive nature of the social media amongst youth given its role in the formation of public opinion. As a counter approach to the destructive use of the social media, a more positive role of the platform revealed itself in the course of the study.

The research examined the relationship between citizen journalists and mainstream media, illustrating how user-generated content frequently bridges the gaps left by traditional journalism, particularly in situations where institutional media encounters censorship or limited resources. This phenomenon is especially significant in Nigeria, where protest like EndSARS showcased the influence of digital activism in shaping both national and global conversations. The instance in Edo State highlights the differences in media accessibility, government reactions, and public confidence, providing insights for managing crises and improving media literacy programmes. The research presented important insights for media professionals and scholars of communication regarding the changing influence of citizen journalism and digital platforms in crafting public narratives during times of crisis.

The findings from this study would also be useful to government agencies, policymakers, activists and researchers by providing them with insights into how social media can be used effectively for conflict management, so they can develop evidence-based strategies, foster constructive dialogue and mitigate tensions in volatile situations. It would also help the government and other stakeholders develop better strategies for addressing public grievances and preventing the spread of fake news and hate speech during protests. Furthermore, this study would contribute to existing knowledge on the role of social media in conflict management, especially in countries where young people use social media to speak out against injustice. It would also serve as a useful reference for future researchers interested in studying how social media can influence social movements and conflict management.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study aims to find out the role of social media in conflict management during the EndSARS protest. As a result of the broad nature of this study, it focused only on internet users living in Benin City, Edo State. This is because the city was one of the major hotspot in the south-south that participated in the protest. Benin City population which comprises of students, civil society organisations, activists, youths and ordinary Edo citizens were clearly active in the use of the social media in their advocacy against the anti-criminal squad- an arm of the Nigeria Police. Their social media interaction top major chats across different social media handles. This provided the researcher a veritable data resource to investigate the role of social media in social activism like the EndSARS protest. To gather useful information for this study, questionnaire were given only to social media users living in Benin City to find out how social media played a role in managing conflict during the #EndSARS protest.

1.7 Limitations to the Study

The study is significantly limited by the research instrument adopted. The survey design is limited by the extent of its opinion sampling methodology which is restrictive as it fails to cover for thematic analysis and observational investigations, research designs like content analysis could have helped to examine. The research instrument which adopted a five likert scale questionnaire design restricted the responses of respondents just as its places a boundary to the extent or effectiveness to the research design, in examining the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 EndSARS protest.

Due to the sensitive nature of the EndSARS protests and lingering tensions in Edo State, some media users and protest participants were hesitant to provide detailed accounts. This limited the availability of firsthand testimonies, forcing the researcher to rely more on secondary sources such as news reports and existing scholarly analyses.

Additionally, the study's scope was affected by the limited number of academic works specifically addressing media's role in conflict management during the EndSARS protests in Edo State. Most existing studies focus on Lagos or the broader national movement. As a result, the researcher had to adapt findings from these other areas to fit the specific situation in Edo, where the circumstances might be quite different. Also, issues related to security and the brief nature of the protests limited the chances for comprehensive fieldwork, including on-site surveys or lengthy discussions with important stakeholders. Consequently, certain viewpoints may have been inadequately represented in the research.

1.8 Operational Definition

Terms frequently used in this study are defined within the context of usage. This is to avoid misinformation and misinterpretation.

Conflict: Conflict is a social unrest, disagreement, oppositions or struggle between groups or institutions with incompatible interest, values, or goals between and/or among Parties especially that of the Nigeria police and youth during EndSARS protest

Conflict Management: This involves the methods used to address issues between the protesters, the government, and security agencies during the EndSARS protest. It includes strategies such as dialogue, negotiation, social media advocacy, and policy reforms aimed at reducing police brutality and ensuring peaceful demonstrations.

EndSARS Protest: The EndSARS protest was a large-scale, youth-led movement in Nigeria that began in October 2020 to demand an end to police brutality, particularly the abuses carried out by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The protest, which gained massive support both online and offline, called for police reform and better governance. It highlighted the power of social media as a tool for mobilising citizens, spreading awareness, and demanding actions from authorities.

Protest: Protest has to do with public outcry or demonstration against certain policies or agencies perceived to be negatively impactful to social progress. It is an action to express dissatisfaction by member of the public. These expressions of dissatisfaction usually leads to demonstrations majorly across major towns, cities and metropolitans with a view to force government hand to back step or draw attention of the global community for redress. This public outcry could be violent or peaceful.

Role: In the context of this study, "role" refers to the specific function or purpose that something serves. When looking at social media's role in conflict management, it refers to how social media platforms were used to share information, organise protests, promote peaceful dialogue, and influence government actions during the EndSARS movement.

Social Media: This involves social media platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp which played a crucial role in spreading information, organising protests, raising global awareness, and providing a platform for youths to voice their grievances and demands for justice.

Sars: SARS stands for special anti-robbery squad, a now disbanded unit of the Nigerian police Force. It was created to combat armed robbery, kidnapping, and other violent crimes, the unit became widely criticized for its brutality, extortion and human rights abuses, particularly targeting young Nigerians.

Soro Soke: Is a Yoruba phrase that translates to “speak up” or “speak louder”. It was used during the 2020 EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The phrase became a powerful slogan for Nigerian youths demanding justice and an end to police brutality. Protesters chanted “Soro Soke” to encourage each other to speak boldly against oppression, police violence, and government inaction.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the literature review of this study. The literature review was presented under the following subheadings;

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

2.2 Use of Social Media in Managing Conflict

2.3 Social Media as a Tool to Spread Information

2.4. Types of Social Media Platforms Used in the EndSARS

2.5 Social Media and the Spread of Fake News and Misinformation during the EndSARS Protest

2.6 Empirical Review

2.7 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

2.1.1. Social media

Social media has emerged as a significant force in contemporary society, shaping the ways we communicate and share information. Olise (2019) sees social media as a variety of communication media that utilize web 2.0 technologies, allowing users to download, upload, interact, collaborate and share information, in ways never imagined by a man. Asemah et al., (2013), sees social media as online platforms that enable users to engage in interactive communication and share content within virtual communities. These researchers describe social media as digital tools that allow individuals and organizations to create, modify, and distribute content generated by users through interconnected platforms. Also, Asemah (2020) asserts that the internet, social media, mobile apps and other digital communication technologies have become part of people's daily life. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) opines that social media is seen as

internet-based platforms that empower users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content within virtual communities and networks. These platforms include Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, among others. Social media has revolutionised communication by facilitating real-time interactions, enabling global outreach, and encouraging user-generated content, making it a powerful instrument for activism and societal change.

The advent of social media has revolutionised the way we consume and share information as many can no longer do without the internet. Social media has helped in mobilising for social movements and causes. Baruah (2012) cited by Ajibulu & Asemah (2021), define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the technological foundation of the web 2.0 that enhances the creation and sharing of user generated-contents. Inobemhe et al., (2022) note that social media refer to activities, practices and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions, using conversational media.

Before the internet, communication was limited to face-to-face interactions, letters, telephone calls, and later, emails. Early social networking sites such as Six Degrees (1997) and Friendster (2002) enabled users to create profiles and connect with others, laying the foundation for contemporary social media (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). As time went on, more sophisticated platforms appeared, providing features like photo sharing, instant messaging, and video content. Nowadays, social media has transformed into a worldwide phenomenon, shaping the way individuals communicate, share information, and engage in business activities. Social media refers to online platforms and tools that allow people to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content in virtual communities and networks. These platforms enable users to interact with each other through text, images, videos, and audio. Social media has changed the way

people communicate, access news, and engage in social, political, and economic activities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

In Nigeria, social media adoption has grown rapidly due to increasing internet penetration and smartphone usage (Adeleke, 2015). Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter (now X) are widely used for personal communication, business, and activism. For example, during the EndSARS protests in 2020, social media played a crucial role in organizing demonstrations and spreading awareness (Akinfemisoye, 2021). One of the greatest benefits of social media is its capability to connect individuals over vast distances. Families and friends are able to communicate through messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Companies utilise social media to promote their products, interact with customers, and boost sales. Numerous small business owners in Nigeria depend on Instagram and WhatsApp to reach consumers without incurring significant marketing costs. Additionally, social media serves a crucial function in education, as students and educators utilise platforms like YouTube for learning and WhatsApp groups for discussions. Another significant advantage of social media is its efficiency in disseminating information swiftly. News, trends, and essential announcements can become viral within minutes, allowing people to stay updated on global events.

During elections, political parties and activists leverage social media to campaign, communicate their messages, and rally voters. Social media has also been instrumental in organising protests and social movements, such as the EndSARS campaign in Nigeria, where youth utilised Twitter (now X) and Instagram to advocate for police reform and justice. The protest originated from a Twitter (now X) campaign in 2017, using the hashtag EndSARS to demand the disbandment of the unit by the Nigerian government. This protest began in 2017 but attracted global attention in October 2020, spearheaded by youth against police brutality,

specifically aimed at the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian Police Force, known for extortion, torture, and extrajudicial killings. In Edo State, Nigeria, protests featured extensive demonstrations, confrontations with law enforcement, and a substantial online presence that influenced the course of the conflict. Social media has played a dual role in both intensifying and managing the conflict, acting as a venue for mobilisation, raising awareness, and negotiation, while also disseminating misinformation and inciting violence.

2.1.2. Conflict

Conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, dissonance within or between social entities (Rahim, 2011). Conflict is a process of social interaction characterised by the antagonistic contradiction of interests between persons or groups, manifested through hostile behaviours, cognitive dissonance and affective tensions (Ojo, 2015). According to Igabafen (2018), conflict represents the deliberate opposition of forces arising from incompatible work goals or interpersonal relations within formal organisations, requiring managerial intervention for resolution. To Hocker & Wilmot (2018), conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.

During the EndSARS protests, social media was vital in rallying protesters, coordinating actions, and amplifying grievances. Platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, and Instagram were utilised to disseminate real-time updates, organise protests, and document instances of police brutality, drawing international attention to the cause (Akinwotu, 2020). The hashtag EndSARS trended worldwide, exerting pressure on the Nigerian government to address the demands of the protesters. In Edo State, social media activity was particularly robust, with protesters utilising WhatsApp groups for logistics coordination and Facebook Live to broadcast

protests and police responses. This digital mobilisation played a critical role in consolidating a decentralised protest, enabling participants from various locations to act collectively without a centralised leadership model. Nonetheless, these same platforms also allowed for the spread of misinformation and provocative content, heightening tensions among protesters, security forces, and counter-protesters.

