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SOUTHWEST YOUTH'S PERCEIVED IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FAKE NEWS ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Insecurity remains a paramount concern in present-day Nigeria, manifesting in diverse forms such as terrorism, ethno-religious conflicts, farmer-herder disputes, kidnappings, and secessionist movements. Within the realm of these security challenges lies a contentious debate among scholars regarding the influence of fake news disseminated through social media platforms on the country's security situation. This study employs an exploratory qualitative research approach to investigate how Southwest youth perceive the implications of fake news on national security. The research selectively sampled eighteen young individuals from nine local government areas spanning three Southwest states—Lagos, Ondo, and Osun. The study relied on in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method, employing an interview guide as the research instrument. NVivo IO software was utilised to thematically analyze the gathered data. The findings derived from these 18 interviews, involving participants aged between 18 and 35 years, underscored the considerable national security challenges facing Nigeria. Moreover, they highlighted the role of fake news in exacerbating these issues, resulting in adverse consequences for the nation's stability, unity, and overall development. Consequently, the study recommends that the government undertake initiatives to educate citizens about the potential harm stemming from fake news in the context of national security. This includes enhancing media literacy skills among the populace, enabling them to distinguish between false and accurate information.

Keywords: Southwest Youth, social media, fake news, perceived implications, national security

Introduction

The proliferation of fake news has become a significant global concern, accelerated by social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). These digital networks, while enhancing information sharing and knowledge diffusion (Hara & Sanfilippo, 2016), have also paved the way for the dissemination of inaccurate information. Misinformation on the internet is a growing worldwide issue and fake news now poses a substantial threat to various sectors and institutions (Kaliyar, Goswani, Narang & Sinha, 2020), leading to declining trust in the media.

Nigeria, a nation known for its rich cultural, religious, ethnic, and geographic diversity, grapples with the escalating issue of fake news. This phenomenon has contributed to the spread of hate speech, eroded trust, and the misuse of freedom of expression, ultimately challenging the country's unity (Wilson & Umar, 2019). Despite regulatory efforts, fake news continues to proliferate across various segments of Nigerian society.

Fake news, though not a new phenomenon, has become an increasingly formidable challenge due to the rapid dissemination of information online, where messages can go global within seconds. This influx of information, encompassing text, images, opinions, and videos, has made it exceedingly difficult to ascertain the accuracy of content (Vasu, Terri-Anne-Teo, Jayakumar, Faizal, & Ahuja, 2018; Etumnu, 2020). Numerous news reports have drawn attention to the proliferation of fake news in political, social, economic, and entertainment realms worldwide (Ashford, 2017, Ike & Smets, 2017).

However, scholars argue that the spread of fake news carries serious implications for national security, sparking interest in media literacy and verification behaviours, especially among young people, when navigating

media content (Chukwuere & Onyebuka, 2017; Pate, Gambo & Ibrahim, 2019; Ngwainmbi, 2019; Wilson & Umar, 2019). In Nigeria, youth heavily rely on various media sources for information, but not all of this information is credible or accurate. International research has shown that modern media and journalism can facilitate the dissemination of exaggerations and falsehoods, highlighting the pressing need for improved media literacy (Wineburg & McGrew, 2019).

While previous research explored the exposure to fake news and its impact on political attitudes and behaviour, as well as audience perception, knowledge, and attitude, there has been limited focus on the implications of fake news on national security (Berinsky, 2017, Wood and Porter, 2016; Uscinski, Klostad, & Atkinson, 2016). Duffy, Tandoc, and Ling, (2019) noted that most research on fake news has emerged from the US and UK contexts, with limited empirical research in Nigeria, and they recommended scholars to look beyond. The researcher purposely selected Nigeria, a developing country that is less well studied (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019) to provide an alternative view of understanding this global problem. Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring the perceptions of Southwest youth on social media fake news and its implications for national security in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the perceived level of national security among the youth in Southwest, Nigeria.
2. To investigate perceived implications of fake news on national security among the youth in Southwest, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Fake News: A Conceptual Discourse

The concept of fake news has a rich history in academic discourse, encompassing various phenomena such as news satire, parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018). However, recent research has narrowed its focus to describe a specific phenomenon- false information crafted to mimic legitimate news with the deliberate intent to mislead (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018).

