



Appraisal of Media Contributions to Promoting Security in Imo State: A Study of Select Media Organisations in Owerri, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: The persistent insecurity in Imo State, Nigeria, has heightened public concern regarding the role of the mass media in promoting security awareness, encouraging civic participation, and supporting peacebuilding efforts. Although previous studies have extensively examined media coverage of insecurity in Nigeria, limited empirical attention has been devoted to assessing how media organisations, through their editorial policies, programme content, and audience engagement strategies, contribute to promoting security at the state level.

Objective: This study appraised the contributions of selected media organisations in Owerri to promoting security in Imo State.

Method: The study adopted a survey research design. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and the researcher's observation.

Results: The findings revealed that both broadcast and print media employed diverse content formats to address security issues in Imo State. The selected media organisations contributed substantially to public awareness by disseminating security-related information through various programmes and publications. Furthermore, the broadcast media demonstrated considerable audience participation by providing interactive platforms for discussing security concerns.

Conclusion: The study concluded that the selected media organisations in Owerri recognised the severity of insecurity in Imo State and adopted diverse communication strategies to raise public awareness, stimulate public discourse, and encourage citizen participation in addressing security challenges.

Unique Contribution: The study provides empirical evidence on the contributions of media organisations in promoting security awareness and public engagement at the sub-national level, thereby enriching the growing body of literature on media and security communication in Nigeria.

Key Recommendations: The study recommends that media organisations increase the frequency and prominence of security-focused programmes and newspaper columns. It also recommends the development of dedicated interactive platforms that facilitate sustained public engagement and collaboration with relevant security stakeholders to strengthen security awareness and promote community resilience in Imo State.

Keywords: Security, Insecurity, Mass Media, Security Communication, Imo State, Nigeria.



INTRODUCTION

Security is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development, social cohesion, and economic prosperity. In every society, the protection of lives and property remains a primary responsibility of the state, while the mass media complement this responsibility by informing, educating, mobilising citizens, and promoting public awareness on issues affecting national and community security. Through agenda setting, public enlightenment, and citizen engagement, the media serve as critical stakeholders in fostering a security-conscious society (Onwe, et al., 2017).

In recent years, Imo State, Nigeria, has experienced a persistent and multifaceted security crisis characterised by kidnappings, attacks by armed groups, political violence, destruction of public infrastructure, and the enforcement of illegal sit-at-home orders. The situation has disrupted socioeconomic activities, weakened public confidence, and resulted in the loss of lives and property across both rural and urban communities. In some parts of the state, residents have reportedly abandoned their communities, while traditional social activities, including funeral ceremonies, have been severely disrupted due to threats and extortion by criminal elements. For instance, Punch (Online) reported that residents of Agwa in Oguta Local Government Area were compelled to pay illegal funeral levies imposed by armed groups before they could bury deceased relatives, while several people reportedly lost their lives in related attacks between 2020 and 2025 (Idowu, 2025).

The security challenges have also negatively affected the state's economy. Businesses, educational institutions, transportation services, and other economic activities have repeatedly been disrupted by the enforcement of sit-at-home directives associated with separatist agitations. Although factions of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have at different times denied responsibility for the continued enforcement of the order or claimed that it had been suspended, many residents remain reluctant to engage in normal economic activities because of recurring incidents of violence, killings, and destruction of property. Similarly, restrictions on movement during court appearances involving IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu have often generated widespread fear and significantly reduced human and vehicular traffic across the state (Nwafor, et al., 2024).

Kidnapping has equally become a recurring security threat in Imo State. Reports indicate that incidents of abduction occur with disturbing regularity, making residents, travellers, and commuters vulnerable to criminal attacks (Agenzia Fides, 2025; Chibundu, 2025; Omonobi, 2025). In addition, some high-profile violent incidents have been linked to political tensions within the state. A notable example is the assassination of Ahmed Gulak in 2021, an incident that generated widespread public debate regarding its political dimensions, with conflicting narratives from government officials, political actors, and separatist groups (Abati, 2021; Channels Television, n.d.; Edem, 2021; Sahara Reporters, 2021; Vanguard, 2025).

Given these realities, the role of the mass media extends beyond merely reporting incidents of violence. Contemporary media are expected to support security governance by providing timely and accurate information, educating citizens on personal and community safety measures, facilitating dialogue among stakeholders, countering misinformation, promoting peaceful



coexistence, and encouraging public participation in crime prevention and security management. These functions position the media as strategic partners in strengthening public resilience against insecurity.

