Perception, Attitude and Psychological Impact on Media Coverage of Gunmen Attacks in Mushin Minority Community Area, Lagos State

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Abstract

The media is generally assumed to give less coverage to issues and events in minority areas while prioritizing coverage of news for the affluent. This study investigates the perception, attitude and psychological impact of media coverage of gunmen attacks in the minority community area of Mushin in Lagos State. It examined the extent of public awareness and perception towards media coverage of gunmen attacks and its impact on the mental and emotional well-being of the people. Purposive sampling technique and survey were utilised for the study with questionnaire administered to 437 participants. The paper anchored on the agenda setting theory to explain how media coverage of gunmen attacks can direct discourse and other implications among residents. Findings revealed that people's perception and awareness of media coverage of gunmen attacks is high. Social media is the most prominent and reliable source of information and the psychological impact of media coverage on residents manifested as trauma, fear and sadness. The study provides valuable insights into media coverage of sensitive issues like gunmen attacks in minority areas for media practitioners and policymakers to understand and address.

Keywords: Public perception; psychological impact; media coverage; gunmen attacks; Mushin community

Introduction

The media is important for providing information on community events and issues which influences thoughts and perceptions of people. The media can programme its schema to affect society or its citizens in the desired way with the messages they choose to prioritise and thereby influence the news that gets more attention from the audience. The media, particularly the news media, is not only successful in influencing opinions but also at shaping our thoughts (Wang, 2022). Public perception is shaped largely by the contents presented in the media, perception plays a significant part in making issues important or unimportant (Chaika, 2020). Perception represents people's general attitudes, convictions, and emotional reactions. Public view can be positive, negative, or neutral and are influenced by a variety of factors, including personal experiences, cultural norms, social influences, and information learned from peers, institutions, the media, and other sources.

Public attitudes play a significant role in determining how people behave both individually and collectively. The way people receive information, respond to messages, and engagement with social and political issues can be influenced by their views. Perceptions of safety and security may be influenced by the viewpoint and attitude of people towards media coverage of gunman assaults on minority areas such as Mushin community area. Media coverage is impactful in the society as it has the potential to create insecurity or assurance of safety in people. The angle from which a story is reported in the media can boost or lower people's perception of safety and security. Selective exposure in the media can create a system where conflict and strife are reduced by hunting for information that is in agreement with existing opinions and patterns of behaviour or norms (Turner et.al 2007).

The conventional media has been frequently accused of bias and subjectivity in the way it reports current events in minority areas; this claim is especially pronounced in institutions that are owned, controlled, or supported by the government. The perspective and attitude towards media coverage of gunman assaults in the minority area of Mushin local government, Lagos state, Nigeria, are the issues of discourse in this study. Attacks by armed individuals is a common problem in Mushin local government area, posing a dangerous threat to the protection of minorities in the community. Mushin is a residential and business district in Lagos state and popularly known as a neighbourhood of social miscreants called 'Area Boys'. The presence of scoundrels in the area has historically made Mushin a place of violence and unrest (Abdullah, 2024; Okolie, 2013). Residents, merchants, and nearby streets have frequently expressed their worry and uneasiness over the presence of crooks in the area. Arson and criminal activities are rampant in the vicinity leaving many community members wounded, trapped or killed (Ogunmefun et.al, 2022). Coverage of such instances in the media has a significant impact on how the people feel about the attacks, how it disrupts the neighbourhood and the interpretation of such attacks. Finding the level of awareness, understanding, and comprehension of the attacks in the community is imperative. It will be helpful for the media to find out areas where it falls short in the coverage of gunmen attacks in Mushin minority area.

Research Questions

- What is the extent of public perception of news on gunmen attacks in Mushin minority community area?

- What is the attitude of residents towards the accuracy of media coverage of gunmen attacks in Mushin minority community area?
- How does media coverage of gunmen attacks alter the psychological well-being of residents in Mushin minority community area?

