

Speaking Up And Silencing Out In Networked Sphere On National Issues: A Content Analysis Of The Nigerian Global Awakening Day Online Protest Group

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Abstract: The 2012 Occupy Nigeria Protests which occurred after the decision of the Federal Government of Nigeria to remove fuel subsidy put Nigeria on global social media map; most especially Facebook which was explored by the civil society groups and human right activists across the country to campaign against the decision. During the protest, various socio-political movements emerged, calling government's attention to the impacts of the decision on the masses, and by extension the nation's economy, if eventually implemented. The groups that were formed then aimed at revealing varied consequences of the policy on the masses, which range from social to economic. The Nigerian Global Awakening Protest Day Group is an online protest platform created after the popular protests, demanding holistic approaches to various socio-economic and political problems in the country. It is against this background that this study investigated how actors and followers or bystanders of the group speak up and silent out on certain national issues through their posts and comments. The study employed content analysis as a main research design, while data gathered were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (PASW 18.0). Findings revealed that members of the group discussed poor leadership as an issue covertly (93.3%) and overtly (84.3%). Also, the study established that 9.0% of the members that commented on the analysed posts expressed their opinion overtly on a combination of corruption and poor leadership. Specifically, the study established no relationship between types of agenda set by members of the group and national issues they overtly expressed. However, there was a strong relationship between types of agenda created by 'actors' and national issues overtly expressed within the context of their posts.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Although the new and social media were in existence before the year 2009, their adoption for national and international protests became more evident and assumed a sporadic dimension as from that year. This is because right from year 2009, public and private institutions and individuals from varying walks of life have increased their use of social media to communicate, coordinate and monitor national and international issues (Mozorov, 2009a, cited by Segerberg and Bennett, 2011). Today, people talk about the new media revolution and the information age, driven by various information communication technologies. Communication is now online via social media which attract diverse players which range from individuals to organisations, contributors to followers, and even gatekeepers. With the help of social media, people with varying demographics meet online to exchange ideas and contribute to national and global issues, using a platform that breaks barriers associated with space and time.

Allan (2007:1836), citing Castel (2007) observes that "the diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, and a variety of tools

of social software have prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in chosen time." According to Castel, today, ordinary citizens worldwide are using SMS, email, IPTV, video streaming, blogs, podcasts, wikis and so on, to build their own networked communities. Although the digital divide affects the capacity of developing countries to effectively exploit the opportunities provided by the new media technologies for development, millions of people in Nigeria are using mobile phones and other new media tools for development. One of these uses is the use of social media platform by the Nigerian Global Awakening Online Protest Group, an online social group that allows Nigerians to discuss and protest against constituted authorities and other concerned agencies, over various social, economic and political problems be-settling the nation.

The aim of the group is to prepare and mobilize citizens for a peaceful global protest by crying out to the world over the state of corruption, poverty, instability and gross insensitivity of political leaders to the plight of the citizens. The group seeks a nation where citizens enjoy good provision of

infrastructures and social amenities, good and affordable education, regulated religious activities and affordable housing. Furthermore, the group wants unbiased and accountable institutions to check corruption, eradicate poverty, promote rule of law and good governance, diversify the economy and consolidate democracy. Making a blind assumption about the factors that motivate members of this group to speak up on some national issues and be silent on some others, one can submit that the desire for a revolution, economic prosperity from poverty and political agenda are the motivating factors. Again, the type of agenda being created by this group when it engages national issues would provide a better understanding of the vision, mission and sentiments of the group. It is important to investigate the contribution that new and social media have made to the development of this group, and various national and global reawakening ideas that the group presents for sustainable national development, using the social media platform.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The advent of the internet, and by extension social media, has revolutionized the ways citizenry of different nations in the world participate in governance. Social media have been used to mobilize citizens for and engage them in political activities ranging from online social movements to offline protests that had dethroned some authoritarian leaders. The Arab Spring of 2011 established the extent to which the masses can utilize the Information and Communication Technologies available to them in calling for social, political and economic changes in all ramifications. Before and since the spring, scholars in sociology, psychology, political communication, ICTs etc had researched and have been researching on the implications or effects of the new media technologies on the masses' calls for socio-economic changes and the recent global awakening cum political change (Khamis and El-Nawawy, 2012; Theocharis, Lowe, Deth and Albacete, 2013; Ibrahim, 2013). Stromer-Galley (2002) focused his study on analysis of interpersonal and online political talk in the public sphere. The researcher aimed at revealing the differences between people who talk about politics online and do not do face-to-face. Using secondary survey analysis to study the effects of political deliberation, the scholar reported political conversation behaviour of people online and offline. The study found that there are people who talk politics online, who do not do so in face-to-face interactions, and they are categorically different from those who do so face-to-face. Berdal (2004) focused his study on public deliberation on the web, using Habermas's inquiry and actor network

theory's propositions within the background of three selected major web forums: Spiegel Guardian Online Forum (SOF), Talk Debatcentralen within Theory (TDC) and The Unlimited of Conceptual Habermasian Actor-Network Terminology. Analysing the nature of these selected web forums, Berdal (2004) noted that the first and the second take up Habermas strict criteria of the Ideal Speech Situation (ISS), and raise questions on the extent to which the given forums live up to their ideals. The third one concerns public opinion formation, and asks to what extent the strength of the better argument may transmit from Web forums to decision-making institutions of societies like parliaments and governments. To attain the study's purposes, empirical inquiry, consisting online surveys, interviews and observations related to the identified Web forums, were adopted as methodology for the study. The study however revealed that web forums do promote and facilitate democratic deliberation, although not entirely without being exposed to coercions.

