

Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

**Analysing the Evolution of Online Activism in Nigeria:
Lessons from the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign**

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UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies

Debrecen, 2025

**Analysing the Evolution of Online Activism in Nigeria:
Lessons from the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign**

Following the framework of Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, University of
Debrecen, this dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
doctoral degree in English Literary and Cultural Studies Subprogramme

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Declaration

The undersigned Blessing Dachollom Datiri in full awareness of my liability, I declare that the dissertation submitted is my original academic work, which was prepared with attention to the international norms of copyright, and the references included in it are clear and complete. I further declare that I am not currently subject to a procedure aimed at the revocation of a doctoral degree, and that a doctoral degree already awarded has not been revoked from me in the past 5 years. I have not submitted the present dissertation at another institute before, and it has not been rejected.

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Acknowledgements

Perhaps, my favourite endeavour of this research journey is this opportunity to express gratitude to the key people who not only made this possible but also contributed to my personal and professional growth. While I cannot mention everyone by name, I am grateful to all who have supported me.

I must start with my supervisor, Prof. Séllei Nóra, for her guidance, thoughtful feedback, consistent encouragement, and availability at each critical stage of this research. Her support helped me navigate this demanding intellectual journey with ease. I firmly believe that the successful completion of this dissertation is a direct result of her mentorship and dedication.

I am also grateful to the members of my doctoral committee, Prof. Rácz István, Prof. Anna Keszeg, Dr. Zsófia Orosz-Réti, Dr. Kalmár György, Dr. Dorottya Mózes, and Prof. Kérchy Anna, for their, challenging questions, and thoughtful feedback, all of which sharpened my thinking and strengthened this dissertation.

I extend my appreciation to the instructors and staff of the doctoral school. Through seminars, consultations, and informal discussions, their academic generosity and support helped me broaden my intellectual scholarship and perspectives. I am grateful to Ms. Erika Kiss for her support and willingness to help at all times, often going beyond her administrative duties to assist me in personal matters.

I also would like to specially thank Dr. Olaniran Samuel for introducing me to different data mining, sourcing and analysis methods that are often used in the field of Digital Humanities and large-data research. I am also equally thankful to Dr Chima Nwaogu for taking out of his time to patiently answer all my questions on how to use the R software. Thank you for all the learning sessions. I am just as thankful to your wife, Kwanye, for our endearing friendship.

I would like to acknowledge the scholarship support I received from both the Stipendium Hungaricum Program (Tempus Public Foundation, Hungary) and the Nigerian Bilateral Education Agreement (BEA) Scholarship, which made this research possible. I also acknowledge the learning experience I gained at the DaLiCo – Data Literacy in Context Project in the course of my research.

I would like to also thank my colleagues and friends I made along the way who made this journey feel lighter. For the friendship we shared, from spontaneous brainstorming sessions to quiet words of encouragement, your presence made the process far more meaningful.

To my in-laws, the Pam family, thank you for your constant encouragement and always checking in, making me feel supported from afar. Your kindness made a real difference. I am truly blessed to have you all in my life.

To my parents, Rev. Prof. Dachollom and Naomi Datiri, and to my sister, Dr. Dorcas, and her family, thank you for your unwavering support, prayers and daily encouragement. Even with the distances, not for once did I ever feel alone, I always felt your presence and love.

Last but not least, to my husband, Samson, and my son, Yey-tek Caleb, I cannot fully express in words how grateful I am for you both. I could not have done this without all the laughter, jokes and genuine support. Thank you for being my calm in all the chaos and my steady ground through it all.

With a heart filled with gratitude to you all, I say thank you!

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ABSTRACT

The use of digital platforms for activism has transformed the ways in which social movements are able to garner visibility, create awareness, mobilise global support and sustain momentum over time. In this study, I explore how online activism functions and evolves through the case study of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. The movement was created in response to the abduction of 276 schoolgirls of the Government Secondary School, Chibok, Nigeria by Boko Haram in April of 2014. The abductions sparked a global outrage that leveraged social media and other digital platforms, particularly Twitter to advocate for the release of the girls and also to demand government accountability. The movement has emerged to represent a landmark moment in contemporary African women's activism, underscoring the benefits of hashtag activism on the one hand and its limitations on the other. I situate the #BringBackOurGirls campaign within the frameworks of African feminist theory and the Uses and Gratifications media Theory (UGT). Through these frameworks, I analyse how digital platforms enabled engagement, solidarity and global participation. The research attempts to provide a nuanced understanding of how digital activism functions in gender focussed advocacy campaigns. Using a dataset of over 3.26 million tweets, I adopt a mixed-methods approach integrating both qualitative (rhetorical) and quantitative (computational) analysis of Twitter data. Findings reveal that the online campaigns created a global awareness of the abductions and at the same time, pressured the government and world leaders to act urgently to rescue the girls. However, the movement encountered challenges in achieving the success of their advocacy efforts, as over eleven years after the abductions, over 80 girls remain unaccounted for. The research also demonstrates that celebrity participation in the online campaigns significantly amplified the virality of the hashtag campaign, highlighting the influence of both popular culture and digital platforms on contemporary activism. A key contribution of this research lies in my conceptualisation of the campaign's evolution from mobilisation, persuasion and creating awareness into a sustained form of memory activism over the years. Rather than viewing this shift as a continuation of advocacy, I frame it as a transformation in the function of the campaign itself. The study highlights how online campaigns that have lasted and become long-term campaigns evolve to preserve collective memory and maintain public discourse usually around the anniversaries of the events. This study contributes to scholarly discussions on the use of social media for digital activism, African women's movements, and the evolving landscape of online social movements.

Key words: digital activism, hashtag campaigns, Twitter, memory activism, gender-based violence

INTRODUCTION

Exploring the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign and Beyond

Background of the Study

On the night of 14 April 2014, over 276 schoolgirls were abducted from the Government Girls' Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria, by the militant Islamist group Boko Haram. This single event sparked global outrage and catalysed one of the most prominent digital protest campaigns in Sub-Saharan Africa: the #BringBackOurGirls movement. Originating on the social media platform Twitter and quickly gaining international attention, the campaign marked a shift in how social movements in the Global South could leverage digital media platforms to demand accountability, draw attention to gender-based violence, and connect local struggles with transnational advocacy.

Gender-based violence specifically targeting girls and women became a distinguishing feature of Boko Haram's strategy. Zenn Jacob and Pearson Elizabeth state that Boko Haram made abductions of girls and women as a common tactic in its war against the Nigerian state (46). Omeni Akali chronicles that the girls were abducted from an all-female government secondary school in the town of Chibok, 80 miles off Maiduguri in Borno State, Nigeria (10). Around 2014 Chibok, a local government area in Borno State, Nigeria, had a population of about 80,000 according to estimates by City Population¹, up from 66,105 in the 2006 Nigerian official census. Although not the only case of abductions that occurred during the period, the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction became a significant concern that generated an unprecedented level of attention nationally and internationally.

Since 2002 Nigeria has witnessed the rise of an Islamist sect, the Boko Haram. According to Newman the term *Boko Haram* translates to "western education is forbidden." The etymology of the group's name reflects its ideological roots and doctrines: *Boko* derives from the Hausa language, meaning "Western education". It is often associated with the Hausa language phrase '*Yan Boko*', a term often used derogatorily in northern Nigeria to refer to so called "westernised educated elites". *Haram* comes from Arabic, signifying something is forbidden, outlawed or "proscribed by Islamic law" (2). The name underscores the group's rejection of Western style education and highlights its alignment with extremist principles. Thurston observes that Boko Haram started as a religious movement in the north-eastern city of Maiduguri and transformed into an extremist group launching a series of insurgent

¹ https://www.citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/admin/borno/NGA008006__chibok/

campaigns to topple the Nigerian government and establish an Islamic Caliphate within its conquered territories (5). Women and girls constituted a major target group within Boko Haram's deadly ideology and, against their will, were often featured as pawns in the group's campaigns, rhetoric and actions.

This attack on schoolgirls was happening in a broader context of a massive local problem of gender-based violence. Nigeria is the most populous black nation on earth with about half of its over 200 million people being female. Bello asserts that Nigerian women and girls endure some of the harshest conditions of any women's group around the world (2). Most women in Nigeria do not only lack equal access to opportunities they also contend with systemic barriers rooted in cultural expectations, social norms, political hardships and economic constraints in their daily lives. According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria has the highest number of children out of school in the world², the overwhelming percentage of whom are young girls. Even girls who happen to be in school face a myriad of challenges including gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and other cultural pressures. The experience of the 276 Chibok girls only serves to highlight a persistent problem for millions of girls, particularly in northern Nigeria. Fortuitously, the plight of the Chibok girls gave rise to a social movement that leveraged digital media to bring attention to the predicament of not just the girls abducted but the dire conditions of millions of other women living in conflict prone communities.

The Chibok girls' abduction became the basis for an online campaign, Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG), which began with a single tweet relaying that hashtag. Barely a month after the Chibok schoolgirls had been abducted, the #BringBackOurGirls (#BBOG) attracted over 2.3 million tweets on Twitter. This campaign leveraged a hashtag activism as a new tool for mass mobilisation. With increasing access to the internet across Africa, the continent has witnessed an exponential growth in the number of social media users, making online platforms the preferred means for effective mass mobilisation towards advocacy for social justice campaigns, particularly those affecting women and girls.

While the campaign succeeded in effectively raising global awareness and asserting pressure on the Nigerian government and world leaders to take urgent action through its online virality, its limitations however provide valuable lessons. A decade after, despite the liberation of some of the girls, many remain unaccounted for. This incongruity highlights the gap between online advocacy and tangible outcomes in real world scenarios. However, the #BBOG online

² <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>

campaign highlights the potential of social media to create global networks of solidarity that unite supporters of the cause around themes of sisterhood, motherhood and a motive to achieve social justice. The campaign also provides a case study illustrating the dynamic evolution of online campaigns and showing how initial protest activism can transition into sustained memory activism. Studying the progression of the campaign helps to shed light into the mechanisms through which digital movements not only mobilise immediate action but also shape collective memory and long-term cultural narratives.

The #BringBackOurGirls movement is the subject of a modest but growing body of literature that study various aspects of the campaign including its objectives, participants, outcomes and prospects. Maxfield Mary was among the earliest to probe the impact of digital communities on mainstream media coverage using the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Utilising gender studies concepts, she recommends techniques to be adapted for propagating online feminist movements and sustaining enthusiasm for offline campaigns (886–900). Olson Carter subsequently took a cross-cultural approach to the #BringBackOurGirls, highlighting the role of social mobilisation in an international context in pushing for positive changes in society (1–16). Other studies on the campaign (Chiluwa Innocent and Ifukor Presely 267–96, Njoroge Dorothy 311–25, Zenn and Pearson 46–57) have focused on content analysis, social criticism and political analysis to understand issues surrounding the campaign.

I situate my research at the intersection of gender studies and media studies using African feminist theory, foundational concepts from Aristotelian rhetorical framework of persuasion, and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to examine how the #BBOG campaign addressed gender-based violence while leveraging social media platforms to mobilise a global support for the cause. From a feminist perspective, advocacy for the Chibok schoolgirls underscores their systemic marginalisation by Boko Haram, as they faced intersecting vulnerabilities due to their gender, socio-economic status, religious and cultural backgrounds. Boko Haram's tactics of targeting the young and vulnerable schoolgirls accentuates its patriarchal ideologies that on one hand devalues the autonomy of women and, on the other hand, undermines their future by degrading and disrupting their pursuit of education. By advocating for the liberation of the Chibok schoolgirls and their right to safety and education, the campaign became a feminist movement relying on global solidarity to challenge the normalisation and acceptance of gendered violence in regions that experience conflict, insurgency or terrorist attacks.

Analyses based on UGT explain the campaign's success in becoming a trending topic of discourse on social media, attributed to the campaign's ability to engage audiences actively

to join the cause through the platforms. Online supporters of the #BBOG campaigns participated in the cause to fulfil various needs that include seeking information and awareness, expressing solidarity, and feeling empowered by contributing to the cause even if this ‘participation’ was just an online interaction, like or comment. The hashtag of the campaign became a tool that fostered a collective identity, particularly among women, who used it to align themselves with the objectives of the cause, and the principles of empowerment and justice for women and girls. Social media platforms allow their users to not only consume information but also to actively become agents of advocacy by creating and sharing content that amplifies the message of solidarity and advocacy to a global audience of social media users. By combining these frameworks together, this study attempts to show how the #BBOG campaign not only brought the plight of the Chibok schoolgirls to the global discourse but also demonstrated the uses and gratifications of digital activism in advancing advocacy for women and girls as well as facilitating the building of collective memory.

A reflexive awareness of these two frameworks reveals productive tensions. On one hand, feminist theory foregrounds the voices, agency and lived experiences of the abducted schoolgirls, their families, and grassroots activists. In contrast, the media theory encourages analysis of how those voices are constructed, mediated, amplified, or silenced by digital platforms. This dual perspective allows for a critical examination of both the commodification of digital activism and the structural dynamics of platformization, while still affirming the campaign’s feminist potential. This research argues that the #BringBackOurGirls campaign was more than just a contemporary trending online hashtag. The movement reflected deeper political and cultural significance by functioning as a site of feminist resistance, global memory-making, and digitally mediated political engagement. I situate this argument at the intersection of digital activism and gendered violence by exploring how online platforms have the potential to mediate both visibility and erasure based on platformization

To the best of my knowledge no scholarly work has combined feminist theories and media theories, particularly the UGT, to probe the impact and explore the lessons from the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. My dissertation contributes to this growing scholarly corpus by integrating African feminist theories from gender studies and the UGT from media studies to analyse the impact the campaign has on the feminist activism movements in Nigeria. Through an analysis of the rhetorical devices used by activists around social media discourse on the #BBOG online campaign, this study will also provide a contextualised and nuanced understanding of advocacy, activism, commemorative practices and collective memory. It also presents a nuanced view of the strengths and limitations of digital activism, considering both

its ability to foster global solidarity and its challenges in achieving tangible real-world outcomes.

Statement of Thesis

This dissertation argues that the #BringBackOurGirls campaign exemplifies a transformative form of digital activism, which, through the integration of African feminist theory, key principles of Aristotelian rhetoric and the uses and gratifications framework, mobilised global feminist solidarity against gendered violence and extremist oppression while also creating a lasting, multimodal collective memory. The thesis examines the campaign's evolution from an urgent protest appeal that swiftly engaged netizens worldwide to a continuous practice of both online and offline remembrance activities. The research suggests that although hashtag activism can rapidly attract national and worldwide attention and promote community involvement, its ability to bring about lasting policy reform and social change is limited by the inherent constraints of digital platforms. Therefore, this research asserts that the integration of online and offline strategies is essential for converting the potential of digital activism into enduring social change that can be ingrained in collective memory.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is framed within three key sections, each consisting of different chapters that together construct the argument of this research. The first section covering the Introduction, Chapters One and Two will delineate the theoretical and historical context of African feminism and social media activism, tracing the evolution of feminist movements in Nigeria from precolonial times to the present. Nigerian women historically had significant positions within different Nigerian communities in the precolonial era. The postcolonial period saw the emergence of feminist activists such as Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Margaret Ekpo, who championed women's rights through grassroots community organising and political engagement. Over time, feminist movements in Nigeria increasingly utilised media platforms to amplify their voices, culminating in the contemporary digital age, where social media platforms have become an essential tool for advocacy as the internet has democratised activism, enabling real-time engagement and global participation. These platforms allow campaigns to create instant visibility and engagement, unlike in traditional activism which relies more on physical protests and institutional lobbying.

Setting the theoretical framework, Chapter One explores how African feminism provides a unique framework for understanding the intersection of gender, culture, and activism

in Nigeria. Unlike Western feminism, which often focuses on individual empowerment, African feminism emphasises communal upliftment and intersectionality. The #BBOG campaign aligns with African feminist principles, mobilising collective action to address the systemic marginalisation of women and girls. The chapter also looks at UGT and the valuable insights it provides into why individuals engage with digital activism. The theory posits that users actively seek media content that fulfills specific needs, including information-seeking, social interaction, and identity expression. In the context of #BBOG, supporters engaged with the campaign for various reasons, including raising awareness, expressing solidarity, participating in global advocacy efforts, and building collective memory.

Chapter Two details the methodological approach adopted for this study. This approach integrates qualitative and quantitative analyses to examine the evolution of the #BBOG campaign. The qualitative component involves rhetorical analysis of tweets, slogans, and visual content based on major themes within the data identified using Leximancer, while the quantitative component includes computational analysis of data using Power BI and Python to extract trends and patterns from the data. Data for this study was collected from Twitter's API, focusing on tweets containing the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag. The analysis includes frequency trends, engagement levels, and sentiment analysis to assess how the campaign evolved over time. I also perform a close reading of the primary source data, providing qualitative insights into the online discourse on Twitter. This methodological triangulation strengthens the study's credibility by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative analysis of online activism.

The second section, composed of Chapter Three and Chapter Four, addresses the motivations and gratifications derived from using social media for activism from the data collected in the first 100 days of the #BBOG campaign. The section explains that individuals engage with digital platforms for social justice, fulfilling informational, social, and participatory needs while exploring how the #BringBackOurGirls campaign leveraged social media to amplify its message and mobilise both local and global support. In Chapter Three, titled *Voices and Visuals of Protest: The Multimodal Expressions of the #BBOG Campaign in the First 100 Days*, I show how the uses and gratifications of social media activism by activists and other online users harnessed the power of digital platforms to enhance the call for mobilisation, advocacy and global solidarity of the #BBOG campaign. Global attention on the abduction of the girls was attracted through slogans, chants and songs of protest shared in different forms – ranging from visual (images, videos) to auditory and textual material – to mobilise both national and international support and facilitate cross-border advocacy and

diplomatic pressure on the Nigerian government for the immediate release of the schoolgirls. The chapter also highlights the influence of digital activism on enhancing the persuasion tactics in advocating for social change.

Chapter Four, titled *From Visibility to Virality: The Influence of Celebrity Participation in Amplifying Online Activism*, underscores how celebrity culture impacts the global visibility of socio-political causes. The participation of reputable figures and celebrities in social campaigns can transform a local event or issue into an international movement. By using their platforms to raise awareness, these personalities can elevate an issue into a viral sensation, after which their online following and circle can be mobilised to support the cause. The chapter provides an analysis of the involvement of both international celebrities and local Nigerian celebrities to understand the role celebrity participation in social campaigns influences the uses and gratification of social media for activism.

The third and final section, comprising solely Chapter Five, looks closely at the transformation of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign from a hashtag protest movement into a form of more enduring memory activism. It analyses hashtags such as #NeverToBeForgotten, #HopeEndures, and #UntilAllAreFree, looking into how the campaign was able to sustain public discourse on the abducted Chibok girls, and ensure their plight remains part of collective consciousness. This is achieved through the textual analysis of these slogans using foundational Aristotelian rhetorical framework as well as the visual analysis of artistic expressions in the form of murals, photography and other commemorative practices to underscore the importance of digital activism in building collective memory. Furthermore, the chapter adopts a more critical view of digital activism, emphasising that although digital activism has effectively amplified feminist movements, its sustained effectiveness relies on smart adaptation to changing digital trends and the integration with other conventional advocacy methods.

Lastly, the Conclusion summarises the key outcomes of the study. It also provides insights that contribute to broader discussions on digital activism's sustainability in African contexts. It also summarises the outcome of the campaign and offers recommendations for future studies.

This thesis is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the primary motivations for the use of social media platforms to advocate for social movements?
 - How does the use of Twitter influence the mobilisation of participants in social movements involving women experiences?

- What role did the microblogging social media platform play in the coordination and organisation of the #BBOG movement?
2. What gratifications do users experience from the use of social media platforms to address issues affecting women in Nigeria?
 3. How does the celebrity popular culture influence the global visibility of socio-political issues affecting women in the global south?
 - What role does celebrity endorsement on social media platforms play in influencing public perception and/or mobilising support from their following?
 4. How do the uses and gratifications of social media usage for social movements evolve over time?
 - What are the long-term impacts of continuous social media interaction and influence on the visibility and discourse of social issues affecting women?

Research Questions One and Two are grounded across the analytical chapters. They draw on the core principles of UGT, specifically examining the motives and gratifications behind the use of social media for socio-political activism in the #BBOG online campaigns. Research Question Three is explored in Chapter Four and focuses on the role of celebrity culture in enhancing the visibility of the movement. Finally, Research Question Four is analysed in Chapter Five and focuses on the long-term uses and gratifications derived from using social media platforms for the #BBOG campaign.

CHAPTER ONE

Feminism in Nigeria: The Interplay of African Feminism and Uses and Gratification Theory in Social Media Campaigns

The increasing use of social media in socio-political movements offers innovative ways for mobilisation and advocacy in both local and transnational contexts. In this chapter, I present the theoretical frameworks guiding the analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls (#BBOG) campaign. I examine two intersecting theoretical frameworks: African feminism and the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), to understand the motives and gratifications associated with social media activism, particularly through the lens of the #BBOG campaign.

African feminism focuses on advocacy based on the lived experiences and struggles of African women. It emphasises the unique social, cultural, economic, religious and political structures that influence their activism. This perspective aids in understanding the ways in which African movements that focus on women and girls navigate the intersections of gender, society, culture and power while using social media as a tool for advocacy in this age of technological advancements. The UGT concurrently provides insights into the reasons why people actively turn to specific media, including online platforms and digital media, to satisfy their needs for information, social interaction, entertainment, or political engagement. By combining these frameworks together, I argue that understanding the dynamics of women's movements in the digital age requires acknowledging the power of social media use in amplifying the objectives of a cause, redefining advocacy strategies, addressing critical socio-political issues, challenging social injustices, and driving social change.

The integration of African feminism and UGT is grounded in the understanding that both frameworks bring together different, yet complementary, aspects of digital activism. African feminism foregrounds the ideological and cultural dimensions of the movement, particularly underscoring the intersection of gender, national identity, and postcolonial state failure to shape the experience and articulation of advocacy for the Chibok schoolgirls. UGT, on the other hand, underscores the platform-based behaviours and motivations of online users who participated in the campaign. This interdisciplinary approach aids the understanding of both the symbolic meaning and significance of the movement and the communicative strategies that sustained its visibility and momentum online.

1.1. Introduction to the Origins and Core Principles of African Feminism

Theories of African feminism developed principally as continental African women's response to black feminism and African American womanism. American women of African descent saw a need to distinguish the peculiarities of their experience from the dominant theories of second wave and third wave feminism. In like manner, starting from the early 1980s, continental African women sought to develop a theoretical framework for understanding their peculiar lived experiences in contrast to those of black women in the diaspora in particular, and women living in the developed world in general. According to Gwendolyn Mikell, African feminism was created by African women to promote gender equality within the context of a multiplicity of ethnic, cultural, religious, and class differences, separate from those facing women of African descent in the diaspora. The theories of African feminism enabled the growth of movements aiming to establish economic, political and social equality between both sexes in male-dominated African cultures (2). Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie sees African feminism as primarily concerned with the distinct and specific systems in Africa including socio-cultural issues facing all women in Africa, regardless of their nationalities ("Re-creating", 230). Some of these issues include illiteracy, poverty, communal conflicts and war, which have defined African feminism's focus on "women's empowerment", a term implying enablement to satisfy basic needs of subsistence and security.

Black feminism contends that conventional feminism fails to explain the black woman's struggle with additional systems of oppression that include racism and class discrimination. Attempts to tackle this challenge, in order to make feminism more diverse and inclusive, have led to intersectional feminism, a growing body of work addressing the concerns of black feminists. Similarly, African feminism argues that Western feminism ignores Africa's indigenous systems of oppression on the one hand, and Western imperialist systems of oppression on the other hand. The African feminist, therefore, does not pre-eminently pursue gender equality but instead attempts to encourage women to participate in the political and business affairs of their nations, while supporting the men to maintain the rights of African nation states to be sovereign decision makers when faced with imperialist influence from first world countries (Mikell 2). Chilisa Bagele and Gabo Ntseane state that African feminism "promotes the thinking and working together and interdependence between men and women that is necessary to address gender inequalities" (630). In essence, the more African women collaborate with men in business and politics, the more empowered they become, leading to shrinking gender gaps, even though that is not the explicitly stated goal. With the unifying

agenda of improving living conditions of people in their communities, men are not seen as the primary source of oppression. They are rather considered as partners in the fight against systems of economic imperialism. Moreover, empowering women does not imply fewer opportunities for men, instead, cross-gender relationships work towards improving living conditions of all the people in the community irrespective of their gender while expanding opportunities for all. In her essay, *We Should All Be Feminists*, Chimamanda Adichie makes the same point arguing that feminism's goal is all-inclusive prosperity (Adichie 27:10–29:18). Adichie's argument is akin to what Zillah Eisenstein terms “feminism for humanity” (207). This noted tendency of African feminism towards collaboration with men may be necessitated by the religious and socio-cultural landscape on the continent which leaves very limited space for radical and transformist strands of feminism to flourish. Consequently, African feminism is often reformist. Iweriebor Ifeyinwa describes it as a movement that is “integrationist rather than separatist” (303). Integrationist, because the sheer dominance of the African patriarchy makes a feminist revolution (separatism) virtually impossible. This forces the pragmatism of incremental reform upon African feminists, who strive to work within existing constraints of the system to effect change. Reformism works toward the gradual adoption of the philosophy of social justice in which women are considered equal participants in nation building and should be accepted as partners in the fight against cultural imperialism, racism and economic exploitation (Mohanty et al. 316). African feminism promotes an activism that favours negotiation, consensus, compromise and sometimes confrontation as tactics to achieve its agenda.

While themes such as living conditions of African women, imperialism, and indigenous patriarchal structures underpin African feminism, the theory diverges significantly in philosophy and focus. Since the 1970s various scholars have differentiated and described often opposing variants of African feminism, which they consider to be paramount. These include *African womanism*, *stiwanism*, *motherism*, *nego-feminism*, *African femalism* and *snail-sense feminism*, amongst others. The subsequent parts of this chapter will explore the first three of these enumerated strains of African feminism because together they, more so than the others, explain concepts that most define the prevailing gender movement on the continent, albeit with some overlap. It is worth noting that these theories of African feminism tend to uncritically accept generalisations and stereotypes about feminism – attributing to Western feminism notions and goals that are not strictly pursued by any mainstream African feminist scholars.

1.1.1. Womanism

First, womanism emphasises the equal importance of a woman's femininity and culture to her existence. According to Phillips Layli, a woman's femininity is inextricably linked to the culture in which it is expressed (xx). Explained from varying perspectives, womanism articulates the concept of womanhood within the context of race, class and gender. Alice Walker, who coined the term "*womanist*" in her 1979 short story "Coming Apart", considers a womanist to be a black woman or a woman of colour who acts and behaves as a grown-up, is courageous, strong-willed and sometimes acts out of acceptable cultural norms and statutes. She is responsible, in charge, mindful and serious. Walker adds that the womanist is a non-separatist universalist who champions the "survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female." To her, "womanism is to feminism as purple is to lavender" (xiii). Put differently, just as lavender is the "whitewashed" version of purple, so too feminism is the "whitewashed" version of womanism.

Other scholars also think there is an apparent distinction between womanism and feminism. According to Hudson-Weems Clenora the former is "family-oriented" and emphasises race, class and gender, similarly to intersectional feminism, whilst the latter is "female-oriented" and fights for women and girls around the world based solely on their biological sex (137–38). In other words, feminism is a narrower concern that elevates the female's advancement while womanism examines the broader identity of the woman within the family context aiming to improve the lives of all members of the family including the man.

Chikwenye Ogunyemi suggests the need for African womanism in some sense similar to how Walker understands it but appropriated for Africa. She argues that due to the history of slavery, discrimination and oppression in America, racial issues predominate the theory of womanism. The emphasis is on the experiences of women of colour and African American women whilst the experiences of the female from and living in Africa are more or less overlooked. The continental African woman faces socio-economic and cultural issues different from those of women of colour in the West. These experiences form the basis of an indigenous theory of African womanism (63–80). Hudson-Weems agrees that womanism must incorporate the experiences of the African woman but asserts that African womanism should be totally detached from white feminism (a movement she claims solely advocates for the Western woman). To Hudson-Weems, the African woman shares more socio-economic experiences with the African man than she does with white women. She sees the potential for greater cooperation between African women living on the continent and those in the diaspora, insisting that

activism and advocacy related to issues affecting women on the continent should not be exclusively pursued by the continental women but must also be within the purview of those in the diaspora (25). In short, womanism is suitable in the African context because it focusses on black people's culture and places emphasis on African women's experiences, ideals, welfare and their interaction with the environment. The concept, however, leads to some internal contradictions when analysed within the context of African feminism. For instance, African womanism's focus on patriarchal subjugation and other forms of domination (Chizea and Njoku 77) as well as male dominance and women's marginalisation (Kolawole 92) contrasts with the conciliatory approach of African feminism which seeks to tone down male criticism. To resolve this contradiction, a rethinking of African womanism is required in order to elevate notions of the theory that align with Walker's original view of men not as the enemy but as partners for societal growth and development. As alluded to earlier, the argument that Western feminism views men as "the enemy" is not accepted without question, as many scholars critique this notion.

1.1.2. Stiwanism

Second, *stiwanism* is another strain of African feminism that promotes collaboration with men for the goal of social transformation, considered the preeminent objective. Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie coined the acronym 'STIWA' for "Social Transformation Including Women in Africa" (1). To her, what Africa needs is social transformation to enhance the living conditions of the African people. Thus, women's advocacy, as earlier implied in womanism, should build a harmonious society that it is in the best interest of men and women alike. The improvement of African society is the responsibility of both men and women, and it is also in their interest. Noting the negative connotations associated with the word 'feminism' in Africa, Ogundipe-Leslie advocates for the use of "*stiwansim*" instead of feminism to avoid what is seen as an antagonistic discourse that often ensues when one raises the topic of feminism in Africa. "Feminism" and "feminist" are largely unpopular terms in Africa. Mistaken stereotypes about feminism within Africa include thinking that women want to become men, or want to immediately reverse traditionally assigned gender roles, or radically adhere to misandry and the harsh treatment of men. Stiwanism is reformist. Its goal is to push for the gradual improvement of the African woman's well-being through her active participation in the continent's eventual social transformation (Ogundipe-Leslie, "Stiwanism", 550). Quite like womanism, stiwanism tries to avoid the negative stereotypes associated with feminism and seeks to capture the uniquely African reality of gender activism. It will only be accomplished

by employing a collaborative approach that invites men to advocate for the inclusion and participation of women as co-partners in the ongoing political, social and economic transformation of Africa.

1.1.3. Motherism

Third, motherism highlights motherhood, nurturing and nature as core values within African feminism. Catherine Acholonu theorised the concept as “the Afrocentric alternative to feminism” (110). The theory is multidimensional, involving the processes of creating, building and ordering structures in cooperation with Mother Nature at all levels of human activity to preserve Mother Earth by promoting healing and counteracting all forms of exploitation. Women have a gender role of nurturing, which they willingly embrace. According to Acholonu, motherism is “anchored on the matrix of motherhood, which is central to African metaphysics and has been the basis of the survival and unity of the black race through the ages” (110).

Being women in the “Mother Continent of humanity”, African women have embraced motherhood, evidenced by the prominent representation of motherhood in African art, literature, culture, psychology, oral traditions, and empirical philosophy (Acholonu 110). Motherism considers motherhood as the quintessential quality of feminism. While the concept of honouring motherhood has existed for centuries, motherism as a theoretical framework is a more recent development. It is the symbolic and activist acknowledgment of women’s contributions as mothers in protecting and sustaining the Black race. In keeping with the recurring theme of African feminism, motherism does not seek to elevate women by undermining men, it rather suggests the equal treatment of men and women (Alemayehu 64). As in most other strains of African feminism, the theory considers human welfare as the present goal: to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition, political and socio-economic exploitation, domestic violence, child abuse, drug addiction, maternal mortality, etc. (Alemayehu 64). Proponents of motherism believe that the elevation of motherhood, without which there is no survival of the human race, should cause society to challenge the patriarchal view that men are superior to women.

While the theories of African feminism tend to differentiate between Western and African conceptions of feminism, in practice African feminism revolves around the same battle against patriarchy, only within the African context. The same struggle for equality of the sexes may take different approaches, depending on the socio-economic and political conditions of women living in different nation states. My study’s focus is on the movement in Nigeria; therefore, I will provide a historical background.

1.2. Historical Background of Feminism in Nigeria

Nigeria's traditional and cultural norms trace their origins to several centuries of history. Through the confluence of numerous factors and practices, the country has evolved a highly patriarchal society in which the man is the head of the family, and by extension the society, while the woman's "place" is the home. Having outright authority over the family, the man is ascribed the lordship of the household (Ezebunwa Nwokocha 36). The man controls how members of his family conduct themselves and interact in all aspects of human relationships in their community (Remi Akujobi 3). African feminism operates within this context and has evolved through the various phases of Nigerian history which I have sub-divided into precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial (including the contemporary) periods because colonialism has had an immense impact on Nigerian society, even though it lasted less than 76 years (from 1884 to 1960).

1.2.1. Precolonial Period

Prior to the first documented contacts with Europeans, the region now known as Nigeria encompassed a territory that hosted numerous highly complex and comparatively advanced societies. These ranged from the early iron-age Nok civilisation in the central part of the country, to various empires such as Nri (9th century AD), Edo (11th century AD), Yoruba (8th century AD) and Benin (11th century AD) kingdoms in the south and the Kanem-Bornu (8th century AD) and Hausa kingdoms (9th century AD) in the north³. Women are documented to have played prominent roles in their societies and occupied influential positions all through these time periods. Whatever gender barriers may have existed during these times, they did not prevent many iconic women figures from emerging in the precolonial era. Contrary to common misconceptions of an era in which women played no role at all, the Nigerian pre-colonial society is replete with women leaders. The society was structured into various clans and the woman's role varied according to her clan's kinship structure. The older the woman was, the more authority she had. Power and authority depended more on age than gender. Women were widely respected by the entire kinship and acknowledged to be a fountain of wisdom and knowledge, educating each successive generation from the home. Even though patrilineal kinship structures dominated many of these societies, women performed complementary roles, and some held positions equal to, or even higher than men. Adiele Afigbo remarks that in precolonial Nigerian societies there were many examples of women who played influential

³ Metz Helen, Library of Congress information on Nigeria

roles in communal leadership, politics, economics and social building (5). First, in the 16th century, Queen Iyoba Idiya of the Benin Empire, the mother of Esigie, the Oba (the king in Yoruba language) played a vital role that led to the Benin kingdom's victory over the Portuguese during the Idah war (Oronsaye Daniel 61, Ebohon Osemwegie 60). The victory enabled Benin to gain and consolidate advantage in the North-South Niger River trade route. It also opened trade at notable commercial centres of the Songhai Empire and the Atlantic Ocean (Sargent 422). As the Iyoba (mother of the Oba or king), she changed the longstanding traditional protocol that limited honorary leadership power to only daughters of royal blood to include all wives, regardless of their original social status, who are married into royalty. Due to her impact, the Yoruba kingdoms still have the queen mother office, the *Iya Oba*, who serves to guide and counsel to the *Alaafin* (the emperor) as a son. In many ancient Nigerian kingdoms, kings recognised the authority female figures. One such figure is the *Iya Mode*, the priestess that performed spiritual and religious rites and was in charge of the veneration of the spirits of departed kings. The king must hold her in the highest esteem. Adediran Biodun, and Olukoya Ogen state that Kings privately saluted the *Iya Mode* by kneeling (Afigbo 7). She was his personal priestess and head of all *Ifa priests* (150). The woman births the prince and makes the king.

Second, during the same 16th century up north, Queen Amina of Zazzau (now Zaria) ruled for over 30 years, expanding her kingdom through victorious war campaigns she personally led, gaining on Hausa and Nupe territories as far as Kano and Katsina (Mikell 37). Through her conquests in battle, she created trade routes to northern Africa, including the Arab slave trade routes (Jones David 84). The reign of Queen Amina of Zaria would suggest that indigenous Hausa society did not preclude women from holding key political leadership positions.