Public Attitude towards Media Coverage

Public attitude refers to opinions, feelings, and evaluations that individuals hold towards a particular issue, object, person, or concept within the larger society. It represents the collective sentiment, disposition, and emotional response of the public towards various aspects of social, political, economic, or cultural life. Public attitude describes the assessments and attitudes held by members of a certain community or society towards a specific problem, circumstance, individual, or idea.   It represents people's general attitudes, convictions, and emotional reactions (Freeland, 2015)

Public attitudes have important implications for a wide range of societal issues and decision-making processes. They can influence public opinion, political campaigns, policy formulation, public support for initiatives, consumer behaviour, social movements, and public acceptance of new technologies or scientific advancements. It influences how people make decisions, interact with one another, and form opinions, and plays a significant role in shaping how people behave both individually and collectively. The way people receive information, respond to messages, and engage with social and political issues can all be influenced by their views. People react to the same message in very different ways, and this is all related to the process of decoding; that is how people process specific information. People's perceptions of their safety and security in Lagos may be influenced by the public's perspective and attitude toward media coverage of gunman assaults (Haddock et. al, 2019).

The role of media in guiding public opinion involves guidance of public view in an indirect, flexible and subtle way, the media's role in guiding public opinion is somewhat related to the concept of propaganda by shifting the focus from "what people think" to "what people think about". This is the main hub of media, giving issues to the public for what they think and act on based on their perceptions, and in many cases the media gives them direction to perceive and act on. The function of media in providing information has an impact on societies, but this varies from person to person. Societies are affected by the function of media for providing information, but this could vary from individual to individual. It can be related to the need for orientation which is a cognitive action of an individual about a certain topic or issue (Liao, et.al, 2023).

Persuasion plays a crucial role in shifting attitudes by presenting compelling arguments, evidence, and appeals to emotion. Personal experiences, exposure to new information, social interactions, and influential figures can contribute to attitude change. However, attitudes can be resistant to change, particularly if they are deeply ingrained or strongly linked to personal identity or values. Public attitudes are not monolithic, as they can vary among different segments of the population based on factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and political affiliation. Subgroups within society may hold divergent attitudes due to variations in their experiences, values, and exposure to different information sources. These variations can lead to social polarization and the formation of echo chambers, where individuals primarily engage with like-minded individuals and reinforce their existing attitudes.

Analysing public attitudes helps policymakers, businesses, and organizations to gain a deeper understanding of public sentiment and tailor their strategies, messages, and actions accordingly. It is essential for effective communication, policy formulation, and decision-making. By considering and addressing public attitudes, stakeholders can better anticipate public reactions, gain support for their initiatives, and build trust and credibility. Engaging with the public and actively seeking feedback can help bridge gaps, address concerns, and foster a more inclusive and participatory decision-making process.

The socialisation function of media, involves spreading a particular culture among citizens in the society. People in this age of technological revolution frequently rely on the media for immediate and accurate information about their surroundings, reports in the media can easily sway public perceptions and opinions. In this sense, media is a tool that can be used to influence people's thoughts and foster peaceful coexistence but occasionally, animosity between various social groups can be stoked by the media, leading to either uncertainty or insecurity in the society. This can be associated with the style the media uses to successfully create significant portions of social reality either out of thin air or occasionally from facts and events that go unnoticed in society. Again, constructing specific parts of one or more issues and presenting them to the public to form impressions in the mind of people is substantial for the media.

Media in Contemporary Nigeria

In contemporary Nigeria, the media is marked by both progress and challenges, reflecting the country's dynamic socio-political landscape and its transition into the digital age. Mass media, comprising television, radio, newspapers, and online platforms, performs a crucial role in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and holding those in power accountable. The media landscape in Nigeria has been significantly impacted by the digital revolution. Traditional media have increasingly embraced digital platforms and online news portals have emerged as popular sources of information, especially among the youth and urban population. The rise of the internet and smartphone penetration has led to the rapid growth of online media in Nigeria. Numerous online news websites, blogs, and social media platforms serve as alternative sources of news, providing diverse perspectives on various issues. It has become a powerful force for news consumption, platforms like *Twitter, Facebook,* and *WhatsApp* are widely used for sharing news, opinions, and user-generated content. However, the rapid spread of misinformation and fake news on social media remains a significant concern (Anyanwu et.al, 2024).