Watson (2018) traces the origins of the term fake news back to the late 19th century when it was first coined by Merriam Webster. Before this time, fake news simply referred to false news. It is important to note that fake news and false news do not carry identical meanings, as argued by Meneses (2018). Meneses emphasises that the distinction lies in the intention behind the dissemination of false information. False news is associated with journalistic errors, incompetence, and irresponsibility, whereas fake news pertains to intentionally fabricated information meant to deceive (Meneses, 2018). This neologism owes its emergence to technological advancements, particularly the Internet and social media (Baptista & Gradim, 2020).

In the relatively few years since the conceptualisation of fake news, extensive research and scholarly discussions have taken place. This includes attempts to define and categorise different types of fake news (Rini, 2017, Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018), analyses of its online dissemination (Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang, & Liu, 2017, Benkler, Faris & Roberts, 2018), and case studies examining instances of fake news. Despite this active research, a consensus on the precise definition of fake news remains elusive, posing a challenge even as the term proliferates in academia, media, and politics (Baptista & Gradim, 2020). Although fake news has historical roots dating back to the 19th century (Watson, 2018), its meaning has evolved over time, gaining prominence during the 2016 American presidential election campaign (Meneses, 2018). Its ubiquity led to fake news being the most searched term on Google in 2016 (Zaryan, 2017), ultimately earning it the title of Collins Dictionary Word of the Year in November 2017 due to a 365% increase in usage (Towers-Clark, 2018, October 4). Notably, the term fake news is attributed to Canadian journalist Craig Silverman, who coined it in an article for BuzzFeed specifically related to U.S. election news in 2016 (Silverman, 2016).

Given the myriad definitions of fake news, a recent report by the Independent High Level Group of Experts (HLEG) of the European Commission deliberately avoids using the term fake news. According to the HLEG (HLEG, 2018), the label falls short in capturing the complex issue of disinformation, which encompasses not only entirely fabricated content but also information blended with facts and various practices extending beyond traditional news. These include automated accounts for astroturfing, networks of fake followers, manipulated videos, targeted advertising, organised trolling, visual memes, and more (Ireton & Posetti, 2018). From the foregoing, it is clear that fake news takes different forms, ranging from the harmless to potentially harmful.

Social Media and the Proliferation of Fake News

The 21st century has witnessed a significant transformation in human communication through the advent of Web 2.0 technology and social media platforms. These platforms have reshaped how people interact and exchange information, bridging gaps and revolutionising access to knowledge (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2019; Jumbo, Asemah, Anyanwu, Onyebuhi, Etumnu & Anyi, 2023). In particular, social media has emerged as the primary channel for news consumption, especially among younger generations (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos & Nielsen, 2019).

Social media platforms, fundamentally web-based services, facilitate connections with a broader audience, enabling individuals to gain insights into others' activities, thoughts, and connections (Trottier & Fuchs, 2014). These platforms are defined as internet-based applications rooted in the principles of Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Users actively contribute by posting status updates, photos, links, and comments, engaging with peers through likes (Mayfield, 2010). In this context, social media serves as a Web 2.0 platform that fosters information and knowledge sharing.

While disinformation has historical roots in media, recent years have marked the emergence of what scholars and pundits refer to as 'the misinformation society' (Pickard, 2016) and the era of 'alternative facts' and 'post-truth' (Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, 2018). This 'post-truth' environment not only signifies an increase in falsehoods but also a shift in the expectation of truth (Higgins, 2016; Tsfati, Boomgaarden, Strömbäck, Vliegenthart, Damstra, & Lindgren, 2020). Contemporary fake news spreads rapidly, reaching vast audiences in real-time, potentially exerting substantial influence (Burkhardt, 2017). As Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) highlight, even individuals without established reputations can, in some instances, reach as many readers as major news outlets like Fox News, CNN, or the New York Times.