Women in precolonial Nigeria exhibited different forms of leadership capabilities and provided counsel, comfort, and nurture to the community at times of war and peace. Women were also the guardians of the means of production in a predominantly peasant agricultural economy. They worked alongside their husbands, sons and brothers to produce food for subsistence and enabled their families to produce enough to barter with other clans. Women were involved in all aspects of farming including husbandry, planting of the crops, weeding of the farm and harvesting. They were also in charge of processing harvested produce, such as winnowing of grains, production of spices etc. Afigbo affirms that in precolonial times, Nigerian women extended their economic skills to the production of clothing, earthen ware, arts, craft and artefacts that they adorned their household with or used in trade (8–9). Through

oral tradition, women played a nurturing role in educating children while preserving culture and belief systems. They excelled at art, music, dance, folklore and storytelling. Far from an era considered totally patriarchal, precolonial Nigeria bears record of established collaboration between men and women to lead, sustain and advance society, potentially providing a model for contemporary African feminist activists who still aim for partnership with men.

1.2.2. Colonial Period

Africa was colonised by 19th and 20th-century European men, whose colonial laws and conventions were imbued with European-style patriarchy. Nigeria became a British colony during the late Victorian Era, when women's suffrage was yet to pass even in the United Kingdom. Mikell notes that by the time the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 to become what is today known as Nigeria, the colonial administration practised various forms of female exclusion (16). For example, colonial laws codified gender discrimination, even extending to areas enjoyed by women prior to colonisation. Factors that exacerbated gender disparities in Western Africa during colonial times include religion, westernized education (which at that time favoured men over women), differential marriage systems, and legal systems that treated women as jural minors needing male guardians.

These colonialist-induced disparities led to rising agitation and protestations by women. One could argue that this birthed the first signs of an emerging feminist struggle in early twentieth-century Nigeria. The Aba Women's Riot in 1929, also known as the Women's War, exemplified the struggle. The first enemy was the colonial administration, which was implementing the Native Revenue (Amendment) Ordinance, a taxation law that imposed new taxes with a disproportionate impact on market women. In protest, thousands of women travelled from Umuahia, a city in Eastern Nigeria, to the neighbouring town of Oloko. Beyond the issue of the new tax law, the women wanted a redress of political, economic and social impediments to women of the Igbo, Ibibio, Efik, Andoni, Ijaw and Ogoni ethnic groups. The movement displayed awareness, even among rural women, of women's strong sense of their role in the community (Korieh, "This Matter" 293). The women saw themselves not merely as economic agents subject to the taxation whims of the colonial administration, but more importantly as activists and agents of change. The brave women were met with colonial force of violence leading to the tragic deaths of over fifty women. Korieh asserts that despite this unfortunate turn of events, the movement's leaders and women all over the country drew from a resilient moral, feminine and ethical imperative to continue their resistance (Korieh, "Women

and Peasant” 55). The movement’s impact planted one of the most enduring seeds for the effectual independence of Nigeria in 1960 and offers hope for gender activists today.

The Aba Riots inspired other women leaders in various parts of the country to launch their activism and challenge colonial authority. One such notable leader was Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, who became active from the early 1930s. The movement she founded achieved Nigerian women’s suffrage and overturned unfair market taxes. Being the first Nigerian woman to drive a car, she led efforts that ensured Nigerian women were not deprived of the ability to gain a driver’s license. The feminist movement led by Ransome-Kuti was better structured than the eastern efforts that led to the Riot. Three years after the Aba Riots, she founded the Abeokuta Ladies Club in south-western Nigeria. Johnson-Odim specifies that members of the club were mainly western-educated Christian middle-class women who trained themselves and others in the emerging economic activities at the time including catering, sewing and adult education (144–45). Through its charity work with market women, teaching them to read and write, the club became one of the largest organisations in Nigeria with more than 20,000 official members by the end of the 1940s (Sheldon Kathleen 14). As independence approached, Nigerian women were making giant strides.

The Ransome-Kuti-led movement utilised the power of the media effectively to achieve its goals. For example, during the protests against the tax imposed on market women in Abeokuta, Ransome-Kuti successfully used newspapers across the country to publicise the event (Johnson-Odim 144–57). Newspaper columns criticised the impropriety of having poor market women forced to pay additional taxes for the upkeep of male market supervisors. This mounted pressure on the authorities, who were forced to rescind the new policy. The ability to utilise the media to boost the effectiveness of feminist activism is a key feature of fourth-wave feminism as well as contemporary African feminism. Ransome-Kuti’s methods of using the media is central to my research because a key aim of my study is to show how the advent of digital media platforms and other communication technologies are impacting feminist activists in twenty-first century Nigeria. Operating towards the dusk of first-wave feminism in the West, the feminist movement in colonial Nigeria managed to secure the legal victory of women’s suffrage first in the south in 1948 (in the north it came thirty years later in 1978). Despite her accomplished career, Ransome-Kuti does not get the recognition she deserves as a pioneering Nigerian feminist who inspired millions of women around the continent. In the typical course of male dominance, the son she raised, Fela Kuti, the internationally acclaimed father of Afrobeats – is today much more celebrated than his mother. The feminists of colonial-era

Nigeria established the philosophy widely adopted by African feminists, of working constructively with men to achieve the goal of gender equality.

1.2.3. Postcolonial Period

Ransome-Kuti's impact continued even after Nigeria gained independence from the British colonial administration in 1960. She worked with other renowned Nigerian women like Margaret Ekpo to improve women's living condition through their work as leaders of the women's wing of the NCNC party (Etim and James 9; Afigbo 20). Margaret Ekpo was elected a parliamentarian in 1961 to the Eastern Regional House of Assembly. She advocated for the progress and empowerment of women in economics and politics. She extended her advocacy to include the development of infrastructure such as the construction of major roads that link markets to rural areas, majorly benefitting market women (Etim and James 108–10). Following Nigeria's independence and the increasing numbers of educated women on the scene, the feminist struggle is waged under the auspices of women's organisations, relying less on titans like Ransome-Kuti and more on institutions. Some of these non-governmental organisations include:

- The National Council of Women's Societies, founded in 1959, as an umbrella body of women's professional groups providing them with direct access to government decision-makers and expanding women's participation in economic and political activities (Olojede 12).
- Women in Nigeria (WIN), founded in 1982, to address general issues of human rights and oppression affecting men and women alike. The organisation works towards fighting for social justice, equality and the liberation of women. At its founding, 30% of WIN's membership was male (Olojede 13). This signals the early influence of strains of African feminism that emphasises cooperation between the sexes.
- The Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF), founded in 2008, aims to define and advance the cause of contemporary Nigerian feminism drawing from a pool of women with diverse expertise, professions, indigenous locations and age (Abdul et al. 15).

In 1999, the Nigerian government established the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development with functions that include promoting health and literacy programs, coordinating and monitoring women's platforms, supporting women's non-governmental organisations and promoting political, civic, social and economic participation of women across the country (Nenadi 1–9). This set the stage for the contemporary women's movement in the world's most populous black nation.

1.2.4. Contemporary Nigerian Feminism

In continuation of the postcolonial era, the feminist movement in Nigeria today is primarily concerned with women's empowerment and the collaborative fight, alongside men, to end the direst conditions impacting women in today's Nigeria. These are conditions of poverty and disease, discrimination and insecurity. The movement is heavily influenced by Nigeria's history. Nigerians endured long periods of military dictatorship, starting in 1967, only seven years after independence and ending in 1999 with brief stints of democratic governance in-between. During these military regimes, the rights of all Nigerians, men and women, were trampled. Shortly after the first military coup, the country was plunged into three years of bloody civil war from 1967 to 1970 during which as many as three million lives were lost, predominantly in the eastern part of the country that attempted to secede (ICRC, 2). In the civil war period, women in northern and western Nigeria lived in relative safety while those in the east suffered the brunt of a brutal war.

Many of today's most prominent women in Nigeria were deeply impacted by the war either directly during their childhood or indirectly through tales from their parents. Examples include Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, current head of the World Trade Organisation, who escaped the war as a child to the United States, eventually attending Harvard and MIT. She worked for a long time as an economist at the World Bank and served two terms as Nigeria's finance minister during which she initiated several fiscal reforms and led the movement for debt forgiveness for poor countries including Nigeria. Another one is Nigerian feminist writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who exemplifies an eastern Nigerian impacted by the war through her parents' direct experiences during the armed conflict. Her writings bear the markings of this impact, and the civil war has been a background for several of her works. Additionally, Nigerian activist Oby Ezekwesili grew up in eastern Nigeria during the heat of the war. She would go on to serve as a prominent public reformer in Nigeria and eventually become the founder of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign that forms the basis of this study.

Contemporary Nigerian feminism highlights the importance of greater participation by women in the political system. Current levels of representation in elective offices are abysmally low. In the 2019 Nigerian general elections, women's representation fell to the lowest level of representation since the return to democratic rule in 1999. In the National Assembly women's representation witnessed a decline compared to previous terms. In the Senate, only 3 out of 109 seats (approximately 2.7%) were secured by women, a decrease from the 7.3% (8 seats) held in the 9th National Assembly. Similarly, in the House of Representatives, women won 17 out

of 360 seats (about 4.7%), only a slight increase from the previous 3.6% (13 seats). Also, no woman was elected governor in any of the thirty-six states of the country and out of seventy-three candidates for president, only seven were women (Kelly 1–4). Female candidates often receive threats and hate speech and occasionally suffer from election violence (Kelly 12).

Even within the Nigerian context, feminism takes on varying objectives, depending on the geographical location of the woman. Women in the majority Muslim north are less likely to be involved in feminist activism, and they face more systemic challenges including early marriages, female genital mutilation, domestic violence and religious subjugation. They are also more likely to be out of school and hindered from participation in the economy. On the other hand, women in the Christian-majority south are more likely to be liberal and have greater access to education and economic opportunities. Women from the south have had to champion the cause of their fellow women in the north. Eliminating barriers and raising the level of women's participation in the economy, politics and governance remain key goals of contemporary feminism in Nigeria, across Africa and even in the West. African feminism recommends an activism that works towards actualising these goals without alienating men. As with activists of fourth-wave feminism in the West, most contemporary Nigerian feminists do not learn their feminisms from formal education. Rather, they absorb conceptual frameworks that enable them to understand their own identities and express their activism from and through digital media platforms. By incorporating social media use into their activism campaigns, they redefine traditional feminist strategies. For example, Twitter has influenced campaigns such as #SayNoToRape, #JusticeForOchanya, #SheCanLead where activists share their experiences to raise awareness about gender-based violence and inequalities. Similarly, Facebook has been used to create communities, 'Facebook groups' that encourage community discussions based on personal stories and crowdfunding efforts for initiatives that address women's empowerment, education or healthcare. Using hashtags for the online interactions highlights the potential of social media platforms to overcome geographical boundaries, empowering African women with a platform and community that collectively challenges both indigenous systems and global disparities.

1.3. Nigerian Media History and Civic Resistance

Nigeria's media history is intertwined with its socio-political evolution from acts of colonial resistance to contemporary political, cultural, social, religious and socio-economic movements. Nigeria's media history over the different eras has influenced how social movements operate. Fred Omu traces the origins of Nigeria's indigenous press to the establishment of The Anglo-

African press by Robert Campbell in 1863 (19). He further states that although the periodical did not last a long time, it represented an early attempt to provide educational and literary content to a growing literate audience in Lagos and served as a precursor to later developments of Nigeria's printing industry (20–23). This growth in media literacy led to the increase in the number of educated elites which led to the emergence of more newspapers and periodicals that would become central to anti-colonial discourse and civic mobilisation against colonial rule in the country. The print media was the earliest medium for political engagement in the country. They were instrumental in mobilising nationalist sentiments and pushing for Nigeria's independence from colonial rule.

Ochanja and Esebonu state that in the post-independence and military eras, under the different rule of Babangida and Abacha, press freedom was often under threat. However, Nigerian journalists continued to use print and broadcast media as tools of resistance and information dissemination (185-187). Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1999 opened the media landscape that encouraged a more pluralistic and dynamic environment. Pate, and Abdulmutallib posit that the broadcast comprised of both radio and television became key platforms for political discourse, particularly in rural areas where literacy levels influenced media access (2–6). Democracy opened the way for the inclusion of multiple voices and viewpoints that led to the growth and change in the Nigerian media landscape. This growth made it a more diverse, vibrant and participatory public sphere for civic and political engagement.

In the digital era of technological advancements, the early 2010s fundamentally reshaped how Nigerians approach civic engagement and media consumption. Social media platforms provided decentralised avenues for political mobilisation, real-time citizen journalism and public demand for accountability. One of the first examples of this development was the 2012 #OccupyNigeria movement, which emerged in response to the removal of fuel subsidies that led to the doubling of fuel prices overnight. This development triggered protest across the Country from concerned citizens. It was one of the first forms of hashtag activism in the country, but it did not gain global visibility like the #BBOG campaign did. The online movement became one of the first hashtag campaigns that underscored the ways in which digital activism can be used as a tool for mobilisation and citizen-journalism. While mainstream media: both government owned and public outlets covered the protests, it was the digital media engagement that amplified and coordinated activist campaigns across different regions of the country. This interplay between traditional and digital media reflects a hybrid form of civic media ecosystem. This contemporary development that has given rise to digital activism in

Nigeria underscores an ongoing continuum of media facilitated political engagement, where each development from the earliest printing press era to the technological digital era builds upon past struggles for expression, accountability, democracy, resistance and advocacy.

1.4. Overview of the Uses and Gratification Theory

Early theories in media studies emphasised the influence the media have on its target audience by focusing on the effect of media content on users. Baran and Davis assert that in the early days of mass communication, media content was received simultaneously by a heterogeneous audience who lacked the capacity and will power to participate in or influence the content offered to them by media outlets (27–28). Theories such as the Media Agenda Setting theory and the Hypodermic Needle theory explain this effect (90-94). Denis McQuail argues that the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) explains the reason why and the ways in which people actively seek and select specific media content to satisfy certain wants, desires or needs (405–10). It is focused on what people do with the available media content they have (Katz et al. 510). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch also argue that the UGT revolves round three principles: (I) people are heterogeneous in nature, yet goal directed in their behaviours; (II) people who use the media are assertive and active users of media content, and (III) since users of media are aware of their needs, they actively select the kind of media to engage with to gratify those needs (510–15). Central to the UGT framework are the concepts of “motive” and “gratification”, which facilitate the cyclical relationship between the consumption of media content and personal satisfaction. Motives are the primary reasons that prompt individuals to engage with a certain form of media or content.

McQuail posits that the earliest of these needs are education/information, entertainment, enhanced social interaction, engagement with or creation of identification or escape from stress accumulated daily (73). This underscores that the motives to engage with media or shape media consumption patterns emerge from intrinsic psychological and social needs. Alan Rubin argues that information-seeking motives for example stem from a desire to stay informed about current trends, whereas entertainment motives may be characterised by an individual’s need for relaxation or escape from daily stress (62). In their analysis of television viewership, Rubin and Perse assert that the motivations of individuals serve as indicators of both the nature of content they engage with in relationship with the frequency of their media consumption (24). For example, viewers who gravitate towards media content that fosters shared experiences or prompts collective discourse or action may have been driven by strong social interaction motives. Similarly, individuals who prioritise fictional genres may be driven

by a variety of motives, such as escapism, emotional catharsis, intellectual stimulation, or more so the exploration of complex human experiences that may mirror or contrast their own realities or personal experiences. This underscores the pivotal role of motives in guiding the selection of content and the use of media. It also highlights the core premise of the UGT, which emphasises that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific personal needs.

Gratification refers to the satisfaction of the needs or motives that encourages individuals to engage with media. Palmgreen and Rayburn argue that this form of satisfaction measures the degree to which the media content sought for aligns with or fulfils the audience's initial expectations (575). Palmgreen and Rayburn's expectancy-value model underscores that the satisfaction attained is not only dependent on the actual content the user engages with but also on the alignment between the audience's anticipated and achieved experiences (570). Thus, the gratification derived from media consumption and engagement reinforces habitual media behaviours resulting in a continuous feedback loop. Papacharissi and Rubin in their research examined how the gratification of entertainment and social interaction needs among internet users contributed to a consistent online engagement (180). This highlights that this reciprocal approach to media content creates a continuous desire to gratify the need for social interaction.

The interplay between motive and gratification is a dynamic process that is fundamental to the UGT. Motives serve as the driving force that initiates the media engagement process, while gratification is a measure that evaluates the outcome of the interaction. The level of satisfaction derived either reinforces or reshapes future behaviours. As Carey James argues, with the advent of the internet traditional media is now experiencing a total transformation as the internet has "altered the structural relations among traditional media" (4). LaRose Robert et al. posit that individuals who use new media technologies or the internet have simultaneously become both producers and consumers of media content (397). To Stafford et al., with the internet and the technology that accompanies its functionality, the UGT provides three categories of gratifications: gratification from the content used online, based on the need for researching or finding specific information; gratification derived from social interaction by the online user when new friendships are formed or when existing social bonds are strengthened; and process gratification, which occurs when internet users gain gratification from purposefully or randomly searching, surfing or browsing the internet at its functional process (260–261). I argue that in addition to these gratifications, there is a unique fourth gratification category, which is the satisfaction that comes with utilising social media for activism.

The UGT provides a complementary media studies framework for examining the participatory dynamics of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. This theory is particularly suited for studying social media platforms such as Twitter, where users are not only consumers but also producers and curators of content, highlighting reasons as to why the users engage with the online campaign. In the context of the #BBOG campaign, Twitter served as a central platform for initiating and sustaining public discourse around the abductions and the plight of the Chibok schoolgirls through key hashtags such as #BringBackOurDaughters, #FreeLeah, #ChibokGirls, #RescueOurDaughters. These hashtags and other variants were employed as tools for mobilisation, emotional expression, and the formation or linking of networked publics under a common cause.

The theory offers a nuanced framework for understanding the motivations behind user engagement and participation in the #BBOG campaign. Online participants may have been drawn to the movement for a range of reasons: to seek and share information (cognitive), to express emotions such as outrage, grief, or solidarity (affective), to connect with others and build communal ties (social integrative), or to affirm activist cultural and socio-political identities (personal identity). These different categories of gratifications sought for to join the #BBOG campaign online provides a structured way of interpreting the diverse behaviours associated with online participation, from tweeting, retweeting and sharing visual or audio content to composing personalised messages or statements of protest and advocacy. It is worth noting that the UGT as a method supports both qualitative and quantitative approaches to media research, making it methodologically appropriate for the mixed-method analysis of digital discourse conducted in this study. Unlike other media frameworks that focus primarily on media institutions such as the gatekeeping theory, agenda-setting theory or framing theory, UGT foregrounds user agency, a critical theory essential in aiding the understanding of the decentralised, participatory dynamics of hashtag activism.

In the Nigerian context, where mainstream media outlets have historically been state-aligned or constrained by political pressures, the emergence of social media as a relatively open public sphere encourages the dissemination and curation of information and political expression. UGT aids in understanding how ordinary social media users, civil society activists, and international actors engaged with the campaign through their own gratifications and strategic intents, often bypassing gatekeepers in mainstream media. This theoretical perspective, when combined with African feminism, enables a dual-level analysis. It provides a perspective that is attentive to local, cultural, and gendered forms of activism, and, in addition, it critically engages with the technical and behavioural affordances and capabilities of the

digital platform. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive perspective for analysing and interpreting how online activism is influenced by both ideology and communicative practices

The #BringBackOurGirls campaign illustrates how activists derive satisfaction from sharing the objectives of the cause online, engaging in digital activism. Supporters of the campaign experience content gratification by accessing information about the abducted girls, upcoming events and updates about the state of the campaigns. Social gratification arises from the innate motives of interaction and building connections with like-minded activists on the platform. The motivation for online engagement and a derived gratification occurs as users of the platform interact with content, use hashtags, and amplify the objectives of the cause with other users. Beyond these traditional motives and gratifications to engage actively with media content, I argue that activism itself constitutes a distinct form of gratification. Hashtag activism which can be categorised as a subset of online activism tactic, employs campaign specific slogans and hashtags to mobilise users to participate by giving them a concrete role to play in collective action. Participating in the #BBOG campaign allowed individuals to express solidarity and to experience the personal gratification that comes from becoming agents of change through social media interaction. Exploring the BBOG phenomenon through the lens of the UGT reveals multiple motivations driving participant engagement with slogans and hashtags in online activism. The first one is information seeking as many Nigerians turned to social media for real-time updates on rescue efforts because television and newspapers often lagged behind or offered incomplete coverage. By following #BBOG, individuals could glean immediate developments shared by activists, journalists, or insiders. Second, users could turn to hashtag activism for emotional release and empathy, the heartbreak of the abduction demanded collective processing. Many users posted tweets simply to share their grief, thereby finding community and comfort. Third, it was used as a means of building social identity and belonging, retweeting or posting a #BBOG slogan signalled alignment with the cause. Adopting the campaign's images or slogans in personal profiles or display pictures signified moral alliance, enabling netizens to form group identities. Fourth, hashtag activism was a means for empowerment and efficacy as activists believed that consistent online pressure could embarrass the government into taking action. Each repost or mention felt like a micro-contribution to the cause, an empowering and reinforcing belief that "my voice matters," thus fuelling repeated engagement. Fifth, #BBOG served as a tool for memory preservation, particularly for diaspora communities, using the hashtag was an act of ensuring that family and friends in Nigeria did not feel alone or forgotten. Over time, this also solidified into a digital

archive to ensure that each anniversary, event, new abductions or information on the Chibok girls was documented.

1.5. The Intersection of African Feminism and UGT in Social Media Activism

The African feminist frameworks discussed at the beginning of this chapter, including womanism, stiwanism, and motherism, offer a culturally grounded perspective for understanding the different methods through which African women engage in social activism. The #BBOG campaign exemplifies how the use of social media and other digital platforms for mobilisation and advocacy aligns with these African feminist frameworks to foster solidarity and agency. By capitalising on technological advancements and online platforms, online movements such as #BBOG focussed on advocating for the rights of women and girls reshape and amplify the narrative of feminist activism to resonate closely with their collective identity and lived experiences.

One of the primary motivations for social media use is to seek for information, a primary form of gratification identified by the UGT. The interactive and immediate nature of social media interaction gives users instant feedback on breaking news and other general information. Twitter, Reddit, Facebook and Threads, for instance, frequently provide updates on events as they unfold. These platforms often allow its users to follow trending topics or explore niche areas that interest them through hashtags or keywords. Whiting Anita, and David Williams argue that accessibility and extensive range of information on social media platforms often fulfil the need for being informed by supplementing or even replacing conventional media outlets (364). Hence, social media platforms function as central hubs and sources that provide real-time updates of events. The #BBOG movement for instance started on Twitter, which became one of the key platforms that provided updates about the abducted Chibok girls, their families and other information about the emerging movement and the early efforts to secure the girls' release. The hashtag became a rallying point online encouraging interaction and news sharing that provided information to a vast number of global supporters about intersections of gender, education, power and terrorism in Africa. This characteristic aligns with stiwanism, which underscores how inclusive access to information can enhance campaigns. It also emphasises the importance of using the acquired knowledge to advocate for systemic change, particularly in advocating for good governance and gender equality.

Another motive for social media use is social interaction. These online interactive platforms foster relationships by connecting a group, family, friends or followers irrespective of their geographical boundaries. Interactive features such as direct messaging, tagging,

commenting, liking, etc. enhance this interaction process creating a bond between individuals. The #BBOG facilitated social interaction on a large scale, transcending physical barriers of inclusivity. Supporters of the online campaign expressed solidarity with the Chibok girls and their families through social media activity. This created a global movement united by shared outrage and empathy, especially in the first 100 days of the online campaigns. Womanism reinforces this communal approach to activism. With its emphasis on intersectionality and community building, the framework resonates with the #BBOG campaign's ability to connect a heterogeneous audience across cultural, racial and national divides. Also, the #BBOG online campaigns reinforce motherism by leveraging maternal narratives and imagery of nurturing and care to foster an emotional connection between supporters of the movement. This portrayed the Chibok schoolgirls as symbolic daughters of the global community by referring them as "our daughters", "our sisters" and "our girls". This emotional appeal helped mobilise public support and contributed to amplifying the virality of the campaign online. This demonstrates how African feminists' frameworks of inclusivity, collective action and solidarity encourages online activism, where both men and women advocated for social justice and the liberation of the Chibok schoolgirls.

African feminism is rooted in principles of collective action, solidarity, and inclusivity. It underscores that the struggle for justice for women and girls goes beyond addressing women's issues and fundamentally becomes a societal concern. It also underlines the strengths of all members of a community irrespective of their gender, working together to achieve common objectives that will benefit the members of their community. This collaborative approach aligns well with the central structure of social media, where diverse voices can converge, amplify a cause, and encourage collective initiatives for action.

When social media is used for online activism, it significantly influences the identity formation of the individual user, which subsequently impacts the identity of the collective as advocates of a cause. Users are able to create their online personas as supporters of an online campaign through posts, photos and their social interaction with other users, often shaping their online narrative. Supporters of the #BBOG online campaign also used social media as a tool to gratify their needs relating to their personal and collective identity. Through hashtags and other online interactions, they expressed their alignment with the social justice cause, contributing to the collective effort of the online campaign. This sense of agency reflects stiwanism, which encourages active participation from individuals or a collective in driving social change. It also emphasises the agency of women actively working to promote inclusivity and global participation in addressing the advocacy for the Chibok schoolgirls.

The gratification derived from receiving feedback increases the validation and social approval for supporting hashtag campaigns on these digital platforms. Online interaction often reinforces the motivations to share content or join a campaign, as such posts receive recognition and affirmation in real time, the gratification for validation or social approval is met. Activists who share posts that explicitly ask other users to share/retweet, like and/or comment often have their gratifications met when their request to join the online campaign is honoured by other users. Consequently, this social approval increases the gratification for mobilisation and agency for collective action. In the case of the #BBOG campaigns, social media platforms were used to mobilise, organise offline protests and pressure governments and international organisations to act. In this context, this practical approach and call to action mirrors stiwanism's focus on systemic change and motherism's emphasis on collective responsibility. The intersection of the UGT's and African feminism's frameworks underlines the role of social media as a tool that aids activism, emphasising the active role of a social media user in selecting media and the kind of content to satisfy their needs.

The adaptability of the UGT framework to digital contexts such as internet use and social media activism underscores its relevance in gratifying the needs of the users. However, the theory is not without limitations. The UGT postulates that individuals actively choose the kind of media and content they engage with based on their motivations and needs. However, in the online space, digital algorithms often mediate these choices by shaping user experiences and the kind of content they encounter in ways that may be overlooked by the UGT framework. Pariser Eli argues that social media platforms employ algorithms that prioritise content and the user experience with the aim to maximise user engagement and not necessarily align with their needs (9). This trend often becomes prevalent when individuals engage with social media content to meet their needs of entertainment or pass time while scrolling through their timelines or various platforms. For instance, users seeking information on social justice campaigns or a specific topic may frequently encounter content that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs or disposition. They may also continuously encounter trending posts the algorithms have picked up based on their virality, instead of providing a more balanced view of the topic of interest. Consequently, while the UGT framework on digital platforms encourages agency, the dominant influence of algorithmic driven curation and platformization undermines the process. Users might inadvertently engage with content dictated by the platform mechanics that may or may not align with their personal preferences.

Social justice campaigns enhanced by social media use have redefined contemporary activism, enabling users to organise or engage in campaigns they support with ease. While the

UGT highlights the motives why users participate in these campaigns, it does not address the superficial engagement often advocated for by these digital platforms. Morozov argues that “slacktivism”, characterized by minimal engagement in online activism is a notable critique. It refers to the phenomenon where users experience gratification from performing minimal actions such as liking, sharing online content, without making efforts to contributing to meaningful change. He refers to this as a delusion that often leads to ‘net promiscuity’ that results in encouraging activists to “feel useful and important while having preciously little political impact.” (189–90). Also, Halupka Max posits that “clicktivism”, a term describing the use of social media for activism, has raised a debate regarding its efficacy and limitations. While it promotes democratic activism by raising awareness, enabling and encouraging participation irrespective of physical or geographical boundaries on one hand, its critics argue that it often fosters superficial engagement rather than meaningful action from users of social media platforms on the other hand (115-18). Thus, suggesting that clicking “like” or sharing a post has the tendency of creating an illusion of activism without physically addressing the systemic issues that happen in real life experiences. For instance, the #BBOG saw significant online support in the first 100 days of the campaign, but such a level of participation slowly declined as time went by and efforts for the advocacy for the release of the Chibok girls was left to the conveners and concerned supporters of the movement. Despite these limitations, clicktivism for instance mobilised support for the #BBOG campaign, demonstrating its potential when paired with offline actions like the sit-ins, marches and other events the #BBOG conveners organised. Ultimately, the challenge of slacktivism and clicktivism lies in transforming online interaction and participation into tangible and sustained efforts to address social injustice or create societal change.

This chapter presented an introduction to African feminism as a theoretical framework underpinning the African feminist movement and analysed some of the forms and theories through which scholars view African feminism. The chapter also provided a historical overview of Nigerian feminism from precolonial to contemporary times. It argued that African feminism offers an alternative to black feminism as a theory for understanding the identity and societal role of an African woman living in Africa. In addition to issues covered by intersectional feminism, African feminism tackles existing imperialist systems of oppression and aims to ameliorate challenges like poverty and insecurity by adopting a reformist posture which seeks to collaborate with men to address these challenges. Some sub-theories of African feminism have emerged, with certain internal contradictions, attempting to explain what African feminism represents, these include African *womanism*, *stiwanism* and *motherism*. The theories

also help to understand the evolution of the feminist movement in Nigeria beginning from precolonial times. During this era, women held leadership positions in political, cultural, social, economic and spiritual customs, exercising influence in the society in partnership with men. The successful methods employed by women in these prior eras and the model of collaboration with men are adopted by contemporary Nigerian feminists, who incorporate men in both their online and offline activisms. The chapter also explores postcolonial feminism in Nigeria by examining the contributions of key women leaders, outlining the institutions driving the current gender movement in Nigeria, and analysing how contemporary feminism uses digital platforms to sustain activism.

The #BringBackOurGirls campaign exemplifies how social media platforms are central to organising and sustaining contemporary activism. The application of the UGT to social media activism reveals how these platforms satisfy diverse needs of users such as information-sharing, connection, creation of awareness, persuasion and empowerment. As a result, this enables global movements to resonate both emotionally and practically with users of these social media platforms. This digital mobilisation is part of a broader continuum in Nigeria's media history, where each era, from colonial print to broadcast and now social media platforms has been instrumental in shaping civic and political engagement in the country.

Significantly, the use of social media has amplified African women's voices and strengthened their transnational solidarity by connecting activists together irrespective of their geographic location. The #BBOG online campaign underscores the integration of both conventional and contemporary digital strategies, demonstrating that women's movements can be both adaptive and transformative, while the UGT reflects on the motivations for the gratifications sought for and the gratifications obtained and the implications of digital engagement, particularly because the dynamic nature of these platforms constantly reinvents new ways of shaping modern communication. Together, these theoretical frameworks underscore the ability of social media to encourage systemic advocacy for change while reflecting on the unique experiences of African women's movements. By integrating both theoretical frameworks and historical context, this chapter has demonstrated that the tenets of various forms of African feminism align with the engagement opportunities UGT offers through media activism. Together, this intersection provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the role social media hashtag activism plays in advancing social justice campaigns that affect women and girls.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodological Approaches to Studying the Interactive Network Communities of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign on Twitter

2.1. Ethical Considerations

The adherence to ethical principles demands careful considerations when working with social media data, particularly when studying sensitive digital activism movements like the #BBOG campaign. While Twitter is an open and public platform where users share content voluntarily, ethical considerations regarding privacy, and responsible data handling need to be taken seriously. This research imbibed ethical principles, respecting both individual user privacy (by anonymising as much as possible) and other ethical standards required for digital research.

The analysis and findings presented in this research comply with standard academic ethical standards, including those outlined by relevant research ethics committees⁴. Specifically, I follow guidelines of the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), European Commission's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles and institutional ethical approval principles that ensure academic integrity and professional practices in digital humanities and social science research.

2.1.1. Data Access and Approval

I obtained official approval from Twitter's Development platform to access historical data for academic research. Approval was granted in October 2021 allowing me to mine tweets using Twitter's API. Twitter's data sharing policies require adherence to strict guidelines that include the anonymisation of data and the responsible use of publicly available data. I do this by anonymising the tweets used for analysis and removing any identifiers related to the identities of other social media users, with the exception of tweets from the key conveners of the movement, top celebrity posts and organisations. Additionally, since Barrie and Ho's 2021 *academicwitter* package follows Twitter's API guidelines, this study operates within the platform's ethical and legal guidelines.

⁴ i. Association of Internet Researchers. *Ethical Guidelines 2.0*. AoIR, 2019, aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf.

ii. European Commission. "Principles of the GDPR." *European Commission*, https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/data-protection/rules-business-and-organisations/principles-gdpr_en

iii. University of Debrecen. *Rules for Writing a Thesis*. University of Debrecen, 2021, https://eng.unideb.hu/sites/default/files/de-mk_rules_for_writing_a_thesis_0.pdf.

2.1.2. Handling of Sensitive Content

Given the context of the #BBOG campaign, the content of the data centres around advocacy for human rights violations and political concerns. Working with such sensitive content requires the adherence to ethical standards to avoid misrepresentation or emotional distress for the victims of Boko Haram, the participants of the campaigns and the readers of this research. I take the following precautions to address these concerns: I discuss the traumatic events with careful framing and ethical responsibility, ensuring that the findings contribute to meaningful academic discourse. When conducting a close reading and computational analysis of the data, I cross check the findings against contextual and cultural information to avoid misinterpretation or biased framing. I also maintain an ethical stance that acknowledges the agency and contributions of the activists and those who participated in the online campaigns while remaining objective and analytical in my presentation of findings.

2.2. Introduction to Methodological Approaches

Given the central role digital platforms play in shaping contemporary activist movements, selecting the appropriate medium and social media platform for data collection is crucial to understanding how socio-political discourse unfolds and circulates online. In the case of #BringBackOurGirls, Twitter emerged⁵ as the most generative and dynamic social media platform that encouraged global public engagement, positioning it as a primary source for data collection for this study. Twitter was selected as the primary data source due to its central role in the emergence and amplification of the #BringBackOurGirls movement as the whole movement emerged from this particular site. As a microblogging platform with concise post formats, Twitter fostered real-time interaction and global accessibility. These characteristics made it the digital epicentre of the campaign, providing an open environment for activists, political figures, celebrities, and everyday users to engage with the cause. Additionally, Twitter's public visibility, searchable hashtags and chronological flow which makes it easier to track the timeline of events, reactions, and conversations as they happen, allowed for the tracing of how the #BBOG discourse was formed, circulated, and evolved over time.

The data collected for this research was retrieved from Twitter's Representational State Transfer (REST) Application Programming Interface (API). At the time of data collection, Twitter was a social media microblogging platform with over 360 million active users, each

⁵ Twitter was rebranded as "X" in July 2023 following its acquisition by Elon Musk. The rebranding signified a significant transformation in its vision, interface, features and functionalities under a new ownership.

with a unique “user profile” and “username” (also called a Twitter ‘handle’), who interacted and formed connections with other users through tweets, retweets, likes, @mentions, and tags, among other features. These connections could be symmetrical, meaning users mutually “followed” and thereby able to see and interact with one another’s content and postings based on reciprocity. The connections formed on the microblogging site can also be asymmetrical, whereby a user “follows” another user but there is no reciprocity involved, the other user is not obligated to “follow back” and therefore is unlikely to interact with content from that “follower”. Users can ensure another user is made aware of their content by “@mentioning” or tagging that particular handle, typically by simply writing the target username preceded (without spacing) by an “@” symbol within the body of the posted text. User postings on the platform are called tweets, which can take various forms including texts, videos, photos, Graphics Interchange Formats (GIFs), memes or a web link. Users can also repost tweets authored by another user, called “retweet”, or they can react to another user’s tweets through “likes” (to convey approval of the content), direct replies as “comments” or “quote tweet”. Unlike the case with “likes”, many users make the point of specifying on the front page of their profile that their retweets are not endorsements of the message contained within the tweet. The social media platform is considered a microblogging site because users are restricted to a maximum of 280 characters per post. Recent changes have removed these character limitations for those using the premium versions of the platform. Users who intend to convey lengthier thoughts create a “thread”, which is a series of connected tweets that when read together form a story. To be part of any topic or ongoing discussion, users can use hashtags (e.g. #BringBackOurGirls), which helps in promoting a “trend”, and makes tweets easier to be found.