Although the media in Imo State have consistently reported incidents of insecurity, existing evidence has largely focused on the frequency and nature of such coverage, with limited attention devoted to evaluating whether media organisations deliberately design communication strategies and audience-oriented content that promote security awareness and encourage public participation in addressing security challenges (Odoemelam & Nwafor, 2012). Consequently, there remains insufficient empirical evidence on the extent to which media organisations in the state have gone beyond routine news reporting to actively contribute to security promotion through specialised programmes, public enlightenment campaigns, editorial initiatives, and interactive audience engagement. This gap in knowledge necessitates a systematic appraisal of the contributions of media organisations to promoting security in Imo State.

This study therefore investigated how selected media organisations in Owerri have contributed to promoting security in Imo State through their content development, public awareness initiatives, and audience participation mechanisms. Specifically, the study focuses on Orient FM, Orient Television, Zanders FM, Boss Radio 98.9 FM, *Daily Sun*, *New Telegraph*, *News Point*, and *Front Burner*. These organisations comprise both publicly and privately owned broadcast and print media with substantial audience reach across the state. Their diversity in ownership and media platforms provides an appropriate basis for assessing how different categories of media organisations contribute to security communication and public awareness in an environment characterised by persistent security challenges.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What media contents are employed by the selected media organisations in Owerri to promote security in Imo State?
2. To what extent have the selected media organisations contributed to creating public awareness of security issues in Imo State?
3. How have the selected media organisations incorporated audience participation into discussions of security-related issues in Imo State?



LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Management and Security

Media management is primarily the responsibility of senior editors who have acquired substantial professional experience through years of media practice. As leaders of media organizations, they are responsible for managing editorial inputs and outputs in ways that serve the interests of society. Since the media exist to inform, educate, and serve the public, editors are expected to align media content with prevailing societal issues and public concerns. Achieving this requires them to remain observant, attentive, and responsive to developments within their environment. According to Maxwell (2008), effective leaders are good listeners. This suggests that leaders who aspire to make meaningful contributions to society must deliberately listen, observe, and respond appropriately to emerging issues. These qualities are equally essential for media managers in designing content that addresses the needs and aspirations of the public.

Managing media content that contributes to public security requires editors to possess a sound understanding of the security challenges confronting society. Udoudo (2024) argues that editors must understand and determine what constitutes news for their audience. Consequently, news and programmes that promote public safety and security, particularly in situations where insecurity threatens lives and property, deserve prominent attention. Through news reports and other media programmes, citizens should be adequately informed and educated on measures that enhance their safety. This position is consistent with Uche's (1989) assertion that "...without the privately owned press by Nigerians, independence could have taken a longer time to come" (p. 97). The statement underscores the transformative power of the media in influencing societal outcomes. By extension, properly managed media content can make significant contributions to promoting peace and enhancing security.

Insecurity and National Development

Insecurity poses a serious threat not only to individual citizens but also to national development. Persistent insecurity discourages both local and foreign investment because investors are generally reluctant to commit resources to unstable environments. Udoudo and Diriyai (2012) observe that terrorism constitutes a major threat to every nation and its people. This assertion is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context, where kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, and other violent crimes have significantly undermined socio-economic development.

Udoudo et al. (2015) note that despite the frequent occurrence of insecurity in Nigeria, some scholars have argued that the media have not consistently adopted insecurity reporting as a deliberate editorial policy, while others maintain that media content merely reflects prevailing realities in society. Although this observation may have been valid at the time, contemporary media coverage indicates that incidents of insecurity are now reported almost daily by both traditional and digital media platforms. The critical issue, however, is whether such reportage is guided by deliberate editorial policies aimed at promoting public safety and national security rather than merely reporting violent incidents. Supporting this position, Nwadiani (2018) argues



that sustainable development cannot occur in an environment characterized by insecurity. He further describes Nigeria's security situation as deeply disturbing and detrimental to national progress.