2.1.3. Conflict Management

This refers to the systematic process of identifying, addressing, and resolving disputes between individuals, groups, or organisations in a constructive manner. According to Asemah (2011), it involves strategies and techniques aimed at reducing tensions, promoting communication, and achieving mutually acceptable solutions while minimising negative outcomes. Also, the concept of conflict resolution refers to the process of identifying, addressing and resolving disputes or disagreements between individuals or groups through peaceful means such as dialogue, negotiation, mediation or arbitration, with the aim of restoring harmony.

Exploring how social media impacts conflict management during the EndSARS protests in Edo State, shows the influence of digital platforms on conflict dynamics, the ways they aid in conflict resolution or escalation, and the broader consequences for social movements and governance. Social media has revolutionized communication by facilitating real-time interactions, enabling global outreach, and encouraging user-generated content, making it a powerful instrument for activism and societal change. Conflict is part of life; it characterises the dynamics of human interaction. Little wonder that conflict is seen as a universal phenomenon, which occurs between individuals, groups and nations. Conflict management involves the methods and strategies employed to reduce, alleviate, or resolve disputes, ranging from negotiation and mediation to more confrontational tactics. In the case of the EndSARS protests, social media

functioned both as a trigger for escalating conflicts and as a resource for conflict management, depending on the manner in which various actors engaged with it.

Social media has emerged as a significant tool for managing conflicts, which enables individuals to communicate, disseminate information, and coordinate actions rapidly, which can aid in conflict resolution or sometimes exacerbate tensions. Numerous researchers have examined the impact of social media on conflict management, indicating that it can facilitate peace initiatives but also serve as a conduit for misinformation and hatred (Hjorth & Adler-Nissen, 2019). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), and Instagram create environments where users can engage in discussions, negotiate solutions, and foster understanding among opposing groups. For instance, in the context of protests or political controversies, social media assists activists and mediators in promoting messages of peace and arranging dialogues (Shirky, 2011). Before 1999, social mobilisation in Nigeria, particularly regarding social and economic concerns, was primarily the responsibility of trade and student unions, ethnic and tribal organisations, market women, and similar groups. The organisation of protests during that time was not as immediate or rapid as what we witness today with social media, though those protests were still effective. Notable instances include the Aba riot, the Enugu miners' strike, protests against the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), and the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) strikes over fuel price increases, among others. However, the rise of social media in the early 2000s created new avenues for a broader group of individuals to express their frustrations on these platforms. Important issues such as inadequate electricity supply, poor road conditions, a failing education system, and subpar healthcare have become topics of discussion. Social mobilisation through social media began to gain momentum between 2007 and 2009, as networks began to link more voices around shared concerns, leading to a noticeable outpouring

of frustration expressed via social media. Activists seized these social media tools to amplify their messages.

One way that social media aids in conflict resolution is by providing a platform for marginalized voices. Those who are frequently overlooked by traditional media have the opportunity to share their narratives and advocate for justice through social media (Howard & Hussain, 2013). For example, during the Arab Spring, demonstrators utilised social media to coordinate protests and highlight governmental abuses, which attracted global attention and prompted calls for reform (Lotan et al., 2011). Social media also facilitates immediate updates during conflicts, enabling humanitarian organizations to respond more swiftly to emergencies (Meier, 2015). Furthermore, it allows peace builders to conduct online initiatives that foster tolerance and reconciliation, effectively reaching vast audiences in a short time (Hjorth & Adler-Nissen, 2019).

During the EndSARS demonstrations in Benin City, social media proved essential for organizing, documenting, and disseminating information about the protests. The movement, which aimed to end police brutality, gained traction online before moving into the streets. In Benin City, youth utilized platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to coordinate meeting locations, share protest methods, and alert one another about police activities. For instance, when protesters assembled at Ring Road, a key protest location in Benin, live videos and tweets were employed to inform others about security forces attempting to disperse them (Adegami & Uche, 2021).

Social media also played a vital role in bringing to light instances of violence that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. On October 19, 2020, reports and videos began circulating online depicting protesters being shot near the Oba of Benin's palace. These posts went viral,

garnering national and international focus on the crackdown occurring in Benin City (Egharevba & Osunde, 2022). Without social media, many of these incidents could have been overlooked or denied by authorities.

Ultimately, social media proved to be a significant asset during the EndSARS protests. It facilitated the organization of protests, revealed acts of violence, and compelled the government to respond. Although it occasionally propagated false information, its capacity to bring people together and enhance their voices was crucial to the movement's success.

2.2. Use of Social Media in Managing Conflict

Conflict will always be present in the human society, as a result of different opinions and positions on issues. For no two individuals will take the same positions on issues. Conflict is therefore necessary to human existence. Conflict is a serious disagreement between two or more groups, organizations or nations. It can also occur between two individuals or even within an individual because as humans some conflicting thoughts and opinion exist in our minds that keep us restless or troubled. Asemah (2011), assert that conflict is when two or more values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature and have not been aligned or agreed about. Conflict, according to Obot, in Nwosu and Wilson (2004: 105), is a severe case of disagreement, usually caused by or resulting in acts of violence. To Wilson (1997,p.163), conflict is any situation, which results into controversy, struggle, strife or contention and in consequence, brings about a state of incompatibility between humans and a crisis within the society. This implies that conflict refers to the state when there is a disruption in the natural order of things. It may occur at the intrapersonal and group levels; that is, local, national and international levels. Anyanwu, in Nwosu and Wilson (2004, p. 111) notes that conflict must find expression in a communicable

form. Thus, conflict at intrapersonal level has no relevance to a communicator, unless the person expresses the internal conflict in some form, whether verbal or non- verbal.

Conflict management refers to policies relating to national reconciliation; peace-building; stronger state-citizen relations; and social cohesion and inclusion. Conflict management refers to the methods used to address disputes among individuals or groups in a manner that diminishes adverse results and encourages constructive resolutions. It requires grasping the root causes of disagreements, engaging in effective communication, and utilizing approaches to peacefully settle conflicts. Okeke (2015), explains that conflict management in Africa often involves traditional methods such as dialogue, mediation, and community meetings, where elders or leaders help resolve disputes without violence, to Fisher (2010), effective conflict management requires skills like active listening, empathy, and negotiation to ensure that all parties feel heard and respected. Deutsch (2000) emphasize that conflict management is not just about stopping fights but also about turning conflicts into opportunities for growth and better understanding, while Albert (2001), describe conflict management as the ability to control and resolve disagreements in a way that maintains peace and harmony, especially in a diverse society like Nigeria where ethnic, religious, and political differences often lead to conflicts.

In Nigeria, social media has served as a tool to address political and ethnic disputes by raising awareness and encouraging conversation. During elections, social media help in debunking fake news that could lead to violence. According to Shirky (2011), social media creates a platform for public discourse where disputes can be openly discussed, which diminishes the likelihood of false information circulating. Nevertheless, social media has the potential to escalate conflicts when misused, such as when hateful messages or misinformation spread rapidly. Research conducted by Anderson and Jiang (2018) indicates that while social media can

facilitate conflict resolution, it can also heighten tensions if not handled appropriately. Omenugha (2018) emphasize that regulating social media and enhancing digital literacy are crucial to ensure online conflicts do not escalate into real-world violence.

However, when an individual begin to face one form of conflict or the other, they look for the easiest means to get it off. Thus, the social media becomes the most handy and easiest avenue. People do this through their status or display pictures which will in turn elicit advice and comments from their friends. Disagreeing couple might as well log into one of their favorite relationship talks group on Facebook to get an advice about their completing interest. One reasonable thing to know is that with social media less time is wasted. Conflict arising between or among people divided by geographical landmarks can also be quickly resolved via chatting on social media platforms, calls might be made but, there is a fact that conflict resolution doesn't happen in few hours, it takes processes. What social media do is to bridge the gap, provide an interactive forum thereby unifying people again.

The stress one passes through everyday both inwardly and outwardly can even be lessened while accessing one social network or the other. For instance, when scrolling down one's Facebook page, one will see posts of meaningful passages or uploaded pictures that can amuse or enlighten someone. As individuals engage in social networking so also does organizations.

Nowadays, most business enterprises, cooperate bodies, companies have their own social networking groups where they establish and try to maintain mutual relationship with their clients/audiences. Various organizations find it necessary to hire professionals to manage their social media accounts. Managers who have some experience or training in conflict management and resolution are employed to handle any disagreement between the organization and their

customers. Most times when conflict escalates very fast, there is a need to use the social media to effect constant publicity. Social media contents travel very wide and fast. Also, in most organizations, it is necessary to maintain a healthy informal relationship among colleagues or between the employers and the employees in order to enhance cooperation and productivity, social media platforms also aid in this kind of achievement. Even at the national level the social media aid in resolving conflicts. Suffice it to say that without social media citizen journalism becomes a figure head because it is through the various social media that citizens of a country air their candid opinion about the policies or activities of their government. In case of any disagreement between the government and citizens about any issue, the social media is always a means of airing opinion. Citizens employ this medium to make their voices heard and the government can as well announce their deliberated decisions through this same means.

The development of a social media campaign with the hashtag ENDSARS in 2017, provided an avenue for victims to share their experiences and grievances about police brutality (Malumfashi, 2020). This pathway allowed social media to witness the evolution, experiences, and perceptions of police brutality, particularly from the SARS unit. The use of social media to communicate grievances through shared protest messages and arts, and further use to disclose other political opinions and grievances, made it a viable medium to study the movement. The EndSARS social media campaign from 2017 majorly performed the function of hashtag activism (Oloyede & Elegba, 2019). This was accompanied by marginal and decentralized mass mobilization (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020) to call on governing institutions to curb the excesses of the SARS unit.

Overall, the ability to manage conflicts is essential in both personal and professional environments, and social media has introduced an additional layer to conflict resolution. While it

provides chances for swift communication and solutions, it also carries dangers if not used properly. Researchers from Nigeria and various other regions concur that comprehending the nature of conflicts and employing appropriate strategies whether conventional or online can facilitate effective dispute management.

2.3 Social Media as a Tool to Spread Information

Social media has emerged as one of the most influential means of disseminating information in Nigeria and globally. It enables individuals to rapidly and easily share news, ideas, and viewpoints with a broad audience. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and TikTok allow anyone with internet connectivity to post updates, videos, and messages that can be seen by millions almost instantaneously. This rapid dissemination and extensive reach render social media a powerful tool for spreading both important information and misinformation (Olayinka, 2021). In Nigeria, social media has transformed communication methods, particularly among young people, who utilize it to engage in political discussions, address social issues, and even arrange protests (Adeleke, 2020).

One of the most significant benefits of social media is that it empowers everyday Nigerians with a voice. Previously, only major newspapers, television networks, and state-owned media had the ability to disseminate information to large audiences. Now, anyone with a smartphone can share their observations and experiences. This was vividly demonstrated during the EndSARS protests in October 2020, when young Nigerians leveraged Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to organize demonstrations, document incidents of police brutality, and call for justice (Ojedokun & Eke, 2021). The global community might have remained unaware of the protests and the violent reactions from law enforcement without these platforms (Akinwotu,

2020). Adibe (2020), claim that social media has dismantled the government's monopoly on information, enabling citizens to narrate their own stories.