However, Twitter’s platform specific constraints also contributed towards shaping the discourse. Twitter’s platformization and algorithm tend to prioritise content that generates high levels of interaction and online engagement, such as likes, retweets, and replies. As a result, users with large followings or verified accounts, particularly celebrities, religious leaders, influencers and political figures are more likely to have their posts amplified and widely circulated. This mode of online engagement has the potential to distort the visibility and accessibility of alternative narratives, thereby constructing narrative dominance and marginalising less amplified content and the opinions of other users. I account for these dynamics in the analysis by examining data from both high-profile public figures and grassroots activists. In addition to algorithmic amplification, Twitter’s brevity that permits limited characters per post sometimes affects how narratives are constructed. Users often resort

to using slogans, abbreviated words, slangs, emotional appeals or share weblinks to other websites for additional information. These features influence both the dissemination and reception of online discourse, a dynamic I explore in the interpretive framework.

This chapter presents the methodological approaches adopted in mining and analysing primary sourced historical data from Twitter. I examine the impact and rhetorical strategies used in the #BBOG campaign by employing a mixed methods approach that combines qualitative close reading, grounded in the fundamental principles of Aristotelian rhetoric with a quantitative computational analysis of Twitter data. By integrating these methodologies, the chapter attempts to deploy an interdisciplinary approach in probing the impact of the use of digital media activism and how it functions and evolves over time.

Methodologically, I draw on insights from cultural studies, digital activism and social media analytics to understand the trends employed by the #BBOG Twitter campaigns. I employ a qualitative approach by conducting a rhetorical analysis of key tweets to examine how the motives as well as the uses and gratifications of persuasion operate within the BBOG campaign through *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotional appeal) and *logos* (logical reasoning). This approach is complemented with a computational analysis of Twitter, focusing on frequency trends and networking mapping of social interaction on the platform.

Scholars such as Johnson and Christen assert that mixed methods research uses two or more research methods (645). Guest Greg also asserts that multimethodology can be described as triangulation (141). This method enhances credibility, validity and reliability of findings where different methods meet the objectives of research. The mixed methods approach effectively addresses the limitations found in both qualitative and quantitative methods when either is used exclusively. While a rhetorical analysis of the tweets used in the campaign allows for a close reading and textual interpretation, it lacks the capacity to systematically process large datasets as those mined from Twitter. In contrast, computational analysis is able to provide a comprehensive analysis of network structures but is obviously lacking in providing the contextual and interpretive depth needed to comprehend fully online and digital discourse. By combining these methods in this research, I bridge these gaps and attempt to provide a balanced and nuanced analysis on the #BBOG campaign on Twitter.

The chapter is divided into two main subsections. The first part outlines the methodological framework, introducing the mixed methods approach to the analysis of the interaction networks, data sampling, computational analysis and rhetorical discourse patterns. The second focuses on the practical aspects of the research including the process employed for data collection using Twitter API and academicTwitter package, analytical techniques

employed such as keyword frequency and temporal trend analysis and a discussion on the limitations of the methodological approach used. Through this holistic approach, this chapter aims to contribute to understanding how hashtag activism operates and influences digital cultures.

2.3. Mixed Methods Research

My decision to adopt a mixed method approach in this research stems from the growing recognition of its value in digital media research. This approach allows room for the analysis of both textual interpretation and understanding the trends presented in studying large data. This is relevant in online studies where the sheer volume of complex and multifaceted data can overshadow underlying socio-cultural dynamics. Academic scholars like Giglietto et al. and Weller et al. suggest that multi-method approaches in the study of online activism aids in understanding online interaction and engagement (Giglietto et al., 149; Weller et al. xxxiii). Most analyses on digital platforms for instance, have conventionally relied on qualitative methods like discourse analysis, ethnography and critical theory to interpret data. However, these approaches are often criticised for their sample size or interpretation subjectivity. On the other hand, quantitative methods such as computational analysis, sentiment analysis, network analysis and natural language processing (NLP) allow researchers to understand trends and measure engagement in the discourse strategies used in digital media. However, these quantitative methods often provide inadequate contextual depth needed to interpret these online discussions on social media. I align with recent methodological innovations that advocate for bridging these gaps and incorporating a multimodal approach to provide a robust and nuanced approach to the study of digital activism.

2.3.1. Qualitative Approach: Rhetorical Analysis and Close Reading

Drawing on foundational concepts from Aristotle's theory of persuasion, I employ rhetorical analysis throughout this research as a key qualitative method to examine the persuasive techniques found within the #BBOG online campaign on Twitter. The term rhetoric pertains to one's manner of communication, particularly focused on the art of persuasion. It reflects on how writing and speaking are deployed in different contexts to inform, persuade, or motivate an audience (Corbett 23 and Fahnestock 6–7). As often attributed to be the foundational concepts of persuasion laid by Aristotle, *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotional appeal), and *logos* (logical reasoning) make up what is referred to as “the rhetorical triangle,” which artistically aids in understanding the intricacies of an argument (Corbett 23). This method has

been used by scholars like Ihlen Øyvind and Heath Robert, and Mateus Samuel in media communication studies to explore how online discourse mobilises audiences, influences public perception and constructs identities (Ihlen and Heath, 3; Mateus, 166). Activists, politicians, and organisers of socio-political campaigns on digital platforms frequently combine ethos, pathos and logos to construct convincing arguments that appeal to both reason and emotion, thereby enhancing the flow and efficacy of their acts of persuasion, mobilisation and communication on these digital platforms.

I perform a close reading of selected tweets from the Twitter campaign from April 2014 to April 2021. This method allows for an in-depth analysis of the language, imagery and framing techniques used to sustain online engagement on the #BBOG campaign over time. Papacharissi in his study on online engagement argues that emotional appeals (pathos) are particularly effective in online activism as they encourage public empathy and drive viral engagement (35–37). The appeals to ethos (conveners of the movement, celebrities, government and world leaders each played a key role central to the campaign’s credibility). These figures function as authoritative voices that enhanced the legitimacy of the #BBOG movement, strengthening trust and influence among their audience and at the same time reinforcing the objectives of the cause. Also, logos (the statistical data, reports and logical reasoning) contribute to the credibility and legitimacy of the persuasion tactics. By analysing tweets through the lens of an Aristotelian framework, this research identifies how different actors and stakeholders of the movement rhetorically framed the Chibok abduction and how events revolving around the campaigns evolved over time.

The adoption of Aristotelian rhetoric as the primary analytical framework for this research is grounded in its continued relevance in deconstructing persuasive discourse across different modalities. The triadic model presents a coherent and structured methodological approach through which to analyse both textual and visual elements of persuasion systematically, which is the crux of online discourse of social movements. The clarity of its concepts allows for a systematic categorisation of rhetorical strategies, which proves to be especially practical in examining how credibility, emotional appeal, and logical reasoning are developed and circulated in the context of digital activism discourse. This framework is especially effective for analysing social media texts and discourse on platforms like Twitter, where brevity and immediacy often intensify the use of rhetorical persuasion. Given that in this study, I engage with multimodal data including tweets, hashtags, slogans, images, and shared weblinks, the use of Aristotelian rhetoric provides a coherent analytical framework for interpreting these varied forms of posts and social media content. This approach helps maintain

continuity and consistency across the dataset and enriches the overall interpretative framework of the research. By applying the same analytical framework to both verbal and visual data, I avoid fragmenting the analysis into different disjointed theoretical strands and models. This methodological uniformity not only strengthens the coherence and structure of the research, but it also allows for a more integrated understanding of how persuasive strategies operate within online activism discourse as in the case of the #BBOG campaign. Considering the visual and emotionally charged nature of digital activism, the triadic rhetorical interpretation facilitates the analysis of emotional texts without simplifying them to mere sentiment analysis. Also, this methodology avoids algorithmic bias by focusing not solely on the virality popular tweets garnered but also on rhetorical significance, hence I emphasise the meaning-making process rather than visibility alone.

2.3.2. Quantitative Approach: Computational Analysis of Twitter Data

The computational analysis approach I employ in this research examines broader trends, including how the #BBOG campaign unfolded over time on Twitter. Computational methods like sentiment analysis, frequency distribution, network mapping and topic modelling help to provide an understanding in engagement patterns or shifts in discourse in the online campaign. I use Barry and Ho's *academicwitter* package in R, an advanced tool for mining and analysing Twitter data in academic research. I also use Leximancer to understand the content and topic modelling of the tweets. I then use Microsoft Power BI and Python for the analysis and visualisation of the data.

Scholars such as González-Bailón Sandra and Ning Wang, and Stieglitz Stefan and Linh Dang-Xuan use computational approaches to study social media analytics, online activism and political communication on digital media. González-Bailón and Wang in their work highlight how algorithmic methods can trace the flow of political information and identify structures of influence or clustering within digital discourse. They demonstrate that protest campaigns on Twitter are neither entirely centralised nor evenly spread. Instead, certain users occupy brokerage positions across structural holes, acting as bridges that shape information diffusion, even though peripheral users collectively contribute to campaign visibility (95–97). This argument underscores that computational analysis enables the understanding of patterns of political communication that would otherwise remain invisible in large datasets. Similarly, Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan focus on the role of emotional language in online communication, emphasising the importance of sentiment in political communication. They find that emotionally charged tweets that are either regarded to have a positive or negative tone tend to

be shared more widely, shaping collective responses to unfolding political events (1277). This highlights how sentiment analysis can uncover the emotional underlying tone of online discourse and influence engagement strategies on social media platforms. Building on these contributions, in this study I integrate, sentiment analysis, hashtag frequency measurements, and network metrics to examine how hashtag activism unfolds and influenced the online discourse of the #BBOG campaign on Twitter. Sentiment analysis, for instance, measures the emotional tone of tweets by identifying whether the discourse is emotionally perceived as positive and hopeful or negative and contemptible. Analysis on hashtag frequency provides an understanding of the evolution of key themes that emerge from the data, while network analysis identifies influential actors, information flow and the role of elite participants like celebrities, politicians and organisations.

However, computational approaches also pose methodological challenges in online research. Network analysis for example may reveal trends and patterns but does not often capture the cultural context as to why certain messages or trends resonate more with the audience than others. To address this challenge, incorporating computational findings with qualitative close reading ensures that the statistical trends are interpreted and contextualised through a critical cultural lens. This data driven approach complements rhetorical analysis by validating the qualitative interpretations of my close reading with large data and empirical evidence.

2.4. Data Collection: Twitter Mining through API

To understand the gratification and motives of using social media for mobilisation and activism, I collected tweets generated from the first 100 days of the campaign from 23rd of April 2014 when the first tweet was shared to 31st of July 2014. To complement this, I also collected tweets from 23rd of April 2014 to 30th of April 2021, from four key Twitter accounts of the conveners of the movement: the official Twitter handle of the movement (@BBOG_NG), Aisha Yesufu (@AishaYesufu), Obiageli Ezekwesili (@obyezeks) and Bukola Shonibare (@BukkyShonibare. See Table 1 below.

S/N	Name	Twitter Handle	Date Account created	Number of Tweets From: 23/04/2014 to: 30/04/2021	Description
1.	Bukky Shonibare	@BukkyShonibare	05/04/2010	28,454	Co-convener
2.	Aisha Yesufu	@AishaYesufu	05/05/2014	17,394	Co-convener
3.	The official page of the movement	((@BBOG_Nigeria	04/05/2014	9,735	Organisation
4.	Obiageli Ezekwesili	@obyezeks	21/04/2009	7,377	Co-founder

Table 1: Analysis of Tweet Counts from Key Twitter Campaign Handles

The analysis from the online trends revealed a heightened activity and interaction in the month of April of each year. To have a better understanding of the cultural context of the discourse, I took the data collection process further to collect data of tweets posted with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls a week before and a week after the anniversary date, 14 April of each year, starting from 2015 to 2021. See Table 2 below for the breakdown of tweets.

YEAR	ORIGINAL NUMBER OF TWEETS	NUMBER OF ENGLISH FILTERED TWEETS	NUMBER OF LANGUAGES	NUMBER OF USERS USER-NAMES	DURATION	NUMBER OF DAYS
2014	2,890,763	2,229,113	58	1,027,300	23 April 2014 to 31 July 2014	100
2015	190,818	152,441	46	90,325	7 April 2015 to 21 April 2015	14
2016	79,874	65,902	42	43,970	7 April 2016 to 21 April 2016	14
2017	28,421	23,355	32	14,108	7 April 2017 to 21 April 2017	14
2018	20,832	18,759	31	10,762	7 April 2018 to 21 April 2018	14
2019	13,965	11,355	24	9,1984	7 April 2019 to 21 April 2019	14
2020	21,189	19,288	31	13,148	7 April 2020 to 21 April 2020	14
2021	11,407	10,359	23	7,521	7 April 2021 to 21 April 2021	14
TOTAL	3,257,269	2,530,572				

Table 2: Breakdown of Tweet Counts

This table shows an overview of the total number of Tweets analysed for this thesis. They are all authored between 2014 and 2021. The ‘Number of Usernames’ represents the distinct count of users who participated in the campaign within the first 100 days of 2014, totalling 1,027,300 different participants. By the campaign’s first anniversary in 2015, there were 90,325 distinct users. However, by the campaign’s 7th anniversary in 2021, the number of the online participants had dwindled to just 7,521 distinct users. This gradual decline over the years

reflects a broader trend with digital campaigns. Even though viral campaigns are sustained as a result of initial visibility and momentum, sustaining user engagement over time experiences a decline. The decline in the number of distinct users in the #BBOG campaign indicates that the movement lost much of its public reach likely due to users moving on to other topics or connections of interest. As such, this pattern supports the criticism of slacktivism and clicktivism as online activism campaigns do struggle with longevity, especially when participation requires minimal effort like tweeting, retweeting and liking a post.

2.4.1. Data Source and Collection Process

The data collected for this research was retrieved from Twitter's Representational State Transfer (REST) Application Programming Interface (API) Development Platform Academic Research product track, which allows the collection of up to 72,000 tweets an hour and a maximum tweet cap of 10 million tweets a month, solely for academic purposes. This platform developed by Twitter for academic researchers provides access to Twitter's historical public data in a complete and unbiased form and also in a cost-effective manner without the need for purchasing expensive subscriptions. I applied for the access to the historical data of Twitter's Development platform for academic purposes and received approval on 19th October 2021. As a condition for access, I agreed to abide by the ethical and policy guidelines of Twitter.

Tweets were extracted using the open-source R software in RStudio, with the "academicTwitter" developer module designed by Barrie and Ho in 2021. The `academictwitteR` package enables researchers to retrieve historical tweets, apply filters and structure the data for further analysis. Twitter data that can be extracted using this application package include username, tweet text, mentions, replies, tweet date and time, language, device source, description, location, conversation ID, etc. Using this package, search queries containing the hashtag of the movement #BringBackOurGirls, were imputed into the module to mine the tweets for the research. It is worth noting that the first tweet that utilised the hashtag was posted on 23 April 2014, at 1:49 p.m. by the twitter user Ibrahim M. Abdulhai with the twitter handle @Abu_Aaid "Yes #BringBackOurDaughters #BringBackOurGirls declared by @obyzeke and all people at Port Harcourt World Book Capital 2014". The use of the hashtag grew from there which led to the viral campaign for the release of the abducted girls. By integrating these datasets with qualitative and computational methods, the research provides a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of digital activism.

2.4.2. Data Preparation and Cleaning

To ensure accuracy and relevance for analysis, data cleaning was performed on the raw dataset, which involves the removal of irrelevant variables from the data, the elimination of tweets which were in languages other than the English language and the deletion of duplicate or irrelevant tweets. See Table 2 above for the breakdown.

The languages eliminated included Twitter language markers that appeared in data such as “Qme, Qht and Und”. These Twitter “lang:” codes are used in the background to filter and categorise tweets based on their content type, making it easier for developers who make use of codes and researchers to search for specific trends and structures within the data. These filters are categorised based on content type rather than traditional language recognition. They are useful for data analysis, social media research and detection of bots. Lang:qht represents tweets that have hashtags only without any additional text. Lang:qme filters tweets with media links such as images, videos, GIFs or external media sources and links. Lang:und refers to “undefined language”. These tweets include texts where Twitter’s language detection system could not identify the language used in the tweet because it may contain random characters, emojis, symbols or gibberish, it is short or ambiguous and may contain multiple languages in one tweet, which confuses the detection system. See Table 3 below for the breakdown of the top languages used for the #BBOG twitter campaign from 2014 to 2021.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
English (en)	2,229,113	152,441	65,902	23,355	18,759	11,355	19,288	10,359
Spanish (es)	123,886	12,965	4,728	1,637	597	821	1,094	64
French (fr)	51,576	8,639	3,642	1,472	819	883	127	266
Italian (it)	30,918	1,430	948	649	138	171	190	128
Qme	153,565	3,686	2,111	567	142	75	89	116
Qht	136,913	4,908	448	89	36	123	86	81
Und	81,911	1,942	424	254	80	55	81	75

Table 3: Top Languages Used Over the Years

The Leximancer online software was used to analyse the textual data in the English language, making it necessary to remove words that the software recommends in order to improve the quality of the textual analysis. This process included removing stop words like “the”, “and” and “is” that do not contribute meaningful insights to the message behind the tweets and commonly occurring but non-informative words like “RT” for retweets, twitter handles identified by the “@” symbol and as well as other repetitive or irrelevant data.

The tweets were also tokenised, lemmatised and standardised to improve consistency and readability. Tokenisation requires the tweets to be split into individual words, or phrases (tokens) to prepare them for systematic analysis. Lemmatisation focuses on reducing words to their root (lemma) form to ensure consistency. For example, words such as “protesting” to “protest”, “mobilisation” to “mobilise” etc. The standardisation process included removing and correcting inconsistencies in the text. This is done in Leximancer to enhance the topic modelling process of the text, enhancing the accuracy of the computational text analysis.

Additionally, tweets in other languages other than the English language were identified and removed from the data to maintain language consistency. This process ensured that the data for analysis were clean, structured and readable for both rhetorical and computational analysis, thereby making it possible to interpret insights from the #BBOG twitter discourse.

2.5. Data Analysis Methods

As earlier stated, by integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to this research, the analysis is based on both computational and rhetorical analysis.

2.5.1. Frequency Analysis of Keywords and Concepts with Leximancer

To identify the key themes that occur in the #BBOG campaign, a frequency analysis of keywords by Leximancer was carried out. The Leximancer software identifies dominant concepts that occur in large textual datasets. It does this by detecting recurring words and their contextual relationships. This approach aids in providing in-depth insights into the nature and the dynamics of the online discourse surrounding the #BBOG twitter campaigns, highlighting which topics, themes, emotions and arguments were frequently discussed. See Figure 1 below of a picture illustrating the network of concepts in a concept map and how the concepts are interconnected for data gathered from April 2016. The data metrics of “Concepts” at 33% suggests the degree of the unique terms found in the dataset, while the “Theme size” at 60% indicates the breadth and coverage of the themes in the discourse.

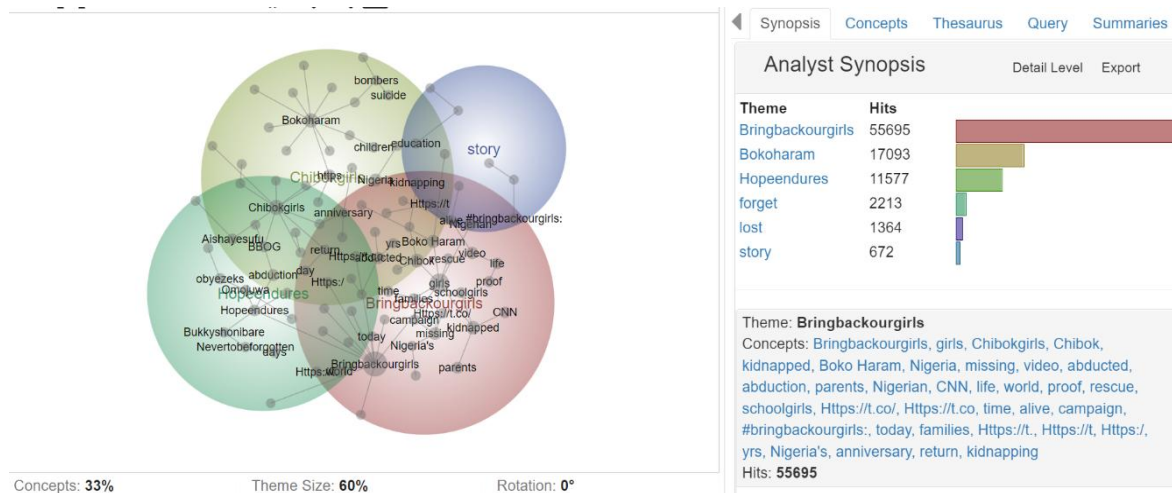


Figure 1: Concept map from Leximancer analysing data (April 2016)

The frequency analysis reveals how the rhetoric of the #BBOG campaign evolved by identifying key words, phrases, and concepts that were mostly used in the Twitter discourse. For instance, key words and concepts such as “girls”, “Chibokgirls”, “rescue”, “world”, “abducted” “Boko Haram”, “Nigeria”, “schoolgirls”, “families”, “today”, etc. were frequently mentioned in the discussions. Also, analysing the co-occurrence patterns of these words aids in understanding their categorisation and public sentiment. The central theme of this Venn diagram in figure 1 above is BringBackOurGirls in the red-coloured cluster. It highlights the movement’s objectives by emphasising the emotional and social dimensions through themes such as “parents”, “missing”, “kidnapped”, etc. The brown-coloured cluster connects themes related to “Boko Haram”, “Chibok girls”, “suicide”, “bombers”. It focuses on the identity of Boko Haram and the negative connotations of destruction and fatality with the themes of suicide and bombs. The cluster also focuses on the identity of the abducted Chibok girls, their resilience and how they are remembered. The themes “HopeEndures”, “NeverToBeForgotten” and some key conveners like “AishaYesufu”, “BukkyShonibare”, “Obyezeks” and “Omojuwa” form the bases for the green-coloured cluster. This cluster focuses on activities of the #BBOG conveners to remember the Chibok girls with slogans and phrases such as “Never to be forgotten” and “hope endures”. While the blue cluster includes the themes of “story,” “education,” and “kidnapping” implying the narrative on the importance of education and also the storytelling abilities of the twitter discourse. The theme of “Anniversary” intersects the three dominant clusters. This underscores how the other themes work together to create narratives of collective memory.

2.5.2. Temporal Trend Analysis of Convener Accounts

In addition to the keyword analysis, I conduct a time-based trend analysis to examine the uses and gratifications of using social media for social movements as time passes. I perform a temporal analysis of the data from the official Twitter page and that of three key conveners of the movement, Obiageli Ezekwesili, Aisha Yesufu and Bukola Shonibare. The column “created_at” from the dataset shows the volume and trends of tweets over time, indicating consistent engagement on certain dates. The temporal trend analysis involved tracking the frequency and daily posting of tweets by the conveners. By mapping their engagement patterns over time, the analysis identified periods of increased activity which indicate heightened activism, periods of resurgence and shifts in discourse particularly around the anniversaries each year. See Figure 2 below showing a time series graph of their Twitter activities.

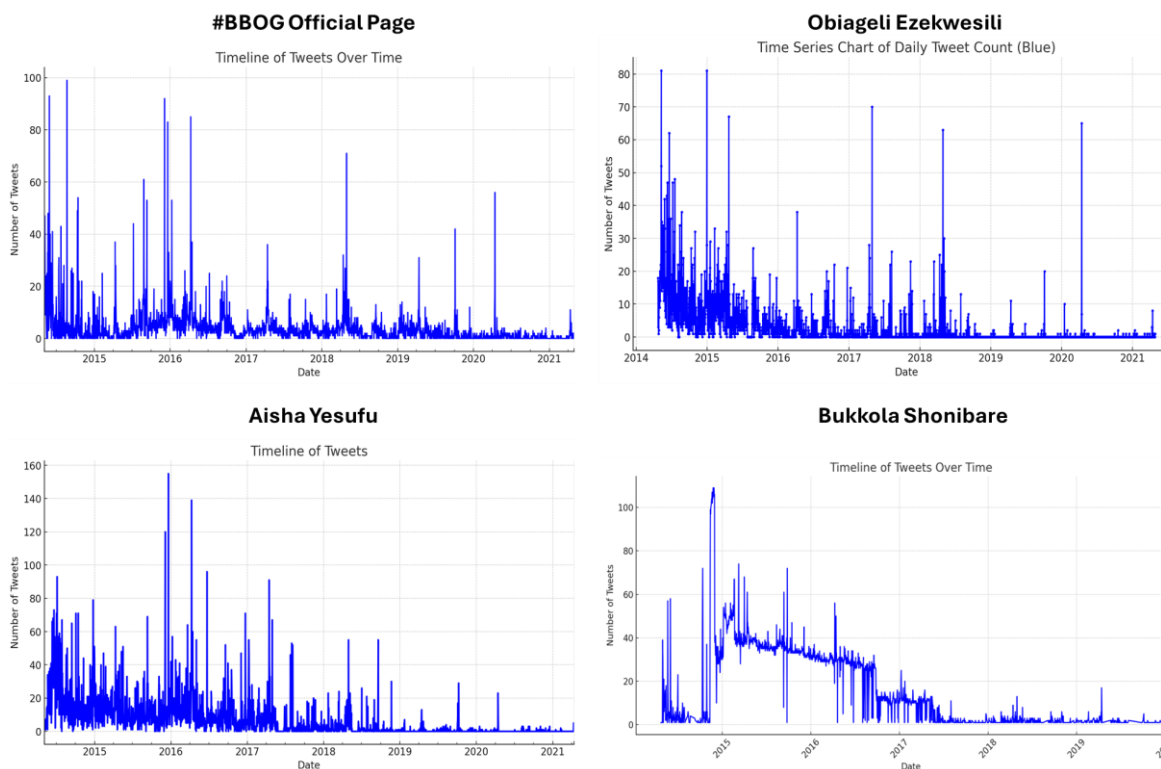


Figure 2: Temporal graphs of #BBOG conveners’ Twitter activities (2014–2021)

These trends provided insights into the ebbs and flows of digital activism over extended periods, highlighting the role the movement organisers played in shaping public discourse while advocating for the objectives of their cause. The time series line charts of the Twitter activity of top conveners of the movement represent the daily frequency of tweets posted from April 2014 to April 2021. The x axis presents the timeline, showing the dates in calendar years,

while the y axis denotes the number of tweets posted each day. The blue line visually represents the trend in tweet activity, highlighting fluctuations from one day to another. The several peaks indicated in the different charts point toward days that recorded higher number of tweets, implying significant events that resulted in higher engagement on those dates. In the first quarter of 2016 for instance, all the conveners recorded activity from the 700th day on the 14th of March 2016 leading to the second anniversary, amplifying their advocacy for the Chibok schoolgirls with the hashtag #700DaysOn. This shows the significance of commemorating anniversaries or timeline milestones and the collective engagement surrounding the advocacy for the girls in online discourse. Other activities and media coverage also had an influence on the fluctuation. The graph also indicates that other real-world factors and events had a significant influence on the online discourse. In contrast, the troughs represent their lower twitter activity. The consistent spacing from the data points indicates the regularity of Twitter posting patterns showing a general decline in the frequency from 2019 to 2021, with an above-average level of interaction around the anniversaries. These trends underscore the organic ebb and flow of online discussions, particularly when the hashtags are no longer consistently trending topics as the world may have moved on to other trends or discourse.

The data on the official page reveals several notable trends in the timeline of Twitter interactions related to the #BBOG online campaigns on Twitter. A recurring observation is that the month of April in each year frequently emerges as the month that recorded the highest engagement across the seven-year period. This trend corresponds to the heightened social media activity around the annual remembrance and commemoration of the abduction's anniversary. A significant spike in interactions occurred at the start of the campaigns, particularly in May, June and July of 2014. This correlates with the peak of international media coverage and global participation in the online discourse shortly after the abductions in April. However, after 2014, there is a noticeable decline in the overall posting frequency by the official page of the movement. This trend indicates a gradual waning of global attention as the years passed. Despite this general decrease, the month of April in subsequent years maintained a relatively high engagement. The analysis of the other conveners' Twitter activity levels also indicates that the month of April stands out as a recurring month that recorded heightened activity from 2015 to 2021. This implies that the anniversaries and other milestones of the movement remained key events that triggered greater online discourse. The slight resurgence in interactions in 2018 coincides with renewed advocacy efforts which were triggered by another series of schoolgirl's abductions in February 2018 by Boko Haram. Additionally, in

October 2018, members of the #BBOG campaign protested the killing of a Red Cross aid worker by Boko Haram who was abducted in March of the same year.

The analysis of the top months of Shonibare's Twitter interaction shows a slightly different trend from Yesufu's, Ezekwesili's and the #BBOG Twitter handle's timestamp graph. A consistent pattern is observed in her elevated interaction in the first quarter of the years, particularly in the month of January of 2015, 2016, and 2017. This highlights her tendency to increase her online interaction at the beginning of each year. The first year of the abductions in 2014 stands out with a high level of posts in November and December, with November alone recording a total of 1,960 posts, averaging to over 65 posts per day or about 8 posts per working hour. This surge corresponds with the emotions of disappointment that at the end of the year, the Chibok schoolgirls had not gained their freedom. Her tweets reflected a countdown to Christmas and the New Year "*Day 254 of abduction! 1 day to Christmas 8 days to New Year #BringBackOurGirls*" @BukkyShonibare. The message behind this tweet conveys a sombre contrast between the anticipation of the festive season and the celebration of Christmas and New Year. It reflects the painful reality that the Chibok schoolgirls have been subjected to spending the Christian festive season with their captors and not their families. The use of the word "countdown" suggests both the passing of time and the urgency to reunite the girls with their families. It also urges other Twitter users to remember the Chibok schoolgirls and their plight as they celebrate the holidays with their family members. In contrast, the latter years, particularly from 2017 to 2021, show a noticeable decline in the number of tweets shared. While there are still occasional peaks, such as in April 2017, 2018, and 2019, the level of her participation is significantly lower compared to the earlier years. This indicates that the anniversaries and other milestones of the movement remained key events that triggered participation in the online discourse by Shonibare's and other conveners of the movement alike. This decline suggests reduced engagement over time.

Overall, the movement's social media activity through the Twitter handles of these conveners reflects the influence of external events outside the abductions of the Chibok schoolgirls. It also shows the enduring commitment of the conveners to keep the objectives of the #BBOG campaigns in public digital discourse. These insights underscore the evolving and dynamic nature of social media interaction. It points out how social campaigns that have lasted long in the digital space often evolve from digital activism, which focuses on immediate mobilisation and awareness creation, to memory activism, which centres on preserving collective memory, sustaining visibility, and honouring the victims over time, even long after the initial media and social media attention has faded. The trends also provide a comprehensive

understanding to the long-term impacts of continuous social media interaction and influence on the visibility and discourse of social justice campaigns.

2.6. Limitations in Data Availability and Engagement Metrics

Relying on Twitter API presents some challenges as the interface imposes some restrictions on the kind of data that can be collected. There are limitations in tweet availability, as deleted tweets, suspended or deleted accounts are not retrievable. For instance, the Leximancer analysis of the data retrieved in 2019 and 2020 revealed a key social media user who played a unique role in the Twitter discussions. This user, who describes himself as an investigative journalist, had an unpopular opinion about the wellbeing of the remaining girls still held in captivity. The dataset included retweets from other users of his posts. A number of social media users retweeted and interacted with his posts; however, his account appeared to have been deleted and could not be retrieved. Consequently, this implies that the dataset may exclude certain influential tweets or narratives that were later removed from the public domain.

Also, in this research, I do not include direct engagement metrics, such as user impressions (the number of times a tweet was displayed on users' screens) and click through rates of activist accounts and posts (the percentage of people who clicked on a link in a tweet after seeing it), while these metrics could have provided statistical insights as to the audience reach and global impact of their tweets. For these reasons, the focus of this study remains on the qualitative aspects of rhetoric, persuasion, language and framing employed within the #BBOG online campaign.

In this chapter, I outlined the methodological approaches adopted for this research such as the mixed method approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, data collection process, analysis methods and ethical considerations. The chapter also provided a comprehensive approach to studying the #BBOG campaign through persuasive strategies viewed from a rhetorical perspective and engagement trends through computational approaches. I detailed the methodological process I used in collecting data from the Twitter API with the `academicTwitterR` package, detailing the procedures for sourcing, preparing, and cleaning the dataset. In the chapter, I also described the computational techniques employed to analyse the data, including keyword frequency analysis and temporal trend analysis, which helped uncover patterns of engagement and shifts in the #BBOG'S online campaign visibility over time.

In the next chapter, I shift from methodological discussions and the results of the quantitative data processing to a close reading of the data gathered in the first 100 days of the

#BBOG Twitter campaign. The data retrieved from the accounts of the conveners indicates that the first 100 days marked a critical phase in the movement. It also indicates that this is the phase that recorded the highest global participation, characterised by intense mobilisation through persuasion tactics, media attention and international participation. The chapter also provides evidence as to how digital activism operates through multimodal persuasion, presenting the foundation for understanding the campaign's long-term impact years after.

CHAPTER THREE

Voices and Visuals of Protest: The Multimodal Expressions of the #BBOG Campaign in the First 100 Days

The rise of digital technologies and social media platforms have changed the dynamics of activism, enabling campaigns to cut across geographical and cultural boundaries with speed and visibility. The #BBOG campaign, which started on Twitter, relied social media to share evocative posts through texts and digital visuals that resonated with grassroots participants, international activists, organisations and world leaders. This campaign strategy quickly generated an awareness of the plight of the abducted schoolgirls and also pressured the government to act urgently and decisively. Through hashtags, viral posts, visual representations and collective digital strategies, the campaign amplified the objectives of the cause, transforming the local campaigns for social justice from a local tragedy in Nigeria to an international call to action. By combining emotional appeals with the effectiveness of digital platforms to transcend physical borders instantaneously, the campaign underscored the power of social media to foster global solidarity and advance their online campaigns.

The #BBOG campaign exemplifies the uses and gratifications derived from using social media for socio-political activism. I argue that the strategic use of digital platforms by the #BBOG activists and supporters did not only function as a public space that encouraged interaction with other social media users but also enhanced the advocacy and call to action by persuading new supporters to join the cause and mobilised existing participants to maintain the momentum. Through slogans, hashtags, impactful visual texts, chants, songs and mantras shared on Twitter, the campaign in its first 100 days advocated for the immediate release of the abducted schoolgirls.

Through a multimodal framework, focusing on how protest discourse was constructed, shared, and amplified across Twitter I analyse the interplay between textual expression and visual symbolism, highlighting how these modes functioned as rhetorical tools for raising awareness, asserting urgency, and demanding state accountability. The BBOG campaign's effectiveness in this early phase was shaped not only by its informational content but also by the emotive and symbolic resonance of its texts, voices and visuals. Tweets, chants, and images became powerful instruments for mobilising public sentiment and sustaining pressure on state actors. These digital texts were often remediated from offline protests, reflecting how online activism does not merely mirror the physical world but reconfigures the message and objectives of a cause to have a global reach and symbolic impact. The second part of this chapter pays

particular attention to chants and songs used during the #BBOG campaign gatherings. While these expressions originated in physical protests that were often performed at marches, sit outs and vigils, they were subsequently transcribed, or quoted in online posts, recorded as videos and shared online, thereby taking on existing and new rhetorical meaning in digital spaces.

In analysing these different models, this chapter draws on African feminist thought and rhetorical analysis to probe as to how identity, community, and resistance are encoded in both verbal and visual texts. The campaign's persuasive force operated not only through reasoned argument (logos) and appeals to credibility (ethos), but also relied heavily on emotionally charged language, visual cues, and collective rhythms (pathos), all of which contributed to the creation of a digitally networked protest community that advocated for the abducted Chibok girls in the digital space.