Nigeria has a relatively vibrant media environment with constitutional provisions guaranteeing press freedom. However, there have been instances of government interference, intimidation of journalists, and harassment, leading to concerns about media independence. The media in Nigeria grapples with ethical challenges, including biased reporting, sensationalism, and lack of professionalism. These issues occasionally undermine the credibility of certain media outlets. Moreover, there are concerns about the concentration of media ownership in Nigeria. Some media houses are affiliated with political figures or business interests, raising questions about their impartiality and the potential for media bias. The media industry faces economic constraints, particularly for traditional print media and broadcast stations. Advertisements and circulation revenue have declined, impacting the financial sustainability of some media organizations. Journalists in Nigeria face safety risks, especially when covering sensitive topics like corruption, conflict, and human rights abuses. Threats, physical attacks, and even killings

of journalists have been reported in the country (Adeyemo & Roper, 2022; Adeyemo, 2023). The Nigerian media is subject to regulatory bodies, including the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Nigerian Press Council (NPC). The regulations are established to maintain standards in the practice of journalism but there are concerns about potential abuse of power and restrictions on press freedom. Despite the challenges, the Nigerian mass media continues to play a crucial role in promoting democracy and holding public officials accountable. Investigative reporting and exposing corruption remain important functions of the media in the country.

Media Coverage and its Impact on the Public

Media coverage and its impact on the public is a complex and multifaceted interplay that lies at the core role of media to model public understanding, attitudes, and behaviours. Media coverage serves as a powerful conduit through which information, news, and narratives are disseminated to the broader society, contributing to the formation of public opinion and the construction of collective knowledge. The media's agenda-setting function is central to this relationship. By selecting, highlighting, and emphasizing certain news topics and events while downplaying or neglecting others, the media influences what the public considers important and relevant. Agenda-setting enables the media to set the tone and direction of public discourse, steering public attention towards specific issues and away from others. In this way, media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping the collective consciousness of society, determining which problems are urgent and which are marginal, what is perceived as threatening, and what is deemed significant.

Moreover, the framing of news stories in the media further influences the public's interpretation and understanding of events. Media frames are the lenses through which information is presented, influencing how individuals attribute meaning to news content and shaping their emotional responses. The frames used in coverage of news in the media can evoke fear, compassion, anger, or sympathy, thus influencing the public's attitudes and emotional reactions to the events described. The impact of media coverage extends beyond mere information dissemination, it influences public attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Positive or negative portrayals of individuals, groups, or issues in the media can shape public perceptions and evaluations as media narratives can influence public sentiment towards specific political figures, social groups, or policies, ultimately impacting public support or opposition. Furthermore, comprehensive reporting and in-depth analysis, the media can bring attention to pressing societal issues and raise awareness about important matters that might otherwise remain unnoticed. Media coverage also plays a crucial role in shaping public policy and decision-making processes (Haper & Philo, 2013). Policymakers often take media coverage and public reactions into account when crafting policies or responding to crises. Media coverage can generate public pressure, which can influence policy priorities and agenda

However, the relationship between media coverage and its impact on the public is not unidirectional. Media consumers are active participants in the process of interpreting and engaging media content. Individual differences, cultural context, and prior experiences shape how audiences respond to media coverage. Media consumers actively select, interpret, and internalize information based on their pre-existing beliefs, values, and attitudes. This phenomenon is known as selective exposure, where individuals seek out and prefer information that aligns with their pre-existing views. The relationship between media coverage and its

impact on the public is dynamic and multifaceted. The media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception, attitudes, and behaviours through agenda-setting, framing, and information dissemination. At the same time, media consumers' active engagement and selective exposure influence how they interpret and respond to media content. Understanding this intricate relationship is crucial for media professionals, researchers, and policymakers to navigate the responsibilities and opportunities associated with media communication and its potential to influence public opinion and societal outcomes.