Joining the conversation, Dahlgren (2005) studied the internet within public spheres and political communication with a view to knowing their dispersion and deliberation. According to the researcher, the theme, 'the Internet and the public sphere', now has a permanent place in research agenda and in intellectual inquiry; it is entering the mainstream of political communication studies. The first part of the scholar's research was the analysis of the three main analytical dimensions of activities in public sphere: the structural, the representational, and the interactional. Then the study further addressed some central themes in the current difficulties facing democracy, refracted through the lens of the public sphere perspective. The study revealed that the concept of civic cultures offers an alternative way to understanding the significance of online political discussion. Expanding the discourse, Hara and Shachaf (2007), using the propositions and assumptions of collective action frame as a theoretical framework, analysed 17 Web sites of online Peace Movement Organizations (PMOs) in Japan and Israel, as a way of identifying the similarities and differences in the ways that online PMOs frame their activities. The study found that PMOs employed various strategies to develop resonance in communicating various messages on their web sites to the targeted audience. Cultural highlighting is one of these strategies that enable movement actors to hold other members' attention, especially bystanders.

Liu and Fahmy (2011) focused their study on the spiral of silence in virtual world, with the purpose of revealing individuals' willingness to

express personal opinions in online versus offline settings. This study extended the understanding of the spiral of silence theory by taking into account the impact of new media on virtual behaviour motivation. They found that when the likelihood of speaking out online increases, the likelihood of speaking up in a real setting also increases, and vice versa. The findings further established that the congruency of current opinions with one's own opinions predicts the willingness to speak out offline. Congruency of future opinions, however, failed to predict the likelihood of speaking out offline. Findings also indicated that congruency of future and current opinions did not predict the willingness to speak out in the online setting. The scholar concluded that while experiencing fear of isolation predicted the willingness to speak out online, it did not affect offline outspokenness.

Examining the role of social media in the 2011 Arab Spring using Egypt as his case, Storck (2011) studied the extent to which Egyptian activists used social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and weblogs as tools for organizing and generating awareness for political mobilisation, in the uprisings that took place in Egypt between January and February 2011. The propositions of two sociological theories were adopted as the basis for generating relevant research questions. These theories are: functionalist and network theories. Content analysis was adopted as the research design for examination of a cross-section of primary and secondary sources, which documented the events in Egypt both during the time of the uprising and after. From the analysis, the researcher found three identifiable trends: social media as an organisational tool, as an alternative press and outlet for citizen journalism, and finally as a tool for generating awareness both at regional and international levels.

Selecting Twitter, a social media platform used by Spanish, Greek, and American citizens for exchanging information, organising protest events, mobilizing participants and creating new, or supporting old, repertoires of engagement, Lowe, Deth and Albacete (2013) did a comparative examination of two critical research questions of the study: how did networking capacities offered by the internet were utilised to diffuse cross-national solidarity and allow high-threshold, old-fashioned social movement tactics, such as occupations, to become a tactic that surpassed borders?, and How common were the demands, practices, goals or political actions promoted by the three movements? Through propositions of action network theory, the study found that although Twitter is used significantly for protest information diffusion, calls

for participation are not predominant, while only a very small minority of tweets refers to protest organisation and coordination issues. Adding to this discussion, Ibrahim (2013) did a comparative analysis of Nigerian protesters' opinions on the removal of fuel subsidy in 2012 using online and offline protesters within the concept of networked and public spheres. The researcher found that there is a strong affinity between real public sphere and networked public sphere. Primarily, the study revealed that the socio-economic and political issues discussed by the online protesters motivated offline protesters during the protests. His study was based and tested on the propositions of social categories and perspective theories, while survey and content analysis were adopted as main research designs.

These studies have shown that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and by extension social media, remain potent tools for effective participatory governance in all the continents. It also showed the extent to which the masses, minority groups and social movements can go in calling for good governance and institutionalization of social justice in all spheres of life. Suffice to note that none of the researchers known to the current researcher has explored why Nigerians speak up and silencing out on various national issues facing them in any social medium platform, and which were brought to the limelight during 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests (the protests that awaked citizenry for the collective actions toward good governance). The current study addresses the deliberation of members of the group under study on various national problems facing Nigeria. Basically, the study explores the posts and comments of the group focusing on how members converse on socio-economic and political issues with or without fear of being apprehend, and how they overtly express with or without sufficient information. This study seeks to answer these two questions: What categories of national issues do members of the Nigerian Global Awakening Day Online Protest Group overtly and covertly discuss? What types of agenda are being created by the members in relation with national issues they overtly discuss?