3.1 The Role of Visual Advocacy in Modelling Social Media Movements

Visual materials influenced the framing of the abducted girls and how their stories were remembered over time. Placards, posters, and digitally shared images became critical tools in the campaign's semiotic repertoire, contributing to the online discourse of protest that combined local grievances with global visibility. Among the most iconic visual motifs displayed was the use of the colour red, mostly in backgrounds, photographs of activists wearing red uniform, and textual overlays bearing the phrase “#BringBackOurGirls.” These images were widely circulated on Twitter and became the central visual symbols and signifiers of the campaign. In semiotic terms, these visual codes functioned as indexical signs that signified not just the abducted Chibok schoolgirls, but the larger crisis of gendered violence, educational insecurity, and governmental inaction. By adopting the colour red, the movement also utilised it as a polyvalent symbol that did not only signified urgency, danger, and mourning, but also resilience and solidarity which resonated across cultural, emotional, and political registers. By consistently wearing red garments or holding red placards and sharing these visual representations in their online posts, the activists aligned themselves with a shared affective code. This semiotic and visual uniformity helped to establish an immediately recognisable aesthetic that linked different protest actions under the single objective of the cause. These visuals were frequently remediated from offline events to online platforms. Protest photographs taken at rallies were uploaded and reshared across Twitter, often accompanied by emotionally charged captions or hashtags. In some cases, posters originally designed for offline in-person demonstrations were digitally adapted and circulated as shareable posters and graphics, hence increasing their global reach and resonance.

Social campaigns on digital platforms thrive on user engagement and interaction. Engaging posts and content shared on these social media platforms play a pivotal role in encouraging this participation. In most cases, advocates and conveners of movements use visual representations in the form of protest posters and photos to motivate and persuade support from the online community. By leveraging the power of hashtags and other social media interaction tools, these images facilitate the objectives of a cause to transcend geographical and cultural boundaries. Protest photos shared on social media go beyond mere visuals; they serve as unifying symbols that convey narratives that inspire supporters of a cause. Through visuals, symbols of resilience, and comprehensive texts, protest visuals designed to aid online advocacy inspire solidarity, connecting and strengthening the bonds within communities advocating for justice or social change. The interconnected role these advocacy graphics play underscores the relationship between visual representation and digital activism.

To illustrate the impact of protest visuals in online advocacy, I analyse two notable examples from the #BBOG campaign: a post shared by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on 5 May 2014, and another shared by American popular culture celebrity Mary J. Blige on 30 April 2014. The post by UNICEF garnered over 20,000 shares, while Blige’s post was shared more than 11,000 times on Twitter. These numbers reflect the significant role high-profile figures and organizations played in amplifying the campaign’s reach.

These protest posters were widely shared during the movement, exemplifying how visual representation contributes to digital activism and encourages engagement. Among the various protest visuals shared online, these gained widespread traction and became emblematic of the movement. The visuals leveraged classical rhetorical appeals of ethos through credibility, pathos through emotional engagement, and logos through statistical data that enhanced the advocacy to mobilise public support and activism. These kinds of protest posters contrast with personal photos individuals shared of themselves holding placards with the hashtag of the campaign written on them, which were widely circulated.

One of the most iconic images associated with the #BBOG campaign was a photograph of a young girl leaning on a table, with the words “#Bring Back Our Girls” boldly written. The photo was the most frequently posted and retweeted image of the campaign on Twitter. It is estimated to have been posted, shared and retweeted over 920 thousand times across Facebook and Twitter (see Figure 3 below). I refer to the picture as the “Face of the movement” because it captured the essence of the objectives of the cause. Despite its viral spread globally, the original image was not initially linked to the movement. The original photo was captured by American photojournalist Ami Vitale in 2011 during a project in Guinea Bissau in West Africa.

However, the photograph was repurposed, mediated and remediated by online users to symbolise the #BBOG campaign. Ironically, the girl, subject of the picture, was neither Nigerian, nor was she among the kidnapped schoolgirls. Vitale expressed dismay and disappointment that the picture was misrepresented and associated with the movement (McCoy 2). However, the internet culture of tweet, retweet, click, tag, like, comment and share contributed to the picture emerging as an iconic symbol of the movement due to its viral use and reuse to advocate for the cause online, transforming a single image into a global advocacy tool.



Figure 3: Face of the movement shared on Twitter (@maryjblige)

The poster was shared by news organisations like BBC⁶, international celebrities, and other activists and supporters of the campaigns online. The post shared by Blige of this particular photo of protest, just seven days after the first tweet of the #BBOG campaign, recorded the highest number of retweets and interaction. The post employs the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos to effectively raise awareness of the cause on one hand but also advocates for a call to action on the other hand.

The ethos of the post is established through the international presence of the American celebrity. Blige's status as an international celebrity lends weight to her message. Her public show of compassion towards humanity by advocating for the Chibok schoolgirls reinforces her authority in amplifying humanitarian causes on her social platform. Additionally, the blue verification badge next to her name signals that her account has been verified on the platform,

⁶ News story by the *Guardian* newspaper titled "BBC news chief: #BringBackOurGirls photo error caused us 'anxiety'". <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/may/19/bbc-news-chief-bringbackourgirls-photo-james-harding>

making the information she shares through her post reliable in an era where misinformation, disinformation and fake news proliferate on social media platforms through pseudo accounts. Posts shared by international celebrities often raise awareness of social and political issues that may otherwise go unnoticed by mainstream media, thus fulfilling audiences' informational needs and gratification. By aligning herself with the #BBOG online campaigns, Blige's post reframes the social issue as a global humanitarian crisis rather than a distant tragedy in West Africa, reinforcing her role as a credible advocate.

The emotional appeal of the photo is the dominant rhetorical element in the post. The visual of a young girl staring into the camera with tears rolling down her cheeks evokes deep sympathy and outrage. Her distressed yet calm expression captures the helplessness the abducted Chibok schoolgirls may be experiencing, making the advocacy of their return an urgent call. The emotional gravity of the girl's expression in the photo personifies what might have otherwise been perceived as mere statistics, encouraging empathy and compassion.

The text in the post, particularly the phrase "They still aren't home," heightens the emotional impact of the longing experienced by their family. The word "still" emphasises the prolonged nature of the abductions. The duration of their captivity is also highlighted in the statement "it's been two weeks". This amplifies the collective frustration and despair, underscoring the extended inaction and the perceived inadequate accountability from both local and international authorities. The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls functions as a powerful call to action on digital platforms by providing a means for digital participation irrespective of the geographic location of the supporters. By using the hashtag, users of the platform are able to interact with the post reinforcing their digital activism and making the campaign go viral. This fulfils their gratification for using social media platforms for online activism to enhance social connection and collective purpose.

The post also integrates logos to strengthen its persuasion. By referencing the specific time frame of "two weeks" since the abduction, the post appeals to the rational judgment that underscores that an unacceptable period has passed without an intervention into the situation. Referencing the exact number of the abducted schoolgirls "234 Nigerian girls" provides facts that fulfil the audience's informational needs. The logic behind the exact number of the abducted girls underscores the magnitude of the crisis. This use of statistics also reinforces the logical assertion that such a mass kidnapping is not an isolated incident of Boko Haram's tactics but a systemic insurgency that requires immediate intervention by those in authority. The underlying assumption of this appeal is the rational conviction that using hashtags and social media platforms for activism can mobilise a call to action by placing pressure on governments,

global institutions and world leaders to act urgently. The widespread sharing of such protest posters (as Blige’s post was shared over 11,000 times) also demonstrates how advocacy visual expressions have the ability to build momentum and sustain interest in online campaigns over time, hence, keeping the discourse ongoing on social media platforms and in the public spotlight long after the traditional media coverage of the movement fades.

The protest photo attached to the post enhances its rhetorical impact. The repetition of the hashtag “#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS” in capital letters in the poster, with “BRING” in the font colour red reinforces the central demand. This emphasis makes the post visually memorable. The colour red is often associated with urgency, danger, alarm, blood and life. Using this colour heightens the emotional depth of the message, while in contrast with the rest of the photo in black and white creates a visual representation of sadness, loss and expectancy of liberation or restoration. The protest photo of the young girl becomes a symbol that represents the suffering and collective trauma experienced by the abducted schoolgirls, their communities and immediate families. Using the hashtag of the campaign, the post went beyond creating awareness of the social issue to a call for global action. This exemplifies the impact advocacy posters have in creating awareness, sustaining the momentum of online campaigns and shaping the public narrative in the digital space. The post by UNICEF on 5th May 2014 also played a key role in the visual advocacy that shaped the narrative of the #BBOG online campaign.



Figure 4: UNICEF post on #BringBackOurGirls (@UNICEF)

This poster also played similar roles with the protest photo shared by Blige, such as raising awareness, promoting digital activism, and encouraging empathy for the victims. In addition

to these functions, the post also highlighted the importance of education for the girl child through the symbolic representation of schoolgirls in uniform and other design elements.

The credibility of this post is established by the name of the globally recognised United Nations organisation, UNICEF, dedicated to advocating and protecting children all over the world. The UNICEF logo used as the profile photo and the blue verification badge strengthen the authenticity of the post and also reinforce the organisation's expertise on issues concerning the welfare of children. By positioning itself as a voice advocating for children's education, UNICEF not only creates awareness about the abductions, but also advocates the importance of education for children which might otherwise be forgotten amid global news headlines. This logos further strengthens emotional and logical appeals of the post by framing the abduction as not only a national crisis affecting Nigeria but a global concern that demands international attention.

The emotional appeal of the photo attached to the post resonates with the emotions of users of the platform. The young girl in the foreground of the poster, dressed in a school uniform and carrying a school bag that may possibly have school supplies has a solemn and determined expression. This symbolises the girl child's resilience, determination, and the pursuit of education despite adversity. It takes a stance against Boko Haram's ideology that western education is a taboo. It also represents the right to education; a fundamental right often threatened in contexts of violence and conflict like that of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Her solemn and determined expression evokes courage and resolve to encourage the education of the girl child despite the challenges they face. The school uniform and schoolbag are symbols of hope, ambition, and the power of knowledge as a means to catalyse revolutionary social change by overcoming oppression. In this context, the girl becomes a symbol of the broader struggle for the right to education, justice and equality, particularly in countries affected by insurgency, insecurity and gender-based discrimination like Nigeria. Her raised finger and direct gaze, as if in silent protest, pledge or commitment, evoke defiance, hope, readiness and urgency. This reinforces the theme of resilience, rendering the girls' plight both personal and urgent, hence inciting the empathy of the supporters of the campaign.

The use of an additional hashtag at the bottom left corner of the photo **#EndViolenceAgainstChildren** alongside the campaign's hashtag in bold amplifies the emotional resonance of the post with supporters of the cause, broadening the appeal for social justice and freedom. This supplementary hashtag also broadens UNICEF's advocacy and the emotional resonance of the campaign. It emphasises the international ethical and moral obligation to protect all children from violence and conflict while also engaging the audience's

empathy and compassion. The phrase “End Violence” conveys urgency, by emphasising the suffering and trauma experienced by the children who are often the victims of violence and conflict. It also offers a vision of hope for a future where there is no more violence. The phrase “against children” is central to the hashtag’s emotional appeal. It serves a reminder that the victims of violent conflicts are innocent, defenceless and depend on the actions and decisions of adults for their safety and wellbeing. It invokes the feelings of hope by inviting readers of the post not only to acknowledge the problem but to work towards being part of the solution.

The logical appeal of the post is structured around the text of the post “We repeat our call for the immediate release of Nigerian school girls”. The message reinforces the urgency and persistence of the reason for the advocacy. It indicates that continued advocacy is necessary even as time has passed without the release of the girls. The inclusion of hashtags, such as #BringBackOurGirls, #EndViolenceAgainstChildren and #Nigeria, organises the online discourse on Twitter. The hashtags play a role in ensuring that the algorithms of the platform maintain the visibility of the post in the #BBOG online discourse and in the wider movement.

The post also played a key role in mobilising a call to action by presenting directives for engagement and participation in the campaign. The instruction to “RT [retweet] to stand with Nigeria” provides a simple yet meaningful way for users to contribute to advancing the global awareness of the cause. This demonstrates the post’s focus on promoting digital activism and calls for global participation, as meaningful change requires ongoing engagement rather than temporary attention. By emphasising the importance of continuous visibility and action, the post encourages its supporters to become active participants as opposed to passive observers, thereby gratifying their desire for agency and empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the #BBOG cause.

3.2. Songs, Chants, Mantras and Hashtags as Tools of Protest and Mobilisation

The creation or adaptation of songs, chants or mantras to support a cause fosters strong emotional connections and promotes collective identity among participants of the movement. The rhythm, melody, tempo and other components employed in performing these songs and chants of protest can convey complex emotions such as anger, joy, hope or resilience in a way that resonates with its audience. The rhythmic and repetitive structure of protest songs makes them easier to remember, memorise and share with a broader audience. This transforms simple melodies into cohesive anthems that serve as a rallying call that motivates existing supporters to maintain momentum during protests or persuade new participants to join the cause. In addition, the performance of these protest songs or mantras often creates collective belonging

and solidarity, reinforcing the shared objectives of the movement itself. Also, through the choice of lyrics or performances, which may include gestures or demonstrations that accompany these renditions, such as raising a fist up, clapping of hands or dancing, serve as symbolic acts of resistance. These lyrics and performances challenge oppressive systems and social injustices on one hand and inspire their audiences with courage, hope, and a shared sense of belonging on the other. In contemporary movements like that of the #BBOG campaign that has been amplified by social media use, songs and chants can instantly become a viral sensation, increasing the visibility or audibility of a cause while simultaneously mobilising support on a global scale.

Songs, mantras and chants served as a central expressive modality within the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, particularly during its initial stages. These vocal expressions were first performed during physical gatherings such as rallies, marches, sit-outs and vigils organised by the activists and held in major cities like Abuja and Lagos. This form of expression adopted by the campaign conveners is rooted in oral protest traditions of resistance. The chants often invoked maternal imagery that claimed the Chibok schoolgirls as integral members of the society, national identity, and also included moral appeals to state responsibility. These expressions did not remain confined to the offline sphere. Conveners of the movement and other social media users frequently recorded these performances and circulated them on Twitter in the form of short videos, transcribed lyrics, or quoted refrains embedded in textual posts. In doing so, these chants were remediated and transformed from embodied collective expressions into digital content that was posted, shared, retweeted, and adapted by broader audiences. This conversion of offline protest into digital form and online discourse underscores social media's ability to create, preserve, amplify, and reinterpret grassroots activism beyond its immediate physical context. By integrating cultural expressions, political and social themes together, protest songs can propagate resistance that is capable of being repurposed to serve future campaigns that have new goals. The song "Solidarity forever" used by the #BBOG movement is a good example of how original songs can transcend specific protest, motivating future generations. The phrase "Solidarity forever" carries a significant historical importance, resonating with the language of historical labour and social justice movements. The song connects the struggle for the liberation of the Chibok girls to a broader timeless legacy of collective resistance to injustice.

As one of the oldest forms of creative and artistic expression, music has served as a universal language for activism. Adopting Ralph Chaplin's 1915 popular trade union anthem "Solidarity Forever" and sung to the tune of "John Brown's Body" and "The Battle Hymn of

the Republic”, the #BBOG campaign exemplifies how timeless protest songs can be repurposed. The former, “John Brown’s Body,” was collectively composed during the American Civil War by Union soldiers as a marching song symbolising their shared purpose of preserving the Union and abolishing slavery. The latter, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” written by Julia Ward Howe in the 19th century, became another enduring anthem for moral righteousness and sacrifice. Honey Michael states that Chaplin composed the song during World War 1 (121). By drawing on these historical legacies, Chaplin’s “Solidarity Forever” represented a symbolic continuity that positioned the labour movement’s fight against exploitation and social and economic injustice as a continuation of broader struggles for freedom and human dignity.

The cultural resonance of the song “Solidarity Forever” extends beyond the history of labour movements in America and has now been adapted globally, particularly within Nigerian labour unions and activist movements. The flexibility and symbolism attached to the song has enabled it to go beyond its original context and take on new meanings. Labour unions and activists often personalise the song’s lyrics by modifying the last line of the refrain to emphasise the objectives of each movement. By so doing, creating new variations that maintain the song’s central solidarity message among the collective while adapting the lyrics to meet the demands of the movement. The adaptability of the song in the context of different movements demonstrates the global transferability of cultural resistance that permits shared traditions of protest to be adapted in local contexts while maintaining their broader symbolic power.

Song 1

Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
We shall always fight for our girls

Though brief, the song is a strong declaration that embodies the principles of collective unity and commitment to advocating for the Chibok girls. In the context of the #BBOG campaign the song reinforces solidarity and collective strength. The repeated phrase “solidarity forever” is a refrain that emphasises the strength of the bond and unity of the collective in the fight for justice. The song also affirms the moral commitment to resilience in seeking social justice. The last line “we shall always fight for our girls,” underscores a resolute devotion to the cause, framing it as a moral and enduring struggle. It presents a unifying statement from the conveners, encouraging its global supporters to maintain a collective resolve as they face adversity. The phrase “solidarity forever” invokes a collective ethos that resonates with individuals familiar with social justice campaigns, labour rights advocacy, and liberation

movements. By repeating this universal call to solidarity, the post positions the #BBOG campaign and its global supporters as part of a broader, timeless tradition of collective action. The rhetorical effectiveness of the song is enhanced by its allusion to historical movements.

In the context of the #BBOG campaigns, the song carries a strong pathos, drawing heavily on the emotional resonance of the activists as a collective and those who engage with the post. When sung in unison the repetition of “Solidarity forever” evokes feelings of unity, strength, resilience and persistence, encouraging the supporters to stand firm in their commitment to the cause. This emphasis on “forever” evokes timelessness. It suggests that the resolve to stand in solidarity to advocate for the Chibok schoolgirls will transcend temporary challenges and persist indefinitely or until the demands of the campaign are met.

The last line “We shall always fight for our girls,” intensifies the emotional appeal by framing the advocacy for the liberation of the Chibok schoolgirls as a moral obligation. The word “always” signifies persistence, while “our girls” humanises the victims, creating a personal connection that encourages the show of compassion, empathy and emotional engagement. The phrase resonates with collective values of familial care, moral obligation, and communal protection, forging an emotional bond with the Chibok schoolgirls, their families and the supporters of the cause. This emotional resonance motivates the target audience both offline and online to act out of compassion, empathy, concern, and a desire for social justice based on collective responsibility. The ethos is also rooted in its dual resonance with grief and resilience. It laments on the injustice, plight and suffering of the abducted schoolgirls on one hand, while affirming the determination of the campaign to secure their liberation on the other.

The song derives its ethos from the principles of social justice, collective credibility and moral responsibility. Stressing the repeated declaration “solidarity forever” reinforces that the cause does not derive from an individual’s personal aspirations but from a collective ethical commitment of the group of activists. The repetition stresses the steadfast commitment of the conveners, reinforcing the authenticity of the campaign’s demands. The line “we shall always fight for our girls” further strengthens the ethical appeal by framing the narrative around the need for the protection of the vulnerable schoolgirls. Describing the girls as part of the collective family evokes a moral duty to advocate for ending their suffering. Through the song, the conveners build credibility, trust and collective purpose, thereby ensuring that the commitment is perceived as a communal undertaking rather than an individual or isolated practice. Drawing from the historical ethos of social, political and economic justice movements, the legacy of the song’s declarations challenges oppression and injustice. By

aligning itself with this history, the #BBOG campaign associates its advocacy with the moral obligation of past movements that have fought for freedom, equality and justice.

The logos of the song is rooted in its rational argument that emphasises the importance of collective action as a means to achieving social justice. The phrase “solidarity forever” conveys an argument that the strength and purpose to participate in the advocacy campaigns is derived from the unity amongst members of the collective. It emphasises that a sustained collective effort is the most effective way to address and overcome injustice. The rationale here is that a united group that demonstrates solidarity increases the chances of success as opposed to isolated individuals or efforts. By reinforcing the enduring nature of the #BBOG cause with the word “forever”, the song asserts that a longstanding dedication is required to bring about meaningful and lasting change. The word “always” also emphasises the importance of sustained action rather than sporadic outbursts. It reinforces the rational argument that lasting change requires ongoing vigilance and advocacy. The last line “we shall always fight for our girls” proposes a cause-and-effect relationship that suggests that by maintaining solidarity in the continuous fight may result in the probability of achieving the goals of the cause. This logical connection asserts that meaningful action is contingent upon solidarity from the collective.

The #BBOG campaign’s use of “Solidarity Forever” exemplifies how protest songs can both galvanise supporters emotionally and embody a symbolic act of collective resistance. The song’s ability to unite, mobilise, and sustain the campaign in the digital space underscores the broader role protest songs play as powerful rhetorical tools that articulate grievances, foster hope, belonging, and a call to action. In doing so the song reinforces that the #BBOG’s advocacy for justice is both a continuous and collective endeavour.

In addition to protest songs, the campaign used chants and mantras to sustain momentum and rally support.

Chant 1

“What are we demanding?
Bring back our girls now & alive!
When shall we stop?
Not until our girls are back & alive!
When shall we stop?
Not without our daughters?... #BringBackOurGirls”
“@BBOG_Nigeria: ‘We shall overcome, and you must believe that’”
“@BBOG_Nigeria: ‘Are you ready to be said to have given up?’ asks @obyzezs”.

The inclusion of Twitter handles in the chant increases the visibility of the post and links the message directly to the key activists within the #BBOG online campaign. These handles serve as identifiers that anchor the message within the broader activist online discourse and advocacy, linking or “@mentioning” Ezekwesili and the official Twitter handle of the movement advocating for the safe return of the abducted girls. The chant was directed toward prominent voices in the movement by another activist. This act illustrates the interactive and participatory nature of social media activism. Rather than originating from key activists alone, messages like these from other supporters of the cause emerge within the dynamic digital space. The conveners engage with one another and other participants of the movement to sustain pressure and mobilise support enabling further engagement within activist networks. However, due to ethical considerations regarding privacy in academic research, this discussion focuses on the collective nature of the campaign rather than attributing specific messages to other individuals who participate in the online discourse.

The ethos of emphasising the broader movement’s impact from the contributions of other participants of the cause by mentioning the key handles in the chant reinforces the legitimacy of the campaigns as a collective force rather than reducing it to the efforts of a single individual. This highlights the decentralised nature of online activism, where engagement and the objective of a cause is sustained by a network of activists interacting with each other rather than a singular authoritative voice. Beyond ethos, this approach also influences the pathos of the chant’s rhetorical influence. By framing the message within the broader #BBOG campaign, the focus shifts from the activist to a collective struggle that unites the global supporters of the movement. The logos emphasises that online activism thrives on decentralised participation that encourages continuous engagement between activists, rather than mere directives from conveners of the campaign.

The content of this chant leverages a rhetorical structure and language to mobilise public action and maintain urgency in response to the kidnapping of the 276 Chibok schoolgirls. Through a strategic use of emotional appeals, repetition, and inclusive language, the tone of the chant persuades, and rallies support for the campaign’s cause. In the context of the abductions, the primary purpose of the chant is twofold: it is a strong demand for urgent action while sustaining public awareness and a commitment to the cause amid opposition or growing fatigue. The slogan “Bring back our girls now and alive!” conveys a demand for the immediate and safe return of the abducted girls. The message is directed to a diverse audience comprised of both local and global actors. The primary audience consists particularly of the families of the abducted schoolgirls, their immediate community, citizens of Nigeria and the

conveners of the movement. The secondary audience, on the other hand, extends to international organisations, including governments, policymakers, and individuals around the world.

The most prominent rhetorical appeal in the chant is pathos. By using inclusive pronouns such as “we” and “our,” the chant fosters collective responsibility. For instance, referencing the abducted schoolgirls as “our girls” and “our daughters” frames them as victims who are part of a collective family, transforming the cause from simply categorising the schoolgirls as just victims of Boko Haram to important members of the collective. This evokes empathy and moral duty among diverse audiences that transcend geographical and social boundaries, constructing a global community that is united by the plight of the Chibok girls. The phrase “now and alive” in “Bring back our girls now and alive” underscores a strong demand for urgency by implying the vulnerability of the schoolgirls and their circumstances, urging those in authority to reflect on their plight and act to rescue them. Also, the rhetorical question “Not without our daughters?” expresses the activists’ anguish, resilience, empathy, and compassion as they refuse to abandon the schoolgirls. The phrase embodies the weight of collective grief, and a refusal to accept the loss of the innocent girls without a fight. It is a universal cry for justice and unity, which symbolises the desperation of their immediate families and communities who long for the return of their daughters. The words invoke the primal emotions of fear of separation, while also emphasising the enduring strength of love that propels action, hope and resilience. Although succinct, the statement is a reminder to both readers of the post and the rest of the world that these ‘daughters’ have dreams and ambitions that symbolise the construction of a future that must not be ignored.

The inclusive language of the pronoun “we” positions the author of the post or convener of the movement as a member of the collective struggle, emphasising shared values of the group and solidarity with the supporters. Ezekwesili positions the demand as one rooted in collective resolve and moral righteousness. The ethos of the chant used during the activist sit-outs and marches which was shared on Twitter lies in its moral authority and commitment to justice, accountability, and humanity. It draws credibility from its clarity of purpose and the activist’s dedication to advocating for the vulnerable. The repetition of questions and answers reinforces the stance of the campaign by highlighting a collective and ethical obligation to demand the safe return of the schoolgirls. By refusing to accept complacency or silence, and choosing to speak up, the conveners exemplify leadership rooted in moral responsibility. Framing the demand as an urgent and non-negotiable necessity, the words appeal to collective

values of family, dignity, and the right to life. The post also challenges the broader global audience, institutions and individuals alike to act according to these ethical obligations.

The logical structure of the chant contributes to a persuasive argument that facilitates mobilisation. It begins with a strong and straightforward demand: “Bring back our girls now & alive!”, establishing the urgency of the message. The subsequent rhetorical questions “When shall we stop?” and their corresponding answers “Not until our girls are back and alive!” and “Not without our daughters” indicate a logical progression that reinforces the demand and resolve. The repetition of the words “until” and “alive” highlights the commitment of the cause to ensure the liberation of the girls while underscoring the moral clarity of the demand. This structure creates a coherent and logical framework that persuades the audience of the post of the rationale behind the cause. The use of the hashtag “#BringBackOurGirls” is a strategic online protocol that connects the text to the broader social media campaign for the release of the Chibok schoolgirls. By incorporating the hashtag into the post, Ezekwesili positions the post within the online campaign, consequently encouraging its virality.

The excerpts “@BBOG_Nigeria: ‘We shall overcome, and you must believe that’” and “@BBOG_Nigeria: ‘Are you ready to be said to have given up?’ asks @obyzeeks” are powerful rhetorical constructions that inspire collective resolve. These statements perform two key roles. On one hand, they inspire hope and resilience by seeking to instil optimism, confidence and resolve among supporters of the cause. On the other hand, they challenge complacency and reinforce agency: the question “Are you ready to be said to have given up?” promotes sustained action, directly confronting readers of the post not to be discouraged and not to abandon the cause. This rhetorical strategy ensures continued pressure on the government.

Cornel West asserts that historical justice movements are interconnected and are able to draw upon shared narratives of perseverance and resilience amid suffering (115-117). The phrase “we shall overcome” resonates strongly as a symbolic refrain rooted in historical civil rights movements, particularly in the context of the African American struggle for equality in the 20th century. It originated as a hymn and was later adapted by labour campaigns during the Civil Rights Movement. Carawan Guy and Carawan Candice observes that the phrase embodies a spirit of resilience and collective hope when confronted with systemic oppression (45–48). Scholars such as James Cone have noted that the undertones of such phrases serve as spiritual expressions of liberation, reinforcing a belief in justice as both inevitable and divinely sanctioned (101). The Bring Back Our Girls campaign, by drawing upon this legacy of persistence and liberation, situates the online discourse within a broader global narrative of

justice, resilience, and the hope for the eventual triumph over injustice. Consequently, this approach aligns the objectives of the #BBOG cause with a history of nonviolent protests that reminds the readers of the post that the advocacy for the abducted Chibok girls is not an isolated struggle, but rather a global demand and call for the respect of human dignity, freedom and accountability. Aligning the #BBOG campaign to this historical chant affirms that a delay in justice does not necessarily equate to the denial of justice, which resonates with movements from the past. The emotional resonance of the post contributes to its rhetorical effectiveness in persuading and mobilising supporters of the cause. The statement “we shall overcome, and you must believe that” evokes the optimistic feelings of hope and resilience that help sustain the survival of campaigns where despair and prolonged fatigue threaten collective action. The phrase “we shall overcome” conveys the message with moral certainty and inevitability. By urging the reader of the post to “believe,” this call encourages emotional engagement and confidence, even amid prolonged adversity.

The last line of the chant, “Are you ready to be said to have given up?” poses a thought-provoking question aimed at inspiring the readers of the post to be steadfast in continued action. This message resonates with the supporters of the cause on an emotional level, evoking feelings of guilt and reflection. Framing the question around “giving up” underscores a negative connotation of failure, abandonment, and loss of moral resolve, by implying that persistence is the honourable action to take. The question also evokes feelings of shame and self-reflection on thoughts of growing weary or choosing to abandon the cause. This tactic compels already existing supporters to stand firm and renew or reaffirm their commitment to the cause. It is also a persuasive mechanism aimed at convincing new global supporters to take a stance and become part of the #BBOG global campaigns. The question increases the awareness of the consequences of abandoning the cause, thereby strengthening the supporters’ responsibility and moral commitment. Based on pathos, the question frames perseverance as a fundamental ethical obligation and giving up as an unacceptable option.

While the last two lines of the chant are primarily emotional it employs a logical appeal and strategic questioning aimed at persuasion, mobilisation and a call for action. The use of rhetorical questions forces the general audience to reflect on their stance, actions and response to the emphatic appeal to sustain the collective action of not giving up. By framing the decision to align with the objectives of the cause as a binary, the questions present a logical reasoning that opposes any form of complacency. This suggests that the decision to abandon the cause contradicts the moral duty of seeking social justice, hence, suggesting persistence as the only reasonable choice to make. The phrase “We shall overcome” conveys a confident, strong and

resolute objective that focuses on the eventual success of the campaign. The rationale behind the statements suggests that belief, persistence, hope and resilience are required preconditions for success in the collective struggle. By framing the fight for the liberation of the Chibok schoolgirls as one that will most certainly be won, no matter how long it takes, the decision to give up would undermine any form of progress that the campaigns may have achieved.

Chant 2

What are we demanding?
Bring Back our Girls now and alive
What are we asking for?
The truth nothing but the truth
What do we want?
Our Girls back now and alive
Where are we from?
Chibok
Where are we from?
Nigeria
What is our core value?
Humanity

The strategic rhetoric of this chant amplifies the urgency of the cause. It situates the Chibok schoolgirls as part of a shared communal and national identity and reinforces moral and political accountability from the Nigerian government. The chant when shared as a post on social media is strategically designed to sustain public awareness by ensuring that the plight of the abducted schoolgirls remains visible in public discourse. As part of the online campaign to propagate and persuade a global support, the chant performs three key functions:

Firstly, it clarifies the expectations of the conveners. The phrases “now and alive” and “the truth, nothing but the truth” are clear demands that underscore the need for transparency and responsibility from those in authority. “Now and alive” demands the immediate return of the Chibok girls, by emphasising the importance of their being alive and actively present within their immediate family dynamics and communities, where they rightfully belong. Similarly, the phrase “the truth, nothing but the truth” invokes the language associated with legal oaths and oath-taking employed in court settings or legal proceedings to ensure honesty and accountability. In Nigeria, the Oaths Act mandates that individuals taking an oath are expected to do so based on their religious beliefs; Muslims place their hands on the Quran, Christians hold the Bible or New Testament in their right hand, and Jews use the Old Testament (Nigerian Legislation: Oaths Act 2003). In this context, the integration of religious texts in legal proceedings underscores the value of truth-telling. It reflects not just a legal expectation but also a moral and spiritual commitment embedded in the legal system of the nation. Drawing

on this rhetoric of legal and religious responsibility, the chant frames its appeal as a moral obligation by holding the government and those in authority to moral accountability. Since expecting honesty and integrity in Nigeria carries both a legal and religious weight, the phrase functions as more than just a legal demand, it also invokes a moral obligation for truth and justice. This dual invocation to both legal duty and spiritual responsibility reinforces the demand of holding those in power responsible for their actions or inactions.

Secondly, the chant reaffirms collective identity of the conveners of the cause. With questions asking, “Where are we from?” and answering with “Chibok” and “Nigeria,” the chant reinforces local pride and national identity, emphasising solidarity with the abducted Chibok schoolgirls, their families and their immediate community. This shared identity and ethical or moral responsibility, positions their plight as a collective or national concern rather than an isolated tragic event. This emphasis on national identity also fosters moral obligation for both the leaders of the nation and its citizens.

Lastly, the rhetorical structure of the chant encourages the maintenance of momentum and accountability, particularly through the repetition of questions and answers in a participatory manner, urging its audience, both citizens and the government to work towards the liberation of the Chibok schoolgirls. This inclusive approach ensures that the discourse is not situated as an isolated case affecting only the Nigerian citizens in northeastern Nigeria, but as a national crisis, motivating Nigerians and the rest of the world through the online post to regard the abducted girls as “their own” daughters or sisters and members of their shared community.

The chant derives its ethos mainly from its collective voice. By using the pronoun “we,” the post establishes the authenticity and credibility of the conveners as representatives of the collective, comprised of the activists, affected families, and concerned supporters of the campaign. The mention of “Chibok” and “Nigeria” situates the demands specifically in the Nigerian cultural and geographical context, giving authenticity and credibility. This connection frames the ethical authenticity of the cause as legitimate, important and urgent. The last question and answer statement in the chant “What is our core value?” and answered with “Humanity” is grounded in the moral authority and universal appeal of compassion, dignity, and respect for the wellbeing and lives of people. By upholding humanity as their core value, the conveners of the #BBOG campaign position themselves and also the objectives of the cause with universally ethical standards of shared human principles. This credibility is established by the campaign’s commitment to justice, empathy and inclusivity, which are acceptable values that are shared in diverse cultural, religious, political and social backgrounds and divides. By

anchoring the ethos of the cause in humanity, the conveners align their intentions toward the collective good, reinforcing their role as principled advocates irrespective of their differences or background, thereby underscoring their message and advocacy as universally just and credible.

The chant is an example of persuasive rhetoric structured around pathos, aimed at evoking a deep emotional response that fosters unity, solidarity and urgency. It resonates with the emotions of its supporters by employing a repetitive structure and evocative language that appeals directly to their sentiments of empathy, compassion, social justice and national pride. The repeated question-and-answer format mirrors the tone of a rallying battle cry. This tactic compels the global audience to feel responsible for the rescue of the abducted schoolgirls. This call-and-response technique engages the audiences actively by creating a participatory atmosphere that reinforces communal bonds. The call-and-response rhetoric plays a critical role in social movements. It encourages unity and shared purpose through verbal and non-verbal interaction that energises supporters to stay committed to the cause. Geneva Smitherman opines that this style of communication is rooted in oral traditions and often operates as a spontaneous exchange that includes both verbal and non-verbal communication between a speaker and listener (104). This performance often creates a participatory and interactive experience among the collective. In this dynamic context, the speaker's call invites a response that reinforces the group's commitment to the collective identity and emotional connection the campaign operates on. Hence, the call-and-response technique employed through the rhetorical questions does not only function as an expressive tool but also as an avenue for affirming solidarity and the resolve of the conveners, activists and supporters. Prompting the collective to respond vocally, emotionally, or even through online interaction in the form of retweets, likes or shares transforms passive spectators into active participants and strengthens their resolve and sense of belonging. In the context of social activism, this form of rhetoric amplifies the central message, making the demands of the movement resonate across diverse audiences. Like a rallying cry, it motivates participants to remain engaged and united in their pursuit of justice by strengthening their solidarity.

The repetition of the phrase "What do we want?" followed by "Our Girls back now and alive" reinforces the relentless nature of the demands of the conveners, building momentum and pressing concern for global activism that thrives from the emotions of the supporters of the cause. However, a closer analysis of the rhetorical impact of the two key phrases: "Our Girls back now and alive" and "Bring Back Our Girls now and alive", reveals nuanced but significant distinctions in how they evoke emotion and convey urgency to advocate for the Chibok girls.