In countries like Nigeria, a substantial portion of the population actively engages with social media, making it a significant platform for the exchange of ideas (Mohammed, 2020). However, the absence of adequate regulation and oversight on the internet renders these platforms vulnerable to abuse (Mohammed, 2020). In Nigeria, social media plays a critical role in disseminating information, including fake news, propaganda, and events related to issues like Boko Haram, Biafra agitation, the #EndSARS protest, and Fulani Herdsmen (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2019). Consequently, the presence of social media sometimes poses threats to the country's peace and stability, leading to security challenges (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2019; Macaulay, Etumnu, & Akwari, 2021). It is essential to recognise that while the issue of fake news is a global phenomenon, its propagation is often influenced by local factors and contextual issues (Apuke & Omar, 2020).

Fake News and National Security in Nigeria

The proliferation of fake news has become a growing concern in recent times, affecting various aspects of communal life in Nigeria, from politics to religion and from business to social interactions. One of the most significant areas where fake news poses a grave threat is in the realm of national security, which currently stands as Nigeria's most pressing challenge (Madu, Aboyade & Ajayi, 2019). As pointed out by Malik (2018), fake news, or at the very least, misleading information and baseless rumours, have been a source of concern and conflict throughout human communication history.

Haciyakupoglu, Hui, Suguna, Leong & Abdul Rahman (2018) have highlighted that fake news becomes a national security issue when it undermines the foundational elements of a nation-state, including social cohesion, public institutions, and peace and order. In this context, fake news can be employed as a tool for disinformation campaigns, where false information is intentionally disseminated to influence the opinions or policies of the receiving audience. An illustrative case of this is the revelation that Russian operatives used divisive social media content to influence the 2016 US Presidential election (BBC, 2017). A parallel example in Singapore involves a couple convicted in 2016 for operating a seditious website, *The Real Singapore*, which generated advertising revenue by propagating falsehoods that fueled xenophobia (Lee, 2016). Consequently, researchers and policymakers globally have been actively seeking to comprehend this phenomenon and develop strategies, including new legislation, to curb its propagation (Carson, 2017).

The concept of national security is complex, considering the ongoing security challenges faced by nations globally, including terrorism, which significantly influences security issues in Nigeria. Madu, Aboyade, and Ajayi (2019) have identified several factors, such as institutional capacity gaps, disconnect between the government and the people, security agency failures in information sharing, and ethno-religious or tribal conflicts, among others, as

contributing to the insecurity in Nigeria. One often underestimated factor that has emerged as a grave threat to national security in Nigeria is the phenomenon of fake news (Madu, Aboyade, & Ajayi, 2019). This perspective aligns with Mosseri's (2017) assertion that fake news harms communities, erodes trust, and poses a threat to national security. Supporting this viewpoint, Ugwainyi (2019) has suggested that falsified information could result in human casualties, ranging from personal harm to national security risks. Thus, it is crucial for social media users to discern false news, especially when the risks of producing and consuming such content outweigh the benefits (Ngwainmbi, 2019).

However, the term "national" explicitly denotes the security of a nation (Mofolorunsho, Idah & Abu-Saeed, 2019). National security varies from one country to another, contingent upon the prevailing circumstances and context. Broadly speaking, it concerns anything that jeopardizes the welfare of individuals within a sovereign geographical region, encompassing their safety, security, and freedoms. Protecting citizens from any form of threat is the primary responsibility of a nation (Usman & Singh, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study is built upon the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) McQuail (2005) defines UGT as an approach that seeks to elucidate media usage and gratification by examining the motives and self-perceived needs of the audience. This theory provides a framework for understanding individuals' motivations for adopting communication technology, their needs, and the consequences of their media consumption behaviour (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973).

Given the focus of this study, the Uses and Gratifications theory is employed to investigate Southwest youth perceived implications of fake news on national security. Nigerian youth turn to media, including social and mainstream media, to satisfy their informational needs. UGT serves as a framework to conceptualize the active role of users in identifying fake news across social media platforms. Nigerian youth are studied as active users who leverage media to expand their knowledge, identify fake news, and assess its implications for national security.