Mass Media, Peace, and Development

Peace is widely regarded as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Without peace, meaningful social, political, and economic development becomes difficult to achieve. Since peace represents the absence of insecurity, efforts to promote peace directly contribute to national development. Singh (2008) emphasizes that although conflict is inevitable in every society, it can produce lasting peace when effectively managed through dialogue and negotiation. Such peaceful resolutions create the conditions necessary for development. Similarly, Omokhodion (2018) argues that development encompasses both the process and the means of improving the quality of life of citizens, particularly in developing countries.

The mass media play a vital role in promoting peace by informing, educating, and mobilizing citizens. James (2009) contends that the mass media have long been recognized as influential during periods of crisis in Nigeria. Consequently, at a time when insecurity remains a major national challenge, the media are expected not only to report security issues but also to promote peace, foster social cohesion, and encourage constructive public engagement capable of facilitating national development (Omu-Ngebo, et al., 2024).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory developed by the Hutchins Commission. According to McQuail (2005), the theory views the media as a public trust and emphasizes that media organizations have an obligation to serve society responsibly. The theory advocates that the media should provide accurate, balanced, and socially responsible information while contributing to social order, peace, and national security.

The Social Responsibility Theory further maintains that while the media should enjoy freedom of expression, such freedom must be exercised with a strong sense of accountability to society. Accordingly, media organizations are expected to balance press freedom with ethical responsibility by promoting peace, stability, and the public interest.

McQuail (2005) summarises the major assumptions of the theory as follows:

1. The media have obligations to society, and media ownership constitutes a public trust.
2. News media should provide information that is truthful, accurate, fair, objective, and relevant.
3. The media should remain free but operate within a framework of responsible self-regulation.



4. Media organizations should adhere to established codes of ethics and professional standards.
5. Under exceptional circumstances, government intervention may be justified to safeguard the public interest (p. 172).

The Social Responsibility Theory is particularly relevant to this study because it emphasizes the obligation of media organizations to contribute positively to society. In the context of the prevailing security challenges in Imo State and Nigeria generally, the theory provides an appropriate framework for assessing how media management can promote peace, security, and national development through responsible editorial policies and professional media practice.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design. The population comprised 68 editorial staff drawn from selected media organizations in Owerri, namely: Orient FM, Orient Television, Zanders 105.7 FM, Boss Radio 98.9 FM, *Daily Sun*, *New Telegraph*, *News Point*, and *Front Burner*.

Although the population was relatively small and could have been studied through a census, purposive sampling was adopted because of the specialized nature of the study. Accordingly, ten senior editorial staff were selected from each of the four broadcast media organizations, while two senior editorial staff were selected from each of the four print media organizations for questionnaire administration. The smaller number of respondents selected from the print media was due to the comparatively fewer editorial personnel available in their Owerri offices.

In addition, one editor or bureau chief from each media organisation was purposively selected for an in-depth interview. Data were collected using three instruments: a structured questionnaire, an interview guide, and the researcher's observation checklist. The interviews were conducted via telephone.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in the tables that are presented below:

Table 1: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by Orient FM, Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate programme for the enlightenment of the audience on security matters in Imo State	10	0
Jingle on security matters in Imo State	10	0
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	0	10
Reporting security matters only as they occur	10	0
Audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available	10	0

N= 10



Table 1 above indicates unanimous agreement among the respondents that Orient FM operates dedicated security enlightenment programmes, broadcasts security-related jingles, reports security issues as they occur, and provides audience participation platforms for discussing security matters. However, all respondents agreed that the station does not operate a deliberate editorial policy specifically focused on security issues in Imo State.

Table 2: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by Orient Television, Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate programme for the enlightenment of the audience on security matters in Imo State	10	0
Jingle on security matters in Imo State	9	1
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	0	10
Reporting security matters only as they occur	10	0
Audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available	10	0

N= 10

Data on table two show that all respondents agreed that Orient Television operates dedicated security enlightenment programmes, reports security issues as they occur, and provides audience participation opportunities on security matters. Nine of the ten respondents also confirmed the existence of security-related jingles. However, all respondents agreed that the station does not have a specific editorial policy devoted to security issues in Imo State.

Table 3: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by Zanders 105. 7 FM, Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate programme for the enlightenment of the audience on security matters in Imo State	0	10
Jingle on security matters in Imo State	10	0
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	10	0
Reporting security matters only as they occur	8	2
Audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available	10	0

N= 10

Table 3 shows that all the ten respondents agreed on every item of the research. In other words, the respondents agreed that *Zanders 105.7 FM Radio* had a deliberate programme on security; jingle on security matters; reported security matters as they occurred and had audience participatory programme for discussing security matters. They also agreed that the station did not have deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State.