The phrase “Our Girls back now and alive” emphasises ownership and personal connection by using “Our Girls”, reinforcing a shared experience of grief and sorrow that encourages collective responsibility. It conveys a personal and direct emotional plea that emphasises the notion that the missing girls are not just mere victims of BH but rather are daughters, sisters, and members of the community whose absence is felt. On the other hand, the phrase “Bring Back Our Girls now and alive” introduces a more direct call to action. The imperative “Bring Back” places responsibility on those in positions of authority, particularly the government, security agencies, world leaders and the international community to take decisive action. This phrasing heightens the urgency and pressure of the movement’s demands, transforming the message from an emotional appeal into a demand that calls for immediate action. Both variations of the chant transform the event from becoming a matter of statistics that states the record of the number of abducted girls to a collective plea for their rescue. While “Our Girls back now and alive” highlights communal belonging, solidarity and collective loss, “Bring Back Our Girls now and alive” amplifies the demand for accountability, responsibility and activism, making it a globally recognised slogan that advocates for social injustices against women and girls. These nuances play a significant role that contribute to the enduring nature of the movement and the global emotional impact of its message.

Although the chant resonates primarily with the emotions of the supporters of the cause, it also contains a logical structure that underscores the campaign’s demands. The progression of questions “What are we demanding?”, “What are we asking for?”, and “What do we want?” establishes a rhythm that provides a logical consistency to the context of the campaigns with each question building a rational demand upon the previous one.

The structure, the emotional resonance, and the inclusive language of these protest songs, chants and mantras do not only sustain the momentum and morale of the activists but also satisfy their online supporters’ need for expression and community irrespective of their global location. By engaging with this content online, users of the platform are able to propel the global visibility of the cause and keep the plight of the schoolgirls in public awareness, hence. This forms a digital chorus of voices chanting the mantra in solidarity, united in purpose that goes beyond geographical and cultural divides.

The examples of the chants and songs used for the #BBOG campaigns show how members of a collective can be transformed from passive observers into active participants in a fight for social justice when they engage with the digital content on their timelines. This transformation aligns with the UGT, which posits that individuals actively seek out media

content to satisfy their needs, such as seeking information, the establishment of emotional connections, and the realignment of their social identity.

The #BBOG campaign demonstrates how social media use amplifies contemporary activist efforts. By employing a multimodal approach that integrated visual, oratory and textual components, the online campaign created a ripple effect that transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, creating a global movement. The strategic use of rhetorical persuasion and emotional resonance in the posts shared online created awareness of the plight of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls. While the #BBOG campaign succeeded in creating awareness, drawing global attention and inspiring some progress in securing the release of over 100 abducted girls, its goals of ensuring every one of the abducted girls is united with their family remain partially unmet, as many of the girls are still in captivity. This undesired outcome of the campaign underscores both the strengths and drawbacks of digital activism. The online campaign in the first 100 days demonstrates how social media can be used to amplify social injustices and pressure authorities to act. However, it also underscores the complexity of achieving tangible or desired results amid systemic challenges. The #BBOG campaign also exemplifies the contrasting dynamics of contemporary activism. On one hand, it enhances the power of collective resistance and solidarity to spark global awareness while functioning as an emotionally resonant reminder of the need for continuous and sustained efforts to address social injustices and the objectives of the cause on the other hand. The legacy of the #BBOG campaign lies in its approach of mobilising a global response from diverse communities in a short period of time.

In the next chapter, I explore the role that celebrity participation played in shaping the trajectory of the online campaign during its first 100 days on Twitter. By examining how celebrities utilised their platforms and following to amplify the online campaigns to secure the release of the Chibok school girls, the chapter showcases how their participation garnered a global response. In the chapter, I also address the interplay between celebrity influence and digital activism, emphasising the impact it had on the campaign.

CHAPTER FOUR

From Visibility to Virality: The Influence of Celebrity Participation in Amplifying Online Activism

A key driver of the #BBOG campaign's success in creating awareness which resulted in the global response was the participation of celebrities and other notable figures and organisations. While the movement began before celebrity involvement, their participation significantly amplified the campaign's reach and visibility online. Using their platforms and large following, their participation brought unparalleled global visibility to the cause and objective of the movement. Although the campaign undoubtedly captured the world's attention, it also sparked debates in the online discourse about the influence or role these celebrities play when it comes to activism. Scholars such as David Marshall et al. have questioned whether these celebrity driven movements are sustainable or risk oversimplifying complex social issues (37). Despite these concerns, the #BBOG campaign demonstrates how the combination of global solidarity and celebrity influence can create a social trend, or viral phenomenon that amplifies the objectives of a social cause on an international level. I argue that the #BBOG campaign demonstrates how global solidarity and celebrity participation amplify online activism using hashtags and other social media interaction tools. However, this form of solidarity also raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness and authenticity of such movements. Celebrity participation in social campaigns can mobilise large audiences and spark vital and viral conversations among their fan base or following. The long-term impact of these celebrity campaigns requires a thorough examination to understand if their participation leads to meaningful societal change rather than momentary awareness or a rebranding process for the celebrities.

The increasing use of social media in socio-political and humanitarian campaigns has redefined the role celebrities play in shaping and enhancing public discourse. Within the context of online activism, celebrity participation has increasingly become not just a form of supplementary interaction but often instrumental in amplifying the virality of causes, attracting global attention, and influencing engagement metrics across digital platforms. This chapter examines how the #BBOG campaign was transformed and amplified by high-profile endorsements and celebrity engagement, particularly in the first 100 days following the abductions of the Chibok schoolgirls. Through a focused analysis of the rhetorical strategies

embedded in celebrity-generated tweets, I explore how celebrity participation contributed to both the global visibility and evolving framing of the #BBOG campaign online.

This chapter situates celebrity activism within the broader phenomenon of platformization, the process by which social media platforms structure, filter, and amplify content according to algorithmic logic and codes. Celebrity content and posts typically benefit from this logic: higher follower counts, verified status, and high engagement metrics increase the likelihood of visibility, hence encouraging more engagement with the original post. This creates a dynamic in which celebrity participation may unintentionally overshadow posts of grassroots voices and sometimes also the conveners of the movement. Rather than viewing this dynamic as inherently positive or negative, the chapter critically examines how platform affordances and celebrity engagement interact to shape the evolving narrative trajectory of hashtag activism. By analysing the convergence of celebrity influence, algorithmic visibility, and feminist solidarity, this chapter contributes to an understanding of how digitally mediated activism operates within complex hierarchical structures of voice, power, and platform. In analysing this dynamic, I apply a feminist cultural rhetoric that critiques digital hierarchies while also recognising the tactical use of celebrity capital and dominance to expand advocacy on social media platforms. Rather than rejecting celebrity participation, the analysis suggests the need for greater attentiveness to how digital platforms mediate power, and how campaigns can balance amplification with fidelity to grassroots voices, particularly of the conveners invested in the campaigns.

4.1. The Influence of Celebrity Culture in Amplifying the #BBOG Online Campaign

Celebrities and world leaders played a pivotal role that amplified the expansion of the #BBOG online campaign, making it become a viral sensation. Most celebrities usually have a large fanbase, with millions of followers cutting across various social media platforms. This large following provides them with a powerful platform to participate and influence socio-political discussions on a global level. Their ubiquitous presence on social media offers fans a constant access to their content and influence. As a result of this continuous engagement with online content that shows their luxurious lifestyle, celebrities often earn accolades and admiration. To maintain their brand and public image, they share content or participate in social, political and philanthropic discussions or activities.

The involvement of celebrities in socio-political issues can be analysed through the lens of pop culture, celebrity philanthropy, and activism. Tsaliki Liza et al. argue that pop culture's fascination with the glamorous lifestyles of those who are famous, or wealthy contributes to

the heightened attention given to celebrities (9). Despite holding little to no institutional power or authority, this dynamic highlights how celebrities receive a varying level of attention, scrutiny, or criticism. With some fans often prioritising the daily lives of celebrities by going through their social media handles or other sites to seek information on their recent activities over other significant news headlines highlights the pervasive influence of celebrity culture. Turner Graeme argues that the affluence and prominence of celebrities significantly shape contemporary pop culture (“Understanding” 128). They contribute to defining what may be deemed as trendy, or socially acceptable through their influence (Redmond Sean 27). Consequently, celebrities often become symbols for various causes not because they possess comprehensive knowledge or understanding of the issue, but rather because of their ability to exert influence on activism, cultural body image, politics, religion, science, and other aspects of the society.

To Hopkins and Louw, particularly in the context of philanthropy and activism, celebrities are often held in high esteem and are often portrayed as ‘glamorous activists’, ‘empowered saviours’ or both figures who are expected to lend their voices and resources to philanthropic causes, particularly for the vulnerable and disadvantaged (68). This suggests that societies often elevate these celebrities and influencers akin to a heroic status, viewing them as more than just entertainers or public figures. Rather, they are portrayed as glamorous individuals who may combine style, charisma, and advocacy in their branding. Their participation in activism is often portrayed through their charm and appeal, subsequently, making the causes they support appear more attractive and worthy of attention or consideration. They are also portrayed as individuals who, due to their wealth, fame, and resources, take on roles of advocacy and humanitarianism and hence become liberators or saviours of the oppressed even in areas outside their expertise.

This phenomenon is closely tied to the notion of global justice activism, which constructs and shows a branded image of celebrities on these digital platforms as individuals to look up to. In certain instances, their position on social issues significantly impacts the nature and trajectory of social engagement with the matters, hence shaping public discourse. This dynamic, however, raises questions about how authenticity, accountability, and the actual impact this celebrity driven participation or philanthropy may function in these cases.

In the #BBOG campaign, celebrity tweets were instrumental in spreading news and creating awareness about the abduction of the Chibok girls. At the time of the data collection for this research, the tweets that received the most retweet count and engagement in the online discourse on Twitter were from western celebrities who posted sparingly. Yet the social

interaction their posts garnered outperformed those of the founding activists, who consistently engaged with the campaign. Table 4 below highlights the top ten tweets under the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag, attributed to nine celebrities or public figures and one organisation: Michelle Obama, Ellen DeGeneres, Hillary Clinton, UNICEF, Pope Francis, Mary J. Blige, Emma Watson, Jaden Smith, and Emma Freud. These tweets, posted in April and May 2014, with the retweet counts ranked from the highest to the lowest were continuously retweeted and reposted over the years. Amongst them, the tweet of Michelle Obama posted on 7th May 2014 held the highest count with over 70,000 retweets.

S/N	Name	Tweet text	Date Posted	Total Retweet Count	Number of Followers
1	Michelle Obama	“Our prayers are with the missing Nigerian girls and their families. It’s time to #BringBackOurGirls. -mo” @FLOTUS	7 May, 2014	70,415	22.1M
2	Emma Watson	#BringBackOurGirls @EmWatson	10 May, 2014	35,984	28.6M
3	Ellen DeGeneres	“It can’t happen soon enough. #BringBackOurGirls” @TheEllenShow	8 May, 2014	32,891	77.4M
4	Hillary Clinton	“Access to education is a basic right & an unconscionable reason to target innocent girls. We must stand up to terrorism #BringBackOurGirls” @HillaryClinton	4 May, 2014	23,128	31.6M
5	UNICEF	“#BringBackOurGirls. We repeat call for immediate release of Nigerian school girls. RT to stand with #Nigeria!” @UNICEF	5 May, 2014	22,776	9.2M
6	Pope Papa Francisco	“Unámonos todos en oración por la inmediata liberación de las niñas secuestradas en Nigeria. #BringBackOurGirls” TRANSLATION “Let us all unite in prayer for the immediate release of the kidnapped girls in Nigeria. #BringBackOurGirls” @Pontifex_es	10 May, 2014	14,892 14,805	18.9M
7	Mary J. Blige	“It’s been two weeks since the kidnapping of 234 Nigerian girls and they still aren’t home #bringbackourgirls” @maryjblige	30 April, 2014	12,231	6.2M
8	Emma Watson	“It’s important that these men are held accountable for their crimes and that we keep up the pressure to find these girls. #BringBackOurGirls” @EmWatson	9 May, 2014	10,954	28.6M
9	Jaden Smith	“They Distract You With Us So You Don’t Pay Attention To The Missing Girls In Nigeria” @officialjaden	15 May, 2014	9,834	8M
10	Emma Freud	“These are the names of the kidnapped #Nigeria girls - important to RT. http://t.co/s2wY1AW8BL #BringBackOurGirls... @emmafreud	7 May, 2014	9,133	187.6K

Table 4: Top 10 accounts with highest Retweets from the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign

The table underscores the influential role these celebrities and organisations had in shaping the online narrative, demonstrating how their engagement can amplify the

dissemination of information. The total retweet count shows the number of times the posts were shared by other users of the platform, resulting in a wide expansion of the #BBOG online campaign.

As evidenced by the dataset, the tweets shared by these celebrities during the first year of the #BBOG campaign were continuously retweeted across seven anniversaries. This sustained engagement over the years underscores the enduring influence celebrity culture has on shaping public discourse on digital platforms. In this modern era of advanced technology and the internet, celebrity popular culture thrives on the instant gratification it is able to provide to both celebrities, who create the content, and their audiences, who consume the content. This dynamic and symbiotic relationship encourages celebrities and notable figures to meticulously develop and maintain influential online brands, hence reinforcing their positions as opinion leaders and influencers of popular culture.

When celebrities engage in online movements, their personas, lifestyles, and opinions often become central to the narrative portrayed. This significantly impacts the perceptions and actions of their followers while simultaneously amplifying the visibility of these campaigns. Marshall et al. observed that celebrity discourse throughout the twentieth century evolved into pedagogical tools, which influenced the way individuals understand and express themselves (36). This trend has intensified in this age of technological and digital advancements, as celebrities now not only construct social identities and modes of self-expression but also develop and manage these constructed personas and values in real time on digital platforms for global audiences. As prominent figures in the public's eyes, celebrities actively shape the social structure of popular culture, mediated through various mass media outlets and digital media platforms. Their participation in online campaigns influences how their followers view the campaigns, thus creating a ripple effect where ordinary people are subtly taught to engage with consumer culture and participate in mediated or online trends.

Social media interaction offers a unique space where traditionally rigid social boundaries now become more open and fluid. This relaxation of boundaries fosters open dialogue, which allows for an unrestricted exchange of ideas, opinions and content. The participation of celebrities during the early months of the campaign showcases various facades of celebrity culture. It shows their influence in reshaping the boundaries between entertainment and activism, ranging from their role as glamorous and philanthropic individuals to digital activists, who mobilise their platforms for a national or global cause.

Celebrity involvement in social causes like the #BBOG online campaign often positions them as mediators of culture who use their platforms and large following to bridge the gap

between social activism and popular culture. By aligning their personal brands with humanitarian efforts, they are able to amplify the global visibility of a campaign while simultaneously reinforcing their own brand and social capital. This dual role of theirs, being both activist and influencer, often contributes to a broader cultural shift, where advocacy may coexist as an integral part of the celebrity brand. Ultimately, as in the case of the #BBOG movement, the enduring retweets of celebrity posts illustrate the powerful interplay between the uses and gratification of social media use, celebrity culture, and social activism. By examining these dynamics, we can gain insights into how celebrity influence may extend beyond entertainment and in turn shape social and political discourse within the digital space.

4.1.1. Jaden Smith on Celebrity Culture

Jaden Smith, the son of famous actors Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith, has built a career as a songwriter, dancer, rapper, and actor, starring in films such as *The Karate Kid* (2010) and *After Earth* (2013). Despite his growing up in the glamorous lifestyle and beginning his career at an early age, Smith points out a critical perspective on the superficiality of celebrity culture. In a tweet he shared in May 2014 which was retweeted 9,834 times, he states, “They distract you with us so you don’t pay attention to the missing girls in Nigeria” @officialjaden. He criticises society’s fixation on celebrities and how such obsession or fascination plays a role in diverting attention from pressing global issues. His tweet is both a rhetorical critique of media and/or popular culture behaviour and a call to reassess or realign societal priorities.

Smith’s ethos as a Hollywood celebrity and an individual deeply rooted in pop culture lends weight to his critique. His use of the pronoun “us” implicates himself and other celebrities as subjects of the global spotlight even in dire times. This strong and active self-awareness adds to his credibility by positioning him as both a member or contributor and critic of popular culture. By including himself in the critique, he is able to avoid alienating his audience and instead cultivates a shared culpability that underscores the need to respond collectively to the urgent matter. His recognition and acknowledgment of complicity encourages collective responsibility from his audience, who allow themselves to be distracted with celebrity news and gossip rather than focussing on the immediate need of finding the missing girls. By framing celebrities as distractions, Smith questions the priorities of the media and their consumers, urging them to reconsider the societal cost of their fascination with the glamorous lifestyle and stories of the celebrities.

Smith juxtaposes the triviality of celebrity gossip with the story of the abduction of the Chibok girls, thus evoking an emotional response to the moral urgency to act. The word

“distract” and the phrase “don’t pay attention” implies negligence and misplaced priorities. It challenges the reader of the tweet to reflect on their personal media and digital media consumption habits. The mention of the abducted Nigerian girls reflects the pathos of the tweet. It redirects an emotional response to focus on matters of life and death and not the distractions of celebrity news. This appeal to the reader’s morality makes the tweet resonate emotionally with the social media users.

Through logos, Smith argues that the constant coverage of celebrities and the dominance of celebrity culture in the media diverts attention from substantive social issues. By contrasting “us” (celebrities) with “the missing girls in Nigeria,” he highlights the disparity in media focus, pointing to the ethical implications of this imbalance. The brevity and clarity of his message enhances its memorability, ensuring that the message resonates with a broader audience on the social media platform.

Smith’s critique is grounded in the broader context of media coverage of societal behaviour at the time. In May 2014, one of the most high-profile celebrity events coinciding with the #BBOG campaign was the Met Gala, an annual fundraiser held for the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute in New York (Ramzi). Widely regarded as the pinnacle of fashion events, celebrities from different professional backgrounds grace the event. The 2014 gala featured the theme “*Charles James: Beyond Fashion.*” Media outlets flooded traditional and digital platforms with images of celebrities like Blake Lively in designer gowns and dress code, overshadowing urgent global issues (Ramzi; Fox and Cartner-Morley). Other celebrity scandals, such as a leaked video of Solange Knowles attacking Jay-Z and the lavish wedding of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West further dominated the headlines. As a result, the story and news coverage of the Chibok girls became an afterthought. This context illustrates the ‘distractions’ Smith criticised: a media environment that prioritises spectacle and glamour over everything else.

Marshall’s concept of celebrity culture as a pedagogy of ostentatious morality, where the private is made public (36), helps frame Smith’s critique. Rather than promoting explicit moral agendas, celebrities become public exemplars whose personal lives, their relationships, struggles, and values, are consumed by audiences as moral narratives. Through this exposure, celebrities and other public figures, by virtue of their fame and popularity, have a platform that allows them to influence the public perceptions of moral and ethical standards. This notion suggests that celebrities and other public figures, by virtue of their fame and popularity, have a platform that allows them to influence the public perceptions of moral and ethical standards. It points to the dynamic relationship between celebrity influence, social values, and moral

education, by raising questions about authenticity and the deeper implications of how these public figures are able to shape the perceptions of morality in society. Celebrity popular culture transforms private lives into public spectacles or entertainment, shaping the norms and values held by a society. In this contemporary digital age, this phenomenon has intensified, with social media and digital media platforms facilitating an instantaneous and widespread access to celebrity content, placing it at the fingertips of global audiences. As Graeme Turner observes, this ubiquity invents a culture of celebrity consumerism that fosters engagement with celebrity discourse, perceptions and interactions at the expense of other critical, national or international issues (Turner, 13–14). Rather than assuming that this dynamic creates a more informed or civically engaged public, it instead underscores the ethical responsibility of both media creators and audiences to remain aware of the effects of celebrity saturation. Smith's tweet directly challenges this paradigm, urging audiences to re-evaluate their priorities and resist the distractions of celebrity culture in favour of sustained, meaningful social engagement.

Beyond its rhetorical elements, Smith's tweet critiques the commodification that characterises celebrity culture. The statement also prompts netizens to reflect on how media narratives are constructed and the complicitous role they play in sustaining them. Smith underscores the importance of having a balanced media landscape that chooses to amplify critical issues as they happen, rather than ignoring them by giving prominence to celebrity entertainment and spectacle.

4.2. Feminist Personification and Celebrity Activism

Contemporary social media platforms have not only reproduced celebrity culture, but they have also promoted the branding and rebranding of female celebrities. According to Hopkins and Louw, the perspectives presented in the discourse involving female celebrities on digital platforms not only portray what is deemed important to contemporary women but also shape how women and girls construct their gendered self. This influence manifests three key implications. Firstly, female celebrities act as role models for many women and girls. The way they speak, dress, and advocate for a cause sets trends that can subtly or overtly redefine norms for femininity and behaviour. Secondly, contemporary digital and social media platforms provide an easy, accessible and constant stream of content, which increases the influence of celebrity narratives in the public's consciousness. Finally, on one hand, female celebrity discourse can empower women by promoting self-expression, confidence, and activism. On the other hand, however, it can commercialise womanhood and femininity by tying the 'ideal' representation of womanhood to consumerism, beauty products, or unattainable lifestyles,

which results in creating pressure rather than empowering women (8–10). This representation underscores how female celebrity discourse on digital platforms go beyond simply highlighting trends to broader political and social concerns affecting women. It actively shapes the aspirations, behaviours, and identities of women and girls, by influencing how they construct and express themselves in the digital age. This dual role of female celebrity discourse as both reflector and shaper of societal norms underscores its powerful force in defining modern gender dynamics. Hence, a new cultural standard that conforms to the lifestyle of the female celebrities and popular influencers they aspire to emulate is shaped.

This form of popular culture that has emerged from the expansion and use of digital technology has given a platform to celebrities, activists, influencers, and vocal allies to stand for a cause they deem appropriate for activism. A good example is the #MeToo movement, which saw women becoming more open and vocal about sharing their stories, by demanding that a new narrative be created in the fight against sexual misconduct in Hollywood. The #MeToo movement also extended to the general work force and other aspects of society. It became an all-inclusive campaign that encouraged everyone, especially women to stand up for themselves without the shame of being ridiculed about their experience(s).

Similarly, from the data of the first 100 days of the online #BBOG movement it can be argued that female celebrities from different fields such as sports, film, television, broadcast, fashion, etc. participated in the campaign to show their solidarity by sharing pictures of themselves on social media platforms holding signs with the words ‘Bring Back Our Girls’. As the #BBOG online movement began to trend, it produced social and cultural symbols that reflect nuanced representations of femininity, capturing its multifaceted nature. This trend demonstrates ways in which representations and lived feminine experiences are constantly evolving in a cultural context. Joane Ferrante argues that femininity is socially constructed and ascribed to womanliness whereby a set of attributes, behaviours and gender roles are associated with women and girls (269–270). Qualities considered feminine may differ slightly because of societal and cultural factors. However, with globalism and access to social media, the general recognised feminine traits accepted around the world may include physical beauty, gracefulness, charm, empathy and sensitivity. Most female celebrities who participated in the movement, presented a variety of different forms of womanliness in the campaign. Several of them represented strength and resilience, dainty and charm, empathy and sensitivity, celebrity branding and philanthropy among many other features.

In analysing celebrity participation in the #BBOG campaign, I do not categorise the discourse along binary gender lines. While both male and female public figures contributed

meaningfully to the campaign and had great influence on the trajectory of the cause, the online discourse was not structured in a way that explicitly foregrounded gender differences as the primary axis of influence. Instead, I give attention to the rhetorical strategies, discursive patterns, visibility, and symbolic capital or principles of individual public figures who participated in the online campaigns.

That said, several endorsements and online campaigns, particularly from female public figures, employed culturally accepted and legible attributes often associated with femininity, such as compassion, protection, resilience and moral responsibility. These traits, communicated through their language and imagery shared in their posts and actions functioned as affective appeals that aligned with the broader feminist framing of the campaign for the Chibok schoolgirls. In the socio-cultural context of this research, this invocation of feminine-coded attributes is not interpreted here as essentialist, but as a form of cultural connotation within the global feminist discourse. Within feminist contexts, traits such as care, nurture, strength, resilience, and ethical leadership are frequently articulated as resources for socio-cultural and political intervention, rather than as constraints rooted in a gendered expectation of conduct. These forms of imagery used in the online discourse can be read as politically strategic, drawing on culturally familiar signifiers to mobilise support and communicate urgency through persuasion.

Nonetheless, in this section, the analysis I conduct remains attentive to the risks of homogenisation in global media representations of feminist celebrity activism. While affectively potent, such portrayals may obscure the multiplicity of feminist voices and subjectivities within the African context that may not conform to globally dominant visual or discursive norms. As such, I critically consider the tension between culturally specific forms of feminist expression and representation and their circulation within broader global networks of meaning.

I analyse four interconnected ways in which femininity is idealised in contemporary discourse; attractiveness, intelligence, resilience, and strength. I argue that they coexist within the broader concept of the “idealised representation of femininity,” a socially constructed framework that defines and reinforces societal expectations of women. These attributes performed by the female celebrities who participated in the #BBOG online campaign are present in the various utterances, manifestations in varying degrees, with greater or minor weight. A number of them embodied all four traits to varying extents, while others portrayed one or two traits more prominently based on their celebrity status, public image or rhetorical positioning. In this context, this framework operates as both a prescriptive and descriptive

model, shaping how femininity is portrayed on social media, culture, and the public consciousness while also influencing how women construct their identities in response to these standards. By analysing these representations, I argue that femininity is neither a static nor a homogenous construct; rather, it is dynamically framed through traditional gender norms while simultaneously evolving to reflect contemporary cultural narratives and changing norms.

Rather than treating these categories as entirely distinct opposites, I propose that they exist on a spectrum, intersecting and overlapping in ways that challenge or reinforce societal norms or expectations. For example, portraying femininity based on attractiveness or intelligence, reflects traditional perceptions of femininity, where women are expected to embody both physical beauty and intellectual capabilities. Female celebrities within this construct are often portrayed as graceful, poised, and effortlessly competent, aligning with an idealised standard that reinforces conventional expectations. On the other hand, femininity characterised by strength and resilience, offers an alternative but equally idealised construct that celebrates women who exhibit confidence, perseverance, and leadership, often navigating challenges while maintaining social status or acceptability in the society. These representations do not exist in isolation, instead, they interact in ways that reflect the complexities and intricacies of gender representation in this contemporary era. Some of the female celebrities exemplify resilience while also adhering to standards of attractiveness, and others challenge conventional ideals while retaining elements of traditional femininity. The traits representing intelligence, empathy, resilience, and moral authority were strategically used in the online interactions and performances of several prominent female figures⁷. By analysing these different performative acts, I argue that femininity is framed through both conventional and evolving frameworks, revealing the tensions between normative ideals and contemporary redefinitions of gender roles.

⁷ While this analysis does not centre on maternal imagery, it recognises that some public responses to the #BBOG campaign, particularly those involving prominent global figures were interpreted through maternal or familial frames as some of the tweets made reference to the abducted schoolgirls as their daughters and sisters. As introduced in Chapter 1, the African feminist concept of motherism describes values such as moral and ethical leadership, nurturing care, and social responsibility as culturally accepted representations of feminine cultural agency. However, in this section, I focus on a broader range of femininity codes which include strength and resilience, ethical authority, and civic responsibility that often function as rhetorical resources in feminist online advocacy. These attributes are not assessed as biologically determined, but as discursively mobilised in ways that resonate within both local cultural contexts and global feminist discourse.

4.2.1. The Idealised Representation of Femininity and Symbolic Performance in Celebrity Activism

In their 2015 research, Hamad Hannah and Taylor Anthea suggest that the media culture of 2014 was marked by numerous “touchstone moments” and events⁸ that encouraged participation by high-profile international celebrities openly identifying as feminists (124). Some celebrities used these opportunities to make public declarations, often leveraging them for branding or rebranding their image, while others responded spontaneously to unforeseen events, such as the #BringBackOurGirls movement, or Chimamanda Adichie’s ‘we should all be feminists’ political campaign.

Emma Watson, a renowned actress, model, and activist, exemplifies this. With over 20 million Twitter followers, Watson became one of the most influential voices in the #BBOG campaign. Her tweets on 8 May and 9 May 2014, collectively garnered 46,938 retweets. In the second post, she stated, “It’s important that these men are held accountable for their crimes and that we keep up the pressure to find these girls. #BringBackOurGirls” This statement not only amplified the campaign but also positioned her as a leading advocate for social justice.



Figure 5: Emma Watson’s support for #BringBackOurGirls (@EmmaWatson)

⁸ Events such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2014) popular ‘We Should All Be Feminists’ speech, the appointment of Emma Watson, as United Nations Women Goodwill Ambassador amongst others.

Watson's tweet represented a powerful rhetorical mediation in the global #BBOG campaign. As a widely recognised actress, activist, and United Nations Women Goodwill Ambassador, her credentials bring credibility to her advocacy for the Chibok girls. Her role in other global initiatives such as the He For She (#HeForShe) campaign establishes her as an authoritative voice on gender equality and human rights issues.

In her tweet, she refers to Boko Haram, the abductors of the Chibok girls as "these men". The words convey specificity, focusing on the perpetrators responsible for the abduction while reaffirming her understanding of the situation and the plight of the abducted schoolgirls. She also strengthens her credibility by identifying the need for accountability, which demonstrates her dedication to social justice and solidarity with the Chibok girls. Watson's personal involvement in social causes, combined with her global platform, allowed her to amplify the message of the #BBOG movement effectively in a few tweets. The readers of her post are, in all likelihood, convinced to trust and respond to her call for accountability and responsibility, considering her social status as both a celebrity and an advocate for women's rights, gender equality and education.

The tweet is emotive, appealing to the audience's sense of compassion for social justice issues. The phrase "these men are held accountable for their crimes" underscores the emotional gravity of the situation, painting the abductors as villains or criminals who must face justice for their heinous acts. By referring to the abductions as "crimes," she positions the act as both a moral and legal violation of the basic human rights of the Chibok girls, evoking emotions of anger, resentment and indignation. Additionally, the next phrase in the tweet "we keep up the pressure to find these girls" emphasises the collective responsibility to ensure that they are found, pointing to the urgency of the matter. The use of the pronoun "we" underscores the need for collective purpose, charging readers of her tweet to join the campaign actively in mounting the pressure. This inclusion contributes to the construction of global solidarity, motivating her large following to join the campaign.

Watson's tweet does not only serve as an emotional appeal but also incorporates a logical argument, which highlights the importance of accountability and ongoing commitment. The demand to ensure that Boko Haram is held accountable aligns with principles of justice and the need for deterrence to prevent future recurrence of similar acts in the future, underscoring the importance of having the perpetrators face the consequences of their actions. This logical appeal strengthens her argument by emphasising the broader societal implications of inaction in handling such crimes. Also, the phrase "keep up the pressure" is a logical reminder of the importance of sustained advocacy until all the girls are brought back.

Continuous advocacy in global movements like the #BBOG campaign is required for driving tangible outcomes and action. This clarion call for continuous action ensures that the broader fight for social justice, education and the restoration of other basic human rights for the girls remains in the public discourse and consciousness.

The message behind the tweet also carries a universal moral argument that appeals to values of liberty, justice, equality, and the protection of lives and properties. Focusing on the plight of the abducted schoolgirls, Watson points to their vulnerability in oppressive systems. It also focuses on the need to safeguard their rights and the rights of other victims of such societal ills. Her message transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. It resonates with netizens who recognise the importance of honouring and adhering to the basic human rights of everyone. The logical appeal of Watson's statement also emphasises the wider societal consequences of failing to act immediately. The phrase "find these girls" underscores a common resolve that encourages solidarity to secure the girls' liberation. It unites diverse groups around the globe under a collective mission. This inclusive approach underscores the notion that the fight for social justice should be a collective global responsibility that reinforces the broader fight for justice, equality, protection and the empowerment of the vulnerable worldwide.

The images most female international celebrities posted on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and other social media platforms holding a sign with the words boldly written "Bring Back Our Girls" in support of the campaign reflects a contemporary feminine narrative that reverberates on one hand feminine attractiveness, poise and elegance, and on the other hand a reflection of feminine strength of women supporting women, a solidarity in the fight against social injustice meted out against vulnerable women. An idealised representation of femininity is one that makes a claim of agency and power in socially acceptable ways, without deviating from the boundaries of conventional femininity, or provoking discomfort through perceived excess or deviance. The concept of femininity has always been associated with traits such as grace, elegance, empathy, and nurturing (Ferrante 269). However, an empowering representation especially in social justice movements reveals femininity as a dynamic expression of resilience and strength. This representation encourages women to face adversity with resilience. I argue that whereas this form of femininity is characterised by conventional traits, it also represents tenacity, courage, strength and resilience to overcome challenges within the society. Historical and contemporary examples illustrate how resilience, when paired with strength, becomes a powerful force that can construct new identities, challenge existing societal norms, and inspire future generations to embrace their own unique interpretations of femininity.

Pakistani children's education activist Malala Yousafzai represents this version of femininity. Yousafzai visited Nigeria in July 2014 to mark her 17th birthday on 12 July. In her shared tweets, she indicated that during her visit, she held a series of impactful meetings with the parents of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls and some of the girls who had managed to escape the attack. In one meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, eleven fathers and one mother shared their grief and frustration. Demonstrating her resolve, Yousafzai expressed hope that adding her voice to the discourse and advocacy would make an impact and inspire decisive action. In a post after one of the meetings she stated, "I am very hopeful that my voice will have an impact, and it will reach to the Nigerian President, and he will take action." In her online interaction, Yousafzai echoed her solidarity and support for the campaigns. In another message she shared "Their only crime was no different than my own: all they wanted was to get an education" @Malala. Her statement resonated with the online community, sparking widespread gratitude and admiration for her commitment. The discussions on Twitter were filled with excitement, with many lauding Yousafzai, for travelling to Nigeria to stand with the parents and appeal to the Nigerian government to act.



Figure 6: Malala Yousafzai's support for #BringBackOurGirls

Yousafzai's words, "Their only crime was no different than my own: all they wanted was to get an education," reflects on the injustice faced by the Chibok schoolgirls, highlighting the irrationality of targeting children seeking education and stressing the ethical and moral obligation for global solidarity and action. Yousafzai's ethos lies in her position as a global advocate for education and women's rights for over a decade. Drawing a parallel between her own experience, being shot by the Taliban on her way home from school in Mingora, Pakistan, on 9 October 2012 for her pursuit for education at the age of 14, with the plight of the Chibok

schoolgirls, who were also abducted as teenagers between ages 16 to 18, positions her as a notable voice in the campaign. Her statement, which draws from her personal experience of oppression, places her on the same level as the Chibok girls. This shared experience of victimhood enhances her credibility, consequently persuading her audience to see her as both a relatable figure who has overcome adversity and an authority in the fight for basic human rights to education and life.

The phrase “Their only crime” conveys injustice and moral outrage, portraying the girls as innocent victims of a brutal system. It conveys an irony framing that critiques Boko Haram’s ideology who regard their desire for education as a “crime”. This irony conveys an emotional appeal that resonates with the readers of the tweet. Comparing her own experience to that of the Chibok girls personalises their suffering, consequently transforming the narrative of the abductions to a tangible representation of collective struggle. Her message emphasises that the schoolgirls sought to gain an education, just like anyone else, which also resonates with the compassion and empathy of her audience. The tweet invites netizens to imagine the pain of being oppressed and punished for doing nothing wrong, eliciting emotions of sympathy, empathy and compassion for the victims and anger, frustration and apprehensions towards Boko Haram.