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to find answer to the following questions:

1. What categories of national issues do members of the Nigerian Global Awakening Day Online Protest Group overtly and covertly discuss?
2. What types of agenda are being created by the members in relation with national issues they overtly discuss?

Hypotheses

H₀: There is no relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly express by actors of the group.

H₁: There is relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly express by the actors of the group.

H₀: There is no relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly express by the members of the group.

H₁: There is relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly express by the members of the group.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**2.1 GLOBAL AWAKENING AND NIGERIANS QUEST FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE**

In recent times, most of the masses in the developed and developing nations of the world have realized that there are some individuals or groups who usually derived delight in making life unbearable for the less privileged despite huge resources that abound in their domain. These individuals or set of groups are those who have socio-economic and political powers, believing that the best way to remain in 'the rich class' is to enslave others through various means such as draconian policies or programmes, self-imposition in terms of political leadership and so on. This observation leads to the concept of global awakening, a concept coined by Zbigniew Brzezinski. Operationalising the term, the proponent notes that for the first time in history, almost all of humanity is politically activated, politically conscious and politically interactive. Global activism is generating a surge in the quest for cultural respect and economic opportunity in a world scarred by memories of colonial or imperial domination (Marshall, 2010).

In Africa, recent political changes cum revolutions in some Arab nations have established the fact that Africans at home and in the Diaspora have realized that there is need for them to be awake to the institutionalization of good governance through a collective effort of utilizing necessary new media technologies, by identifying varied socio-economic and political problems, and prioritising them in the minds of other citizens of the world. For centuries, issues of civil discourse only arose concerning written and oral communication. But now, new technologies for communication and social interaction, particularly social media, have dramatically expanded the potential for human interaction. They generate significant challenges for institutional policies and practices to encourage and sustain civil discourse for the critical social and

personal issues (Junco and Chickering, 2010). Contrasting new media technologies against traditional media, Storck (2011) observes that with a lack of truly independent and representative media, disenfranchised youths have searched for an alternative method of participating in the public and political spheres.

In Nigeria, the emergence of social media in 2004 ushered in facebook and has shaped socio-economic and political discussion among the citizens, especially those who are not digitally disadvantaged in terms of accessing various social networking sites for relevant information from 'guerilla self-mass communication' journalists. Different groups emerge with the aim of letting the masses know various problems confronting the nation. As faceless as most of these group are, many citizens do not usually boarder to verify the genuineness of the categories of information posted by 'administrators' and members of such groups before commenting on the information. Hindman (2008:3), making reference to Benkler, argues that "the Internet does not just place far more information in the hands of interested citizens; it transforms public debates by enabling online communities to use collaborative methods to create content, correct inaccuracies and send readers to the most insightful commentators". However, their requests have always been institutionalization of good economic and political governance, for rapid development in the country.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The idea of a group of people clamouring for political, social and economic changes are usually overtly expressed when the institutions that are expected to function maximally in all aspects of a society failed to do so. The group usually has different names to her credit. The nomenclature, however, depends on the nature and purposes of such a group or organization. In general term, a group calling for political, social and economic changes in a country is better known as social movement, believing that human being are social animal. Whether defined around gendered, ethnic, national, class, environmental or other interests, social movements have long been the carriers of liberation and social change (Hackett and Carroll, 2004). Arguing along this line, Simunovic (2012) notes that social movements have strongly emerged around the world in the last two decades as expressions of contextual and structural grievances. According to the scholar, these structural grievances are not given but are culturally, economically and environmentally mediated, and are dependent on how social

movements and the networks they are inserted create meanings and significations to explain reality. In Nigeria, the emergence of social movements could be traced to many years of perceived neglect of the South-south region, the region that provides the nation's main source of revenue since her independence in 1960. Having examined various problems facing the region, Late Ken Saro-Wiwa and other prominent human and social activists formed The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) with the sole aim of organising the Ogoni people to demand "political autonomy within Nigeria" and bring world's attention to the group's conflict with the Nigerian state and Shell Oil Company. The movement recorded a number of successes before the extra-judicial killing of the leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa and some members by the Late General Sani Abacha. Apart from this group, other groups also emerged claiming marginalization of their regions by the Nigerian state. Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) in the South-Western and Northern parts respectively were also formed, calling for recognition by the state in terms of political, social and economic considerations.

It should be noted that these groups emerged when the country has not developed socially, economically and politically as they expect. They want the country to be developed apropos the huge resources available in all the regions. However, the campaign for social, economic and political changes shifted from regionalization to nationalization in 2012, when the country experienced another nationwide protest as they did against President Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. The 2012 protest was tagged "Occupy Nigeria". This was a protest that signified that the citizenry wanted social, economic and political changes by all means, due to government's decision to remove subsidy on petroleum products. For the actualization of their purposes, different groups or social movements emerged on social media identifying various issues and mobilizing citizens for protests in all the state capitals and towns. The Nigerian Global Awakening Protest Day on facebook is one of such social movements. The group is established with the philosophy that political leaders and other stakeholders in the Nigerian state have failed to turn things around for the masses in terms of providing basic social amenities and ensuring social justice cum rule of law in the country.