Social media also plays a crucial role in raising awareness about social issues in Nigeria. Movements like #BringBackOurGirls, which began in 2014 to advocate for the rescue of the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls, and #EndSARS in 2020 gained international attention through social media (Omenugha & Uzuegbunam, 2018). These hashtags empowered Nigerians to share their stories and urge action from their leaders. During the #EndSARS protests, young Nigerians utilized Twitter to keep the movement trending, compelling the government to react (Ezeah et al., 2021). Nwachukwu (2020) notes that the movement succeeded, in part, because social media made it challenging for the government to dismiss the voices of the people. Another advantage of social media is that it offers real-time updates during crises.

During the EndSARS protests, live streams, tweets, and Instagram stories informed Nigerians about the locations of protests, instances of police aggression, and areas where medical assistance was required (Ojebode et al., 2021). This immediate exchange of information facilitated protesters' safety and coordinated their efforts. However, Nigerian scholars like Musa and Yusha (2021) caution that social media has the potential to rapidly disseminate misinformation. During #EndSARS, rumors and manipulated videos spread across platforms, leading to confusion and anxiety. For instance, false narratives suggested that foreign mercenaries were targeting protesters, heightening tensions (Akinfeleye & Okoye, 2021).

Another issue is the potential manipulation of social media. The Nigerian government and influential groups sometimes propagate propaganda or attempt to silence dissenters. During EndSARS, there were claims that the government contemplated shutting down social media or imposing stricter regulations to control the narrative (Adejumobi, 2021). Some scholars, like

Omojuwa (2020), contend that this would infringe on free speech, while others, such as Danladi (2021), argue that some level of regulation is necessary to curb fake news.

Despite these obstacles, social media continues to be an essential resource for information sharing in Nigeria. The EndSARS movement highlighted its capability to unify individuals and bring light to injustices. Especially the youth in Nigeria have effectively used social media to demand reforms, hold leaders accountable, and advocate for their rights (Ibrahim & Hassan, 2021). However, users should take care to verify information before sharing to prevent the spread of false news.

2.4 Types of Social Media Platforms Used During the EndSARS Protest

Social media platforms are essential for dissemination of information and engagement of scholars in various fields Zimba & Gasparyan (2021). With upgrades of online tools and the emergence of various digital technologies over the past decade, it has become easier to generate online information and reach scholars worldwide. Various digitized items, including articles, books, images, and videos, have become common objects for knowledge dissemination and professional discussion on specially designed networking sites. In contrast to other demonstrations in Nigeria, the EndSARS campaign utilized digital platforms extensively to organize activities, disseminate live updates, and attract global awareness (Olorunnisola & Adegbola, 2021). Different platforms served unique purposes, each contributing to the movements successes in various ways. This paper examines the various social media platforms employed throughout the protest.

Twitter: Twitter is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users tweet. During the protests, Twitter emerged as the leading platform, serving as the main hub for real-

time updates and global engagement. The hashtag EndSARS gained worldwide traction, capturing the attention of international media, activists, and celebrities alike. Protesters utilized Twitter to share live videos, highlight police brutality, and combat government misinformation. The platform also played a crucial role in facilitating crowd funding, with numerous Nigerians contributing funds to support medical aid, legal support, and the logistics of the protests. The retweet feature on Twitter allowed for rapid amplification of voices, making it challenging for authorities to stifle information.

Facebook: This is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. According to statistics from the Nielsen Group, internet users within the United States spend more time on Facebook than any other website. Facebook played a crucial role in facilitating in-depth discussions, coordinating events, and raising funds. Activists established groups and pages to manage logistics, including food distribution, medical assistance, and legal support. The feature of Facebook Live was particularly influential, enabling real-time streaming of protests, such as the notorious Lekki Toll Gate shooting. These live broadcasts served as unfiltered proof of police brutality, challenging government claims. Furthermore, Facebook's fundraising capabilities contributed to collecting donations for injured protesters and the families of those affected.

TikTok: TikTok, a platform for sharing short videos (Zulli & Zulli, 2020), unexpectedly emerged as a significant tool for engaging youth. Young Nigerians produced videos lasting 15-60 seconds to articulate protest demands, share chants, and mock government reactions (Adejunmobi, 2020). TikTok's algorithm enabled these videos to reach audiences globally, extending beyond the

borders of Nigeria (Akinfemisoye, 2021). The platform's duet and stitch features facilitated the creative remixing of protest-related content, further amplifying the overall message.

Instagram: Instagram, a platform centered around visual content that emphasizes photo and video sharing (Sheldon et al., 2020), significantly contributed to capturing the personal stories behind the protests. Activists utilized Instagram Stories and Reels to present powerful images of demonstrations, instances of police brutality, and injured protesters (Olorunnisola & Adegbola, 2021). The transient nature of the Stories feature facilitated immediate updates, while IGTV was used for extended video accounts of protest activities (Akinfemisoye, 2021). The visual aspect of Instagram played a key role in personalizing the movement and stirring emotional reactions from audiences worldwide.

Whatsapp: a messaging app known for its encryption (Montag et al., 2015), played a crucial role in enabling secure communication among those organizing protests. Its end-to-end encryption facilitated confidential planning of protest tactics without the risk of government monitoring (Akinfemisoye, 2021). WhatsApp groups shared vital safety information, such as methods for dealing with tear gas and ways to spot undercover officers (Olorunnisola & Adegbola, 2021). Additionally, the platform's broadcast lists allowed for the swift sharing of emergency notifications to a large number of protesters at once.

YouTube: A platform for sharing videos where individuals can upload, watch, and disseminate video content (Burgess & Green, 2018), functioned as a repository for documenting protests. Activists uploaded unedited recordings of demonstrations, testimonies from victims, and analytical pieces (Omenugha & Uzuegbunam, 2021). The platform's extended format enabled comprehensive coverage that enhanced the brief updates available on other social media

platforms (Olorunnisola & Adegbola, 2021). Additionally, YouTube's recommendation algorithm assisted new viewers in finding content related to protests.

The #EndSARS protest illustrated how various social media platforms can work together to bolster a social movement. The distinct characteristics and capabilities of each platform enhanced the protest's coordination, documentation, and international visibility. This approach of utilizing multiple platforms strengthened the movement against efforts at censorship and ensured its message reached a wide range of audiences.

2.5 How Social Media Spread Fake News and Misinformation during the EndSARS Protest

The #EndSARS demonstrations in Benin City, akin to other regions of Nigeria, were significantly impacted by social media, which served a dual purpose in both facilitating the organization of the movement and disseminating misinformation. As the capital of Edo State, Benin City emerged as a critical locus for the protests, where the swift propagation of false information resulted in a climate of confusion, violence, and distrust. Various social media platforms, including Twitter (X), Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, were utilized to circulate unverified assertions, altered images, and exaggerated narratives, thereby exacerbating tensions among protesters, law enforcement, and the broader community. Misinformation represents fake or erroneous information circulated to deceive people. Parrot Nigeria (2018) noted that unconfirmed, disingenuous and non-professional pieces of information are found in unimaginable quantity on social media. While this affirmation cannot be refuted, it remains to be known if it represented the situation during the 2020 #EndSARS protest or not.

Asemah et al (2017) sees fake news as a sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting, which is deliberately designed to mislead, deceive, or manipulate public opinion. Dominic (2017), defines fake news as fabricated or misleading content presented as legitimate news, often created for financial gain, political manipulation, or social disruption.

While Tandoc (2018) sees fake news as a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate misinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online social media. Therefore, fake news is a fabricated or misleading information presented as true or legitimate used to deceive and influence public opinion.

Misinformation during the EndSARS protest refers to unverified and misleading claims and information, circulated on digital platforms, shaping public perceptions about the protest. Edewor & Aluko (2020) sees misinformation as the dissemination of false or distorted facts, whether intentional or not, which can shape perceptions erroneously in society. To Wardle & Derakhshan (2017), misinformation is information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm. Lewandowsky et al (2017), also sees misinformation as incorrect or misleading information that is spread without deceptive intent, distinguishing it from disinformation.

Eke, Obiora & Odoh (2014), asserts that Social media are a double-edged weapon and their power for progress and backwardness dwells in the users. There is no doubt that social media are an instrument of social change in the contemporary era. However, social media are equally used for spreading misinformation Adepetun (2020). Misinformation comes in form of fake or erroneous information circulated deliberately to swindle or misdirect people. Most times, people take decisions quite impulsively without appropriate checks and balances which they afterward regret. Misinformation on social media has resulted to widespread apprehension in recent years. Allcott & Yu, (2018). Ireton & Posetti, (2018), described it as misleading information created or disseminated without manipulative or malicious intent. They are usually designed and promoted by imposters/faceless individuals whose objectives are premeditated to cause public harm or for profit.

During the #EndSARS protests, Benin City saw some of the most dramatic moments, especially when online rumors surfaced concerning attacks on demonstrators and government facilities. It was later shown that the widely circulated idea that demonstrators had set fire to every police station in Benin was untrue (Egharevba & Ojo, 2021). While majority of the detainees released from Oko Correctional Center were criminals unrelated to the protests, another misleading story claimed that they were #EndSARS supporters (Alemika, 2021). Such false information increased citizens' anxiety and provided justification for harsh security measures. The recycling of old photos and videos was a significant contributor to the propagation of fake news in Benin City. A 2018 video of a market clash in Onitsha was circulated as evidence of soldiers shooting at protesters. (Osaheni, 2022). The public's perception of the events was further distorted when photoshopped photographs of demolished buildings were linked to the protests. According to studies, because there are few reliable local news sources available in Benin City during emergencies, people there frequently disseminate information without doing any due diligence (Ibagere, 2020).

The impact of misinformation in Benin City was severe, as conversation was hampered by the growing mistrust between demonstrators and authorities as a result of false claims. Exaggerated reports of mass murders were taken seriously by many locals, which inflamed resentment and sparked attacks on government buildings (Idemudia, 2021). Fake news also made it more difficult for real victims of police abuse to be heard because unconfirmed claims took center stage in public conversation. Benin City serves as an example of how social media can both strengthen and weaken protest movements. The quick dissemination of false information exacerbated tensions and damaged the demonstrations' legitimacy, even though it

helped disseminate the #EndSARS message. This emphasises the necessity of digital literacy initiatives to assist residents in recognizing and countering false information during social unrest.