In addition to its emotional resonance, Yousafzai’s statement carries a strong logical appeal. Framing the pursuit of education as a “crime” point to the irrationality and moral deficiency of ideologies and practices that punish and oppress girls who seek an education. In the comparison she gives with her own experience, “no different than my own,” she draws attention to the universality of this injustice, suggesting that such forms of oppression extend beyond Nigeria and Pakistan, representing a global issue. This reinforces the notion that the advocacy for education is a collective global responsibility. It transforms these personal stories into a call for solidarity. Framing the plight of the Chibok girls as a collective struggle, at the heart of her message lies a universal moral argument that education and the right to life are fundamental human rights and not a privilege. Comparing her personal experience with the experiences of the Chibok school girls, she reminds readers of her tweet that progress is possible. As a survivor of terrorism, Yousafzai has demonstrated courage, making her emerge as a symbol of strength and resilience. Though shot on her way home from school, she refused to let violence silence her advocacy for girls’ education. Her visit to Nigeria offered renewed hope to the parents and activists fighting for the safe return of their daughters. Yousafzai’s survival and triumph over victimisation became a powerful symbol of hope that the abducted schoolgirls could likewise overcome their ordeal and come back home.

In support of the #BBOG campaign, Yousafzai launched the accompanying hashtag #StrongerThan. This campaign declared that she and others like her, who had personally experienced terrorism and other forms of oppression, were stronger than fear, violence, terrorism, and all the obstacles that tried to deny them an education. Through this message, she extended her strength to the abducted schoolgirls, their families and the nation of Nigeria, reaffirming that they too were stronger and resilient than the challenges they faced as a nation.

4.3. “Real Men Don’t Buy Girls”: A Rhetorical and Cultural Analysis

The slogan “Real Men Don’t Buy Girls” and its hashtag form, #RealMenDontBuyGirls, shaped a key narrative of the #BBOG online discourse on Twitter by linking anti-trafficking rhetoric with male socio-cultural responsibility. This was particularly prominent as male celebrities endorsed it as their own way in creating awareness and joining the movement. Emerging initially as part of a separate anti-trafficking initiative, the slogan was repurposed and remediated within the context of the #BBOG movement. The message behind the slogan resonates with audiences as a critique of gendered power dynamics and the commodification of vulnerable girls.

The origins of the slogan can be traced back to a 2011 campaign launched by the Demi and Ashton Foundation (DNA), an organisation founded by actors Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher to combat child sex trafficking in the United States. The objectives of the campaign sought to do two things. Firstly, it educated the public about the realities of child and teen exploitation and secondly, it encouraged ethical and responsible behaviour amongst men. The methods employed in the campaign featured public service announcements and celebrity participation and endorsements (Kavner). Although the campaign was initially unrelated to the Chibok girls’ abduction, the slogan was revived three years after with the #BBOG campaign shortly after Boko Haram declared its intention to traffic or sell the kidnapped girls as slaves. The viral spread of old photos from the DNA campaign, which were extensively shared and reposted on Twitter and other social media platforms, cemented the slogan’s place within the #BBOG’s campaign narrative.

Social media’s interactive feature of sharing, and reposting (retweeting) allowed the slogan to gain global traction beyond its original context. Male celebrities such as Justin Timberlake, Jamie Foxx, Ashton Kutcher, and Sean Penn were widely associated with the slogan as a photo collage of their pictures holding signs with the phrase were circulated during the first 100 days of the #BBOG campaign (see figure 7 below). The resurgence of these photographs originally captured for the earlier DNA campaign significantly enhanced the

credibility and visibility of the #BBOG movement, demonstrating the interconnectedness of digital activism, transcending physical boundaries

Real #Men don't buy girls.
#BringBackOurGirls



12:07 AM · 08 May 14

203 Reposts 92 Likes

Figure 7: Celebrities holding the sign “Real men don’t buy girls Source: Twitter

The endorsement of “Real Men Don’t Buy Girls” by male celebrities greatly enhanced the credibility of the slogan. These notable figures, celebrated in Hollywood and popular culture, used their platforms to challenge existing societal norms and emphasise the importance of ethical masculinity. The word “real” enhances the slogan’s ethos by implying an ideal standard of masculinity that is morally sound and committed to protecting the vulnerable in the society. The participation of male celebrities in the campaign served as a bridge that connected activism with everyday behaviour. It presented a credible and relatable perspective that challenges men to embody ethical accountability and responsibility. The focus on male accountability emphasises that men hold the power to fight trafficking and other ills perpetrated on women by refusing to participate in activities that encourage ill behaviour. The discourse

focussed on the narratives of victimisation but also leaned more towards charging men to take responsibility and confront their complicity and roles in systems of exploitation.

The emotional appeal of the slogan lies in the sharp contrast it presents between the words “real men” and the dehumanising act of men buying girls. The phrase “don’t buy girls” evokes a strong imagery of the commodification and trafficking of children and the vulnerable. This imagery stirs feelings of indignation and encourages the need for moral urgency. For the online netizens, particularly men, the slogan evokes both pride and guilt as motivating factors to encourage the positive aspects of masculinity such as responsibility, generosity, intelligence, compassion and respect for oneself and others. The emotional appeal in the slogan urges the audience to see themselves as agents of change and as embracing moral standards.

In the context of the #BBOG campaign, the slogan personalised the plight and tragedy of the Chibok girls’ experiences, highlighting the ways in which they were commercialised as commodities or slaves by BH, making their suffering impossible to ignore. The slogan’s logoi is rooted in its moral appeal that positions ethical masculinity as a desirable standard. However, rather than functioning as a strict binary, the slogan implies a dual responsibility that distinguishes between a “real man” versus an exploitative one. It suggests that the concept of masculinity is associated with the rejection of exploitation on one hand and embracing protective or ethical behaviours that discourage prejudice or social injustice on the other. This argument consequently positions ethical masculinity as the standard or benchmark, making any act of deviating from this norm fundamentally unacceptable. The slogan maintained its relevance across cultural and social contexts by framing the standard as universally attainable while being a morally imperative practice. It also focusses on framing trafficking and the commodification of women as an issue of masculine ill behaviour, which can be prevented when all men embrace ethical behaviours, potentially overlooking structural and systemic factors that contribute to gender-based violence. Nonetheless, the slogan’s widespread resonance within the #BBOG campaign suggests that its appeal is rooted in both its moral obligation and its ability to present ethical masculinity as a model that can be universally attained. The hashtag #RealMenDontBuyGirls when used as a supporting hashtag to the #BringBckOurGirls campaign elevated both statements as a duty to oppose gender-based violence and exploitation. Social media’s viral nature created a global network of advocacy against the commodification of the young and vulnerable in the society. By using the hashtag in their posts, users, including male celebrities, amplified the campaign’s visibility, hence encouraging participation in the campaign to save the girls from men who engage in unethical masculine practices of exploitation and oppression. The hashtag also represented collective

responsibility that united men under the collective identity of ethical masculinity. It also provided a space for men who believed in this narrative to engage in discourse and advocate for the Chibok schoolgirls. The discourse also facilitated dialogue about gender inequality, exploitation and systematic disparities. By emphasising ethical masculinity, the campaign calls on men to reject toxic practices and to participate actively in social justice movements that protect women. As Flood and Ertel argue, men must “*walk the walk*” to be the change they wish to see, engaging in activism that uplifts and protects marginalized groups (43, 190). By encouraging individual responsibility and collective action, the slogan reframes masculinity as an embodiment of empathy, compassion and accountability in a pursuit for a more just society.

4.4. Nigerian Celebrity Activism

Research on celebrity popular culture often adopts perspectives primarily from the western world. Such discussions have left little room to understand the celebrity culture in other parts of the world. In analysing celebrity activism within the Nigerian context, it is evident that the similarities may be observed in a comparative perspective with western celebrity culture. Major differences may emerge from the local socio-cultural standpoint. This takes into consideration that celebrity culture and activism may vary considerably across different countries, which is influenced by uniquely different cultures and geographical locations around the world. In Nigeria, celebrities and notable figures have actively shaped social movements, particularly evidenced in their participation in socio-political campaigns like the #BringBackOurGirls movement in 2014 and the #EndSARS movement in 2020, which advocated against police brutality in the country.

Nigerian celebrities received criticism online from Nigerian netizens for their late entry into the online discourse of the #BBOG campaign. However, these celebrities demonstrated solidarity by engaging both online and offline through public demonstrations, such as the organised procession in Lagos on 10 May 2014, and online interaction through tweets, posts, songs, photos amongst others. This highlights that while international celebrities may capture more attention and dominate the global digital space and discourse, the contributions of Nigerian celebrities were equally influential on a national level, reflecting an interplay of both local and international celebrity activism. Therefore, understanding these dynamics is a key component in recognising the full spectrum of celebrity activism and its influence on the #BBOG movement, as well as its representations in different cultural contexts.

In comparison to international celebrity participation in the #BBOG online discourse, on average, most Nigerian celebrities posted at least three or more tweets in respect to the

movement, while most international celebrities posted one or two tweets that garnered global social media attention. This indicates how international celebrity pop culture is dominated by the celebrities in the global north. Even though more Nigerian celebrities posted frequently on the movement, they did not get much traction or reactions in the form of retweets, likes, and reposts from the rest of the world unlike western celebrities, who received more reaction and impressions from social media netizens.

Nigerian actress and broadcast presenter, Toke Makinwa posted 27 tweets in the first 100 days of the movement. Her social movement activity on her social media timeline included tweets, sharing of a vlog post from her YouTube channel and participation in Nigerian celebrity processions, amongst other activities. Similarly to western female celebrities, Makinwa presented herself as a bold and courageous woman to fight against injustice, yet at the same time holding up to her femininity. However, unlike many Western celebrities who engaged with the campaign remotely and leveraged their online platforms and large following to express solidarity from the safety of their professional and personal experiences, Makinwa went beyond online activism. She did not only use her tweets to create awareness of the situation, she went a step further to mobilise her 1.2 million followers to join the movement not just online but to participate in offline activities at gatherings near them. In the first 100 days of the #BBOG campaign online, western celebrities played a role in amplifying the movement's global reach. However, their participation largely remained symbolic rather than active physical engagement. This contrast highlights the distinction between online activism and direct grassroots offline mobilisation and participation, a theme widely discussed in scholarship on "clicktivism" or "slacktivism," where online visibility does not always translate into tangible political action (Morozov 54).

With her social media posts, Makinwa also expanded the discourse to other national issues that may have an impact on the #BBOG campaign, such as insecurity and educational reform. She tweeted, "In Nigeria, you are your own security. You are your own government, #BringBackOurGirls" on 1st May 2014, lamenting the state of insecurity and the government's failure to protect its citizens. Nigerian celebrities, being more rooted in the cultural context, understood the cultural background better and could relate to the needs of the girls and their families on a deeper level. In two other posts, Makinwa shared, "#BringBackOurGirls. Still hard to believe they are not home yet. I can only imagine what the families of these girls are going through" (@tokstarr), and "100 days after and we are still waiting. #BringBackOurGirls. #sad. Say a prayer today" (@tokstarr). These tweets illustrate the use of rhetorical strategies to evoke empathy, reflect on the importance of urgency, and the need to sustain attention to the

plight of the Chibok schoolgirls. Through the effective use of ethos, pathos, and logos, these tweets persuade the target audience of the urgency of the campaign's message.

The first tweet relies heavily on pathos that resonates with the emotions of the readers of the tweet. The opening phrase, "Still hard to believe they are not home yet," conveys disbelief and frustration. The words reflect the ongoing campaign to secure the freedom of the schoolgirls. By stating, "I can only imagine what the families of these girls are going through," Makinwa invites readers to empathise with the pain the families of the schoolgirls have been subjected to. This choice of words resonates with the emotions of sympathy and empathy, encouraging the audience to reflect on the pain and uncertainty experienced by those affected.

In addition to emotional appeals, the tweet establishes an ethos that positions Makinwa as a compassionate, empathic and thoughtful individual. While the tweet does not provide specific details about the situation other than the use of the #BringBackOurGirls, which connects the tweet to the online global campaign, the focus on empathy and moral responsibility resonates with an audience already familiar with what Makinwa advocates for. The conversational tone, portrayed through short and direct sentences, points straight to the message and persuasion tactics with clarity.

The second tweet employs a rhetorical approach different from the first one with more emphasis on logos that points to the urgency of the situation. By referencing the duration in the tweet, "100 days," Makinwa provides a specific timeframe that underscores the prolonged duration the Chibok girls have had to stay in captivity. Presenting this fact highlights the gravity of the situation. It also reinforces the audience's awareness of the need for continued attention to the objectives of the campaign. The tone of the tweet shifts from informational to emotional, marked by the hashtags #BringBackOurGirls and #sad, which conveys the feelings of frustration and despair. The final line, "Say a prayer today," invites readers to keep the thoughts of the plight of the Chibok girls in their hearts as they participate in a collective act of hope and solidarity until they all return from captivity. The plea for prayer also transcends geographical borders, cultural boundaries, and religious differences resonating with fundamental values of faith and compassion that are shared universally.

Similarly to the first tweet, this tweet also builds pathos. It does so by evoking emotions by emphasising the duration or passage of time and the absence of concrete resolution. The phrase "we are still waiting" conveys a shared sense of disappointment and the need for accountability from the government who ought to have already secured the release of the girls. It speaks to the frustrations of societal neglect, highlighting the gap between hope and longing with reality. The phrase also evokes a yearning and anticipation which captures the emotional

weight of unfulfilled promises, unmet desires or wants and delayed social justice. The emotional expression resonates particularly with the #BBOG campaign as the hope for the liberation of the abducted Chibok girls lingers for far too long. It reflects strength and resilience amid adversity and suffering while underscoring urgency to have their demands met. The sentiment expressed in the phrase also acts as a powerful and urgent demand for justice. The message urges the readers of the tweet to recognise the anguish and suffering associated with the prolonged anticipation for liberation. This urgent call for action transforms weariness and longing into a renewed hope that ensures commitment and solidarity in the struggle for justice.

Together, the message behind these tweets exemplifies the effectiveness of social media in driving awareness and engagement through hashtags. The first tweet encouraged an emotional connection with the reader of the tweet, while the second called for urgent action, solidarity and unity. Through her combined use of ethos, pathos, and logos in her tweets Makinwa not only created awareness of the #BBOG movement but also leveraged her offline and in-person participation in protests to reinforce her online activism. Her physical presence at the demonstrations added authenticity to her digital advocacy, persuading both local and global audiences to remain vigilant, steadfast in the cause, and hopeful for a desired outcome. This direct involvement distinguished her from international celebrities, whose engagement was primarily limited to online expressions of solidarity with fewer posts.

Award winning singer, Aituaje Iruobe (Waje), was also amongst the first Nigerian celebrities to join the movement. Her first post on Twitter on 30th April 2014, even before the campaign became viral, demanded for urgent action to bring the girls back to their families, “#bringbackourgirls home...” @OfficialWaje. This was one of the first Nigerian celebrity posts for the movement. The next day, on 1st May, Iruobe and other celebrities like Seun Kuti, Debola Williams amongst many others marched through the streets of Lagos to create awareness about the missing girls and shared this activity on their social media pages. In the first 100 days of the existence of the movement, Iruobe posted 11 tweets with the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag, mobilising and encouraging her over 720,000 followers not to get weary of participating in the movement and creating the awareness the campaign needs to garner an international response. In another tweet, “#bringbackourgirls these girls are worth every walk, every tear, every protest, every Nigerians cry...” @OfficialWaje, Aituaje Iruobe encouraged her followers to have empathy for the girls and to join the fight by creating and promoting awareness to help bring them back. On the same day she tweeted, “My humanity is bound to yours, so we can be human together... #bringbackourgirls” @OfficialWaje. The passion and commitment empathy creates has the ability to construct a celebrity culture of advocacy for the weak and the

downtrodden in the society. Both tweets make use of ethos, pathos, and logos to evoke collective responsibility and moral urgency while also appealing to the adherence of fundamental human rights and values.

The first tweet makes use of pathos as its dominant rhetorical tool for persuasion, focusing on the emotional sacrifices made in solidarity with the missing girls by activists, celebrities, organisations and everyone else who participated in the movement. The repetition of the word 'every' in "every walk, every tear, every protest, every Nigerians cry" emphasises the collective effort the movement implicated its participants in and the emotional toll the abduction of the girls took on everyone involved. This repetition creates a rhythm that highlights the depth of commitment they have to the cause, allowing the reader to understand the depth of the collective advocacy and campaign message. By recognising and acknowledging the Chibok girls as valuable and "worth" the sacrifices of time and resources, Iruobe reinforces the audience's emotional investment. The phrase "every Nigerians cry" ties the campaign to national identity, suggesting that the girls' plight is a suffering shared by the entire country irrespective of the ethnic or religious differences, which strengthens the nation's collective solidarity and duty. It promotes the ideology of unity in diversity. She establishes credibility by aligning herself with the broader #BBOG movement. The reference to active participation in the protests and walks implies a direct engagement with the campaign, portraying her as a notable figure actively involved and emotionally invested in the campaign. Iruobe's concise yet evocative language conveys authenticity, genuineness and credibility, reinforcing her trust in the commitment to the cause.

The second tweet, "My humanity is bound to yours, so we can be human together... #BringBackOurGirls," adopts a philosophical approach, appealing to universal human values through logos and pathos. The statement "My humanity is bound to yours" suggests a fundamental interdependence between a collective, inviting readers of the tweet to reflect on their ethical responsibilities towards one another. By appealing to logic, it argues that shared humanity necessitates solidarity and hence the need for collective action. The phrase "so we can be human together" deepens this argument. It suggests that humanity itself will suffer loss if people fail to show empathy for one another and refuse to act under oppressive conditions. This argument is further strengthened by its emotional appeal, as the message in the tweet invokes unity and collective responsibility.

The pathos presented in the second tweet though subtle yet resonates with the readers. By framing the abductions of the Chibok school girls as a question of shared humanity, the message behind the tweet appeals to the readers' conscience and compassion. The words also

possess a reflective tone, encouraging netizens to take a step back and consider their own role in the collective struggle to achieve the desired goal of the campaign.

Both tweets effectively employ ethos to engage their following and other users of the platform, though they do so with different approaches. The first tweet prioritises active participation. It puts emphasis on the physical and visible actions such as protests, walk-ins and emotional expressions like tears to establish trustworthiness. The second tweet, however, leans more towards a moral and philosophical perspective, presenting Iruobe as a thoughtful and rational public figure who advocates for social justice and human dignity. Together, the tweets posted by Iruobe in the first 100 days of the campaign resonate with the emotions and intellectual awareness of her following and other social media users. She sees the advocacy for the Chibok school girls as an act of preserving humanity, taking into consideration the fact that people need each other to survive.

Ultimately, the tweets shared by Makinwa, Iruobe and other Nigerian celebrities exemplify the versatility and potency of rhetorical strategies in advancing online campaigns and activism through hashtags and social justice movements. By integrating emotional resonance with philosophical reflection, they persuade their following and other social media users to join the movement and remain engaged and committed to the campaign cause. In doing so, they highlight how social media can serve as a powerful platform for advocacy and amplifying voices. Makinwa and Iruobe like many other Nigerian celebrities did not just stay behind their screens and join the movement online, but they also participated in offline activities while also sharing their experiences at the #BBOG processions and opinions online with their followers and circle.

Celebrity activism that is initiated at the national level encourages diverse relationships between celebrities, activists, and the rest of the public. It provides assurance to the followers and fanbase of these celebrities that they too are committed to the pursuit of positive change by participating and contributing to the advocacy. This form of activism persuades the following of such celebrities to join the campaigns. It creates hope that every form of support from using the internet and online platforms or physically taking part in the processions in person may lead to the liberation of the Chibok schoolgirls. In such cases, the values of activism become integrated into a celebrity's persona and public image.

4.5. Celebrity Activism through Music

Nigeria has a history of celebrity activism through music, which can be traced back to Afrobeat singer Fela Kuti, born Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti, who through his music is

believed to have pioneered celebrity activism in Nigeria (Olaniyan 76). As noted before in Chapter one, he was the son of one of Nigeria's women activists, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Inspired by his mother's legacy of fighting against socio-political injustices, Fela's songs had a strong political agenda that focussed on addressing issues such as corruption, injustice, and prejudice in the society (Olaniyan 76). Kuti studied classical music, composition, and trumpet performance in the early 1960s at Trinity Laban (then Trinity College of Music), London (Stewart 102). From there he went on to start his singing career in the 70s with his band, Africa 70 and, later, Egypt 80 (Culshaw par 4). He hoped that through his songs, which he mostly sang in the Nigerian Pidgin English, could invoke a revolution against corruption and other societal ills in the Nigerian military regime at the time. His album "Zombie" (1976) satirised the military describing them as 'zombies', who blindly follow commands like the walking dead without giving thought to the outcome of their actions. In his album "Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense" (1986), Kuti challenges the negative influence colonial imperialism has had on the country. He also confronts Nigerian leaders who he believes were being swayed towards corruption by both historical and modern imperialist influences. Also, in his song "International Thief Thief" (1980), he attributes the surge in inflation to the actions of multinational corporations, highlighting their role in money laundering, looting and social oppression. In "Trouble Sleep Yanga Wake am" (1982), which best translates into the idiom "let the sleeping dogs lie", he subtly challenges the government and individuals wielding power or authority, urging them not to interfere in contentious scenarios that may escalate into complex issues far worse than they were from the onset. Fela used his protest songs not merely for entertainment purposes but also as a tool to advocate for change. His songs confronted military dictators, while, at the same time, resonating with and representing the voices of the people.

On 18th February 1977, Kuti's Kalakuta Republic⁹ was raided by over 1,000 armed Nigerian soldiers and police officers (Darnton par 3). As a response to the raid, he composed the album "Sorrow Tears and Blood" (1977). He described the raid as filled with so much chaos that everyone had to run away and seek refuge elsewhere. The lyrics evoke Kuti's pain, "Some people lost some bread" (8:21), "Someone just died" (8:26) ... "Them leave sorrow, tears, and

⁹ Fela Kuti coined the term "Kalakuta Republic" to describe his physical space or residence where most of his performances and activities were held. Through his music, performances and public addresses, he used Kalakuta as a means of critiquing oppressive systems. The Kalakuta Republic symbolized Fela's extensive political and cultural forms of activism. The word to Kuti also symbolises resistance, freedom, liberation and defiance against all forms of oppression especially from the government or those in power. The name was deeply tied to Fela's political ideology, artistic identity, and confrontation with the Nigerian government. Fela links the name intricately with his political ideology, artistic persona and the opposition he received.

blood, Them regular trademark” (8:45). Describing the attacks, Kuti attributes sorrow, tears and blood to be the trademark and form of identification of military and police brutality on civilians. During the raid, some people lost their properties and means of livelihood, others lost their lives. Kuti goes on to reprove the docility of the reactions of African responses amid socio-political hardships. This he describes as the fear of the ‘air’ around them, the fear to fight for freedom, justice, liberty, and happiness. The song challenges Africans to develop and possess the courage necessary to advocate for their freedom and justice. As the pioneer of social activism through music in Nigeria, through his songs Kuti predicted that music would emerge as a powerful weapon in the struggle against social injustices and the quest for freedom in the future, thus serving as an advocacy tool in social movements.

In comparison to the activism in the time of Kuti, with digital technology, Nigerians have found a renewed strength to engage in activism through music and songs. Years following the foundation Fela Kuti had set, many contemporary Nigerian singers use their music and songs for activism and advocacy. Singers like Eedris Abdulkareem, who sang “Jaga Jaga” (2004), described the state of Nigeria as being in shambles or disintegrated. A year after that, Lanre Dabiri (eLDee) in his protest song “I Go Yarn” (2005) asserts his intention to speak boldly and unafraid of any form of intimidation about the various societal issues plaguing Nigeria. He particularly expresses concern about the troubling inclination of Nigerian political leaders to seek better healthcare and educational services in developed countries. Yet upon their return, they fail to take initiatives to enhance their own country’s systems to match those of other countries they have visited.

In the same manner, contemporary celebrity singers composed songs on the abduction of the 276 schoolgirls in 2014. Some of the songs were played at protest grounds, aired on radio broadcast stations and shared on social media platforms as weblinks to the YouTube pages where the songs were published. Inspired by past revolutionary activist music and anthem, the lyrics of the songs sung by the contemporary artists recount the stories of the Chibok abductions and contemplate the potential lives the girls might have lived had they not been taken.

4.5.1. Kaliné Akinkugbe: “Bring Them Home”

Kaliné Akinkugbe, a singer, song writer and film composer, wrote a tribute song and shared it on her YouTube channel on 8th May 2014. The video contained footage and pictures of different rallies and processions that were held around the world with the hope of creating awareness of the movement and the missing girls. She highlights the pain and suffering experienced by the

parents, the immediate community and the rest of the world, and the hope that Chibok girls would be brought back home, where they belong.

Akinkugbe's song "Bring Them Home (Bring Back Our Girls)" is an artistic yet emotional response to the story of the abductions. Through her use of evocative lyrics, the song amplifies the emotional and moral urgency of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign through themes of loss, resilience, and collective responsibility. The song's structure, imagery, and emotional depth transforms it into both an outburst of emotions and a call for urgent collective action. The song begins with strong pathos that immediately directs attention to the emotional and physical devastation caused by the abductions, "Empty beds, empty hearts, we are trying so hard not to fall apart" (Akinkugbe 0:30). The repetition of "empty" in the first two lines underscores absence and loss. It symbolises the pain experienced amid the emptiness and void the abductions caused in the lives of their families. The helplessness expressed in "trying so hard not to fall apart" (Akinkugbe 0:35) captures the emotional fragility of those experiencing pain from the emptiness the abductions had caused. It is also a desperate and emotional plea persuading listeners of the song to empathise with their pain.

The next line shifts the focus to the broader collective struggle to comprehend or find the best possible way to respond to the abductions. The phrase 'heavy souls' suggests immense grief, while the rhetorical question "Where do we begin?" (Akinkugbe 0:45) points to the daunting challenge of addressing such a significant and overwhelming crisis. It also points to logical reasoning prompting listeners to consider practical ways or suggestions that may support the campaigns.

The song's use of imagery becomes more vivid with the line "When the walls of our lives are just caving in" (Akinkugbe: 48), which conveys a collective collapse of emotions of the group. The imagery of "walls... caving in" suggests both physical and emotional breakdowns, which highlights the critical need for urgent action to intervene. The recognition of a broken system that needs a form of repair leans towards logos. This is reinforced by the comprehensive knowledge that inaction and neglect encourage the moral degradation of the norms and values of the society. The refrain, "Bring them home, back home" (Akinkugbe 1:22), represents the emotional and rhetorical essence of the song. The repetition of these lines throughout the song reinforces the urgency of the call for emancipation which emphasises the moral obligation of the demand by instilling persistence and collective responsibility. The word "home" represents freedom, liberation, safety, belonging, and restoration, which strengthens the anticipation of the girls' return as a fundamental and non-negotiable action. Kaliné reinforces the shared humanity that binds the individuals and members of the collective

together. The authenticity of the message, along with the sincerity of tone and lyrics, establishes an ethical stance by enhancing the credibility and moral weight behind the song's message. Kaliné is portrayed as an empathetic observer, supporter and advocate who has chosen to stand in solidarity with the victims. The simplicity of the song's lyrics and melody provides authenticity to the message. The genuineness persuades the listener to express solidarity with the campaign goals. Akinkugbe's repetition of phrases like "we won't rest" and "we need them now" relies on pathos to convey the message on the urgent demand for social justice, asserting that the campaign advocating for the liberation of the girls will persist until every girl is free from captivity. The use of the words "hope" and "pray" in "and we hope, and we pray that our girls won't be gone much longer than today" (Akinkugbe, 2:08) suggests an appeal to a higher power to intervene, relying on pathos to evoke the emotions of the audience. It also focuses on communal solidarity, contributing to a shared desire for change. The phrase "enough is enough" points towards the frustration caused by the helpless situation the abducted girls find themselves in, while the overall tone of the song conveys a blend of desperation and resolve to keep up the fight relentlessly.

The song also appeals to logos by acknowledging and recognising the need for collective responsibility. By framing the abductions as an event that impacts "our lives" and "our girls," the lyrics broaden the scope of interrelatedness, suggesting that the tragedy is not confined to a single community or nation but universally affects humanity, it is a collective concern. This inclusivity persuades the audience to become active participants or stakeholders in the fight for justice, thereby bridging geographical and cultural divides to build stronger advocacy. By transforming personal grief into a collective plea for change, Kaliné's song not only places the story of the Chibok girls at the centre of global discussion, but it also preserves their memory, thus reinforcing the enduring power of song, music and performance to inspire hope, resilience, and action.

4.5.2. Abena Akuaba: "Bring Back Our Girls"

Ghanaian American singer and model Abena Akuaba joined the campaign and shared a video titled "Bring Back Our Girls" on her YouTube page on 22nd May 2014. The song reflected the career path the abducted girls might have chosen or grown up to become; 'leaders', 'doctors', 'lawyers', 'future mothers' or the next 'Michelle Obama' if only they were released and reunited with their families (Akuaba 0:45). The refrain of Akuaba's song employs rhetorical strategies to underscore the urgency, depth, and global relevance of the #BringBackOurGirls movement. The song engages the audience's emotions by honouring the Chibok girls,

portraying them as individuals with inherent worth, accentuating their value to their families, communities, and society at large. The repetition of “Bring our... back” emphasises the irreplaceable roles and professions the abducted girls could have become in the lyrics “Bring our leaders back; Bring our presidents back; Bring our lawyers back; Bring our doctors back” (Akuaba 0:44, 2:05). These lines project the girls not as mere victims of circumstance; rather they are portrayed as future contributors and assets to the society. They embody potential leadership, intellect, and community service. Therefore, they should be freed because they have the potential to contribute meaningfully to the society when they receive the education they have been deprived of. By referencing universally respected roles such as ‘leaders,’ ‘lawyers,’ and ‘doctors,’ the chorus highlights how these girls represent the future of progress and development. Ironically, these are the very aspirations that BH seeks to deny them by abducting them and opposing their access to western education, which makes their liberation not just a moral duty but a symbolic act of collective responsibility and resistance against oppression.

The emotional appeal intensifies in the lines: “Bring our sisters back / Bring our future mothers back.” Here, the girls are portrayed within the context of familial relationships, including roles such as “our sisters” and “our future mothers”. This, hence, fosters empathy, reminding listeners of their own cherished relationships. This emotional connection portrays the grief and devastation the immediate family members of the Chibok girls have, evoking feelings of sorrow and moral obligation. It also draws the attention of the audience that the Chibok girls are, in essence, also their sisters in the shared experience of humanity.

The reference of the girls as “future mothers”, also represents a lineage of future generations that will sustain the existence of the community and society from generation to generation. This symbolic framing aligns with ‘motherism,’ which emphasises the importance of motherhood in defining African womanhood and positions women as givers of life through childbirth, and as nurturers and preservers of life. This rhetoric appeal emphasises the role women play in ensuring the existence of their communities across generations. Furthermore, describing the Chibok girls as “our sisters” aligns with the principles of ‘womanism,’ which stresses the importance of unity and interconnectedness among women. It embodies a relationship that extends biological relationships and affirms their solidarity within a wider collective network of nurturing and survival. These frameworks offer empowering interpretations of the girls’ roles, strengthening their agency by acknowledging their integral role in society. The plea to bring them back therefore is not only a demand for justice but also a gateway to broader discourse regarding gender, agency, and the evolving landscape of African feminist thought. The lyrics builds ethos by aligning the message of the song with universally

accepted and shared values of family bond and community development. By attributing the girls' traits like future contributors to society: as mothers or members of different professions, the song describes them as individuals with inherent worth, which asserts the collective responsibility to bring them back, nurture and reintegrate them into the society. The mention of public world leaders like "the next Michelle Obama" further establishes credibility by associating the girls' potential with well-known and accepted symbols of empowerment, leadership, and excellence. By referencing Michelle Obama, the refrain resonates with a global audience familiar with her position as a global leader, thereby reinforcing the importance of saving these girls in order to safeguard the world's future leaders and agents of change.

The refrain employs a logical reasoning that argues for the broader societal impact of the abductions. Each profession mentioned: leaders, doctors, lawyers, and future mothers all represent crucial components and roles that constitute and build the existence of a society. The combined impact of these roles demonstrates that the abductions of the Chibok schoolgirls are not just personal tragedies affecting only the girls but rather the abductions possess significant threats to the advancement and stability of society.

Also, the logos of the song is amplified through repetition. The repeated words "Bring our... back" creates a rhythm that emphasises the urgency of the call for freedom. By repeating "Bring our girls back" three times at the end of the refrain, puts emphasis on the unifying demand that underscores the song's core message. This repetition subsequently solidifies the plea, making it both memorable and impactful. It suggests that securing the girls' freedom is not just about restoring their immediate safety but also about preserving their potential to shape the future of society. Thus, the song frames the Chibok girls as symbolic representatives of a generation whose future is imperilled by the intersecting forces of gendered violence, conflict, and systemic neglect. Therefore, the appeal for people to be a part of the movement resonates on a global level.

4.5.3. Innocent Idibia and Olanrewaju Abdul-Ganiu Fasasi: "Break the Silence"

On 31st May 2014, Nigerian singers Innocent Idibia (2Face) and Olanrewaju Abdul-Ganiu Fasasi (Soundsultan) released a music video in conjunction with their Million Voices for Peace Project (MVP) titled "Break the Silence". The song featured over ten Nigerian and other African singers who came together to advocate for the #BBOG movement and also to raise funds in support of activities of the Nigerian Red Cross. The song advocated for peace in Nigeria calling on everyone to live in harmony irrespective of their tribal, cultural, religious, and geographical differences.

The song “Break the Silence” delivers a strong call to action that blends themes of peace, love, and social justice, particularly within the context of the #BringBackOurGirls movement. Through its lyrical structure and persuasive techniques, the message behind the song urges its listeners to reject violence, embrace tolerance, and acknowledge the inherent value of life. Through pathos, logos, and ethos, the song not only addresses the immediate crisis of the abductions but also criticises the broader societal conditions that encourage violence and insurgencies to occur.

The lines of the chorus “It’s time to break the silence, say no to the violence, stop the hate and intolerance, Life is a gift, love the essence” are repeated several times in the song (Idibia and Fasasi 0:45, 2:10, 3:39, and 5:01), calling and mobilising the listeners to speak up and no longer stay silent, reflecting on how Nigerians should be united in an effort to combat the threat of insurgency. The call to fight violence and insurgency raging in the North is a reminder that a similar turmoil could readily erupt in the eastern, western or the southern part of the country if proactive measures are not put in place.

The refrain deeply engages pathos to persuade its audience. The strong emotions frame life as a precious gift that should be treasured and protected at all costs, as seen in the recurring line: “Life is a gift, love the essence.” This sentiment appeals to the audience’s fundamental respect for and appreciation of the sanctity of life, persuading them to see the abduction of the girls and other associated assaults and violence as affronts to human dignity and humanity itself. By equating love with the “essence” of life, the audience is urged to denounce acts of hate and intolerance, presenting them as destructive to the existence of the society. The repetition of phrases like “Break the silence” and “Stop the violence” adds urgency and moral gravity to the immediate and urgent call to action. While calling to their audience to take responsibility and address the issue of systemic insurgencies and violence, the words evoke empathy that resonates with human emotions. The song also evokes feelings of sorrow and urgency. Phrases like “Our mothers are crying cause our children are dying” create a vivid emotional image that elicits empathy for the immediate family members of the Chibok girls. The repetition of the themes of grief, frustration and fear, as well as the rhetorical question “Does anybody care?”, intensifies the emotional impact of the song. It prompts the audience to reflect on their own sense of responsibility for the plight and suffering of others. The rhetorical question also provokes a reflection on social issues like poverty, disease, and fear, creating an emotional appeal to the audience to be compassionate and show concern. The imagery of weeping mothers because their children are helplessly dying enhances the poignancy and emotional impact, calling for immediate action to intervene in the violence and abductions of

the Chibok girls. Through these appeals, Idibia and Fasasi are able to evoke sympathy and empathy and a collective desire for change.

The song establishes its ethos by taking a credible moral stance, thereby positioning the artists not just as celebrities or entertainers but as advocates for peace and justice. They further enhance their credibility by addressing key social issues prevalent in the society that may have served as contributing factors to the abductions, such as violence, poverty, and disease. By addressing and advocating against these social issues, they establish a connection with both cultural and political perspectives, which subsequently lends credibility to their message across to their audience. Also, underscoring key fundamental values such as love, unity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, the song's message resonates across the ethnic, cultural, geographical, religious and societal divides. The reputation of the artists as influential figures with a substantial fanbase and large following on social media within the Nigerian afrobeat music industry enhances the impact of the message. The line "Raise your voice, break the silence" engages the audience's sense of agency, which positions them as agents of change and encouraging them to take an active role in the movement. In doing so, it cultivates collective responsibility that enhances the song's ethical appeal.