For its objectives to be achieved, members of the group deem it fit to discuss and comment on varied socio-economic and political issues ravaging the country. In the process of doing this, the issues

are framed in such a way that the members would take decisive actions. In the words of Snow and Benford (2000:613) "movement actors are viewed as signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists and bystanders or observers". Thus, there are actors and followers or observers. Actors are those who post and comment with necessary information to call other members into action, while followers or observers would only post or comment in support of actors' messages without sufficient information. Snow and Benford observe that the context of social movement denotes an active and effective phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. According to the scholars, it is active in the sense that something is being done, and effective in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organizations or movement activists. Furthermore, it is contention in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity is collective action frames, according to the scholars. Since social movements' members are working together with the aim of achieving common objectives, the frames will also be collective, except where there are bystanders. For the frames to be collective in its real sense, Snow and Bedford (2000) note that collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change. Suffice to say that since the rationale of the group (the researcher's emphasis) studied in this research is to remedy or alter some problematic situations or issues, it follows that directed action is contingent on identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents (Snow and Benford, 2000).

1.2 DISCUSSING NATIONAL ISSUES: A PROBE INTO ONLINE PUBLIC DELIBERATION

There is no nation in the world which does not have its peculiar socio-economic and political problems. These problems are usually occasioned by the inability of various institutions to function as expected by the citizenry. As soon as this is discovered by the citizenry, especially the masses, different deliberations would creep in from different stakeholders. The deliberations might take the form of individuality or collectivity. When it is

individuality, the person who is trying to call attention of the citizens to the inept institutions are usually known as activist, while the collectivity encompasses people of like minds with the sole aim of pulling all their resources together to awaken people and mobilize them for collective actions toward constituted authorities. However, the emergence of new technologies has revolutionized the thinking of many activists, be it individual or collective. New technologies such as internet, social media and other ICT tools have assisted social movement groups to cross-vitalise their ideas and mobilize their members for participatory actions in their respective countries. In Nigeria, 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests revealed the extent to which the masses can employ new media in rebuking government at all levels and political officeholders (Ibrahim, 2013). The Internet is becoming integrated with the established system of political communication, yet, it is also being used to challenge established power structures. Even the efforts of some more overtly authoritarian regimes around the world to curtail the democratic uses of the Net have not been fully successful, though inventories of the mechanisms of control are sobering (Dahlgren, 2005). Commenting on the interactivity of the Internet within the context of voicing one's opinion, Lusoli and Ward (2003:2) point out that: The interactivity of the Internet, in the form of email, discussion fora and live chatrooms provide the public with a range of additional channels to voice their opinions on issues. Political organisations can put large amounts of policy information/documents online and encourage feedback directly from members, supporters and the wider public.

It does seem to be the case that, for those who have access and political motivation, and who are living within open, democratic societies, the Internet offers very viable possibilities for civic interaction, but cannot clearly promise a quick fix for democracy (Dahlgren, 2005). Both proponents and critics of new digital media draw on models of a deliberative democracy that is "egalitarian, rational-critical and inclusive," in which people with diverse perspectives come together to address hard issues, and in which political leaders take seriously the public will expressed through such informed, reasoned discourse (Meraz, 2007). Since public and networked spheres are meant to help masses in voicing their opinions on a number of sundry issues that need urgent attentions from relevant stakeholders, there are basic dimensions to which their collective aims could be achieved, especially whenever they are facing stiff forces such as authoritarian leaders and their allies. Dahlgren (2005) reasons that structural, representational and

interactional dimensions are analytical starting point for the public sphere of any given society or analyzing the contribution of any given communication technology. Thus, the three dimensions have the predisposition to assist members of any social movement group the opportunity of identifying an issue, framing and discussing it to the extent of calling for desired actions in line with the goals of issue being discussed.

Delineating the three dimensions, Dahlgren (2005) notes that the structural dimension comprises formal institutional features that direct public attention to classic democratic issues, such as freedom of speech, access and the dynamics of inclusion or exclusion. Emphasizing the efficacy of the structural dimension, the scholar stresses that a society where democratic tendencies are weak cannot give rise to healthy institutional structures for the public sphere, which in turn means that the representational dimension will be inadequate. With regard to the Internet, the structural dimension directs attention to the way in which the communicative spaces relevant for democracy are broadly configured. The representational dimension, on the other hand, entails the output of the media, the mass media as well as "mini-media" that target specific small groups via, for example, newsletters or campaign promotion materials. And given the increasing "massification" of communication on the Internet, representation becomes highly relevant for online contexts of the public sphere as well. Within this dimension, one can raise all of the familiar questions and criteria about media output for political communication, including fairness, accuracy, completeness, pluralism of views, agenda setting, ideological tendencies, modes of address, and so forth. Interaction actually consists of two aspects. First, it has to do with the citizens' encounters with the media—the communicative processes of making sense, interpreting, and using the output. The second aspect of interaction is the one between and among citizens themselves, which can include anything from two-person conversations to large meetings. To point to the interaction among citizens—whether or not it is formalized as deliberation—is to take a step into the social contexts of everyday life (Dahlgren, 2005).