Gunmen Attacks and Agenda- Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory, posits that the media has the power to influence the public's perception and understanding of events by selecting and emphasizing certain news topics over others. This theory suggests that the media's agenda-setting ability shapes what the public considers important and salient, ultimately influencing their attitudes, beliefs, and priorities (Valenzuela & Mccombs, 2019).

The repetition of media information on certain events and prevalence of news media is a major control on the perspectives of media audience. This makes it easy for media agenda to become the issue of discourse in public places where people generally discuss or deliberate on information presented by the media. Public agenda reflected the agenda of the media in six days in a real-life study conducted to affirm the power of the media in compelling the public to source its agenda from the media. Four basic elements define the type of coverage that evolves into media agenda, they include: dialogues with the source of information, interactions among media personnel and organisation, ethics and norms of journalism practice and social trends online (Valenzuela & McCombs, 2015).

Another significant question of interest revolves around the notion that media agenda is the same as editors' agenda or publishers' agenda. Media owners are reported to be mostly individuals that are business focused and socially responsible. Economic determinism, however, has taken a prior place in the scheme of things in the everyday running of media companies. One specific instance of this in the current media landscape, which includes both privately and publicly owned outlets, is news commercialization. As a result, the issue of news as a commodity or not has emerged in media circles. The view that news is a commodity, will likely go to the highest bidder, like a product that is put up for auction. On the other hand, it is unethical to intersperse newscasts with advertisements or cover the front page of a newspaper with bottom-strip ads if the subject matter is not a commodity. News is a potent instrument for spreading information to people, though it is different from advertising in a newspaper or television. This is especially true because news has a high degree of popular confidence and belief. The advertiser is willing to break ethical rules in order to expose products and gain increase in sales volume. News commercialization has affected the pattern of information because reports that emerge as news in the media are induced by someone or something while real news items are not aired. News is therefore decided by the source with the highest funding for newscast and this means any idea can be presented as news for public acceptance (Omenugha & Oji, 2016).

News commercialization is also a major hindrance to safety and development as irrelevant issues are often reported as news stories to the detriment of decisive news items that are critical for development. The media is expected to contribute positively to development and societal values by promoting information that supports the growth of the nation. News stories that

strengthen social, economic, political, technological, educational and other facets of the polity should be given utmost priority in media coverage. But, some media houses have derailed from the core responsibility of media as a development ally for the minorities by continuously voicing the issues of the rich while ignoring matters that can alleviate the sufferings of the poor (Ismail et.al, 2021).News should not be a commodity for sale and should not go to the highest bidder, there must be free spaces where people can speak without any monetary gain or influence as experienced in the digital arena of social media where citizen journalism has emerged with a strong, loud voice.

The media plays a crucial role in shaping how the public perceives and responds to critical incidents like the gunmen attack. The extent and nature of media coverage of this event will significantly impact how the public views the incident, the potential consequences, and their emotional reactions. Firstly, the media's agenda-setting power dictates which aspects of the gunmen's attack receive prominence in their coverage. The media's editorial choices may highlight certain dimensions of the attacks while others are downplayed or ignored. For instance, the media might focus on the number of casualties, the motives behind the attack, or the response of authorities. These emphasized aspects will influence what information the public is exposed to and what they consider essential in understanding the incident.