"Break the silence" also incorporates *logos* to underscore its message. The line "Stop the hate and intolerance" links violence to an underlying cause which encourages the reflection on how societal divisions and prejudices foster an environment conducive for conflict and injustice to prevail. Hence, this reasoning reflects on the need for comprehensive and systemic change, rather than addressing superficial aspects of the reoccurring problem. Logically, this argument asserts that societal unrest and violence are ultimately detrimental and counterproductive. The song calls for unity and "togetherness," which suggests that unity in diversity is a pragmatic solution to the chaos and existence of social injustices such as the abductions. The reference to "life is short" is a reminder of human mortality, thus reinforcing the need to value the life of others in distress and work towards a peaceful coexistence and communal support. The phrase "Aid is a trick to existence" also adds to the logical reasoning as to the importance of the campaigns. The assertion prompts the audience to critically evaluate their existence as individuals and as a collective living in the society. It provokes thoughts on the efficacy of aid and interventions, by advocating for significant and sustainable solutions to the abductions and other societal ills. The line "Be Your Neighbour's Keeper" invokes a social consciousness and collective responsibility. With the phrase "eyes on the road," the artists emphasise the importance of being aware of the situation while warning against complacency and encourage participation in the campaigns by not being a "sleeper". This appeal to logic

enhances the song's examination of structural and systemic inequalities while also urging listeners to reflect on their own role and contributions to the campaign.

The song's use of repetition reinforces the crux of the message. The repetition of the refrain several times in the song also enhances the memorability of the lyrics. Phrases like "It's time to break the silence" and "Stop the violence" emphasises speaking up and confronting social and structural injustices and rejecting passive indifference. Whilst the repetition of phrases like "life is short" and "let's give peace a chance" reinforces that life is fleeting, hence the call to put down all arms and conflict and work towards a peaceful coexistence. The juxtaposition of the dire consequences of violence characterised by the phrase "killing and bombing everybody" and the desire for peace highlights reasons as to why ongoing strife is pointless. Idibia and Fasasi as celebrities use their platform to point to the urgency and centrality of the need to work together collectively and be the voice of reasoning amid the silence, articulating a voice that reverberates the need to end violence and prejudice. This act of repetition serves to embed the message within public consciousness, and, subsequently, transforms the words in the refrain into a mantra advocating for peace, justice and freedom for the Chibok girls.

The structure of the song effectively balances abstract principles with specific calls to action. The line "Build peace, stop the violence" operates as a prompt or directive to adhere to the actionable guide that will lead to lasting peace, whereas the line "life is a gift, love the essence" reflects a more general assertion that inspires reflection and dedication to the core values of the society. They position the song as a timeless appeal to humanity to embrace peaceful coexistence. Thus, this approach ensures that the message resonates with the audience on both an emotional and practical level. The song also goes beyond the immediate context of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign and addresses issues such as violence, unity in diversity, hate, intolerance, and solidarity. By positioning the abductions of the Chibok schoolgirls as part of an extensive struggle for justice and peace, the words inspire its listeners to see the campaign as an integral part of the #BBOG movement that is advocating for societal transformation.

The song had the same visual characteristics as Kaline Akinkugbe's "Bring Them Home". The sections of the video had pictures and footages of different processions and people around the world who participated in the campaign. Kaline Akinkugbe's, "Bring Them Home" had more footages and rallies that happened in the United States and other western countries, which could be probably because she is a Nigerian in the diaspora, while Idibia and Fasasi's "Break the Silence" had more pictures of notable Nigerian celebrities and footages of protests

and some the BBOG activities carried all over the country. Either way, these songs share the same characteristics and message focused on the urgent and long-term goal of securing the liberation of the abducted schoolgirls unaccounted for. The credibility of these celebrities is enhanced by their efforts to motivate and encourage their audience to take collective responsibility and participate in the campaigns for the abducted girls. Their ability to address genuine real-life challenges through powerful imagery evokes strong emotions. They also offer a coherent and logical argument that encourages peace and unity amid diversity.

4.6. The Use and Gratifications of Celebrity Activism on Social Media Platforms

As explored throughout this chapter, celebrity participation in social justice campaigns on social media reflects a range of motivations that align with the core principles of the UGT. In the case of the #BBOG movement, celebrity online activism illustrates how public figures make strategic use of their platforms to create awareness, amplify the cause, persuade and mobilise action, encourage emotional support, and encourage solidarity and global networking. These activities did not only increase the visibility of the campaign but shaped the resonance of their message across diverse audiences. The gratifications derived from celebrity involvement in online activism include persuasion, solidarity, emotional expression, and entertainment value, all of which help make complex socio-political issues more accessible to the public that may otherwise go unnoticed or neglected. By posting about the social issues that pique their interest, they create visibility to the subject while also provoking discussions on the cause. This effect is especially powerful when celebrities use trending hashtags, relatable language, visuals, or entertaining songs and chants to enhance a campaign, hence making complex socio-political issues understandable and at the same time accessible to the public.

The motivation for celebrities in raising awareness on socio-political campaigns often stems from the empowerment they derive from participating. Their ability to educate and inform their large following and fanbase regarding their positions on socio-political issues through digital platforms yields this gratification. The celebrities often understand the significance of their influence, thus leveraging it to engage their followers, many of whom adore and trust their judgments. When a celebrity participates in a socio campaign through posts, hashtags, or by producing videos or songs about a cause it not only spreads information but also legitimises the issue in the public consciousness. For example, when international celebrities like Emma Watson and Malala Yousafzai participated in the #BBOG campaign, their message instantly reached a global audience, which inspired an international following to learn more about the cause they are advocating or campaigning for. This ability to make an impact

on society and social change often provides these celebrities with purpose and fulfilment. The slogan and hashtag that emerged from celebrity activism, #RealMenDon'tBuyGirls exemplifies this. All users especially men who used the hashtag or slogan in their posts developed purpose and gratification whilst advocating for the Chibok girls.

Celebrities often serve as mediators, simplifying complex issues into easily logical content for their followers to understand the gravity of the cause. For instance, through their songs, Idibia and Fasazi provided information on the abductions, hence raising awareness on different themes that cut across the ills in the society, consequently providing their followers with information that might otherwise be inaccessible or overlooked. Based on the gratifications derived from sourcing and creating their own content, the audience actively seeks to engage with celebrity activism to enhance their understanding of the objectives of the cause by relying on the credibility of the celebrity to serve as a guide. This is seen in the #BBOG movement on Twitter with the number of interactions these celebrities got on their post as discussed above.

From the #BBOG movement we see that celebrities often use their social media platforms to motivate their following towards collective action and support social justice causes. Statista estimates that over 67% of the world population is on social media (Petrosyan). With this number of active users on these social platforms, they serve as effective media for celebrities to mobilise their audiences for action. For instance, Yousazafi used her platform to advocate for girl-child education and the importance of education for the abducted Chibok girls. This resulted in significant media coverage both nationally and internationally during her visit to Nigeria in July 2014. This underscores potential of celebrity driven campaigns to enhance the visibility of a campaign and at the same time motivate their followers to join the cause just as they have.

The gratification for celebrities and public figures like Yousazafi in mobilising social action comes from seeing the real-world impact of their efforts. When combined, raising awareness and mobilising action often result in measurable outcomes, such as reformed policies, improved living conditions or generation of funds to support a charity or cause. The sense of accomplishment these celebrities get from participating in social campaigns often reinforces their trust in the power of their platform and motivates them to do more philanthropy. Furthermore, observing their followers and other activist take action as a result of their influence provides these celebrities with purpose knowing that their advocacy has stimulated collective action and participation. For instance, the songs composed by the celebrities Idibia

and Fasasi were not only shared on digital platforms but were also used for the offline campaigns, marches and performances in memory of the Chibok girls.

There is no doubt a call for action creates a shared sense of community and collective responsibility among their followings. When celebrities invite their followers to unite in advocacy, they foster a collective identity that is rooted in shared values and goals. This invitation encourages ordinary people to feel valuable as partakers of a movement bigger than themselves, amplifying the overall impact of the campaign. By using their platforms to encourage social action and change, celebrities convert passive support into active engagement. This form of participation creates a ripple effect that reaches not only their immediate followers but also other social media users who come across the shared or retweeted content from these celebrities.

For some celebrities, social media activism goes beyond awareness or mobilising social action on a platform but is also a means to express their emotions, beliefs and convictions. These digital platforms become spaces to process and share emotions like anger, grief, or hope. This is achieved through the sharing of heartfelt messages, personal anecdotes, or reflective posts. For instance, Idibia and Fasasi's "Break the Silence", Akinkugbe's "Bring them Home" or Akuaba's "Bring Back Our Girls" did not only increase visibility for the cause but also allowed the artists to connect with their audience on an emotional level through the lyrics of their songs.

The gratification celebrities experience from participating in activism often comes from a place of desiring emotional relief. Expressing concerns regarding matters of importance to them can be cathartic, enabling them to channel their frustrations or pain into positive constructive social action. This expression and purgation of emotion particularly holds importance when they may perceive themselves powerless against systemic challenges. Subsequently, using their platform and brand to confront these issues gives them an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution. For example, after the abductions of the Chibok school girls, many celebrities shared personal reflections, stories and arguments related to violence and social injustice, finding solace in using their voices to support change. Iruobe, for instance, in her tweet as discussed above pours out her emotions, thereby reflecting her compassion and emotion as she actively participates in the campaigns for the release of the Chibok girls with "every tear". This practice of using social media platforms for the dissemination of information and expression of emotions gives their activism a personal significance, providing both relief and gratification.

Furthermore, emotional gratification and fulfilment may arise when celebrities see their messages emotionally resonate with others, thereby, creating a ripple effect of sympathy, empathy, compassion and solidarity. This emotional exchange in the digital space reinforces the idea that celebrities' public voice can have an instant effect on their audience and result in making a difference, not only in advancing social causes but also in developing a connection with their audience. By integrating their personal emotions with public advocacy, celebrities can enhance the authenticity and effectiveness of their activism, thereby creating a positive impact for both their own image and branding and at the same time the campaigns they support. The uses and gratification of social media for celebrity activism shows that this emotional gratification derived from participating in social campaigns online keeps audiences engaged with content oriented towards their advocacy campaigns. This reinforces their connection to both the objectives of the cause and also the celebrities they follow or agree with.

Celebrity activism, while grounded in advocacy for a serious cause often incorporates elements of entertainment in its campaigns. Celebrities and public figures who participated in the #BBOG campaign used creative approaches, such as songs, photos, memes, GIFS, videos, posts, to increase the campaign's visibility and emotional appeal. This approach to online activism passed the message while simultaneously met the audiences' entertainment needs, which allowed them to engage with the #BBOG campaign in a less burdensome manner. The entertaining elements of rhythm, harmony and melody of Idibia and Fasasi's "Break the silence", for instance, made the advocacy feel accessible and relatable. This appeal thereby broadened the impact and relevance of their message among different audience demographics who participate in the campaigns. The motives and gratifications associated with engaging digital media platforms, and the internet underscores this dual role of celebrity activism as both an informative and entertaining medium. This also underscores that people often seek media experiences that meet their specific needs, such as social connection, escapism, cognitive awareness, information or education. This fusion of advocacy and entertainment to an extent transforms a passive audience into active participants. This is because entertaining and engaging content is more likely to be shared widely across different social media platforms. The viral nature of entertaining or visually persuasive posts allows for the exponential amplification of the cause, turning individual moments of engagement into broader social movements.

Celebrity participation in social campaigns online is particularly impactful in the digital age, where algorithms are set to prioritise engaging content, thereby increasing the visibility of such campaigns. These social media platforms facilitate direct engagement between celebrities

and their online followers and fanbase. The options to like, comment, pin, highlight or retweet content creates a participatory environment in which other social media users feel included in the discourse or the campaign itself. For the followers of these celebrities, the act of engaging with celebrity activism often simultaneously becomes a form of validation and entertainment. Thereby reinforcing their sense of connection first to the celebrity and then to the cause they are advocating for.

Through emotional catharsis, narration, spectacle, emotional relatability and interactive engagement, celebrity activism represented on social media platforms achieves a unique balance between entertainment and advocacy. By meeting the audience's desire for captivating content, celebrities do not only amplify the campaigns they advocate for but also inspire and motivate their followers and other social media user to participate in the campaigns, thus leaving a lasting impression on their followers and fanbase while also impacting the campaigns.

The participation of celebrities and global public figures in the #BringBackOurGirls campaign significantly shaped the movement's visibility, affective tone, and global reach. Through rhetorical strategies embedded in visual performances, by sharing protest photographs, musical compositions, and moral appeals, celebrity figures contributed to sustaining international attention and framing the campaign within a broader socio-cultural humanitarian discourse. However, in this chapter I have demonstrated that such contributions are not often neutral interventions. They are shaped by platform-specific logics that prioritise visibility, engagement, and pre-existing digital capital in the form of the celebrity's large following and engagement through the number of likes or retweets their tweets may have garnered. While celebrity involvement in online campaigns often serves to amplify the objectives of a cause, it can simultaneously contribute to the symbolic displacement of grassroots activist voices, consequently, reproducing global hierarchies within digital advocacy. By examining how algorithmic systems structure influence, this chapter underscores the complex dynamics at play when activism intersects with fame and platform power. This interplay between symbolic capital and digital affordances subsequently invites reflection and further study on how campaigns are able to remain accountable to the communities' causes they claim to advocate for.

The following chapter examines the role of collective memory in shaping and sustaining the social movements, particularly through the use of hashtags slogans, personal stories and artefacts. These elements, as seen in the #BBOG campaign over the years have become imperative appeals that encapsulate the essence of the movement, evoking both emotional and logical responses from participants and observers alike. By analysing the

cultural and rhetorical significance of these digital texts, the subsequent discussion sheds light on how causes like the #BBOG movement are remembered, reinterpreted, and revived in the collective consciousness, ensuring that their relevance and impact endure over the years. It probes into questions like what happens after the initial virality of campaigns fade in the digital space? How do social media users remember, forget, or even archive past experiences in networked platforms? And what constitutes what is remembered, particularly in a context marked by state silence, prolonged captivity, and collective grief?

CHAPTER FIVE

Beyond a Hashtag: From Protest to Memory Activism

Before the advent of digital platforms, social movements relied on traditional methods of communication such as printed leaflets, radio broadcasts, mass protests, and personal networks to disseminate their messages. However, the rise of digital technology has revolutionised activism, providing new avenues to sustain global attention and foster immediate solidarity. Movements such as the Arab Spring (2011), Occupy Wall Street (2011), and the mid-2010s hashtag campaigns exemplify the central role of technology in contemporary social mobilisation. In Nigeria, the shift from conventional activism to digitally mediated advocacy evolved gradually but unmistakably. The country's telecommunications boom, marked by increased mobile phone penetration and internet accessibility, enabled rapid information dissemination. By the early 2010s, platforms such as Twitter and Facebook had become vital tools for politically engaged Nigerians, bridging socio-economic divides and linking grassroots activism with elite circles in major cities like Lagos and Abuja. The #OccupyNigeria protests in 2012 over fuel subsidy removals highlighted the potential of digital spaces to drive offline mobilisation, setting the stage for the explosive rise of #BringBackOurGirls (#BBOG) in 2014. The global outcry following the Chibok abductions was amplified by social media, which facilitated the rapid circulation of updates, images, and slogans, transforming what might have remained a localised tragedy into an international movement, as previously discussed.

Digital activism is transforming socio-political involvement, human rights advocacy, and cultural memory, with activists carefully utilising platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to enhance their causes. A fundamental aspect of this transition is the utilisation of slogans, frequently presented as hashtags (#), which have arisen as potent emblems of advocacy and communal commemoration. The #BBOG movement illustrates how digital participation has transformed movements, once dependent on continuous physical protests, into efforts that garner worldwide visibility and solidarity with efficiency. In the initial hundred days following BBOG's establishment, social media globally was inundated with photographs of individuals brandishing placards, urging action from both the Nigerian government and the international community. Nonetheless, despite the movement achieving considerable digital momentum, detractors challenged the effectiveness of online activism, contending that it could deteriorate into "clicktivism" or "slacktivism," wherein digital interactions (likes, shares, and retweets) fail to result in concrete, real-world actions (Njoroge 450–55; Chen, Pain, and Barner 200).

This chapter critically examines the progression of the #BringBackOurGirls (BBOG) campaign, which, although originally intended as a mobilisation initiative for the prompt rescue of the abducted schoolgirls, progressively evolved into a persistent memory activism. Gradually, its emphasis transitioned to memorial, cultural transformation, and sustained public participation. Initially, the movement adhered to conventional protest paradigms, applying pressure on the government for immediate action. However, over the years, its argumentative and visual approaches underwent a significant alteration. Activists increasingly recognised the imperative of maintaining public consciousness, ensuring that the plight of the abducted girls remained salient in collective memory. This transition from transient indignation to lasting commemoration highlights the intricate function of internet activism in influencing collective memory.

I utilise two primary analytical frameworks: textual analysis and visual analysis to investigate this change. The former investigates the rhetorical methods, slogans, and hashtags utilised by movement leaders and members, applying principles of Aristotelian rhetorical concepts (ethos, pathos, logos) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). This approach examines how linguistic expressions shape collective identity, convey shared suffering, and strengthen calls for accountability. The latter investigates the role of imagery, symbolic performances, photographs, and artistic representations in evoke emotional resonance among audiences. Visual artifacts such as images of empty desks to large-scale mural paintings generate an emotional impact, transcending linguistic and geographical barriers.

Over time, the BBOG's dialogue transcended urgent rescue initiatives, integrating itself into the wider context of "memory activism". The notion of "memory activism" might initially seem tangential to a rescue operation. In the first days and weeks, calls for #BringBackOurGirls exclusively focussed on urgency: find the girls, rescue them, rehabilitate them, and punish the terrorists. Over time, however, activists faced the reality that government efforts were inadequate, that media interest would eventually wane, and that broad structural issues that represent extremist ideology, state corruption, global apathy to African crises would not evaporate. Facing these constraints, BBOG leaders decided that remembering the victims had to become a core strategy. This pivot entailed a rhetorical and visual re-framing: from a singular action request ("Bring them back!") to a multi-year vow ("They shall never be forgotten!"). Commemorative events, annual gatherings, new hashtags, emotional images, and creative artworks replaced the initial wave of near-daily protests. In essence, memory activism provided a longer arc to the movement, ensuring that neither the tragedy itself, nor the broader socio-political failures that enabled it would be consigned to oblivion. But in the age of social

networking, activists can keep the conversation alive, re-invoking the victims' names and stories each time they share posts or hold commemorations. Memory activism, thus, is not a static commemoration but a constant process of re-articulation, re-interpretation, and re-engagement with historical events and the #BBOG experience offers a prime illustration of this phenomenon. This chapter will analyse the function of recurring slogans and digital narratives as tools for shaping collective memory, sustaining global consciousness, and strengthening demands for justice. Between 2014 and 2021, the BBOG movement's online engagement transitioned from urgent calls for intervention to a more nuanced strategy emphasising historical remembrance and continuous advocacy.

Twitter and other social media platforms became sites for memorialising the abducted schoolgirls, particularly those still in captivity, hence, sustaining public remembrance, and resisting political erasure. I explore how memory is constructed, circulated, and contested in the digital sphere, and how social media platforms operate as archives of affect, loss, and resistance, becoming sites of digital memory. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs's concept of collective memory and Pierre Nora's notion of lieux de mémoire (sites of memory), I argue that online activism does not simply fade after its initial virality but instead transforms into long-term practices of digital remembrance as seen in the case of the #BBOG online campaign over the years. The analysis focuses on three interrelated dynamics: firstly, the remediation of offline memory practices, such as vigils, anniversaries, and placard displays that are created and circulated as digital forms on social media platforms. Secondly, the development of symbolic memory rituals online, such as daily tweet posts marking the girls' time in captivity, or annual posts mobilising participation in annual commemorative lectures; and lastly, the contested tension between grassroots memory and state narratives, especially in how the campaign's legacy is commemorated or silenced in official documentation and discourse. By tracing how hashtags, images, and commemorative posts function as mnemonic devices, the chapter explores how digital platforms can serve as contested memoryscapes that are shaped by user content, platform algorithms, and power dynamics. I also take into account the challenges associated with digital forgetting and the impact of algorithmic visibility, all of which shape how collective memory is either preserved or lost over time.

5.1. Hashtags and Slogans as Digital Sites of Memory

Hashtags and slogans played a central role in shaping and organising the symbolic vocabulary of the #BBOG campaign. Embedded in social media posts, they became more than calls to action, they transformed into digital memory markers. In this context, hashtags and slogans

that encourage online participation, and engagement can be understood through Pierre Nora's concept of lieux de mémoire, or "sites of memory." Pierre argues that when organic or lived memory fades, societies create symbolic spaces to preserve collective remembrance (7). These may take the form of physical locations like monuments, museums or commemorative rituals, or even textual expressions like online discourse. In the digital sphere, hashtags function as sites of memory, they consolidate shared affect of the collective, encode historical consciousness, and offer a space where memory is repeatedly constructed, circulated, and reaffirmed.

On Twitter, hashtags such as #BringBackOurGirls operated as mnemonic devices, that portrayed public grief, anger, and solidarity. Netizens did not merely share information when they engaged in the online discourse but also performed acts of remembrance. Tweeting or retweeting the hashtag became a ritualistic gesture of solidarity; it was a refusal to forget. The slogans and hashtags that emerged in the discourse captured complex emotions into brief but powerful phrases that symbolised collective resistance to forgetting all together. These digital performances or artefacts reflect a shift from protest to memory activism, where the act of remembering itself becomes a form of socio-political engagement. Twitter threads and timelines, hashtag clusters, and commemorative slogans constituted a networked archive where the campaign continues to live, even as physical demonstrations fade to occasional or annual events. The online discourse resists erasure or forgetting of the past event by working to keep the narrative of the abducted girls symbolically present, by reaffirming a collective refusal to normalise silence or indifference. The memorial function of these key slogans is often shaped by platform nuances and dynamics. As such, while the visibility of the online engagement algorithms can shift a user's attention to other trending topics and discourse while scrolling through their feeds or walls, these same systems simultaneously function as online sites of memory. The mnemonic power of this online engagement lasts as long as these social media users continue to reference them.

By focusing on rhetorical patterns in the online discourse (mainly on Twitter), this subchapter will analyse the major slogans and phrases that shaped the movement from 2014 to 2021.¹⁰ By applying the rhetorical power of ethos, pathos, logos – and the UGT, we can see how the #BBOG online campaign marshalled emotive appeal, credibility, logical

¹⁰ This chapter is an expanded and revised version of my previously published work: Datiri, Blessing. "From Activism to Collective Remembrance: The Transforming Rhetoric of Campaign Slogans in the #BringBackOurGirls Online Movement on Twitter." *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Studies*, Science Publishing Group, 2024, www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/article/10.11648/j.ijsts.20241206.14.

argumentation, and collective motivations to keep the Chibok abduction story relevant over the years. The focus here shifts to how the hashtag #BBOG functioned as a tool for mobilisation and advocacy and subsequently evolved into a sustained tool for memory activism. I will specifically explore slogans of memory activism that were used to shape public opinion, persuade, motivate and mobilise public action or an outright outcry for immediate action from national and world leaders. The analysis is based on data gathered during the first seven years of the existence of the movement from the official Twitter account handle of the movement (@BBOG_Nigeria) and from profiles of the top three conveners of the movement @obyzeeks, @AishaYesufu and @Bukkyshonibare. In Table 5 and Table 6 (below), we see an enumeration of the dominant slogans used at different anniversaries.

S/N	Page Name	CONCEPT/ SLOGAN					
		Never To Be Forgotten		Hope endures		Days/years too long	
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
1	@BukkyShonibare	12,228	46%	5,874	22%	9,881	37%
2	@AishaYesufu	2,463	16%	883	6%	1,303	8%
3	@BBOG_Nigeria	1,035	14%	595	8%	1,024	13%
4	@obyzeeks	484	9%	103	2%	802	13%
TOTAL		16,211		7454		12,835	

Table 5: Key Slogans Used Over the Years by Conveners¹¹

The emergence and use of slogans within the #BBOG campaign did not only function as tools of awareness but also as instruments of discursive power. The repeated use of emotionally resonant slogans helped to establish the moral and emotional vocabulary through which the campaign was understood, accepted and engaged with. Through consistent engagement and rhetorical framing, the conveners influenced not only the trajectory of the online debates, but how the online campaign was constructed, remembered, and contested in public discourse, which shaped interpretive frameworks. The discursive power implied in these slogans allowed the conveners to assume leadership roles in the campaign's public identity as their tweets were retweeted, liked or received more engagement metrics. The #BBOG campaign's legitimacy was also rooted in rhetorical consistency and digital prominence over the years. In this socio-political context, slogans are not just linguistic tools; they are sites of memory that embody a struggle over narrative ownership, visibility, and political legitimacy.

¹¹ The tables provided have been culled from the list of concepts identified in the data analysed using Leximancer. Please refer to the Appendix for a comprehensive list of the top words and concepts that have emerged throughout the discussions on Twitter over the years.

Table 6 below provides a longitudinal analysis of the evolving rhetorical strategies employed by the #BBOG movement from 2014 to 2021, illustrating how the campaign's messaging shifted from immediate mobilisation to sustained memory activism. In its foundational year (2014), the movement's slogans, #BringBackOurGirls and #BringBackOurDaughters, emphasised urgency and global solidarity, framing the Chibok abductions as a crisis demanding immediate action. As the campaign progressed, anniversary markers introduced new slogans – “Never to be Forgotten” (2015), “Hope Endures” (2016), and “No More Excuses” (2017) – reflecting a transition from initial outrage to persistent advocacy. The inclusion of time-related hashtags such as #3YearsTooLong and #4YearsTooLong demonstrates the movement's strategic use of temporal framing to highlight the protracted nature of the crisis and to sustain public engagement. By 2019, with the introduction of “They Will Never Be Forgotten” and subsequent annual iterations (e.g., #5YearsTooLong, #6YearsTooLong), the rhetoric further solidified its focus on remembrance and governmental accountability. The emergence of “Until All Are Free” (2021) underscores a final rhetorical evolution, signalling a shift from retrospective memorialisation to future-oriented activism advocating for complete justice and rescue. The associated thesaurus terms across years, ranging from “abduction” and “parents” in 2014 to “freedom” and “rescue” in 2021, reinforces this transformation, as the movement recalibrates its language to sustain relevance and moral urgency over time. These new slogans further established the movement's evolution from hashtag activism to a new commitment to practices centred on commemoration and remembrance. The dominant phrases that emerged over the years turned into addendums that supplemented the original slogan and hashtag. The phrases were used as chants, songs and slogans for the movement's campaigns and as accompanying hashtags online to the original hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. For instance, the hashtag #NeverToBeForgotten emphasised the fact that regardless of the passage of time from months to years, the memory of the girls will endure. #HopeEndures emphasises the importance of having faith even in dire circumstances while focusing on the promise of a better future. It underscores optimism that, no matter how long it might take to achieve the main goal of reuniting the girls with their families, hope will remain steadfast. #NoMoreExcuses questions authority, leadership and governance, leaning towards a demand for answers and prompt action from those in charge.

Year	Catchphrases ¹²	Description	Thesaurus ¹³
2014	#BringBackOurGirls #BringBackOurDughters	Foundation and mobilisation of the movement	BBOG, Chibok girls, abduction, days, Chibok, abducted, missing, parents, school, terrorists, missing, school
2015	Never to be Forgotten	First Year anniversary	citizens, daily, abduction, days, favourable advocacy, waiting, CryingToBeRescued, alive, demand, demanding, 1 year
2016	Hope Endures	Second Year anniversary	Nevertobeforgotten, Cryingtoberescued, advocacy, days, campaign
2017	No more excuses #3YearsTooLong	Third year anniversary	Ngrpresident, Take, time, lives, long, government, President: Mbuhari, government, Nigerian, Nigerians, 3 years
2018	No more delays #4YearsTooLong	Fourth anniversary	Ngrpresident, too long, negotiate Mbuhari: government, Nigerian
2019	They will never be forgotten # 5YearsTooLong	Fifth anniversary Dapchi schoolgirls abductions	citizens, advocacy, favourable, time, 5 long years
2020	Six long years #6YearsTooLong	Sixth anniversary	Time, long, six years, days
2021	Until all are free #7YearsTooLong	Seventh anniversary	Seven years, freedom, free, rescue, days, now, alive

Table 6: Major Campaign Slogans and Hashtags Used at Each Anniversary

The production, reproduction, and continual retelling of this narrative in various formats creates what is collectively deemed the memory and recollection of the event. The application of these hashtags across different social media platforms has kept the stories of the Chibok girls at the forefront of digital discussions, especially around anniversaries. This remembrance of the past is intricately linked to the idea that a story is not told once, but rather continuously narrated, reiterated, and presented through various forms of media, such as in social media interaction, encompassing texts, videos, images, memes, gifs, etc. The narrative of the movement can be characterised as memory in progress as the story of the Chibok schoolgirls was consistently adapted across various digital and social media platforms through production and reproduction.

The instantaneous nature of information creation and transmission allows digital media users to network instantly with each other through mediated platforms. This flexibility enables users to construct and modify their digital identities instantaneously, making them adaptable and versatile. However, such adaptability does not always reinforce a stable or credible ethos; frequent shifts in standpoints can challenge perceptions of authenticity and consistency in the context of online activism. Without a well-established ethos, arguments, even on digital platforms may lack authority and struggle to persuade the audience of the speaker's

¹² The Catchphrases comprise the key slogans and hashtags used for the BBOG online campaign

¹³ The Thesaurus lists group words used at each time period by the campaigners to express their ideas and activism

trustworthiness. With the number of social media users and the daily mass production of information and content, the ability to create trust and acceptance is therefore crucial for digital activists.

In this context, the key activists of the #BBOG movement demonstrated their credibility in the digital space by presenting and documenting their credentials and qualifications on their profiles and timelines. As a result, they elevated their ethos and authority, positioning themselves as credible voices to engage in the kind of conversations they have on the digital space. Accounts of the official BBOG page and pages of the top three co-conveners of the movement active on Twitter established the communicative memory of the girls. They are: Obiageli Ezekwesili (@obyezeks), Aisha Yesufu (@AishaYesufu), and Bukky Shonibare (@BukkyShonibare), each an expert in different fields, a fact that added credibility to their discourse and advocacy campaigns.

In this digital age of technological advancements, especially within the context of social movements such as #BBOG, digitally mediated activist exhibitions and renditions are often shaped as a form of strategic performance. While an activist's identity may represent the relatively stable aspects of their social being, such as their lived experiences, belief systems, and structural positioning, their persona in contrast, particularly in public mediated platforms denotes the selectively curated and performative aspects of themselves. This distinction becomes especially prominent on social media platforms like Twitter, where social and technological logics, platformization and algorithmic amplification prioritise content and posts backed by performance based on logos or pathos. As such, the adopted persona the activist chooses to show online may be seen as an extension of their identity. These carefully curated personas are also rhetorical and affective social constructs that are often designed to mobilise advocacy and sustain visibility of the online campaign within a competitive social media networking environment.

Alice Marwick argues that social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook structure a "micro-celebrity" economy in which visibility of content is linked to curated self-presentation that carefully balances affective resonance with perceived authenticity (114–15). This dynamic is especially evident in activist engagement showcased in their online activity, where they find it pertinent to craft emotionally engaging yet credible personas to sustain attention, build trust, and mobilise participation within the fast-paced environment of social media use. Zizi Papacharissi's study of "affective publics" emphasises how online movements sustain themselves through emotionally charged narratives and resonance that construct sentimental content with the aim of binding participants together. This process also helps define

their digital personas (21–22). These frameworks explain why activists such as Yesufu, Ezekwesili, and Shonibare construct digital personas that perform emotional urgency, technical credibility, and moral accountability. Yesufu’s straightforward activism demonstrated by her boldness, portrays less about her personal identity and more a constructed persona that is shaped to convey defiance and solidarity. Also, Ezekwesili’s consistent use of policy discourse and global framing aligns her persona with technocratic authority, while Shonibare’s data-driven advocacy posts and online interaction personifies transparency and moral accountability to reinforce her activist persona. Through Marwick’s and Papacharissi’s frameworks, we see that such personas constructed in online interactions are adaptive, mediated constructions that navigate the demands of digital visibility and public engagement.

This process of persona construction reflects both self-promotion in response to the algorithmic and affective structures that construct, sustain and govern desired attention online. As Papacharissi argues, digital platforms foster an “affective attunement,” in which netizens’ participation coalesces through shared emotional content (26). As such, activists, therefore, are influenced to communicate not only their messages but also the affective tones that invite collective identification, acceptance and participation. This underscores why the emotional slogans that emerged over the years became dominant symbols in the #BBOG campaign. They reflected the rhetorical personas constructed by the conveners of the movement and other online activists to emotionally resonate with audiences across Nigeria and the diaspora.

The distinction between identity and persona also enables a more nuanced critique of how authority and legitimacy are constructed in online gendered activism discourse. Drawing from Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, we see that identity is not a stable or innate essence but is constituted through repeated performances of gendered norms (25–26). In the digital space particularly on social media platforms, these performances are often shaped by platform constraints and expectations of conduct which makes the personas of the conveners and other activists a strategic form of gendered expression. By viewing the personas of the activists as performative constructs, we see how their personas, therefore, become rhetorical constructs that encourage accountability, resilience, strength, solidarity and empathy.

While in the previous chapters I have established the prominence of Ezekwesili, Yesufu, and Shonibare as leading voices in the #BBOG movement, this chapter specifically focuses on the ways their expertise, digital rhetoric, and sustained engagement transformed the movement into a sustained and long-term act of memory activism. Their continuous use of hashtags, slogans, and strategic tweeting has played a fundamental role in ensuring that the Chibok girls’ abduction remained in the public consciousness years after the incident occurred. By closely

examining their tweets, statements, and public engagements rhetorically, this chapter illustrates how their leadership connected activism with collective memory, highlighting the transformation of social media into a digital space that fosters the sustained remembrance of past events and particularly advocating for the rest of the Chibok girls who remain in captivity. Thus, this section deepens the discussion by illustrating how their expertise and online strategies became the principal impetus behind the longevity of #BBOG as a form of memory activism.

Their expertise and experience in different fields depict *phronesis*, a characteristic showing the individual is of sound sense (Corbett 80). It is the character of the speaker depicted through their useful skills and practical reasoning in their organisation of the campaigns. Aina et al. in their research conducted for Action for Empowerment and Accountability Research Program (A4EA) state that the #BBOG organisation was structured to have four key offices: head of the movement, the strategic team, the communication team, and the sit-out team (22). The organisational structure distributed responsibilities to different members of the group based on their expertise. Ezekwesili and Yesufu were in the head office, with Ezekwesili as the primary authority holding core decision-making powers and Yesufu deputising. Shonibare was a member of the sit-out team who organised the processions in Abuja, Nigeria's capital. By analysing their public personas in relation to political discourse and digital mobilisation the analysis illustrates the complex and multifaceted ways in which leadership, activism, and ethos are shaped and expressed within the context of digital movements.

Obiageli Ezekwesili, who also goes by the name Oby Ezekwesili, brought to the #BBOG movement not only moral urgency but also considerable institutional credibility and political capital. She was a former Nigerian Minister of Education and one-time Vice President for the Africa Region at the World Bank. Her past involvement in public policy and governance lent the campaign ethos and symbolic weight, making it difficult for the Nigerian government to dismiss the movement as merely populist or sentimental. Her institutional affiliations are analytically relevant primarily because they influenced how her presence was interpreted within the movement. At the time of this research, her profile description on Twitter states, "A passionate believer in the public good of nations. CEO @HumanCapAfrica Founder @fixpoliticsnig @TheSPPG Co-Founder @anticorruption S. Fellow @yale" underscores her deliberate positioning as both a public intellectual and a civic moralist. This hybrid persona enabled her to bridge elite and popular spheres of influence, attracting attention from international media and development agencies while simultaneously domestically advocating for socio-political causes. Her ethos is hinged on the extensive leadership experience she had

in complex organisations and on being knowledgeable and distinguished in her fields of expertise. As Ogunmolaji and Adekunle note, her reputation for bureaucratic reform in her role as cabinet minister for solid minerals, mines and steel from July of 2005 to June of 2006, and later as the minister of education from June 2006 to April 2007 gained her the nickname “Madam Due Process” (225). This indicates that her credibility stems from a consistent commitment to procedural integrity, not only in the manner she conducts herself, but in her insistence that others uphold the same ethical and institutional standards.