Method

This study was carried out among youth participants aged 18 to 35. The informants selected for this study spanned three Southwest states, namely Lagos, Ondo, and Osun, encompassing nine local government areas from nine senatorial zones within these states. These states and regions were chosen due to practical constraints in studying the entire youth population in Southwest Nigeria. Moreover, Lagos was selected due to its diverse demographic representation and large population. Also, the choice of states was influenced by their geographical proximity and shared characteristics.

To ensure a balanced and representative sample, two participants were selected from each of the nine local government areas using purposive sampling. The participants were chosen based on specific criteria, including their age (18-35) and their engagement with social media, which were requirements for participation.

The data collection process involved one-on-one interviews with the informants. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed, consisting of two primary questions aligned with the research objectives. Additional follow-up questions were posed as needed to gather comprehensive information related to the study's objectives. Only responses relevant to the research objectives were considered for analysis.

These interviews were conducted in English and were subsequently analyzed thematically using NVivo 10 software. To ensure the validity of the instrument, experts in the field of mass communication, as well as the research supervisor critically examined the interview guide, offered corrections and suggestions, which were subsequently incorporated. To maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a unique code number, as detailed in Table 1. The table illustrates that out of the total informants, 44% fell within the age group of 25 to 29, while 56% belonged to the age range of 30 to 35. The interviews were conducted between December 2022 and February 2023.

Prior to the commencement of the interview sessions, formal consent was obtained from all interviewees through a standardized consent form. Furthermore, the research objectives and methodologies were thoroughly explained to the interview participants. They were assured that their identities would be kept confidential, and their right to privacy was respected, as indicated in the written consent form, which they were asked to endorse before the interviews commenced.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Interview Participants

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Local Government Area
1. Inf. LGY	Male	27	Ikorodu
2. Inf. LGY	Female	30	Ikorodu
3. Inf. LGY	Male	33	Shomolu
4. Inf. LGY	Male	35	Shomolu
5. Inf. LGY	Female	32	Ojo
6. Inf. LGY	Male	28	Ojo
7. Inf. ODY	Male	29	Akoko South west
8. Inf. ODY	Male	29	Akoko South west
9. Inf. ODY	Female	31	Ile - Oluji/okeigbo
10. Inf. ODY	Male	34	Ile - Oluji/okeigbo
11. Inf. ODY	Female	27	Akure South
12. Inf. ODY	Male	35	Akure South
13. Inf. OSY	Male	28	Ife Central
14. Inf. OSY	Female	26	Ife Central
15. Inf. OSY	Male	25	Osogbo
16. Inf. OSY	Female	34	Osogbo
17. Inf. OSY	Male	33	Odo-Otin
18. Inf. OSY	Male	32	Odo-Otin

Source: Developed from the Study Data

Results

In line with the research inquiries set forth in this investigation, this study aimed to explore the perspectives and evaluations of the participants regarding the prevalence of fake news and its perceived impacts on the national security landscape. The discussions conducted with the interviewees unveiled their appraisals of the state of national security and the potential implications of deceptive information on the nation's security infrastructure. These articulated viewpoints have been organised into various themes, sub themes, and sub-sub themes, following the thematic analysis approach adopted for this research.

Theme One: The Current State of National Security in Nigeria

This theme delves into the evaluation of the present security situation in Nigeria. Examination of the qualitative data showed varying perceptions regarding national security, which can be categorised into four sub-subthemes: intense distrust, intense ethnic agitation, very poor security, and heightened violence. The following quotations represent the perspectives of the participants:

For instance, Informant 3 revealed that "the security situation in Nigeria is highly unfavorable; the nation has been grappling with significant security issues for over fifteen years, ranging from terrorism to conflicts between herders and farmers." In alignment with Informant 3's sentiments, Informant 5 also asserted that the state of national security in Nigeria is exceedingly poor, stating, "Currently, no part of the country can be considered safe. Reports of

kidnappings, banditry, terrorism, and conflicts between herders and farmers saturate the media on a daily basis. The overall security scenario in the country is deeply distressing."