2.6 Empirical Review

This section presents the review of empirical studies. Thirteen (13) studies with bearing to this current study were reviewed. The studies are as follow: Shokoya (2025); Grace (2025); Semilu (2025); Olise & Nnaane (2024); Madueke (2024); Adekoya (2021); Samuel, Eze & Okafor (2021); Akpan & Targema (2022); Oyinloye & Omotayo (2023); Alshaabani & Rudnak (2023); Khalif (2023); Ukka (2023); and Komiti & Obaje (2020).

Shokoya (2025) conducted a research on the role of social media during the EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The study investigated the role and rationale behind the usage of social media during the Endsars protest. The study employed the Descriptive survey research design. The work employed the use of key informant interviews, In-depth interviews, and structured questionnaires as research instruments. A total of 16 interviews were conducted across the three senatorial districts in Lagos with 359 questionnaires administered as well. It was found out that Social media was instrumental to the endsars protest as it was the engine of information and mobilization. Social media was also used to protest online with the use of Hashtags which has been discovered in this study as the digital means of protesting. A recent development in social protest in Nigeria is the phenomenon of using social media as a catalyst of social protest. The study concluded that as internet use and adoption rise in the nation, social media would be utilised more frequently to compel the government to deal with more pressing concerns. The empirical study is relevant to the current study as it discussed the role of social media during EndSARS protes in Nigeria. Both study discussed how social media platforms shaped public discourse and influenced policy decisions and government reactions. The difference between the

study is that the current study is focused on Benin, Edo State, while the study under review focused on Nigeria.

Also, Semilu (2025) carried out a study on brand crisis management in the age of social media. The study explored brand crisis management strategies in response to social media reviews, examining both proactive and reactive approaches. Through case studies of brands such as Food By Hilda, GTBank, H&M, and United Airlines, the research highlights the importance of crisis preparedness, timely response strategies, and stakeholder perception management. The findings suggested that while proactive strategies help prevent crises, they may fail if customer concerns are not adequately addressed. Conversely, reactive approaches, though effective in immediate damage control, are often hindered by bureaucratic delays and ineffective escalation processes. The study concluded that a hybrid crisis management approach leveraging technological tools for monitoring, real-time issue resolution, and persuasive communication can mitigate reputational risks and sustain brand credibility in the digital age. The study under review aligns with the current study as both studies agreed that platforms like Twitter (X) and Instagram are double-edged swords, as they reveal the dual edge power of social media in crisis, which can either worsen or resolve conflicts. Both studies dealt with conflict management but on different approaches.

Grace (2025) in her work, AI-Driven conflict resolution in online communities and social media, explored the role of AI in conflict resolution within online communities and social media. It investigated how machine learning algorithms, natural language processing (NLP), and sentiment analysis can be leveraged to detect and resolve disputes, mitigate harmful behavior, and foster healthier interactions. The study also explored the potential ethical implications of relying on AI systems in conflict management and provides an overview of existing AI-driven

tools and strategies currently employed in real-world applications. Both work aligns as they recognizing the role of digital media. They highlight the dual potentials of social media to either escalate divisions or foster dialogue and unity. In essence, both works explore the transformative capacity of social media to serve as both a catalyst for conflict and a tool for its resolution, making them deeply connected in focus, function, and relevance to contemporary digital activism.

In another study by Olise & Nnaane (2024) on the topic “Influential role of twitter (X) in mobilising 2020 EndSARS protests in Nigeria. Their study highlighted how the platform’s features and style enabled effective protest coordination through hashtags, which facilitated awareness, organisation, and collective action. The researchers adopted a cross-sectional survey research method, administering questionnaires to 384 respondents in Lagos and Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study sample consist of youths who took part in the protest. Their findings revealed that Twitter (X) significantly contributed to the success of the protests by fostering awareness, unity among protesters, and a shared purpose that transcended ethnic and religious divisions. They also noted that while the platform was vital for mobilizing action, they cautioned against the spread of misinformation and disinformation. A key recommendation of the research is that protesting youths and social media influencers should avoid the use of deepfakes and other forms fake news. The study aligns closely with the current study by illustrating how Twitter (X) served not only as a tool for mobilisation but also for coordination and communication among protesters. While their research focused on Lagos and Port Harcourt, the findings are applicable to Edo State, where similar protest dynamics unfolded.

Furthermore, Madueke (2024), carried a research on Social Media and the Biafra Separatist Conflict in Nigeria. The study was hinged on realism and securitization theories, the

research demonstrated that ethnic entrepreneurs like the Biafra separatist leader, Nnamdi Kanu, often take advantage of the lack of gatekeepers in social media to mobilize the support required to sustain ethnic conflicts. Unlike other pro-Biafra movements in the past that fizzled out with time, Kanu's Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has generated sustained attention because it leverages social media to mobilize local and international support. The user-generated content nature of social media makes it fashionable to be used by ethnic entrepreneurs to accelerate the onset of armed conflict. This research suggested that multiethnic states like Nigeria can delay the onset of civil wars and insurgencies by regulating social media use without suppressing dissident voices and restricting individual liberty. The study shares similarity because they both focused on social media, protest, and conflicts. They both examined how digital platforms shapes the dynamics of conflict and resistance, but they do so from different perspectives within the Nigerian sociopolitical context.

Similarly, Adekoya (2021), conducted a study on information and Misinformation during the EndSARS Protest in Nigeria, assessing the Role of Social Media. The study explored social media information and misinformation and EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The study employed the use of close-ended questionnaire to elicit data from 609 social media users across Nigeria. It was found that social media were used to listen to news about the protest, to find out the causes of the protest, and to know about the extent of police brutality during the protest. The study revealed that social media are not immune to being used for spreading misinformation. The work under review directly relates to the current study as both work focused on how digital platforms influenced the flow of information, the perception of events, and the management or escalation of conflict.

A study by Samuel et al (2021) on Perception on the Use of Social Media in Propagating Security Issues in the Post COVID19 era. The study underpinned on Technological determinism theory. The survey research design was adopted. The population comprises 555,500 of Owerri metropolis residents and using Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator 384 was derived as the sample size. The multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. Analysis of data was done using percentage and mean analysis methods. Their findings revealed that at an average mean of 3.0 (N=369), respondents have the perception that social media is use in propagating security issues. They believe that social media users have used the platform negatively and, as such, encourage security problems. It was recommended that the fact that anyone can use social media to promote security issues through the spread of fake news and hate speech platforms should be fact checked to reduce the amount of malicious content that is capable of sparking security spread. The study is similar to the current study as they both examine the impact of digital platforms on public perception, and social order. They align in showing that while social media can escalate conflict and insecurity through misinformation and fear, it can also provide a framework for community coordination, transparency, and digital peace building. However it differs because the study under review is on COVID19 era while the current study is on EndSARS protest.

Also, Akpan & Targema (2022), explored the potential of social media for effective mass mobilization and community engagement to attain national development in Nigeria. The study examined how the opportunities they offer could be harnessed and purposefully deployed to galvanise the citizens to pursue national development causes. The study was anchored on technological determinism theory that provides the framework for investigating the indispensable role which technology plays in the advancement of a nation's socio-economic development. The

secondary research approach was adopted to carry out the study and studied the 2020 EndSARS protest. The study examined the nature of digital activism that social media facilitated during the protest and how that translated into real-life activism, thereby galvanising the youth to actively execute the protest. The study concluded that proper mainstreaming of social media into the community engagement and national development struggle would help engage meaningfully with the citizens and mobilize them to attain socio-economic development in the country. Both work aligns as it converge on the understanding that social media is a critical infrastructure for mass mobilization, community engagement, and collective action, whether aimed at national development or conflict management. This alignment underscores social media's broader role in empowering citizens and shaping Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

Oyinloye & Omotayo (2023). Conducted a research on social media and nonviolent protest movements. The study reviewed the EndSARS movement, which focused on the role of social media in facilitating nonviolent protest movements. The study explored how social media has been used to facilitate protests movements globally and examined the impact of social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, in mobilizing activists, amplifying voices, and disseminating information. The study was anchored on the collective identity theory. The analysis highlights the challenges, successes and limitations of using social media for nonviolent protests, drawing implications and lessons for future movements. The study employed a qualitative data collection method and twelve (12) respondents comprising of police officers and activists who were participants in the EndSARS protests were interviewed. Both work are similar as they focus on the EndSARS movement. They emphasized that social media platforms provide essential tools for organizing peaceful demonstrations, spreading information quickly, and building solidarity among diverse groups of protesters. Both study highlights the role of

social media in enabling activists to coordinate actions, share verified information, and counter misinformation. Additionally, they recognize that social media amplifies marginalized voices and creates inclusive spaces for dialogue, strengthening the unity and resilience of the movement.

Alshaabani & Rudnak (2023), in their research examined the impact of trust on employees' engagement. The study examined the role of conflict management climate (CMC) as a mediator between trust and employees' engagement. The study surveyed international employees who work in Hungary. The study determined how perceived trust affects employees' engagement through CMC's mediating effects. 355 participants joined in filling the questionnaires. The results indicated that trust and CMC are related to employees' engagement. The study highlighted the importance of having a positive trust and conflict management climate on employees' engagement. Both works align in showing that creating an environment where open communication is trusted and conflicts are addressed constructively is critical for managing tensions and sustaining engagement, whether in organizational settings or social movements. Social media during EndSARS functioned as an informal conflict management climate, mediating distrust in formal institutions by enabling grassroots conflict resolution, much like how trust and conflict management climates improve engagement and outcomes within workplaces in Alashaabamo and Rudnak's study.

Furthermore, Khalif (2023), Examined The Role of the Media in Conflict Resolution and Management in Somalia. The paper examined the role of the media in conflict resolution and management in Somalia. The study focused on the reign of warlords, moderate Islamists, and extremists like Al - Shabab, and the federal government showed that local stations within Somalia actively promoted peace journalism, effectively diffusing tensions in various regions. Secondary sources of data were utilized, such as various media outlets' websites and reporters

operating in the Horn of Africa. It highlights the crucial role that the media can play in promoting peace, but more needs to be done to prioritize peace journalism over war journalism. The similarities between both studies is the focus on social media and conflicts as the studies emphasise the dual nature of media in conflict situations. While media can be a source of misinformation and incitement, it also holds the potential to facilitate conflict resolution by providing a space for dialogue, promoting transparency, and fostering a sense of community among diverse groups. Both studies highlight the importance of responsible media practices in managing conflicts and promoting peace within societies.

Ukka (2023) conducted a study on foreign politics and international media conflict reporting. The paper aimed to seek the influence of foreign politics on international media conflict reports. The research looked at the direct effect of international media on conflict escalation; and the indirect effect of international media on conflict escalation through the mediation of foreign policy. The evidence of the geopolitical conflict between Israel and Palestine was used in the study. Data were collected on a sample of 251 media practitioners operating in Israel and Palestine through online survey. The finding revealed that the relationship between international media and conflict escalation is nonsignificant. Findings showed that the mediator variable $\uparrow$ foreign politics $\downarrow$ has a positive and significant influence on international media conflict reports. The findings also revealed that online journalism was the most used. The study concluded that the international media online journalism conflict report is propaganda of foreign politics, and the present and future relationship between Israel and Palestine can be shaped by Al Jazeera through its online journalism.