3.0 THEORY/CALCULATION

3.1 AGENDA-SETTING THEORY

The agenda setting theory places emphasis on enlightened and educated media audiences that do not necessarily swallow and highly depend on the media. The mass media, as theorized by the apostles of the powerful effects theories, are capable of setting agenda or determining what the mass media audience think and act at a particular point in time. However, the basic assumption of agenda setting theory is that

in a modern democracy where the mass media are pervasive and can easily influence public opinion among the enlightened audience, they do not have the capacity to force their ideas on the audience, though they have the ability to focus public attention on specific events, issues and persons, in order to assign importance to them (Shaw, 1979). Instead of claiming a direct effect of media product on audience's attitudes and behaviours, the agenda setting theory is noted for what media do for people and not what they do to people. Therefore, members of the audience know what they want, what to select and how to use them (Katz, Blumer, Gurevitch, 1974; Shaw and McCombs, 1977).

Therefore, in a network agenda, a member of a network can raise an issue or issues to be discussed by the other members. Whether positive or negative, the contributions of members of that network form the agenda of the group, and their viewpoints through their medium, can possibly raise public awareness and discussion concerning the subject. Consider the Arab Spring as an example. Members of different social groups online used their twitter, facebook and other social media accounts to set agenda for their respective groups, which invariably entered public domain and became a national pool of public opinion on the socio-political and economic development of the Arab States.

1.3 SPIRAL OF SILENCE THEORY

Every human being wants to be respected and heard in the society. There is a growing belief in communal and group commonalities, even in a highly materialistic and individualistic world. Humans are gregarious, we usually want to associate and contribute to societal development by belonging to one group or the other (nobody wants to be a lone ranger). Therefore, there is a possibility that opinions of a dominant group would be recognized as valid and important above the opinions of a person or a minority. The spiral of silence theory holds that people appeal to and flow with a popular public opinion than what a minority group says. As a result of this, people try to avoid isolation by conforming more out of a desire to identify with a winner. According to Griffin (n.d:376), Noelle Neumann predicts that Individuals who... notice that their own personal opinion is spreading and is taken over by others, will voice this opinion self-confidently in public. On the other hand, individuals who notice that their own opinions are losing ground will be inclined to adopt a more reserved attitude. This is because most people are afraid of becoming isolated from their environment and they constantly observe their environment closely before they comment on public issues. They first of all investigate the opinions and modes of behaviour that are relevant and popular

among the people, and they align themselves accordingly with the public agenda. Therefore, if there is a prevailing public opinion, an individual will have the willingness to speak out, and such a person will be silent if his or her idea is a minority viewpoint, and there is a perceived discrepancy to the general public opinion.

4 METHODS AND MATERIALS

For the attainment of the study purpose, the researcher adopted content analysis, a quantitative research design, for the generation of necessary data. This method has been described as a research design that enables researchers to analyse the latent and manifest contents of any written medium of communication, be it mass communication or new media technologies such as facebook, twitter, blog etc (Nwabueze and Edegoh, 2010). The posts and comments of the members of the chosen online protest group: The Nigerian Global Awakening Protest Day constituted the population of the study. The group had 8, 260 members and 4 administrators as at the period of conducting this study. The posts and comments that had socio-economic and political issues undertone were purposively selected as representative samples. The members' posts were regarded as messages from 'actors' to the followers or bystanders, and vice versa. Thus, a post was analysed as a message from an actor, a member who initiated discussion on national issues, and commented on by other members. Other members in this situation were those who followed the post by following the actor with additional information, and those that disagreed with the substance of the post, that is those who expressed contrary opinion (these members are referred as bystanders). In a nutshell, actors' and followers' posts and comments were analysed apropos the study's purpose. It should be noted that posts and comments were generated by copying and pasting in a Microsoft word document and later analysed through PASW 18.0 Software Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Specifically, inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data generated in line with the study's research questions and formulated hypothesis. The quantitative findings were however supported with relevant quotes from some of the posts and comments of the members of the group.