Table 4: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by Boss Radio 98.9 FM, Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate programme for the enlightenment of the audience on security matters in Imo State	10	0
Jingle on security matters in Imo State	10	0
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	0	10
Reporting security matters only as they occur	10	0
Audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available	10	0

N= 10

Table 4 shows unanimous agreement among respondents that Boss Radio 98.9 FM broadcasts dedicated security enlightenment programmes, airs security-related jingles, reports security issues as they occur, and provides opportunities for audience participation on security matters. Nevertheless, all respondents agreed that the station has no deliberate editorial policy specifically addressing security issues in Imo State.

Table 5: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by Daily Sun in Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate features or columns to enlighten readers on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Specific editorials on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Does your medium report security matters only as they occur?	2	0
Does your medium make audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available?	0	2

N= 2

Table 5 shows that the *Daily Sun* reports security issues as they occur. However, respondents agreed that the newspaper does not publish dedicated security features or columns, does not produce specific editorials on security matters, does not operate a deliberate editorial policy on security, and does not provide mechanisms for audience participation in discussions on security issues.

Table 6: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by New Telegraph in Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate features or columns to enlighten readers on security matters in Imo State	2	0
Specific editorials on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Does your medium report security matters only as they occur?	2	0
Does your medium make audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available?	0	2

N= 2



Table 6 shows that the two respondents agreed on all the items of the research. In other words, *New Telegraph* did not have deliberate features or columns to enlighten readers on security matters in Imo State; no specific editorials on matters of security in Imo State; no deliberate editorial policy on security in Imo State and did not make provision for audience discussion on security matters in Imo State. The medium, however, reported security matters as they occurred.

Table 7: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by *News Point* in Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate features or columns to enlighten readers on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Specific editorials on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Does your medium report security matters only as they occur?	2	0
Does your medium make audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available?	0	2

N=2

Table 7 indicate that *News Point* reports security issues as they occur but does not publish dedicated security features or columns, specific editorials on security matters, or a deliberate editorial policy on security. Similarly, the newspaper does not provide opportunities for audience participation in discussions relating to security issues.

Table 8: Approaches to Security of Imo Citizens by *Front Burner* in Owerri

Approach	YES	NO
Deliberate features or columns to enlighten readers on security matters in Imo State	2	0
Specific editorials on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Deliberate editorial policy on security matters in Imo State	0	2
Does your medium report security matters only as they occur?	2	0
Does your medium make audience participation in the discussion of security matters in Imo State available?	0	2

N= 2

Table 8 shows that *Front Burner* publishes dedicated features or columns on security matters and reports security issues as they occur. However, respondents agreed that the newspaper does not publish specific editorials on security issues, does not operate a deliberate editorial policy on security, and does not provide avenues for audience participation in discussions on security matters.



INTERVIEW FINDINGS

One editor or bureau chief from each of the eight selected media organisations was interviewed. The interview findings are presented below.

Regarding the existence of a deliberate editorial policy on security issues in Imo State, all eight interviewees stated that their organizations did not have a specific editorial policy dedicated to security reporting in the state. The Bureau Chief of *New Telegraph* explained that the newspaper is a national publication and, therefore, would not formulate an editorial policy exclusively for Imo State. According to him, if such a policy were to be developed, it would apply to security issues across Nigeria rather than to a single state.

On the deliberate efforts made by their organisations to promote security awareness, all interviewees indicated that they consistently reported security incidents as they occurred. One respondent noted that the severity of insecurity in Imo State made it imperative for the media to give adequate coverage to security-related events, adding that such reports attracted considerable public interest.

Respondents from Orient FM and Orient Television further disclosed that their stations broadcast security-focused programmes titled "Imo Security" and "Eagle Eye," respectively. These programmes were specifically designed to address security challenges and promote public awareness. Among the print media, only *New Telegraph* was reported to have a dedicated newspaper column on security issues. According to the Bureau Chief, the column, titled "Metro," appears on page 25 of the newspaper. Similarly, the Publisher of *Front Burner* stated that the newspaper, which is published fortnightly, also maintains a column devoted to security matters in Imo State, although the title of the column was not specified.