Finally Komiti & Obaje (2020) in their study $\Leftarrow$ Social Media and Social Movement Decentralisation. The objective of the study examined how social media facilitated the

decentralization of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement to global recognition. The study was anchored on technology determinism and resource mobilization theories. Mixed methods research design was adopted. The study revealed that the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement was decentralized through social media and users of social media played a dominant role in facilitating the decentralisation of the movement through the use of hashtags which contributed significantly to the globalization of the movement. The findings showed the impromptu and reactionary nature of the protests contributed to the decentralization strategy and the globalization of the movement. The study is very similar to the current study as Social Media and Social Movement Decentralisation: The 2020 Nigerian EndSARS Social Movement, investigates how social media facilitated the decentralization of the EndSARS protests, enabling rapid global recognition. Their research underscores the pivotal role of social media in mobilizing youth, disseminating information, and fostering a decentralized leadership structure. These findings align closely with the role of social media in conflict management during the EndSARS protests in Nigeria, particularly in Edo State.

In conclusion, Komiti and Obaje's research aligns with the understanding that social media serves as a powerful tool in conflict management by facilitating decentralized organization, rapid information dissemination, and inclusive participation, all of which were evident in the EndSARS protests in Edo State. Their findings contribute to the broader discourse on the role of digital platforms in modern social movements and conflict resolution.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two communication theories that provide a strong analytical foundation for examining the course of study. They are Agenda Setting Theory and Social Responsibility Theory.

Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory first introduced by McCombs & Shaw (1972) in their study on how news coverage influenced voters during the 1968 U.S. presidential election. The theory argues that the media does not necessarily tell people what to think but rather what to think about. This means that by selecting and emphasizing certain issues, the media influences the public's perception of what is important. Over time, this theory has expanded, with scholars refining its principles and applying it to different media landscapes, including social media. Agenda setting is now detailing a second level of effects that examines how media coverage affects both what the public thinks about and how the public thinks about it. This second level of agenda setting deals with the specific attributes of a topic and how this agenda of attributes also influences public opinion (McCombs & Evatt, 1995).

With the rise of social media, agenda setting theory in Nigeria has evolved beyond traditional media, as online platforms play crucial role in amplifying certain issues while marginalizing others Ojebode & Adegbola (2017). This theory helps analyze how social media dictated the protest's narrative during the EndSARS protest, forcing mainstream media and policymakers to respond (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2020). Without traditional gatekeepers, platforms like Twitter became the primary agenda-setters, shaping how Nigerians and the global audience perceived the conflict.

One of the fundamental principles of agenda setting theory, is salience transfer, which holds that public views a topic as more important the more attention it receives from the media McCombs (2004). This process has long been dominated by traditional media, such as TV and newspapers, but the dynamics have shifted with the emergence of social media. Users can define their own agendas on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, sometimes avoiding

conventional gatekeepers Meraz, (2009). This was made clear during the 2020 EndSARS protests in Nigeria, when young activists exposed police brutality on social media, prompting the government and mainstream media to take action. The EndSARS protests became a powerful example of how social media has transformed agenda-setting in the digital age. No longer do only newspapers and television stations decide what issues matter ordinary people, armed with smartphones and hashtags, can now shape national and even global conversations. The #EndSARS movement proved that when voices unite online, they can break through traditional media gatekeeping, forcing the world to pay attention to injustices that might otherwise be ignored.

Social Responsibility Theory

The social responsibility theory is a normative theory that explains how media should operate to benefit society. The theory was first proposed by Sibert, Peterson, and Schramm in their 1956 book, *Four Theories of the Press*. The theory developed in response to the shortcomings of the libertarian model, which permitted unrestricted media freedom without accountability. According to the social responsibility theory, while media should operate independently of government interference, they are also required to prioritize the public interest by following ethical principles, delivering accurate and interpretative news, and facilitating public input. This theory seeks to harmonize media freedom with social responsibilities, ensuring that the press does not exploit its authority by disseminating false information or neglecting the welfare of the public. The theory posits that media should serve the public interest by maintaining ethical standards, balance and accuracy Siebert et al (1956). Okunna (2002) agrees with Siebert et al as he emphasize that the Nigeria media must serve the public interest by providing accurate, balanced and ethical journalism, while avoiding sensationalism and

government control. In Nigeria, social responsibility theory requires the press to act as a watchdog, holding leaders accountable, promoting democracy, and ensuring that diverse voices are represented in public Uko (2004).

The fundamental principles of the social responsibility theory assert that the freedom of the media comes with certain duties. The press is required to deliver accurate, thorough, and insightful reports on events, act as a forum for public discussion, and reflect the diversity of various community groups. This theory also highlights that if the media does not fulfill these duties, outside regulation by the government or professional organizations may be essential to maintain accountability. Moreover, the media should steer clear of sensationalism, focus on promoting social cohesion, and aid democratic processes by enhancing informed public discourse. The theory advocates for journalistic professionalism, urging self-regulation through ethical guidelines and codes of conduct. Based on the social responsibility framework, platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are required to ensure the dissemination of accurate information, manage harmful content, and encourage constructive discussions. However, evidence shows that while social media amplified the voices of protesters, it also facilitated the spread of misinformation, which heightened tensions. Bajracharya (2018), Inyang & Edem (2020) contend that social media companies should implement ethical guidelines to prevent the misuse of their platforms during conflicts. This theory posits that, had social media enacted stricter content moderation and endorsed verified information, they could have reduced violence and fostered a peaceful resolution.

Previous research, including studies by Shoemaker & Vos (2009) regarding gatekeeping theory, underscores the importance of responsible content filtering by media, such as social media to avoid disorder. Likewise, Williams & Carpini (2000) point out how unregulated media

coverage can warp public perception in times of crisis. In the context of #EndSARS, the failure of social media to fully comply with social responsibility principles intensified polarization, highlighting the need for improved regulatory frameworks. The dissertation could reference these scholars to contend that social media platforms should incorporate conflict-sensitive reporting and fact-checking systems to adhere to the ideals of social responsibility theory. By adopting such practices, they can more effectively manage conflicts and fulfill their societal obligations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the methodology of this study. Thus, it outlines the research design of the study, amongst others. The chapter is presented under the following headings;

3.1 Research Design

3.2 Population of the study

3.3 Sample Size

3.4 Sampling Technique

3.5 Instrument of Data Collection

3.6 Validity of Research Instrument

3.7 Reliability of Research Instruments

3.8 Method of Data Collection

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design was adopted because the study was conducted among a cross-section of a group of people where data were collected at a point in time, with the use of the questionnaire. This design was appropriate because the focus of this study was to understand the pattern of the variables of interests in this study which is audience responses and attitude towards the role of social media. Besides, the descriptive survey research design allows the collection of data from sub-set (sample) of a population. Thus, another reason for its adoption in this study was that it ensured that important and relevant facts were collected from the sampled population whose analysis aided the generalization of inferences on the larger population.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population has to do with the universe of study, hence internet users in Benin City, Edo State are the population of this study. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), (2024) the total number of active internet users in Benin City, Edo State stands at 5,880,824 (NBS, 2024). However, specifically, the study targeted social media users between ages 18 and above who have experiences about EndSARS protest and literate enough on the subject-matter.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size refers to the subset of the population chosen for data collection. Choosing the right sample size is essential because it directly affects the accuracy and reliability of the research results (Cochran, 1977). For this study, a sample size of 384 participants was considered adequate, as calculated using Cochran's (1977) formula (see Appendix II).

3.4 Sampling Technique

The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique to administer 384 copies of the questionnaire to respondents who are active social media users residing in Edo State. The purposive sampling method was chosen to deliberately target individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research, namely, those who use social media platforms regularly and are residents of Edo State. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate for this study because it allows for the intentional selection of participants who possess specific characteristics essential to the research objectives. Since the study focuses on social media, it was critical to ensure that all respondents were actual users of social media platforms. This non-probability sampling method enabled the researchers to collect data from individuals who are most likely to provide relevant and insightful information, thereby enhancing the study's validity within the target population.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument that was used in collecting data is the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 25-items which were divided into 2 sections (A & B). Section A comprises five items designed to collect background data from respondents, Section B focused on questions relating to the research objectives. The items in section B were coded in a Likert rating scale, where the five response option for each statement given was used. These options are as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), among others.

3.6 Validity of Research Instrument

The validity of the instrument was carried out through face validity which requires cross-checking the content of the study especially the objectives and research questions to ascertain that the questionnaire items reflect the context projected in the study's objectives and research questions. This was carried out by experts such as the research supervisor and other experts in communication and media studies. In addition, content validity was carried out to ascertain the degree to which the designed instrument is different and/or similar to existing literature.

3.7 Reliability of Research Instrument

The reliability of the research instrument for this study was determined through the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient index which shows the degree of internal consistency of the questionnaire to be administered. This is because reliability of research instrument is necessary since it shows the degree to which an instrument will continually produce the same result if administered in similar context among similar respondents. Therefore, the internal consistency of the research instrument was ascertained through a pilot study that was conducted at Oredo Local Government Area, Benin City, Edo State, using 5 respondents. Indeed, the co-efficient

correlation was obtained using Cronbach alpha method of assessing internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was yielded (See Appendix III).