Informant 1 expressed a prevailing sentiment, remarking:

No part of the country is safe. In fact, Nigeria is one of the most unsafe countries to live today. All forms of security challenges such as herders-farmers clashes, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, and ethnic agitations are common occurrences in the country. I can say without any doubt that the national security situation in the country is very poor.

Informant 7 echoed a similar perspective, emphasising that:

With the events in the country over the last decade, including terrorism, kidnapping, farmers-herders conflicts, etc., I can say that the security situation in Nigeria is precarious, porous, and poor. Despite the government's efforts to combat security challenges, there has been minimal success, if any. As I speak to you now, no part of the country can be considered safe in terms of security.

The consensus among other participants aligned with these viewpoints, collectively agreeing that the security environment in Nigeria is highly unfavorable. Thus, the qualitative data portrays a grim picture of Nigeria grappling with a multifaceted security crisis.

Within the context of Nigeria's national security, another sub-subtheme that emerged from this research is the issue of distrust. According to Informant 1, the spread of false information only "worsens the already fragile peace and unity in Nigeria, exacerbating the security challenges faced by the nation." This sentiment was echoed by Informant 10, who shared the perspective that "false news can erode trust among different segments of the population and potentially ignite violence and division in the country." The research data strongly underscores the presence of distrust in Nigeria, largely fueled by the dissemination of fake news.

Furthermore, Informant 1 contends that "Fake news has the potential to breed tension and polarisation throughout the country," and Informant 18 asserts that "The utilisation of media outlets, especially social media platforms, for spreading untrue narratives fosters and exacerbates unnecessary divisions among citizens." Similarly, Informants 7, 11, 16, and 18 align with the previous informants in asserting that fake news has contributed to heightened tension in Nigeria.

Theme Two: Implications of Fake News for National Security

The results of this study revealed varying perspectives regarding the consequences of fake news for national security in Nigeria. Participants' responses unveiled three main sub-themes, each further branching into sub-sub-themes. Based on the coding applied, the sub-sub-themes include: increased tension in the nation, division, electoral violence, terrorism, escalated farmer-herder conflicts, intensified ethno-religious disputes, hindered progress and development, democracy at risk, jeopardized national stability, and heightened security awareness.

Numerous research efforts have delved into the implications of fake news on national security. Apuke and Omar (2020) examined the proliferation of fake news in Nigeria, uncovering several outcomes of sharing false information, such as loss of life, heightened conflicts, increased political hostilities, and societal alarm. Moreover, Odalonu and Ogbogu (2023) noted a surge in banditry attacks on farmers, villages, communities, and highways in Nigeria, echoing the concerns raised by Apuke and Omar (2020).

The responses from participants underscore the detrimental impact of fake news on various aspects of national security in Nigeria. For example, Informant 5 expressed the opinion that:

Fake news has adverse implications on banditry, terrorism, and other security challenges. When people spread false information, it can induce panic and fear in society. In Nigeria, for instance, some social media platforms reported that Fulani herders had killed farmers in Plateau state. This led to a retaliatory attack. However, the information turned out to be untrue.

This illustrates the potential for fake news to exacerbate security challenges. Informant 6 emphasised that "Insecurity itself poses a significant threat to peace and progress in Nigeria, and fake news worsens this situation by

fueling crises, such as farmer-herder clashes and ethnic tensions, through the dissemination of misleading information." Informant 17 pointed out that "Fake news can escalate existing security issues, increasing tension and anxiety in Nigeria."

Regarding the theme of disunity as a consequence of fake news for national security, several participants expressed concerns about its adverse impact on national unity. Informant 4 stated that fake news negatively influences national unity, while Informant 12 added that it has the potential to polarise and incite violence. Informant 9 highlighted that the uncontrolled dissemination of fake news poses one of the greatest challenges to peace, security, and the overall existence of Nigeria.

Furthermore, the majority of informants concurred that fake news has the potential to threaten the unity of Nigeria. Informant 10 pointed out that fake news deepens conflicts like farmer-herder clashes by creating tension through false information, while Informant 13 mentioned reported cases of fake news leading to reprisal attacks in regions like Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa. The participants' responses underscore the severe consequences of fake news on national security in Nigeria, ranging from exacerbating existing security challenges to undermining unity, stability, and democratic processes.