Secondly, the framing of the news can significantly impact the public's interpretation and emotional response. The media's framing choices, such as describing the gunmen's attack as an act of terrorism or a criminal act, can influence how the public perceives the event and attributes responsibility. Different frames can evoke various emotions, leading the public to react with fear, anger, or sympathy. The media's framing of the attack can also pattern understanding of the broader implications for safety and security. Moreover, the frequency and consistency of media coverage of the gunmen's attack can impact public perception of its importance and significance. Extensive and repeated coverage can lead the public to perceive the incident as a matter of utmost concern, deserving urgent attention from authorities and the community. On the other hand, limited or sporadic coverage might downplay the attack's significance and reduce its impact on public attitudes. The media's agenda-setting power can influence public priority in terms of security and safety in Mushin community area. If the media extensively covers the gunmen's attack and emphasizes its implications for public safety, the public may become more concerned about similar incidents occurring in their community. This heightened concern might lead to demands for improved security measures, more robust law enforcement, or community initiatives aimed at preventing future attacks. The media's role in shaping public perception, attitudes, and priorities cannot be overlooked, and understanding this influence is crucial for analysing the impact of media coverage on public responses to critical incidents like the gunmen attack. By studying the media's agenda-setting role, policymakers can gain valuable insights into how to effectively communicate, inform, and address issues that impact public safety and well-being.

Methodology

The study used descriptive survey design in which questionnaire items were used for collecting primary data from respondents. Mushin community, a popular minority area in Lagos state is the population for this study. Survey design is historically used for large population research where data can be generated from a sample representative of the inhabitants. It is also a good

method to investigate human behaviour and widely used in studies exploring social and emotional variables.   The total population of residents according to census figures was 935,400 and sample size of 500 respondents with confidence level of 95% was determined as appropriate for the study (Brinkhoof, 2023). The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants who reside in Mushin community since the residents are the focus of study.. It also used the convenience sampling technique to pick residents who were willing and available to participate in the survey. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and cumulative frequency were used to analyse the data on Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The data collected was used to assess the participant's perception, attitudes, reactions and behaviour towards the coverage of gunmen attacks in the media.

Analysis of Result and Interpretation of Data

A total number of 437 valid responses were received and analysed for the study, the respondents comprised 35% males and 65% females. The female gender was more with a higher response rate of 30% than the male respondents. Majority of the respondents are aged between 16-21 years and generated the highest response of over 50 precent.

Question 1 What is the extent of public perception of news on gunmen attacks in Mushin Community Area?

Table 1.1 Perception Level of Gunmen Attacks in Mushin Community Area

How would you rate your perception level of gunmen attack incidents in Mushin Community Area?		Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	211	48.3	48.3
	NO	157	35.9	84.2
	MAYBE	69	15.8	100.0
	Total	437	100.0	100.0

Table 1.2 Primary Source of Information on Gunmen attacks in Mushin Community Area

Which media source do you primarily receive information or news on gunmen attack in Mushin community?		Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TELEVISION	70	16.0	16.0

RADIO	46	10.5	26.5
NEWSPAPER	43	9.8	36.4
SOCIAL MEDIA	202	46.2	82.6
WORDS OF MOUTH	76	17.4	100.0
Total	437	100.0	100.0

Analysis revealed that 48.3% of the respondents have heard and have been exposed to information/news regarding gunmen's attacks in Mushin, 35.9% have not been exposed to such news and 15.8% are unsure. This implies that majority of the respondents have been exposed to the news of gunmen's attacks in Mushin community and are aware of the attacks. The news of gunmen attack was heard primarily on social media platforms by 46.2%, followed closely by television and radio while newspaper was the least. Although, most people in Mushin community are aware of attacks by gunmen, about 24 % of the respondents claimed to be unaware of gunmen incidents indicating that some residents are ignorant of the attacks.

Question 2 What is the attitude of residents towards the accuracy of media coverage of gunmen attacks in Mushin Community?