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The instrument for this study was administered to active social media users in Edo State, specifically targeting youths aged 18-45 on a face-to-face basis with the help of four research assistants. The researchers identified and approached participants in public places across Benin City where social media users are likely to be found (markets, public recreation centres, university campuses, and tech hubs). The researcher used three weeks in research instrument administration and collection.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected and collated in this study through the questionnaire were processed with the aid of the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The analysis of the different categories of the quantitative data was done with frequency tables, simple percentage and mean scores. The criterion mean for this study was 2.50.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the researcher presented the field data then analysed and discuss the findings obtained through the study. The data were presented in frequency distribution tables, after being analysed with SPSS version 23 to facilitate understanding. A total of 384 copies of questionnaires were administered, and the responses collected are presented in tables and analysed using simple percentage and mean score. From the questionnaire sampled, only 379 were properly filled and returned, resulting in a response rate of 98.7%. Therefore, analysis was based on the 379 copies of questionnaire.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender of Respondents		
Male	197	52.0%
Female	182	48.0%
Total	379	100%
Age Range of Respondents		
18-23 years	107	28.2%
24-29 years	135	35.6%
30-45 years	85	22.4%
36 years and above	52	13.7%
Total	379	100%
Marital Status		
Single	211	55.7%
Married	145	38.3%
Others	23	6.0%
Total	379	100%
Religion		
Christianity	233	61.5%
Islam	121	31.9%
Traditional	13	3.4%
Others	12	3.2%
Total	379	100%
Educational Attainment		
SSCE	91	24.0%
Diploma/NCE	99	26.1%
Bachelor/HND	129	34.0%
Postgraduate/higher	60	15.8%
Total	379	100%

Data from Table 1 shows the demographic variables of the respondents. From the analyses, a slightly higher proportion of respondents are male (52%). This suggests a relatively balanced gender distribution with mild male dominance. In terms of age range, the largest group is aged 24-29 (35.6%), indicating a young adult respondent population. The 18-23 group also has a significant share (28.2%), pointing to a largely youthful demographic. The marital Status indicates that over half of the respondents are single (55.7%), reinforcing the youthful age profile. Married individuals make up 38.3%, and a small fraction falls into other categories (6%). Also, Christianity is the most practiced religion among respondents (61.5%), followed by Islam (31.9%). Traditional and other religions are minimally represented, suggesting a predominantly orthodox religious orientation. In terms of educational level, the largest segment holds a Bachelor's degree or Higher National Diploma (34.0%), and 26.1% have a Diploma/National Certificate in Education. This indicates a well-educated population, with 15.8% having postgraduate or higher qualifications.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data Based on Other Items in the Questionnaire

Table 2: Responses on the Roles of Social Media in Managing Conflicts during the #EndSARS Protest in Edo State

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)	Mean
Social media platforms serve as a vital communication tool.	178 (47%)	117 (31%)	34 (9%)	27 (7%)	19 (5%)	379 (100%)	4.08
Social media played a significant role in mobilising support during EndSARS protest.	163 (43%)	133 (35%)	42 (11%)	27 (7%)	14 (4%)	379 (100%)	4.06
Social media provided a platform for victims of police brutality to share their stories	186 (49%)	125 (33%)	27 (7%)	23 (6%)	18 (5%)	379 (100%)	4.15
Social media facilitated peaceful protest during the EndSARS movement.	148 (39%)	140 (37%)	49 (13%)	23 (6%)	19 (5%)	379 (100%)	3.99
The use of hashtags on social media was effective in raising awareness about police brutality	171 (45%)	129 (34%)	34 (9%)	27 (7%)	18 (5%)	379 (100%)	4.07
Mean Average							4.06

Table 2 shows the role social media platforms played in managing conflicts during the #EndSARS protest among respondents in Edo State. From the analyses, most respondents agree (47% SA, 31% A) that social media was crucial for communication during the protest. This suggests social media helped share updates quickly. Also, 78% (SA + A) believe social media helped mobilise supporters. This implies online platforms played a key role in gathering protest momentum. In the same vein, 82% agreed it gave victims a voice. This shows that social media amplified personal stories of police abuse and shaped public opinion. More so, 76% of respondents see social media as aiding peaceful demonstrations, suggesting coordination and

awareness efforts were helped by online tools, 79% found hashtags effective for awareness. Hashtags like #EndSARS likely helped unify the message and reach a wider audience. Therefore, the average mean score of 4.07 indicates general agreement on the importance of social media in conflict management during the EndSARS protest in Edo State.

Table 3: Responses on How Social Media was used to Spread Information during #EndSARS Protest in Edo State

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)	Mean
Most of the protest related information shared on social media was reliable.	123 (32%)	137 (36%)	57 (15%)	39 (10%)	23 (6%)	379 (100%)	3.78
Social media platforms were the primary source of information about the protest in Edo State	183 (48%)	111 (29%)	39 (10%)	26 (7%)	20 (5%)	379 (100%)	4.08
I frequently saw protest related updates on social media	191 (50%)	115 (30%)	35 (9%)	23 (6%)	15 (4%)	379 (100%)	4.15
Social media played a key role mobilising people join the protest in Edo State.	174 (46%)	122 (32%)	43 (11%)	25 (7%)	15 (4%)	379 (100%)	4.09
Misinformation and fake news spread widely alongside accurate information on social media	143 (38%)	129 (34%)	51 (13%)	36 (10%)	20 (5%)	379 (100%)	3.88
Mean Average							4.01

Table 3 data reveals how social media was used to spread information during the EndSARS protest in Edo State. Based on sampled opinion, many respondents found the information on social media to be reliable (M=3.78). This shows that users generally trusted social media during the protest. Also, social media was the main way people got protest updates (M=4.08). Traditional media played a lesser role. A majority frequently saw updates on social media (M=4.15). This implies high engagement and coverage. Data also indicates that social

media helped gather support for the protest (M=4.09). It was a strong tool for coordination. However, many agreed misinformation spread alongside true information (M=3.88). This reflects both the power and risk of social media.

Table 4: Responses on the Strengths of Social Media in Managing Conflicts during the #EndSARS Protest in Edo State.

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)	Mean
Social media helped protesters organise peacefully and avoid violence in Edo State.	145 (38%)	131 (35%)	51 (13%)	32 (8%)	20 (5%)	379 (100%)	3.93
Social media connected protesters across Nigeria for a stronger voice.	169 (45%)	123 (32%)	41 (11%)	29 (8%)	17 (4%)	379 (100%)	4.06
Social media helped EndSARS gain international support	158 (42%)	126 (33%)	43 (11%)	31 (8%)	21 (6%)	379 (100%)	3.97
Social media spread protest news faster than TV or radio	177 (47%)	117 (31%)	42 (11%)	28 (7%)	15 (4%)	379 (100%)	4.09
Social media corrected false rumours about the EndSARS protest in Edo State	127 (34%)	129 (34%)	61 (16%)	38 (10%)	24 (6%)	379 (100%)	3.78
Mean Average							3.97

Table 4 data reveals the strength of social media and how it became a powerful tool during the #EndSARS protests in Edo State. From the analyses, most of the respondents agreed social media helped prevent violence (M=3.93), suggesting that it enabled better planning and coordination. Also, the data implies that social media unified voices across Nigeria (M=4.06), suggesting that protesters felt more powerful together via social media interactivity. Many also believed that social media platforms helped reach a global audience (M=3.97), suggesting that social media usage during the protests boosted visibility abroad. More so, the data indicates that protest news spread faster via social media platforms than on traditional media (M=4.09),

implying that social media was the quickest source of information on the #EndSARS protest. Finally, most of the respondents said social media helped fight fake news about the protest in Edo State (M=3.78), suggesting that although not perfect, it offered real-time correction.

Table 5: Responses on Weakness of Social Media in Managing Conflicts During the #EndSARS protest in Edo State.

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)	Mean
Social media amplified false information during the EndSARS protest	161 (42%)	132 (35%)	39 (10%)	27 (7%)	20 (5%)	379 (100%)	4.03
The spread of hatespeech and inciting post on social media worsened violence	174 (46%)	117 (31%)	43 (11%)	27 (7%)	18 (5%)	379 (100%)	4.06
Social media made it difficult for authorities and protesters to have constructive dialogue	139 (37%)	121 (32%)	57 (15%)	38 (10%)	24 (6%)	379 (100%)	3.84
The fast spread of unverified videos and images on social increased fear and anger	168 (44%)	124 (33%)	41 (11%)	28 (7%)	18 (5%)	379 (100%)	4.03
Social media created division among protesters by spreading different opinions	133 (35%)	129 (34%)	55 (14%)	37 (10%)	25 (7%)	379 (100%)	3.80
Mean Average							3.95

Table 4 data shows the responses on the weakness and challenges of social media in managing conflicts during the #EndSARS protest in Edo state. A majority agreed social media spread false information (M=4.03), suggesting that social media narratives contributed to public confusion during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. Many also believed that hate speech on social media worsened the violence (M=4.06), implying that social media/online content escalated tensions. Respondents also felt that social media hindered meaningful talks between

relevant stakeholders during the protest in Edo State (M=3.84), suggesting that social media platforms became a space for conflict escalation, not constructive dialogue and communication. More so, majority of the respondents affirmed that fast-spreading videos and images on social media platforms during the protest caused emotional reactions (M=4.03), suggesting that these led to more fear and anger, especially due to unverified contents spreading on social media platforms during the protest. Finally, most of the respondents affirmed that social media created division among protesters by spreading different and diverse opinions (M=3.80), suggesting that unity among protesters was affected.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

To ensure that the objectives of this study were fully addressed, the research questions were systematically answered using data generated from the copies of the questionnaire sampled. The discussion that follows is anchored on the analysis of these responses, drawing insights from the findings. This cohesive approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 EndSARS protest in Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Question 1: What is the Role of Social Media in Conflict Management during the 2020 #EndSARS Protest in Edo State?

The findings from Table 2 provide compelling evidence that social media played a multifaceted and pivotal role in conflict management during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that social media served as a vital communication tool (Mean = 4.08), allowing for the rapid dissemination of information among protesters and the public. This data points to the importance of digital platforms in times of civil unrest, especially in the absence of trust in mainstream media or government channels. Furthermore, the data show that social media was instrumental in mobilising support (Mean = 4.06) and providing victims with a platform to share their experiences of police brutality (Mean = 4.15) the highest mean

score recorded in this table. This supports the idea that social media not only facilitated communication but also empowered citizens by amplifying their voices, thus reducing the marginalisation often experienced in traditional media spaces. These platforms enabled collective identity formation and solidarity, which are vital for conflict transformation and resolution. Another important role revealed was social media's capacity to facilitate peaceful protests (Mean = 3.99). While not as highly rated as other functions, this suggests that social media helped coordinate nonviolent actions, thereby mitigating chaos and helping maintain order during the demonstrations. Similarly, the use of hashtags, particularly #EndSARS, was considered effective in raising awareness (Mean = 4.07). Hashtags functioned both as rallying points and tools for agenda-setting, helping keep the movement focused and globally visible.

These findings align with the study by Shokoya (2025), which identified social media as the engine of the #EndSARS protest, used not only for mobilisation but also as a platform for digital protest via hashtags. The role of social media in empowering victims and unifying voices across social lines is similarly echoed in Olise & Nnaane (2024), who noted that Twitter (now X) significantly contributed to the protest by fostering national cohesion and awareness, while cautioning against misinformation. These findings are also reinforced by Akpan & Targema (2022), who concluded that digital activism via social media helped translate online engagement into real-life action, thereby contributing to social mobilisation and protest efficiency. Similarly, Oyinloye & Omotayo (2023) support the finding that social media facilitated nonviolent protest movements, highlighting its role in global and local protest organisation. On the other hand, caution must be drawn from Adekoya (2021) and Samuel et al. (2021), who raised concerns about the role of social media in spreading misinformation and encouraging security issues. This

underscores the dual-edged nature of social media: while it facilitates mobilisation and awareness, it also has the potential to escalate tensions if not properly managed.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings affirm the agenda setting theory, which posits that the media influences public perception by determining what issues are deemed important. During the #EndSARS protest, social media platforms prioritised narratives around police brutality, thus shaping public discourse. Additionally, the social responsibility theory becomes relevant here, suggesting that media—especially in a democratic society—must act in the interest of public good. By allowing victims to tell their stories and facilitating peaceful mobilisation, social media assumed this socially-responsible role. However, as other studies in this discourse reveal, this responsibility was at times undermined by the unchecked spread of misinformation.