With respect to audience participation, respondents from all the broadcast media organizations stated that they regularly provide phone-in programmes through which listeners can discuss security and other public issues. In contrast, interviewees from the print media organizations indicated that their newspapers do not provide similar opportunities for audience participation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings are discussed in line with the research questions that guided the study.

Research Question One: What media contents are used by the selected media organizations in Owerri to promote security in Imo State?

The findings reveal that both the broadcast and print media employ different forms of content to address security issues in Imo State. The most common content across all the selected media organizations was straight news reporting of security incidents as they occurred. In addition,



three of the eight media organizations (37.5%), all of which were broadcast stations, operated dedicated security programmes, while two newspapers (25%) maintained regular security-related columns or features. Overall, five of the eight media organizations (62.5%) provided specialized content specifically devoted to security issues in Imo State.

Furthermore, all the selected broadcast media organizations indicated that they operated phone-in programmes that enabled audience participation in discussions on security matters. Although these programmes were not exclusively designed for security issues, interview findings revealed that security-related topics were regularly discussed whenever they became matters of public concern.

These findings support the assumptions of the Social Responsibility Theory. According to McQuail (2005), the media have obligations to society because media ownership is a public trust. By providing security-related programmes, news reports, and opportunities for public engagement, the selected media organizations demonstrated their commitment to promoting public awareness and contributing to community safety.

Research Question Two: To what extent have the selected media organizations in Owerri contributed to creating security awareness among audiences in Imo State?

The findings demonstrate that the selected media organizations have contributed substantially to creating public awareness of security issues in Imo State. Through regular news reports, dedicated security programmes, specialized newspaper columns, and audience participation platforms, the media have consistently informed citizens about prevailing security challenges.

Security-focused programmes such as “Imo Security” on Orient FM and “Eagle Eye” on Orient Television were specifically developed to educate the public on security matters. Likewise, the security-related columns published by *New Telegraph* and *Front Burner* further illustrate the commitment of these newspapers to promoting security awareness.

Taken together, these initiatives indicate that the selected media organizations have made significant contributions to public awareness of security issues in Imo State. This finding corroborates James (2009), who argues that the mass media have long been recognized as influential during periods of crisis in Nigeria.

Research Question Three: In what ways have the selected media organizations in Owerri promoted audience participation in discussions on security matters in Imo State?

The study found that all the selected broadcast media organizations actively encourage audience participation through phone-in programmes, enabling members of the public to express their views and contribute to discussions on security issues. This interactive approach enhances public engagement and encourages citizens to participate in finding solutions to security challenges.



Although print media organizations do not provide interactive platforms comparable to broadcast phone-in programmes, two of the selected newspapers publish security-related columns that stimulate public interest and encourage discourse on prevailing security concerns.

These findings suggest that the selected media organizations recognize the importance of public participation in addressing security challenges. Their efforts are consistent with the Social Responsibility Theory, which emphasizes that the media have a duty to promote public welfare, encourage informed public discourse, and contribute to social stability (McQuail, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the selected media organizations in Owerri recognize the seriousness of the security challenges confronting Imo State and have adopted various communication strategies to create public awareness and encourage citizens' engagement with security issues. These strategies include regular news reporting, dedicated security programmes, newspaper columns, and audience participation through phone-in programmes.

Although the findings indicate that these initiatives have contributed meaningfully to promoting security awareness, the study also reveals the absence of clearly defined editorial policies specifically focused on security reporting. Strengthening such policies would further enhance the media's capacity to contribute to peace, public safety, and sustainable development in Imo State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Media organizations in Owerri should expand the number of security-related programmes, features, and newspaper columns to sustain public awareness and encourage informed discussion on security issues.
2. Media organizations should develop clear editorial policies on security reporting to ensure consistent, responsible, and development-oriented coverage of security matters.
3. Broadcast media organizations should increase the use of indigenous languages, particularly Igbo, in security awareness programmes and phone-in discussions to improve audience comprehension, participation, and community engagement.

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

The title of the study was jointly conceived by the two authors. While data collection was predominantly handled by Professor Ekwerike, Dr Nwosu put together the analysis of the data and results of the study. At the end, both contributors reviewed the outcome of the study together.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure

The authors declare that no generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing, analysis, or preparation of this manuscript.

Data availability statement

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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