Table 2.1: Attitude towards reliability and accuracy of media coverage

In your opinion, how accurate and reliable is the media coverage of gunmen attacks in Mushin community Area?		Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	POOR	48	11.0	11.0
	VERY POOR	30	6.9	17.8
	OKAY	245	56.1	73.9
	GOOD	55	12.6	86.5
	VERY GOOD	59	13.5	100.0
	Total	437	100.0	100.0

Table 2.2: Attitude towards the most reliable media source in the coverage of gunmen attacks

Which specific media do you consider most trustworthy or credible in the coverage of gunmen attacks in Mushin Community?		Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	RADIO	63	14.4	14.4
	T. V	81	18.5	33.0
	NEWSPAPER	66	15.1	48.1
	SOCIAL MEDIA	227	51.9	100.0
	Total	437	100.0	100.0

2.3: Attitude towards sensational and exaggerated media coverage of gunmen attacks

Do you believe media outlets sensationalize or exaggerate the incidents of gunmen attacks in Mushin community area for better ratings or attention?		Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	102	23.3	23.3
	NO	132	30.2	53.5
	MAYBE	143	32.7	86.3
	DON'T KNOW	60	13.7	100.0
	Total	437	100.0	100.0

Attitude to Media Coverage of Gunmen Attacks in Mushin Local Government Area

Accuracy of media coverage of gunmen attacks was rated as okay, good or very good by a total of 82.2% of the respondents. This indicates that the community acclaim the media as consistent and truthful in its coverage of gunmen incidents in the area. A paltry number comprising 18% of the population rated media coverage trustworthiness as poor which showed that precision of news in the media about gunmen attacks is not completely satisfactory. The intention of the media for reporting news about gunmen incidents in Mushin is unclear to the residents. A fraction of the people believe that media reportage is exaggerated to gain attention and better ratings while a higher number of 30.2% do not agree with this opinion. Social media sites are not only the most popular channel for news on Mushin gunmen attacks, it also doubles as the most reliable news outlet for residents. Television is rated as the second most reliable channel to get news about attacks from gunmen in Mushin community.

Question 3 How does media coverage of gunmen attacks alter the psychological well-being of residents in Mushin Community Area?

Table 3.1

How do you feel emotionally when exposed to news or information about gunmen attacks in Mushin Community?	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
FEAR	88	20.1	20.1	20.1
ANXIETY	54	12.4	12.4	32.5
ANGER	41	9.4	9.4	41.9
SADNESS	55	12.6	12.6	54.5
NEUTRAL	199	45.5	45.5	100.0
Total	437	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.2 Psychological reactions to media coverage of gunmen attacks

Have you altered your daily routines or behaviour in response to media coverage of gunmen attacks in Mushin Community?	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

YES	114	26.1	26.1	26.1
NO	239	54.7	54.7	80.8
MAYBE	84	19.2	19.2	100.0
Total	437	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.3 Intensity of Emotions Towards Media Content on Gunmen Attack

How intense was the emotion experienced on media coverage on gunmen attacks in Mushin?	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
NOT AT ALL INTENSE	192	43.9	43.9
NOT INTENSE	43	9.8	53.8
INTENSE	80	18.3	72.1
VERY INTENSE	64	14.6	86.7
EXTREMELY INTENSE	58	13.3	100.0
Total	437	100.0	100.0

Psychological Impact of Media Coverage of Gunmen Attacks on Mushin Residents

A large number of residents in Mushin community reported having psychological reactions to the news of attacks by gunmen in the area. The impact of the news on gunmen attacks elicited emotional and psychological feelings in residents, the different responses ranged from irritation to dejection. Residents in the margin of 32.5% were afraid or anxious about the occurrences of gunmen attacks reported in the media, this resulted into feelings of insecurity and fear. People also felt angry, annoyed and sad with the news of gunmen attacks in the area perhaps, because they felt the government ought to have a stronger control over the assault of gunmen. The people who felt neutral about the exposure to news on gunmen attacks, unperturbed or worried about the occurrences totalled 45.5%. The psychological impact of the attacks compelled some people to change their daily routines and avoid areas where the outbreak of gun attacks was reported in the media. Market sellers and shop owners closed their stores and evaded the places of gunmen attacks while others changed the road to commute to work and used alternative

routes. The psychological impact of news coverage on residents in Mushin showed that the emotional disturbance was intense and manifested as trauma, fear and other negative emotions.