Research Question 2: How was social media used to spread information during the EndSARS protest?

Based on the data presented in Table 3, the findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media was utilised to disseminate information during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. The overall mean average of 4.01 signifies a strong agreement among respondents that social media played a vital role in the protest, highlighting its significance as a tool for communication, mobilisation, and information dissemination. The highest mean response (4.15) was attributed to the statement that respondents frequently saw protest-related updates on social media. This suggests that social media served as a real-time, readily-accessible medium through which protest developments were communicated. Closely related, a significant number of respondents (77%) agreed or strongly agreed that social media platforms were the primary source of information during the protest (mean = 4.08), indicating that traditional media were likely secondary or supplementary sources. This aligns with the notion that in periods of civil unrest, citizens tend to rely more heavily on platforms that allow

for instantaneous and participatory content sharing. Moreover, the data affirms the strategic use of social media in mobilisation, as indicated by the high agreement rate (78%) and a mean score of 4.09 for the statement on social media's role in encouraging public participation in the protest. The implication is that digital platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and WhatsApp were not merely information tools but also operational channels for civic action. This supports the concept of social media as a digital public sphere where collective action is organised and executed. Interestingly, while social media was considered a powerful tool for reliable information sharing (mean = 3.78), respondents also acknowledged the concurrent spread of misinformation and fake news (mean = 3.88). This duality highlights the complex nature of social media as both an enabler of truth and a potential threat to public understanding, necessitating careful navigation by users.

These findings are consistent with Shokoya (2025), who identified social media as central to the #EndSARS protest, serving as both an engine for information dissemination and a mechanism for online protest through hashtags. The present data reinforce this conclusion, especially in the realm of mobilisation and citizen engagement. Similarly, the findings align with Olise & Nnaane (2024), who demonstrated the influential role of Twitter in fostering unity and a sense of purpose during the protests. The widespread sharing of updates and mobilisation efforts identified in the current study echo their conclusion, particularly regarding the transformative function of social media in circumventing traditional divisions and promoting collective identity. Furthermore, the recognition of misinformation in the present study supports Adekoya (2021), who warned about the susceptibility of social media to false narratives. This demonstrates that while social media offers immediacy and reach, it also presents challenges to the integrity of information consumed by the public. The findings also align with Samuel et al. (2021), who

expressed concerns about social media's potential to propagate security issues, underlining the necessity for content regulation and fact-checking to maintain information accuracy during crises.

The findings also supports the thrust of the agenda setting theory, which postulates that media have the power to influence what issues the public perceives as important. In the context of the #EndSARS protest, social media platforms prioritised the dissemination of protest-related content, effectively setting the agenda for public discourse, both locally and globally. By flooding feeds with protest information, images, and hashtags, social media shaped not just public opinion but also compelled mainstream media and government actors to respond. Additionally, the findings corroborate the social responsibility theory, which posits that the media should act in the public interest, ensuring truthfulness, accuracy, and balance. While social media served to inform and mobilise, the presence of misinformation indicates a breach of this responsibility. It reflects the absence of editorial gatekeeping, which places the onus of content verification on individual users and digital communities.

Thus, the findings demonstrate that social media was instrumental in spreading information, mobilising protestors, and fostering a participatory protest culture during the #EndSARS movement in Edo State. However, the simultaneous spread of misinformation underscores the need for digital literacy and regulatory mechanisms to uphold the principles of social responsibility.

Research Question 3: What are the Strengths of social Media in Managing Conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Edo State?

The findings from Table 4 reveal that social media played a significant role in managing conflicts during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. The statement with the highest mean score (4.09) indicates that respondents overwhelmingly agreed that social media platforms disseminated protest-related information more rapidly than traditional media outlets such as

television and radio. This suggests that the immediacy and accessibility of social media empowered citizens to remain informed in real-time, thereby reducing the likelihood of misinformation, confusion, and potential escalation of violence. Closely following this was the perception that social media fostered a united protest voice across Nigeria (mean = 4.06), with 77% (SA + A) of respondents affirming this role. This supports the view that social media not only served as an information channel but also as a tool for cohesion and collective identity among protesters. The ability of platforms such as Twitter (X) and Facebook to transcend regional boundaries enabled participants from Edo State to align with others nationwide, promoting coordinated and peaceful action.

Respondents also believed that social media was instrumental in gaining international support for the movement (mean = 3.97). This aligns with the widely observed global solidarity seen during the protests, where celebrities, civil society groups, and diaspora communities amplified the cause. Such visibility arguably provided some deterrence against extreme state action, contributing to conflict management by enhancing accountability. The data further shows that 73% of respondents agreed that social media helped organise peaceful protests in Edo State (mean = 3.93). This reflects the role of digital platforms in planning logistics, crowd control, and sharing safety updates—all of which reduced the likelihood of chaos or unintended confrontations. Additionally, social media was perceived to have helped correct false rumours about the protest (mean = 3.78), demonstrating its corrective power against disinformation, albeit not entirely eliminating it.

These findings are strongly supported by Shokoya (2025), who identified social media as the engine of information and mobilisation during the #EndSARS protests. His study aligns with the present data, especially in the use of hashtags and digital strategies for peaceful protest

planning and government engagement. Similarly, the findings corroborate those of Olise & Nnaane (2024), who noted Twitter's role in fostering protest unity and awareness across ethnic and religious divides. Their caution about misinformation, however, resonates with the more modest agreement among respondents regarding social media's ability to correct false rumours (only 68% agreement), suggesting that while social media is a corrective tool, it is not infallible. Moreover, the conclusions drawn in Oyinloye & Omotayo's (2023) study on social media and nonviolent protests mirror these findings. They documented how platforms amplified voices and mobilised activists, echoing the current study's results on information dissemination, international support, and unity. Akpan & Targema (2022) also support these outcomes, asserting that digital activism translated into real-life mobilisation and community engagement, essential for conflict management.

Conversely, while Adekoya (2021) acknowledged the informational strengths of social media during the protests, he also highlighted its susceptibility to misinformation. This observation is consistent with the relatively lower mean score (3.78) for correcting false rumours in the current data. Furthermore, the concerns raised by Samuel et al. (2021) about social media's role in propagating security issues due to unregulated content echo a cautionary undertone. Although social media was effective in managing conflict during #EndSARS in Edo, the potential for misuse remains significant. Additionally, the social responsibility theory is applicable, particularly in evaluating how social media users, influencers, and platforms assumed moral responsibility in curbing violence and correcting misinformation. Despite the absence of traditional media gatekeepers, many online actors took deliberate steps to verify information, call out falsehoods, and promote peaceful protest as a reflection of social responsibility in digital civic engagement. Hence, the study confirms that social media played a multifaceted and largely

positive role in managing conflicts during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. It facilitated peaceful organisation, amplified protest voices, enabled international solidarity, disseminated timely updates, and helped manage rumours. While limitations exist, particularly concerning misinformation, the platform's utility in conflict management is evident.

Research Question 4: What are the weaknesses of Social media in managing conflict during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State?

The findings from Table 5 indicate that while social media played a significant role in mobilising and coordinating the #EndSARS protest, it also exhibited considerable weaknesses that undermined conflict management in Edo State. The data reveal that the most pressing issue was the spread of hate speech and inciting content, which recorded the highest mean value of 4.06. A majority of respondents (77%) agreed that such content contributed to escalating tensions and violence during the protest. This suggests that in the absence of effective moderation and fact-checking, social media served not only as a tool for mobilisation but also as a platform for exacerbating grievances and fuelling unrest. Closely linked to this was the amplification of false information through social media platforms, as reflected in a mean score of 4.03. Approximately 77% of the respondents (SA + A) agreed that misinformation spread rapidly during the protest. This aligns with the reality that many unverified claims, doctored videos, and conspiracy narratives circulated widely, influencing public sentiment and often leading to panic or retaliation. This demonstrates that although social media enables rapid information sharing, its open-access nature makes it vulnerable to manipulation and disinformation.

Similarly, the data show a strong perception (mean = 4.03) that unverified videos and images heightened public fear and anger. These emotionally-charged materials, often disseminated without context, were likely to inflame tensions and provoke irrational responses. This further complicated efforts at de-escalation and constructive conflict resolution, particularly

in an already charged environment. Another critical weakness identified was the inability of social media to foster constructive dialogue between protesters and authorities (mean = 3.84). While platforms offered space for expressing grievances, they did not facilitate structured, solution-oriented engagement. Over two-thirds of respondents (69%) agreed that social media aggravated polarisation and discouraged negotiation. This data points to a fundamental limitation in using digital tools for conflict resolution, especially when no mediating or authoritative voice is present to guide discourse. Finally, the respondents noted that social media contributed to internal division among protesters (mean = 3.80), stemming from the spread of divergent narratives and conflicting opinions. This finding implies that while social media unified protesters on a broad level, it also gave space to fragmented and competing voices, thereby challenging group cohesion and coordinated action.

These findings find strong support in the study by Adekoya (2021), which highlighted how social media during the #EndSARS protest was both informative and misinformative. Adekoya observed that while the platforms were used to uncover the root causes of the protest, they also became a breeding ground for falsehoods ~~echoing~~ ^{the} current study ~~s~~ findings on amplified misinformation and emotional manipulation via imagery. The study by Samuel et al. (2021) also aligns with these findings. It pointed out that social media often propagates security issues through fake news and hate speech. The respondents in that study held the perception that the unchecked use of these platforms encouraged insecurity, mirroring the current data that indicated hate speech and incitement were among the most severe weaknesses of social media in conflict management. Similarly, Olise & Nnaane (2024) cautioned against the misuse of Twitter (X) for spreading misinformation and disinformation during the protests, despite its utility in mobilising the masses. This corroborates the dual nature of social media platforms revealed in

the present findings tools of empowerment, yet also potential vehicles for conflict escalation. Moreover, the study by Madueke (2024) further reinforces these findings by demonstrating how social media, due to the absence of editorial gatekeeping, can be exploited by conflict entrepreneurs to sustain unrest. This applies to the #EndSARS context, where multiple unauthenticated posts may have been used to incite fear or rally anger. In terms of social responsibility theory, the findings reflect a failure in the ethical obligations of digital media users and platforms. The spread of hate speech, misinformation, and incitement denotes a breakdown in media responsibility. While traditional media are expected to uphold accuracy and social harmony, these standards are often absent on social media. Thus, the findings highlight a need for digital literacy, platform accountability, and proactive content regulation to prevent further erosion of responsible communication during crises.