Content categorization

It is imperative to delineate the formulated content categories designed for the research questions that guided and assisted the researcher in collecting relevant data for the study. These categories are:

a. Overtly Expressed National Issues (OENI)

These are socio-economic and political issues identified, posted and commented on by active members of the group with sufficient information

based on their knowledge of the issues. In a nutshell, the category entails the extent to which members of the group 'speak up' on certain national issues, which is willingness to express their opinions without fear of being apprehended. The specific issues examined under this category include insecurity, corruption, poor policy implementation, unemployment, infrastructural decay, electoral fraud and poor leadership.

b. Covertly Expressed National Issues (CENI)

These are socio-economic and political issues identified, posted and commented on by active members of the group without sufficient information on the issues. In a nutshell, the category entails the extent to which members of the group 'silent out' on certain national issues, which is unwillingness to express their opinions for fear of reprimand. The specific issues examined under this category include insecurity, corruption, poor policy implementation, unemployment, infrastructural decay, electoral fraud and poor leadership.

c. Transformation Agenda

This entails posts and comments of the members of the group under study that focused on the need for the government at all levels and other concerned stakeholders in the Nigerian state to approach the issues overtly expressed with holistic measures. These measures encompass strengthening anti-corruption and security agencies, creation of enabling environment for foreign and local investors, provision of qualitative and necessary social amenities, implementation of relevant policies formulated to the letter, ensuring independence of the electoral body (INEC), uphold of social justice and rule of law at all levels of government and resisting the temptation of highly monetised electoral process by the citizenry.

d. Revolution Agenda

This contained members' posts and comments that called for fundamental changes in the nation's organizational and political structures by all means, believing that when it happened, in-coming generations in the country would live a qualitative life in terms of having better social, political and economic structures at all levels of governance.

e. Protest Agenda

This highlights members' posts and comments that called for peaceful protests as the main opportunity of letting government at all levels know the extent to which the masses are suffering due to socio-economic and political issues identified, posted and commented on across the country.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In line with the purpose and research design adopted for this study, 100 posts of the selected group that were purposively chosen resulted to 134 national issues each for both issues overtly and covertly expressed by members of the group. This gave a total of 268 national issues discussed by actors and followers, and by extension bystanders. Suffice to note that the selected 100 posts generated a total of 149 comments from members as at the period of gathering data from the group's wall page. These data provided the opportunity of explaining why actors and members of the group 'speak up' and 'silent out' on certain national issues or problems in the country. Therefore, various findings generated for the formulated research questions and hypotheses are discussed below in relation with the conceptual and theoretical framework reviewed for the study.

Research Question One: What categories of national issues do members of the Nigerian Global Awakening Day Online Protest Group overtly and covertly discuss?

Since the group's aim is to create awareness for Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora on certain national issues or problems that need holistic approaches from concerned stakeholders, the researcher deemed it fit to examine national issues overtly and covertly discussed by members through this research question. The national issues examined using this question include: insecurity, corruption, poor policy implementation, unemployment, infrastructural decay, electoral fraud and poor leadership. The findings are interpreted and illustrated below with relevant quotes from the group's wall page.

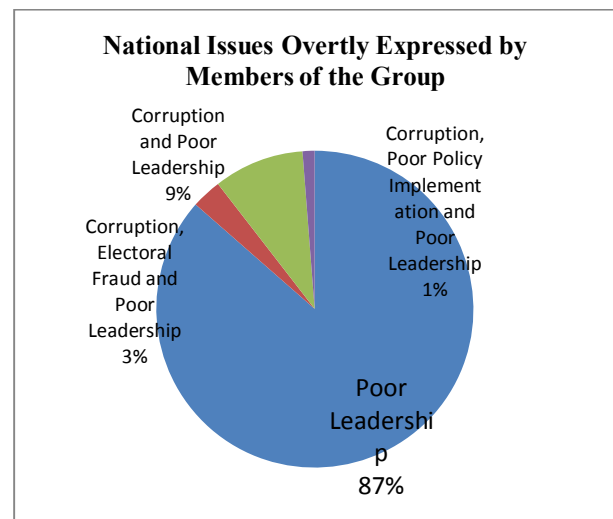


Figure 1: National Issues Overtly Expressed by Members of the Group

According to the information contained in figure 1 above, it is clearly established that majority of the members (n=113, representing 84.3%) provided sufficient information on poor leadership as a national issue in Nigeria that should be addressed by all the stakeholders in the democratic and non-democratic institutions. This is significant enough considering different socio-economic and political problems affecting the country which are usually adduced to incompetence and lack of vision of the past and present political leaders. Out of total members (n=134) that commented overtly on identified national issues, 12 (representing 9.0%) also provided necessary information on *corruption and poor leadership* as major obstacles facing the Nigerian-state, calling for urgent attention from the concerned authorities.

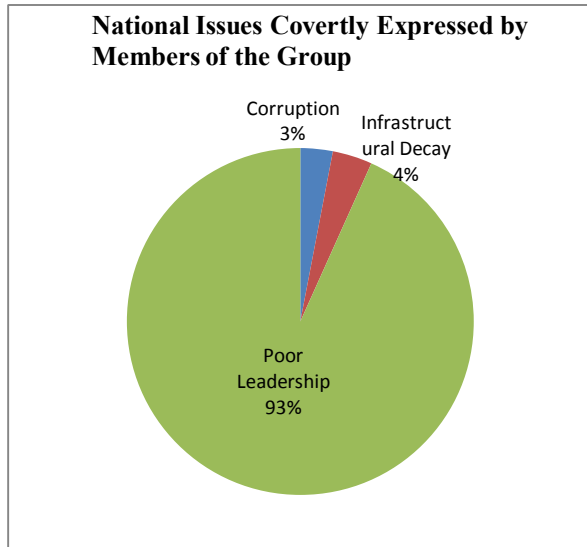


Figure 2: National Issues Covertly Expressed by Members of the Group

Figure 2 indicates categories of national issues covertly expressed by members of the group. One hundred and twenty-five members (amounting to 93.5%) did not provide adequate information on poor leadership as the main problem facing the country. This might be connected with the fact that they do not have genuine information regarding the issue or fear of being tracked down by ‘government’s spies,’ for providing such information that may help other members in uniting against government at all levels. As a matter of fact, members of the group are more willing to express their views on poor leadership covertly than doing it overtly. These findings could be more understood through some of the posts of the group supplied inter alia:

Comment 1: *We never had a good leader right from the beginning. Even most of us still wont (sic) be good leader.selfish .hearless (sic) individual we r.thats (sic) d (sic) truth.*

Comment 2: *We have said that all these Nigerian parties are full of rogues, but some pple (sic) will be seling(sic) parties’ .I think only PDP legislators collect this inhuman wages!*

From the comments above, it could be inferred that members that expressed their views failed to include adequate information capable of engendering other members’ contribution to the issue being discussed. For instance, the writer of comment 2 did not actually know whether PDP legislators collected what he described as inhuman wages. This is established with the phrase, ‘I think’. The finding is in consonance with Griffin’s position on Noelle Neumann’s spiral of silence theory that individuals who notice that their own opinions are losing ground will be inclined to adopting a more reserved attitude. This is because, most people are afraid of becoming isolated from their environment and they constantly observe their environment closely before they comment on public issues. They first of all investigate the opinions and modes of behaviour that are relevant and popular among the people, and they align themselves accordingly with the public agenda. The finding also corroborates Snow and Bedford’s view (2000) on the collectivity of social movement’s members while discussing an issue. The scholars note that collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change; they make attributions regarding who or what is to blame; they articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change.

Research Question Two: What types of agenda are being created by the members in relation with national issues they overtly discuss?

This research question was formulated with a view to revealing the kinds of agenda being set by members of the group in the course of commenting overtly on the examined national issues. From the findings sought for research question one, the researcher can keenly note that poor leadership is the most national issue overtly expressed by the members. Based on this, figure 3 below contains data that established the kinds of agenda considered for the identified national issue.

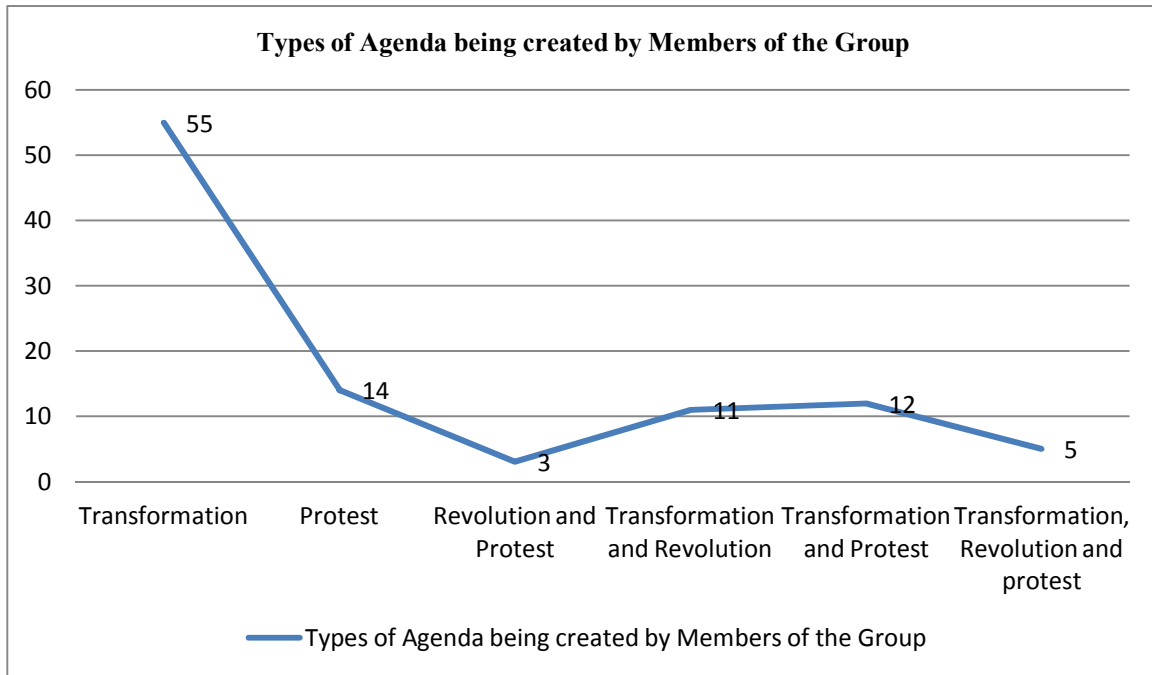


Figure 3: Types of Agenda Set by Members of the Group apropos National Issues Overtly Expressed