Discussion

Awareness of the attacks by gunmen in Mushin is well-known by most residents and the social media served as the major source of disseminating news of the attacks. The social media platform has become the most used media for receiving information on minority community attacks and events. The percentage of Nigerians who use social media as the primary source of news is 95% placed ahead of television and print newspapers (Sasu, 2023). The trend is the same in the globe as most people turn to social media to get news about everything anytime while traditional media takes the back seat (Martin, 2018).

The perceptions of residents in Mushin area on the accuracy of media reportage on gunmen attacks in the area is positive since participants find the news on the attacks as accurate and reliable. There are uncertainties about the intentions of the media, whether social media platforms exaggerate the incidents of gunmen attacks in Mushin community for better ratings or attention as the coverage of such news is on the low side in the traditional media channels. Social media is rated as the most credible source of getting news on gunmen attacks in Mushin. Social media is constant and timely in the reportage of gunmen attacks perhaps because it allows people (citizen journalism) to report events unfolding in the vicinity. It is rated as more popular and credible as breaking news is fast and timely on social platforms. Social media is a strong channel for news as it has attracted more audience in recent times and has become a veritable source of easy access to news (Osong & Egbe, 2020; Adeyemo & Roper, 2022). But news on social media is sometimes created with headline as click bait to display false information thereby raise credibility issues. Social media was not rated as a credible source of news as reported in previous findings, its popularity and availability does not translate to media accuracy (Uchenna, 2020). The younger generation which constitutes majority of the study population prefers and perceives the social media as a reliable source of news (Osong & Egbe, 2020; Akoja & Nwenearizi, 2020). The older generation do not trust the medium due to many fake and exaggerated information.

The impact of media coverage on residents' behaviour and emotions is evident, with a significant number avoiding certain places in Mushin area due to news of the attacks. Media reports have influenced their daily routines, causing emotional upset such as fear, anxiety, and sadness in some cases. Such emotional responses underscore the powerful role media plays in shaping public perceptions and influencing individual actions. The intensity of emotions experienced after consuming media content on gunmen attacks are related to trauma and fear. Some respondents do not rate the intensity emotional disturbances as significant, this suggests that residents in the area might have become desensitized to such news, possibly due to frequent exposure through social media, where exaggerated information and sensationalized reports are not uncommon. The study also revealed generational differences in perceptions of media coverage, similar to findings from other studies examining digital natives' and immigrants' attitudes toward technology. Younger respondents showed a more favourable perception of social media's role in news coverage compared to the older counterparts.

Overall, the research highlights the crucial role of social media in disseminating information on sensitive issues like gunmen attacks in minority areas. It underscores the need for media organizations to uphold credibility, accuracy, and objectivity to foster public trust. Moreover,

the findings emphasize the importance of responsible reporting to minimize negative emotional impacts on the audience and avoid sensationalism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, social media emerged as a vital platform for news consumption, and its role in shaping public perception should not be underestimated. The finding suggests that media reporting on the attacks is generally considered accurate, but caution should be exercised as social media news may not always be reliable. Understanding the impact of media coverage in minority areas is essential for creating effective communication strategies and addressing the emotional well-being of residents in response to security challenges. Traditional media should intensify efforts to increase coverage of news in minority areas and draw attention of government officials to the plight of the people and put an end to insecurity. This will increase news credibility and the government will understand and pay attention to the urgent needs of the minority communities

Recommendations

The media should play its role in exposing the difficulties in marginal areas to attract attention of government agencies in taking care of citizens in minority areas. The mainstream media should be prompt in their reportage of gunmen attacks in Mushin and help establish security measures. They should not wait for citizens on social media to post exaggerated information or rumours, most traditional media are visible on social media and can use these to platforms to gain advantage. The government should ensure adequate security in minority areas and cater for the safety of the minority community. Citizens should ensure delivery of credible news on social media to enhance citizen journalism and increase public trust. Community radio and television should be established in minority areas for accurate coverage of minority news.

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