Positive Implications of Fake News

While the majority of participants believed that fake news has harmful consequences for national security, some informants suggested that fake news can sometimes raise security awareness by alerting people and security agencies to potential security threats. For instance, Informant 12 argued that "fake news sometimes keeps people and security agencies vigilant. The spread of information about potential security attacks often prompts security agencies to proactively prevent any breakdown of law and order." In line with the view of Informant 12, Informant 7 noted that "Despite the adverse consequences of fake news, sometimes sharing fake news helps people become security-conscious. When people hear rumors of security threats, they take security measures to protect themselves."

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the outcomes of in-depth interviews, which revealed unanimous agreement on the high level of insecurity in Nigeria. These findings are consistent with prior research, such as the study conducted by Chukwuere and Onyebukwa in 2018, which also documented a poor security situation in Nigeria posing a significant national security threat. The qualitative data underscores a consensus among respondents that Nigeria's national security situation is dire, with insecurity prevalent across all regions, from the northeast to the south, and from the west to the east. Various security challenges, including terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, and ethnic tensions, were mentioned, indicating a multifaceted security crisis. The general sentiment is that no part of the country is safe, and citizens live in fear due to high levels of violence, kidnappings, and attacks. Some respondents expressed doubts about the effectiveness of government efforts in addressing these security challenges, as the situation continues to deteriorate.

The data also suggests that the spread of fake news can result in distrust and division among different sections of the country, extending from individuals to communities and regions. There is a concern that fake news can incite discord and even violence, disrupting peace and unity in Nigeria. It has the potential to create fear, anxiety, and disunity among Nigerians, posing not just a national security issue but also a threat to peaceful coexistence. The qualitative data underscores the perception that fake news significantly jeopardizes national security, erodes trust among citizens, and threatens the overall peace and unity of Nigeria. Addressing the problem of fake news is deemed essential for maintaining stability and harmony in the country.

The interview data also highlights instances of heightened violence in various regions, including attacks on police personnel and conflicts between different groups, with fake news being identified as a contributing factor in promoting violence, hate speech, and tension. The spread of fake news is associated with incidents of violence and reprisal attacks, as exemplified in Jos, Nigeria. Overall, the qualitative data paints a grim picture of Nigeria's national security situation, with citizens feeling unsafe and grappling with multiple security challenges.

The study also demonstrates a consensus among participants regarding the various negative implications of fake news on national security, including its impact on unity, national stability, development, and overall security. Most participants argue that insecurity itself poses a grave threat to Nigeria's peace, unity, and progress, and fake news has the potential to exacerbate this security crisis. This finding aligns with the work of Nwabuife and Dikmen in 2020, who assert that fake news is detrimental to national unity and security. Pate, in 2019, also posited that fake news can

undermine national unity and tranquility, potentially leading to explosive consequences. This perspective is further supported by the findings of Madu, Aboyade, and Ajayi in 2019, who argue that fake news worsens the country's security challenges.

However, the study also reveals that the dissemination of fake news can inadvertently enhance security awareness among both security agencies and the general public.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study emphasizes that Nigeria confronts significant national security challenges, with the spread of fake news exacerbating these problems and resulting in adverse consequences for the country's stability, unity, and development. The study recommends that the government should prioritise efforts to educate the public about the awareness and potential harm associated with fake news on national security. There is a crucial need for public education on responsible information creation and dissemination, with government policies aimed at enhancing media literacy skills to help individuals discern between false and accurate information. These measures are essential in combating disinformation.

Despite the significant findings of this research, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may affect its applicability to a broader context. The study primarily involved youth aged 18 to 35, resulting in a homogeneous sample. Future research could explore the perception of fake news among older adults and the broader society, shedding light on their influence on national security and development in Nigeria. While this study focused on Southwest Nigerian youth, future research should consider young people from various geopolitical zones and states across the country. Additionally, future inquiries could benefit from a multi-methodological approach that incorporates a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods.

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