Therefore, the study identifies several notable weaknesses of social media in managing conflict during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. Chief among these are the spread of false information, hate speech, inciting content, and unverified media, all of which contributed to confusion, violence, and distrust. Additionally, social media hindered meaningful dialogue and introduced internal divisions among protesters. While social media remains a powerful tool for civic engagement, these weaknesses underline the urgent need for improved digital governance, ethical media use, and conflict-sensitive communication strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

This dissertation examined the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 #EndSARS protest in Edo State, Nigeria. The study was guided by four key research objectives which examines the role of social media in managing conflicts during the #EndSARS protest, find out how social media was used to spread information during the protest, identify the strengths of social media in managing conflicts during the protest and the weaknesses of social media in managing conflict during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. Theoretically, the study was anchored on the agenda-setting theory and the social responsibility theory; these frameworks helped contextualise how social media platforms was used during the 2020 #EndSARS protest among residents of Edo State. Using a survey research design, data were collected from 384 respondents through structured questionnaires using purposive sampling technique from the total population of internet users in Edo State and analysed using simple percentages and mean score. Consequently, findings revealed that:

1. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that social media served as a vital communication tool (M = 4.08), mobilising support (M = 4.06) and providing victims with a platform to share their experiences of police brutality (M = 4.15), among others.
2. Social media was instrumental in spreading information (4.15) as well as mobilising protestors and fostering a participatory protest culture (M=4.09) during the #EndSARS movement in Edo State.

3. Social media strengths in managing crisis during the protest were that it facilitated peaceful organisation (M=3.93), amplified protest voices (M=4.06), enabled international solidarity (M=3.97), disseminated timely updates (4.09) and helped manage rumours (M=3.78).
4. There are several notable weaknesses of social media in managing conflict during the #EndSARS protest in Edo State. Chief among these are the spread of false information (M=4.03), hate speech and inciting content (M=4.06), unverified media contents (M=4.03), all of which contributed to confusion, violence, and distrust.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has provided an in-depth examination of the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 #EndSARS protest in Edo State, Nigeria. Drawing on data from the respondents, the findings demonstrate that social media served as a pivotal tool in shaping the trajectory of the protest and in managing the complex dynamics that accompanied it. The findings clearly show that social media played a multifaceted role during the protest, serving not only as a tool for mobilisation and communication but also as a platform for awareness, advocacy, and real-time information dissemination. The research highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of social media in managing conflict. While platforms like X and Facebook were instrumental in facilitating peaceful protest organisation, amplifying victims' voices, and promoting international solidarity, they were also conduits for the rapid spread of false information, hate speech, and unverified content. These drawbacks often undermined conflict resolution efforts by fueling mistrust and escalation.

Despite these limitations, the study concludes that social media has become an indispensable tool in modern conflict scenarios. Its ability to inform, connect, and mobilise people makes it a powerful instrument for both protest and peace. However, the dual nature of its

influence demands a more responsible and strategic approach from users, platform administrators, and policymakers. Moving forward, efforts should be made to harness the positive potential of social media while mitigating its risks, particularly in sensitive and volatile contexts such as public protests and civil unrest.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government agencies and civil society organisations should develop and implement digital literacy programmes focused on conflict-sensitive communication to empower citizens to use social media constructively during periods of social unrest.
2. Activists and protest organisers should establish verified, centralised social media channels for sharing real-time updates and protest logistics to ensure accurate and coordinated information flow during conflicts.
3. Stakeholders, including NGOs and international organisations, should leverage social media's strengths by collaborating with local influencers and online communities to amplify peacebuilding messages and promote inclusive dialogue during crises.
4. Policymakers and tech companies must work together to strengthen mechanisms for detecting and curbing the spread of false information, hate speech, and inciting content especially during protests through improved content moderation and fact-checking tools.

5.4 Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge on the role of social media in conflict management, particularly within the Nigerian socio-political context.

The findings offer new insights into how digital communication platforms can influence protest dynamics and conflict resolution efforts. Specifically, the study contributes in the following ways:

1. The study provides empirical evidence on how social media was utilised during the 2020 #EndSARS protest in Edo State as a tool for conflict management. It highlights how digital platforms functioned not just as communication tools, but as mechanisms for mobilisation, advocacy, and real-time coordination. This adds to existing literature by contextualising social media use in a Nigerian protest setting, thereby filling a gap in regional case studies on digital activism.
2. The study contributes to theoretical discussions by demonstrating the double-edged nature of social media during conflict. While platforms enabled peaceful organisation, international solidarity, and real-time information sharing, they also facilitated the spread of misinformation and incitement. This nuanced understanding helps refine theories such as agenda-setting and social responsibility in digital environments, offering a more balanced view of the potentials and pitfalls of social media in civil unrest.
3. The research offers practical insights for policymakers, civil society actors, and protest organisers on how to effectively use social media in managing conflict. By outlining the strengths and weaknesses, the study informs the development of digital communication strategies aimed at minimising conflict escalation and promoting constructive engagement during protests.
4. The study advances knowledge on how social media fosters a participatory protest culture. It shows that social media platforms served not only as tools for communication but also as spaces for collective identity formation, emotional expression, and sustained engagement.

This contributes to broader discussions on civic engagement in the digital age and how new media technologies are reshaping public discourse and activism.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

While this study has provided valuable insights into the role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 #EndSARS protest in Edo State, it also opens up several avenues for future research. The following suggestions are recommended for scholars and researchers interested in expanding the scope of knowledge in this area:

1. Future studies could conduct comparative analyses between multiple states or geopolitical zones in Nigeria to examine how social media usage and its impact on conflict management varied across different cultural, political, or socioeconomic contexts during the #EndSARS movement.
2. Further research could focus on specific social media platforms (e.g., X, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram) to understand their unique roles, affordances and limitations in conflict communication and protest coordination. Platform-based studies could help tailor conflict management strategies more effectively.
3. Future studies might investigate the role of social media influencers, activists and online opinion leaders in shaping narratives, mobilising support or mitigating conflict. Understanding their influence could help in designing targeted interventions during future protests or crises.
4. While this study employed a survey-based quantitative approach, further research could adopt a mixed-method design, incorporating interviews, focus groups or content analysis of

social media posts. This would provide deeper insights into user motivations, emotional responses, and social dynamics during online protests.

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APPENDIX (I)
QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication
Faculty of Arts
University of Benin,
Benin City, Nigeria

Dear Respondent

REQUEST FOR THE COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a postgraduate student of the above-named school and department. In fulfilment of the Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Mass Communication, I am conducting a research on **↑The Role of Social Media in Conflict Management During the 2020 EndSARS Protest in Edo State, Nigeria→**

Sir/Ma, this survey seeks your views on the subject of inquiry. Your opinion and perspective are of great value to this study. Your information and responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and is solely for academic purposes. The research will appreciate genuine, direct, specific and clear answer. Thank you in advance for your valuable time and contributions.

Thank you for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours Sincerely,

Esther Osawese Iyonawan

Researcher

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: Kindly tick (✓) in the box the options that best illustrate your disposition.

Section A: Respondent's Bio-Data

1. Gender: Female () Male ()
2. Age Range: 18 – 23 years () 24 – 29 years () 30 – 35 years () 36 years and above ()
3. Marital Status: Married () Single () Married () Others ()
4. Religion: Christianity () Islam () Traditional () Others ()
5. Educational Attainment: SSCE () Diploma/NCE () Bachelor/HND () Postgraduate or higher ()

Section B: The Role of Social media in Conflict Management During the 2020 EndSARS Protest in Edo State, Nigeria.

Instruction: Tick (✓) as applicable to the following statements to reveal your perception on the Role Social Media in Conflict Management During the 2020 EndSARS Protest in Edo State, Nigeria.

S/N	The role of social media in conflict management during the 2020 EndSARS protest in Edo State	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6	Social media platforms serves as a vital communication tool.					
7	Social media played a significant role in mobilising support during Endsars protest.					
8	Social media provided a platform for victims of police brutality to share their stories					
9	Social media facilitated peaceful protest during the EndSARS movement.					
10	The use of hashtags on social media was effective in raising awareness about police brutality					

Section C: How social media was used to spread information during the #EndSARS

Instruction: Tick (✓) as applicable to the following statements to indicate how Social media platforms were used to spread information during the EndSARS protest in Edo State.

S/N	How Social media was used to spreading information	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	Most of the protest related information shared on social media was reliable.					
12	Social media platforms were the primary source of information about the protest in Edo State					
13	I frequently saw protest related updates on social media					
14	Social media played a key role mobilising people join the protest in Edo State.					
15	Misinformation and fake news spread widely alongside accurate information on social media					

Section D: Strengths of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Edo State.

Instruction: Tick (✓) as applicable to the following statements to portray the strength of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Edo State.

S/N	Strength of social media in managing conflicts during the EndSARS protest in Edo State.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16	Social media helped protesters organise peacefully and avoid violence in Edo State.					
17	Social media connected protesters across Nigeria for a stronger voice.					
18	Social media helped EndSARS gain international support					
19	Social media spread protest news faster than TV or radio					
20	Social media corrected false rumours about the EndSARS protest in Edo State					

Section E: Readers' Perception on the weakness of social media in managing conflicts during the #EndSARS Protest in Edo State.

Instruction: Tick (√) as applicable to the following statements to reveal the weakness of social media in managing conflicts during the #EnSARS protest in Edo State:

S/N	weakness of social media in managing conflicts	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21	Social media amplified false information during the EndSARS protest					
22	The spread of hatespeech and inciting post on social media worsened violence					
23	Social media made it difficult for authorities and protesters to have constructive dialogue					
24	The fast spread of unverified videos and images on social increased fear and anger					
25	Social media created division among protesters by spreading different opinions					

APPENDIX (II)
Cochran (1977) Formula for Determining Sample Size

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n_0 = sample size
- Z^2 = Z-value (the number of standard deviations from the mean corresponding to the desired confidence level; for a 95% confidence level, $Z=1.96$)
- p = estimated proportion of the population (for maximum variability, we use $p = 0.5$)
- e = margin of error (usually set at 0.05 for 5% margin of error)

Given:

- $Z=1.96$ (for 95% confidence level)
- $p = 0.5$ (maximum variability for unknown population proportions)
- $e = 0.05$ (5% margin of error)

Substitute these values into the formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5}{0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = 384.16$$

Since sample size must be a whole number, the sample size required without finite population correction is approximately 384.