Figure 3 above shows trends in the agenda being created by members of the group in consonance with the main national issue (*poor leadership*) posted by the actors (those that actively initiate discourse on the examined national issues). From the figure, it could be deduced that transformation is being established as main solution to *poor leadership*, and in some cases, to other issues. Apart from the transformation agenda, 14.0% also considered protest as part of agenda that must be embraced by the citizenry. This is established by 55 comments of some members which amounted to 55.0% of the total comments (n=134) analysed for the study. The finding could be more understood considering excerpts provided inter alia:

Comment 3: *Some Nigerians are gullible and dis (sic) failed govt (sic) will get them a bait come 2015.*

Comment 4: *...will we still fold our hands and look at it this way? Hey our unborn children will curse us if we don't try and put a stop to this.*

Comment 5: *...remember, it is your right to ask for good governance and sustainable development. Keep asking and don't be quiet. Government is tangible and visible.*

Comment 6: *...all these leaders with principles of "Cover-My-Dirty-Yash" at all cost must sit down this time around. People should think, think and think. No more sentimental decisions at all.*

Comments 3 and 6 indicate transformation agenda, calling attention of the citizenry to the need to jettison 'monitised electoral system' associated with the Nigerian politics, while 4 and 5 are calling for protest in the real public sphere against perceived poor leaders in the country. It could be said that the group is not against the constituted authorities, but it is calling for good governance at all levels that would transform the entire nation in line with the available human and material resources. This finding agrees with Katz and Blumer, Gurevitch's (1974) and Shaw and McCombs' (1977) position on agenda-setting theory that members of the audience know what they want, what to select and how to use them. The finding also supports the assertions of Hindman (2008) and Junco and Chickering (2010). Hindman was of the view that Internet does not just place far more information in the hands of interested citizens, it transforms public debates by enabling online communities to use collaborative methods to create content, correct inaccuracies and send readers to the most insightful commentators. To Junco and Chickering, new technologies for communication and social interaction, particularly social media, have dramatically expanded the potential for human interaction. The scholars observed that they (social media) generate significant challenges for institutional policies and practices to encourage and

sustain civil discourse for the critical social and personal issues.

Hypothesis Testing 1

H₀: There is no relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly expressed by actors of the group.

H₁: There is relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly expressed by the actors of the group.

Table 1: Relationship between Types of Agenda Set by Actors and National Issues Overtly Expressed Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	211.150 ^a	90	.000
Likelihood Ratio	171.882	90	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.214	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 110 cells (98.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

The Chi-Square value of 211.150 at 90 degrees of freedom is significant at 0.000. Thus, the alternate research hypothesis is supported. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted meaning that there was statistical significant relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly expressed by the actors of the group.

Hypothesis Testing 2

H₀: There is no relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly expressed by members of the group.

H₁: There is relationship between types of agenda being created and national issues overtly expressed by members of the group.

Table 2: Relationship between Types of Agenda Set by Members of the Group and National Issues Overtly Expressed Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.781 ^a	42	.524
Likelihood Ratio	30.144	42	.914
Linear-by-Linear Association	.425	1	.514
N of Valid Cases	61		

.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is

The Chi-Square value of 40.781 at 42 degrees of freedom is not significant at 0.524 for the types of agenda being created and national issues overtly expressed by members of the group. Thus, the null research hypothesis is supported; there was no statistical significant relationship between the types of agenda being created and national issues overtly expressed by members of the group.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has established that there is a room for collective deliberation on certain national issues on social media that are germane to the

sustainability of an ideal nation, especially in third-world regions (such as Asia, Africa etc) where the real democracy is probably still elusive. The research has revealed the extent to which 'actors' in an online social movement can influence their followers or bystanders towards contributing to discussions on specific and crucial national issues. The study has specifically found that there is no relationship between types of agenda set by members of the group and national issues they overtly expressed. However, there is a strong relationship between types of agenda created by 'actors' and national issues overtly expressed within the context of their posts. In the light of this and the data gathered, the following

recommendations are proffered for the beneficiaries of the study:

1. The Nigerian government should ensure true transformation of all the sectors of the country. Especially, dividends of democracy should be evenly distributed across the country. This will go in a long way in averting forceful protests that might occur in the future.

2. Nigerians in the real public sphere should emulate the collective deliberation zeal of members of the group by exploring various conventional media for the discussion of germane national issues. This will result to collective attention calling of the concerned stakeholders in the country, to the critical sectors that need urgent attention.

3. The coordinators of the group should draw a strategic document that will assist government at various levels in tackling specific problems identified and discussed.

4. Civil society groups in the real public sphere should emulate The Nigerian Global Awakening Protests Day Group's objectives and philosophy of reinforcing various national issues examined through different and available conventional media or integrated mass communication strategy.

5. Coalition of civil societies in the country should organize enlightenment programmes on the use of social media for political participation and mobilization against policies that would not benefit the majority, especially the masses. The programmes should be targeted at the youths who have become net-generation through the emergence of new media.

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