Ezekwesili’s role in the #BBOG campaign demonstrates how political actors can repurpose their official ethos within activist spaces to lend rhetorical force to civic demands. Her interventions on social media reflected both primarily personal statements and also a public act framed by a long-standing discourse of governance, leadership, accountability and reform. In this context, her presence in the campaign functioned as a strategic amplification of civic urgency, using symbolic authority to elevate the visibility of the campaigns and the plight of the abducted girls. Her credibility thus served the purpose of illuminating the campaign’s discourse to reflect both an emotional appeal and institutional demand.

Obiageli Ezekwesili’s role in the advocacy for the #Chibok girls illustrates a carefully calibrated activist persona that draws upon her professional identity (and extending beyond it). While her professional background lends her credibility, what made her a central figure in the campaign was her ability to perform publicly a persona that merged technocratic authority with pathos and emotional advocacy. In her Twitter engagement, Ezekwesili strategically foregrounded her status as a concerned citizen and advocate, framing her advocacy less through institutional affiliation and more through moral accountability and civic responsibility for the Chibok schoolgirls. Her institutional identity is rooted in her past official roles, while her activist persona is performative as she actively responds to the political and social context of the moment, underscoring the difference between her identity and persona. Drawing on Butler’s argument on performativity (68), we can understand Ezekwesili’s online presence and rhetorical appeals not as expressions of her fixed identity but as citational performances that mobilise socio-political meaning. Her repeated invocation of urgency, social justice, and government failure served to frame the campaign as a collective moral crisis, in which her advocacy efforts functioned as a citizen-leader performing public conscience activism, solidifying her ethos.

With such a profile and online presence, Ezekwesili possessed the experience and expertise to lead and organise the #BBOG movement. Ezekwesili registered her Twitter account on 21st April 2009, 5 years before the abduction of the girls. She had a significant

number of followers before her involvement with the #BBOG campaign. Her active participation in the movement saw her followers grow to over 1.4 million. The profile page of tweeters can reveal who they are and the values that drive them. Ezekwesili, in her pinned post, states:

No greater Joy than being a person of Truth. It is the ultimate Ace for Peace. Whatever your traducers may do, they will come back someday and meet you where you were and always will be- calmly sitting with the Solid Rock known as The Truth which never falters. @obyezeks

Aiming to cultivate an online persona of firm commitment to truth and transparency, she describes herself as a person who has chosen to stand on the side of truth even when faced with opposition, slander, and words of defamation. This statement aligns with the *arete* of ethos, which describes the moral standard of the writer or speaker (Corbett 80), in this case the “tweeter”. She advocates for the pursuit of truth and integrity as foundational principles for a peaceful existence. She also conveys a message of stability anchored on the “solid rock” of truth, adding that even though one may face challenges and criticism, remaining true to oneself and to the principle of honesty is ultimately rewarding and empowering.

Aisha Somtochukwu Yesufu is a Nigerian socio-political justice activist and entrepreneur. Her visibility in the #BBOG movement and later the 2020 End SARS (#EndSARS) movement, which advocated for social justice against police brutality in Nigeria, solidified her role as a prominent voice in digital activism. This movement, led by young Nigerians, called for the dissolution of the Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigeria Police Force due to documented cases of extortion, systematic abuse, unlawful detentions, and extrajudicial killings. While her co-convenorship in the #BBOG movement and her participation in the End SARS protests are well known, her role in shaping public discourse on state accountability and police violence extends to her social media activity. Her active participation illustrates a strategic form of activist rhetoric rooted in public embodiment, religious symbolism, and civic activism.

Yesufu’s iconic image from these protests, in a hijab/burqa and defiantly raising her fist, emerged as a significant symbol of resistance, solidarity and civic agency (Ijem and El-Qassim 126 and Areo par. 1). This image was not incidental but functioned as a rhetorical act that visually challenged both dominant gender and religious norms in Northern Nigeria. In this way, her activism blurred the line between personal identity and public performance, making her physical appearance and activism central to the campaigns’ symbolic landscape. Her role in both movements showed a commitment to human rights, cementing her ethos and reputation

as a socio-political activist. Yesufu's active participation in these movements involved an extensive presence on social media, where she mobilised followers and engaged in discussions on national issues through her posts and other online interactions.



Figure 8: A 2015 photograph of Aisha Yesufu, capturing her performativity within the #BBOG campaign

The photograph of Yesufu seated in defiance before a line of heavily armed police officers during a #BBOG protest in 2020 is more than just evidence of participation, see figure 8. It underscores her activist persona in a symbolic and affectively charged gesture. This can be denoted as a deliberate act of visual rhetoric, in which Yesufu consciously performs a persona of civic defiance without fear of security forces and state institutions. Butler argues such embodied gestures become acts of performativity through which subjecthood and political agency are constituted (14). While Yesufu's identity is rooted in her personal story, religious affiliation, and social positioning, the persona she stages in this photograph is carefully curated to evoke moral courage, resistance, accountability and strength. This performance resonates deeply within the visual culture of digital activism, where images circulate as rhetorical evidence for persuasion. Also, the deliberate framing of her red hijab, and the contrast between her seated body and the militarised bold stance of the Mobile Police officers (a paramilitary unit of the Nigerian Police Force) behind her, transforms the photograph into an iconic representation of state-citizen power asymmetry. The mediation and remediation of these images of Yesufu across Twitter and other platforms further blurs the boundary between offline action and online persona, emphasising her strategic self-presentation and civic activism. In this way, Yesufu's visual activism captured in the photograph bridges her identity and persona,

allowing her to recontextualise vulnerability as power, gendered modesty as radical protest, and physically keeping quiet amid opposition as presence and strength.

Rather than relying on institutional or elite authority, Yesufu's rhetorical influence derives from her claim to grassroots legitimacy. Her mode of civic agency both online and offline often characterised by direct language, sustained digital presence, and consistent critique of state failure mobilised publics and contributed to her large social media following, driven by both affective appeals and through political clarity. Her communication style on Twitter positioned her as a voice of civic urgency. Her style often contrasts with more diplomatic or technocratic registers and utterances used by other activists. This contrast enabled her to reach and connect with younger, digitally native audiences, contributing to her resonance within campaigns that encourage and prioritize immediacy and instant visibility. Her activism and participation in both movements can be understood as a form of performative resistance that gains power through symbolic capital and visibility, rather than formal roles or connections to institutions. Her influence is cultural and affective, not bureaucratic or official.

Yesufu's public persona exemplifies what Butler describes as the performative enactment of resistance (13). Through her growing visibility both online and offline, combined with acts of symbolic activism and repetition, challenges dominant socio-cultural and political narratives. Butler's model of performativity argues that an individual's identity is understood as not fixed or inherent but continuously constituted through repeated citations of social and cultural norms, as illustrated by Yesufu's activism. These performative acts derive their connotations from the social norms they cite and reflect on, allowing Yesufu to construct a resistant civic identity through her sustained public engagement. Yesufu's repeated gestures, statements, and symbolic interventions cite dominant norms while at the same time disrupt them. Butler argues that such behaviours and citations can also create or open up space for resistance. This becomes possible when an individual deliberately reiterates and subtly alters dominant hegemonic codes such as gendered expectations or cultural scripts and practices. In this view, the individual's body and appearance become a site of political agency, where cultural symbols such as appearance, dress and embodied presence can be reappropriated to contest and redefine meaning (Butler 13–16). Yesufu's activism not only questioned state practices but also redefined who could use freedom of speech to speak authoritatively within Nigerian civic discourse. In this context, her contribution to the #BBOG campaign reflects not just participation but a reframing of activist legitimacy: rooted in social media visibility, rhetorical immediacy, and embodied protest.

This commitment to resistance extended beyond Yesufu's public performance to the internal values of the movement itself, particularly in how the conveners structured the organisation's ethical and financial integrity. As part of the strategies of the #BBOG movement, conveners chose to self-fund the movement from their personal pockets. They intentionally rejected any external financial assistance. Adhering to the principle of funding purity, they decided never to solicit for or receive money from politicians or other actors nationally or internationally. "Survival for the organisation was to be based on members' donations – cash or kind" (Aina et al. 26–27). This also exemplified the ethos of *arete*, a quality that embodies high morals in Aristotle's rhetoric principles (Corbett 80). In a thread on Twitter, Aisha Yesufu shared:

"@BBOG_Nigeria was awarded The Emilio F Mignone International Human Rights Award. It was an honour receiving on behalf of BBOG in Buenos Aires... We collected the plaque award but turned down the cash award because we are a self-funded movement who decided not to receive any donation #BringBackOurGirls" @AishaYesufu.

The rhetoric in this statement from Aisha Yesufu serves two dominant objectives. First, the award frames the movement as an internationally recognised voice in the struggle for human rights advocacy. It positions the #BBOG movement as a key actor organisation in the international discourse pertaining the safety of women and girls. The #BBOG movement's receipt of the Emilio F. Mignone International Human Rights Award affirms the core principles of integrity that underpin the foundation and objectives of the movement. By publicly celebrating the honour of receiving this award in Buenos Aires on her timeline, Yesufu points towards the movement's global recognition, highlighting the international importance of its mission to advocate for the Chibok girls and to elevate issues of human rights in the Nigerian society. Second, it emphasises the organisation's self-sufficiency and integrity, demonstrating a principled stance that prioritises the movement's mission and objectives over financial gain. In an era where many organisations' operating models rely on external funding and financial assistance, #BBOG's refusal of monetary donations reflects their stance on financial autonomy, accountability, and independence from external influences. This doubtlessly strengthens their credibility and engenders trust with the public, particularly in Nigeria. Yesufu communicates the message that their mission as an organisation transcends external funding, as it is a moral and ethical obligation that demands an utmost dedication.

As the #BBOG discourse online began to gain prominence internationally, key activists involved in the campaign began to gain visibility on the digital platform. Yesufu, for instance,

first created her Twitter account on 5th May 2014, in the formative days of the movement, and has now grown a following of over two million users on the microblogging site. Her ability to create and grow an online presence organically from scratch reflects her level of belief in her character on social media. Naturally, an online presence can contribute to the creation of new connections on social media platforms, and in Yesufu's case, these connections are driven by a shared desire and commitment to advocate for the abducted girls. This appeals to the *eunoia* inherent in ethos. The concept of *eunoia* reflects the heartfelt pursuit of collective well-being and the common good of others (Corbett 80). Their ability to establish connections and interact with other users on the platform also demonstrated their goodwill towards their followers and fellow Twitter netizens.

The third central figure and co-convener of the campaign, Adebukola Shonibare, also known as Bukky Shonibare, is the executive director of Invictus Africa, an organisation that promotes human rights and addresses gender inequality. Her contributions to the #BBOG campaign were marked by a strategic use of moral appeal, data and statistics driven rhetoric. This positioned her as both advocate and a knowledge creator, providing evidence-based information within the movement. Unlike most celebrity figures or institutional actors who participated in the campaign and enhanced its visibility, Shonibare's discursive authority and ethos emerged from her analytical framing of the abductions, employing statistics, timelines and daily tweets to sustain public memory and apply pressure on the government. Her involvement illustrates a form of activist expertise grounded in logic and accountability discourse, a rhetorical style that has become increasingly central to digital advocacy, solidifying her ethos. Through her quantified tracking and repetitive tweeting of the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction, she contributed to the campaign's strategy of temporal attentiveness. As a result, her posts often functioned as digital records of absence, turning commemoration into a form of digital activism. This emphasis on ongoing visibility to back episodic protest helped frame the campaign as both a sustained civic demand and a symbolic gesture. Her rhetorical position can be understood as a convergence of activist legitimacy and grassroots technocracy. She claimed authority and ethos not through prior political office or international recognition, but by producing and curating knowledge in a publicly accessible and emotionally resonant form. In this way, her activism contributed to the shift of humanitarian discourse into political critique, situating the #BBOG campaign within the broader context and debate of state failure, gendered violence, and the politics of public memory.

Shonibare's role in the #BBOG movement can be better understood through the conception of public persona as a strategic and mediated construct. Her daily Twitter presence

portrays an ethos of accountability and humanitarian advocacy. Marshall et al. argue that in digital culture, public figures often operate through a persona assemblage, in which identity is curated across digital platforms to serve specific rhetorical functions (94). In Shonibare's case, her activist persona foregrounded themes of data transparency, urgency, and moral clarity, strategically aligning her advocacy strategies with both grassroots concerns and government and institutional legitimacy. This allowed her to navigate the movement's local urgency and its international visibility, reinforcing her role as a credible mediator between the plight of the Chibok schoolgirls and the global audience. Her influence in the campaign also exemplifies what Marshall et al. identify as the transformation of civic identity into symbolic capital (97). Through consistent engagement, slogan usage, and coordinated advocacy with her daily posts, Shonibare shaped not only the movement's online discourse but also its affective tone and discursive trajectory. Her persona did not only reflect her professional background, but it also actively constructed a position of moral and epistemic authority and ethos.

While the conveners of the #BBOG movement shaped the emotional and rhetorical tone of the campaign through personal engagement, the official Twitter page (@BBOG_Nigeria) functioned as the central platform for articulating the movement's collective voice and core values, by officially sharing the sentiments and ideologies of the campaign. The page consistently served as a trustworthy resource of information about the movement, news about forthcoming events, and updates about the abducted Chibok girls, their families, and their communities. The page is dedicated exclusively to the movement's objectives, disseminating necessary information and, at the same time, serving as a platform to document essential details about upcoming events, processions, and more. The page pinned a link to the official website of the movement where more information about past events, upcoming events, news stories, and much more information can be found. A description of the mission of the organisation on their profile reads: "A diverse group of citizens advocating for speedy and effective search and rescue of all our abducted girls and for a rapid containment and quelling of insurgency in Nigeria" (<https://bringbackourgirls.ng/>). On the profile, page organisers assert their core value, which is ensuring the well-being of humanity.

Twitter has a special feature that marks active and verified user accounts with a blue tick, recognising them as credible users of the platform. The accounts of @obyezeks and @Aisha Yesufu have gone through the verification process, with their pages stamped with blue tick mark. Another way ethos is presented on Twitter is through the interaction and networking process between the conveners and the users of the platform. The regularity of these tweets establishes familiarity among individuals who frequently encounter the content, especially

because when a follower encounter posts from a user they had previously engaged with, it enhances the credibility of the creator of the post. The integrity and reliability of the person tweeting enhance the effectiveness of the persuasion techniques used, making them more appealing to the target audience.

Building on this understanding of how the individual credibility of the convenors is established and perceived in the Twitter discourse, the following section turns to the broader rhetorical strategies that shape the collective memory work of the #BBOG campaign through slogans of remembrance. I analyse the rhetoric of ethos, logos, and pathos of collective memory reflected in the #BBOG online discourse, based on the different slogans of remembrance that emerged on Twitter and the digital space. Specifically, I examine how these slogans that represent remembrance, hope, responsibility, and freedom evolved and were used during the first seven anniversaries of the Chibok girls' abduction

5.1.1. "They Will Never be Forgotten", #NeverToBeForgotten

Shortly before the first anniversary of the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction in 2015, the phrase "Never to Be Forgotten" emerged as a dominant textual refrain, soon converting into the hashtag #NeverToBeForgotten. This pivot signalled a transformation from rescue-oriented protest to commemorative activism. The abduction was an unprecedented event in Nigeria's history, quickly becoming an impactful and unforgettable experience for both individual citizens and the nation as a whole. Aisha Yesufu, describing the event in a tweet, asserts that the abducted Chibok schoolgirls "...are not just numbers. They are children who went to school and never returned home. Their parents are waiting for the #ChibokGirls...#NeverToBeForgotten... #BringBackOurGirls" @AishaYesufu. This statement captures the deep pain and unresolved grief the girls' abduction caused their families, who are still waiting for the return of their daughters. It is also a reminder that there are human faces in the form of daughters, sisters, and students behind the numbers and statistics. The plea here is one of remembrance, a call not to let the world forget these young girls who were snatched from their families and communities and had their future stolen. Yesufu urges netizens to remember them and to honour their humanity and the enduring pain inflicted on their families and immediate community. In addition to calling for justice, Yesufu demands the world not to ignore the victims' suffering. As indicated by the hashtag, #NeverToBeForgotten is a reminder that remembrance is not passive but active. The hashtag fuels the ongoing calls for justice, action, and change, ensuring that such tragedies cease to occur. For the parents and the immediate community, remembering is an act of love, a persistent plea for the return and the

total restoration of the dreams of their daughters. Advocates, by sharing posts on social media with hashtags, ensure that the schoolgirls' memories endure, demanding humanity not to abandon the Chibok girls.

The activists challenged the silence that had inevitably contributed to a cultural, national, and even international “forgetting” of the event over time. Forgetting the ordeal of the Chibok girls is comparable to erasing the collective memory of the schoolgirls' experiences and the impact their abduction had on every facet of society. This impact includes a noticeable collapse of the educational sector, especially in the northeastern part of the country, where children are afraid to go to school to avoid being the next victims of the insecurity in their vicinity. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that by 2018, over 1,400 schools had been destroyed and more than 2,295 teachers killed in the northeast since the early 2010s. Additionally, the World Bank's data¹⁴ indicate that Nigeria's national primary school enrolment rates have plummeted, reflecting the broader impact of insecurity on education. Throughout the years of the #BBOG movement, the slogan “Never to be forgotten” held great significance, almost becoming the essence of the campaign.

In 2019 and 2020, another variant of the slogan emerged in the online discourse, “They will never be forgotten.” This was used broadly in tweets that mentioned all cases of abducted women and girls by Boko Haram at different times between the period of 2014 and 2019. The expression depicts two constructs. Firstly, it is an expressed determination and persistence to keep the memory of the Chibok girls alive in the digital space. Secondly, it expresses the futurity and implementation of different strategies and methods to keep the discourse of the girls and their plight a dominant conversation in the digital space and the society. The reference to “they” in the slogan was an advocacy for the Chibok girls, Leah Sharibu and Alice Nggadah, who were also abducted by Boko Haram. In February 2018, there was another mass abduction of 112 schoolgirls between the ages of 11 and 19 from their school in Dapchi. All the schoolgirls were later released, except for Leah Sharibu (aged 14 at that time), who had refused to renounce her Christian faith. Alice Nggadah, a humanitarian aid worker with the UNICEF was also abducted in March of 2018. A post on the movement's official handle, @BBOG_Nigeria, states “We invite you to join today's march for 112 #ChibokGirls #LeahSharibu #AliceNggadah All other abductees Our demand has been & remains - #BringBackOurGirls Date: Tuesday 22nd January 2019 Time: 9AM Venue: Unity Fountain, Abuja...#NeverToBeForgotten #BBOG”. These three separate experiences were used as cases to represent all the women and girls who

¹⁴ (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.ENRR?locations=NG&utm_source=chatgpt.com).

were captured on different occasions and were being held in captivity. The post radiates the enduring spirit of remembrance and the relentless pursuit of justice for all those in Boko Haram's captivity. The appeal addresses not just netizens but the nation and the rest of the world, to be compassionate and actively work towards alleviating ongoing suffering. Each name mentioned #ChibokGirls, #LeahSharibu, #AliceNgadda, embodies narratives of loss, of waiting, of anticipation, and of hope that has remained resilient. The march organised symbolises an active resistance against forgetting, serving as a bridge between memory and action, between grief and hope. To participate in the march is to remember and be the voice of the victims. More than just imperative appeals, the hashtag #NeverToBeForgotten, accompanied by #BringBackOurGirls, commits their users to preserve the victims' memories until their liberation. Through remembrance, the victims are honoured, and through collective action, the rest of the world is reminded to remain hopeful that the girls will be returned home.

Collective memory significantly influences our understanding of historical events as the frameworks we develop reflect our interpretation of the past. Collective memory intertwines silence and forgetting indicating that what a community remembers is often shaped by intentional silences, where uncomfortable or contentious aspects of history are left unspoken, thereby fading from collective awareness. Indeed, people always selectively remember past experiences, occasionally missing, forgetting, or deliberately omitting key information. However, these omissions may become the centre of discourse as time passes. In daily conversations and interactions, there is a strong inclination associating memory with our capacity to recall the past. As Bartoletti suggests, we often perceive remembering favourably and forgetting negatively (8). However, various factors shape our perceptions and memories of past experiences, leading to narratives that selectively recall certain aspects and omit others. The structured and accepted account benefits from these selective memories, which differentiate between remembered scenarios and those intentionally ignored or forgotten. The new narrative of recollected fragments transforms into collective memory, thereby embodying a constant process of reorganising and revisiting the past in the present.

Memory is a complex and multifaceted aspect of human experience, encompassing emotions, creativity, empathy, reasoning, and sensory insight. In online activism and social dialogue, users are highly dependent on their ability to remember experiences that shape their trajectories for online activism. They constantly shape and restructure their campaigns with new phrases and dialogue, fearing that if they choose to stay silent or inevitably forget, they may lose sight of what may be considered relevant in the society. Individuals consistently seek methods to preserve and protect their memories, whether through internal processes such as

thoughts and recalling memories in their minds or external methods like archives, museums, monuments, books, digital storage devices, and social media, to avoid the forgetting of historical events. For the #BBOG movement, adopting slogans like “never to be forgotten” and “they will never be forgotten” in remembrance of the girls consolidates support for the victims and their families as the years pass, safeguarding their memories in the digital space with key hashtags.

Characterised by pathos, posts with #NeverToBeForgotten demanded empathy from social media users, encouraging them to share and retweet. The process involved the act of influencing the audience by stimulating specific emotions based on their beliefs, consequently guiding them towards the desired response. The words ‘never to forget’ stirs sentiments that elicit emotions on two opposite spectrums. It evokes the feelings of sorrow, grief, and loss on one hand and, at the same time, feelings of respect, recognition, and honour on the other. The emotional appeal of the hashtag prompts the reader of the tweet to form an emphatic connection with the message to which the conveners appeal. The emotional appeals employed included the technique of telling true life stories about the girls and information the Chibok girls themselves do not know as they remained in captivity. Tweets often included direct references to parents’ ongoing emotional grief, weaving personal stories into the broader vow of remembrance. Rather than focus solely on the government’s failures, the movement used each retelling as a moral call to maintain global awareness. The emotional appeal intensified significantly when referencing newly discovered tragedies – for instance, in reference to parents who succumbed to grief or families massacred by insurgents. In 2019, Aisha Yesufu recounted the stories of two Chibok girls on the 5th anniversary of their abduction:

“Mary Dama. Her mother died of stroke in 2015. The mother never had BP [High Blood Pressure] until after her daughter’s abduction. Her father & eldest brother were shot dead by Boko Haram in front of their house in 2017 #ChibokGirls #5YearsTooLong #NeverToBeForgotten...” @AishaYesufu

“Dorcas Yakubu was the youngest amongst the #ChibokGirls. She was 15 and now 20. Her Mother has been battling heart related problems since her abduction and had stroke a few weeks ago #ChibokGirls #5YearsTooLong #NeverToBeForgotten...” @AishaYesufu.

Incorporating empathetic characters into a narrative enhances pathos, as it enables readers to emotionally identify with the Chibok girls and their families, thereby motivating them to actively participate in the movement and honour their memory. The tragedy that befell Mary Dama’s family invokes empathy for her and the other victims in the story. Consequently, in the event of her release from Boko Haram’s captivity, she would be forced to relive a renewed

sense of trauma, discovering that her captors had also taken the lives of all other members of her family. This family's suffering is a vivid emotional illustration of ceaseless distress and sorrow, marked by a succession of different afflictions that are difficult to come to terms with even with the passage of time.

Dorcas Yakubu's story involves the reader of the tweet emotionally so as to feel her mother's pain and suffering, stemming from a heart-related condition that culminated in a stroke. The inclusion of such stories and sympathetic characters in the campaign to remember the girls and advocate for their freedom immerses the reader of such tweets into the girls' experiences and plights. The reader may experience a variety of unpleasant emotions and hence feel the need to share the information on their timelines or join the movement, thereby increasing the visibility of the stories online. Amy Coplan sees empathy as "a complex imaginative process in which an observer simulates another person's situated psychological state while maintaining a clear self-other differentiation" (5). The empathic feeling for others is a rhetorical strategy, representing a purposeful decision to establish a connection with someone else, in this case, the Chibok girls and their families. It is also an involuntary, emotional reaction to the experiences of others that may occur frequently when one encounters the information repeatedly, or when the subliminal thoughts resurface. It entails an emotional response that aligns with the circumstances of another person. The arousal of empathy becomes possible through perspective-taking, a cognitive process where an individual attempts to understand and feel what another person is experiencing. This involves imagining oneself in the situation of the victims described in a narrative, thereby forming a stronger emotional connection and understanding of their feelings. By mentally placing themselves in the victims' position, individuals can experience emotions similar to those of the victims, enhancing empathetic responses. In a post Ezekwesili evokes emotions of determination that is resolute in the advocacy for the victims of Boko Haram: "Our #ChibokGirls and #LeahSharibu are #NeverToBeForgotten. It was a pledge we made and shall ever stay true to until they are all brought back. The #CountDown is on". @obyzezs. The foundational concepts of Aristotle's rhetoric on logos involves appealing to the target audience's rationality and logic. This is in most cases achieved by presenting facts, evidence, and logical reasoning to the occurrence of an event. Without these factors, arguments may seem weak or unsupported, thus failing to persuade an audience but may do the opposite by creating doubts. The logical argument of the slogan implies that remembering the past, be it positive or negative establishes social justice and stability while simultaneously offering lessons for future action.

The slogan “Never to be forgotten”, however, did not solely evoke pathos but was also used to support logical arguments for remembering the tragic case of Chibok. It highlights the role of cultural memory in prompting informed decisions and practices for engendering better societies. Providing deductive reasoning, the movement reiterated their goals by logically keeping record of all Boko Haram’s atrocities, “We begin our proceedings today on: - Day 1,618 of abduction for our #ChibokGirls - Day 211 of the abduction of #LeahSharibu and 5 #DapchiGirls yet to be accounted for - Day 201 since the abduction of 3 #RannWomen #BringBackOurGirls #WhereIsLeahSharibu #NeverToBeForgotten” @BBOG_Nigeria. Through observation, activists draw conclusions on the need to act urgently, as no child should be denied their youth and innocence or be held in captivity even for a day. Several posts employed this method to track the duration of the girls’ captivity. Typically, a single standalone post detailing the girls’ plight or the length of their captivity may not persuade a reader. However, the daily repetition of tweets and retweets by the collective continually presents facts about the victims, reinforces neural connections associated with memory formation and keeps the information ever fresh in mind.

In summary, the slogan “Never to be forgotten” was a rhetorical approach that addressed the creeping danger of “forgetting,” a phenomenon that often plagues protracted crises once initial media interest fades. By consistently rewriting the abductions into the present, the BBOG campaign expanded its activism to the plane of cultural memory. These tweets were often laced with emotive triggers and explicitly declared that the girls “will never be forgotten.” Activists resisted any drift toward historical erasure or public complacency. They affirmed that the time dimension – whether it be months or years – would not diminish the tragedy’s moral urgency.

5.1.2. “No More Excuses”, “No More Delays”

By the third and fourth anniversaries (2017–2018), activist frustration was palpable. The government had made numerous promises, and partial successes were overshadowed by the large remaining number of captive girls. Two slogans, “No More Excuses” and “No More Delays”, emerged to capture that exasperation. Both slogans reflect a frustration with inaction as to how most of the Chibok girls were still held in captivity four years after; hence, in unison, a cohesive message is conveyed that opposes complacency and advocates for a proactive and intentional response.

The slogan expresses a succinct, urgent, and direct call to action to save the Chibok girls. It represents a critical moment where patience has been exhausted and where immediate

action is not just anticipated but imperative. In establishing the ethos effectively, the co-conveners demonstrate authority and reliability in advocating for urgent action. By constantly repeating the slogan in their online posts, they position themselves as leaders who recognise the problem and are willing to fight for a resolution. “OUR #ChibokGirls DESERVE to be RESCUED NOW! Mr. President @MBuhari, Federal Government it’s already #861 DAYS LATE. WE SHOUT: #NoMoreDelays!!” @obyezeks. In this post, Ezekwesili establishes her ethos as a voice that comprehends the situation and is prepared to advocate for the victims of the abduction, consequently reinforcing the message’s credibility. The expression of this tweet is an urgent and avid call to action, highlighting the writer’s frustration. Writing the sentence “OUR #ChibokGirls DESERVE to be RESCUED NOW!” in capital letters emphasises a passionate and emotional appeal that stresses the moral obligation of acting urgently for the sake of the safety and well-being of the abducted girls. The phrase “it’s already #861 DAYS LATE” highlights the duration that has passed since the abductions, reminding decision makers of the extended period of inaction. This numerical information adds weight to the urgency but also mounts pressure for accountability on the part of the government. The expression “WE SHOUT: #NoMoreDelays!!” with two exclamation marks functions as a resolute demand and a rallying call to action, asserting that any continued delay is unacceptable. “No More Delays” encapsulates the intense frustration stemming from the unfulfilled expectations with most of the abducted Chibok girls still in captivity even after seven years. The phrase addresses the anxiety of anticipation, the anger and pain of abandonment, and the hope and desire for immediate action. By amplifying the collective pain associated with lost time and missed opportunities, the slogan intensifies the emotional pressure while also encouraging hope and urgency for prompt action.

The logical structure of the argument behind “No More Delays” lies in its clarity and emotional appeal, which makes the message immediately persuasive. The consequences of delay and inaction compound the problem; waiting has only caused more pain for the victims and their families, making any planned solution costlier and more intricate. Logically, the time to have acted was immediately after the schoolgirls were abducted and not seven years later. To avoid future devastations or even history repeating itself and having missed the optimal window, the next best time to act is now. This is because further waiting will exacerbate the problem; hence, finding solutions now is the rational choice. By contextualising the slogan through the logical consequences of the experiences of the Chibok schoolgirls, we see the reinforced assertion that immediate action is both emotionally gratifying and a rational necessity for achieving the main goal of the #BBOG movement.

The slogan “No More Excuses” is also a formidable challenge directed at individuals, those in authority, and institutions. In a tweet Ezekwesili states:

“Mr. @NGRPresident? #NoMoreExcuses! Mr President? #NoMoreDelays, Mr President? #DecideNow!! Mr President? #ActNow! #WeWantAnswers!! #WeWantOurGirlsBackNOW!”. @MBuhari Bring Back OUR REMAINING 112 #ChibokGirls! #BringBackLeahSharibu! WE SHALL NOT STOP. No matter what Police NG does” (@obyzeeks).

The tweet conveys yet another urgent call to action to Nigeria’s president, who is tagged in the post (@NGRPresident). In this context, the ethos established positions Ezekwesili not just as the convener of the movement but also as an individual who prioritises responsibility and accountability and, in return, also has the authority to demand the same from others. The tweet emphasises frustration with the lack of progress regarding the plight of the Chibok girls. The persistent address to “Mr President” constitutes a direct confrontation with the Nigerian government and those in authority, insisting on accountability. The phrases “Decide Now!” and “Act Now” in the tweet both underscore a demand for progress in rescuing the Chibok girls and a resolution to bringing the insurgency and violent attack on schools to an end. The repeated plea for answers from the use of question marks whilst addressing authority points at the collective’s desire for transparency and acknowledgment of the grief and struggle of the victims, their immediate families, and communities.

The use of pathos in the tweet intensifies the appeal for accountability by connecting to the social media users’ emotions of disappointment, urging them to channel their feelings, sentiments, and emotions into meaningful action by joining the movement or online campaign. The online campaign anchors the emotional intensity of the slogan “No More Excuses” in the frustration and disappointment of broken promises and the ongoing failure to reunite all the Chibok girls with their families seven years later. The words speak directly to the accountability of the collective in advocating for genuine change.

The slogan “No More Excuses” further employs logical appeal to convey that genuine progress requires both accountability and rationalisation. By advocating for the cessation of excuse-making, the slogan aims to promote a culture of accountability. It establishes the argument that excuses are not solutions; they have not and will not be able solve the problem. The message behind the slogan is concise; it leans towards the collective memory of the group and states: excuses can no longer be acceptable; the time for decisive action is now and the responsibility rests on all the members of the collective, community, or nation. The apparent procrastination or evading of responsibility should no longer be tolerated, and the lack of

tangible results in uniting the Chibok girls with their families is unacceptable. They call for immediate action and oppose complacency. “No More Excuses” implies that justifications and valid explanations are no longer sufficient, while “No More Delays” asserts the urgency of immediate progress. Both phrases address the challenges to the progress of the objectives of the movement, whether they are psychological, in the form of excuses, or practical, in the form of delays.

Although the individual slogans are effective in themselves, when combined in a narrative or post, they enhance their overall message in a complementary manner. Excuses often lead to delays, as these justifications directly or indirectly encourage postponing urgent action. Together, they represent a comprehensive rejection and dismissal of both procrastination and rationalisation by encouraging the collective, the individuals, and the government to be responsible and to act with urgency for the Chibok girls and the future of the nation.

5.1.3. “Hope Endures”

Amid frustration, the movement also introduced an optimistic message: “Hope Endures.” Although it may seem paradoxical to maintain unwavering hope, the rhetorical choice underlined the group’s resilience and refusal to yield to despair. The statement conveys that hope remains steadfast even in challenging and difficult situations, highlighting the significance of resilience, optimism, and positivity. In this context, the word ‘hope’ denotes a belief in positive and favourable outcomes, regardless of obstacles, adversity, and ambiguity. It represents a positive mentality that eagerly anticipates a better future, even in the presence of disappointments and difficulties. The word ‘endures’ denotes permanence, longevity, and stability. It implies that hope is not transient but rather has the capacity to withstand challenges over time, thus embodying perseverance amid adversity. To mark the second anniversary of the Chibok girls’ abduction, Ezekwesili tweeted, “Today marks 2 years since the #Chibokgirls were abducted, we continue to keep hope alive. #HopeEndures #Bringbackourgirls” @obyezeks.

In May 2017, negotiations between the government and Boko Haram led to the release of over 80 Chibok girls, reigniting hopes for their eventual reunion with their families. Even the discovery of just one of the girls with a child on 18th May 2016 renewed the message of hope. The campaign revived their hope and celebrated the return of the Chibok girl, echoing the parable of the lost sheep in the Bible, in which the shepherd rejoiced when he found his one missing sheep. “1 found, 218 still missing. Truly, our hope endures! Join us as we stand for them this weekend. #BringBackOurGirls #HopeEndures”, @AishaYesufu. The character and

nature of resilience serve as the foundation for the slogan “Hope Endures” in the tweets. It implies that hope is capable of withstanding hardship and time because it is a steadfast quality. Ethically, this concept of resilience builds credibility because it resonates with the human experience of perseverance. It implies that hope consistently provides strength, regardless of the lack of progress. Celebrating the return of one girl, though returning with a child, possibly fathered by one of her captors, rekindled enduring hope in the cause. This ethos of enduring hope cultivates trust in the tweeter and advocate, positioning Yesufu and other co-conveners as dedicated activists who have chosen to remain committed. This served to encourage others to discover their own strength and resilience and to join the campaign.

Richard Lazarus posits that the central theme of hope is “fearing the worst but yearning for better” (28). Although fear and doubt may surface when desiring a better situation or outcome, the resilience to trust that the outcome will become favourable sustains movements, regardless of how long the waiting time may be. A tweet posted on the official handle of the movement underscores that because the Chibok girls have waited for long, as a collective, an enduring hope is required. “ChibokGirls have waited long enough, Just #BringBackOurGirls Now #HopeEndures” (@BBOG_Nigeria). The rhetoric of the slogan “hope endures” resonates on an emotional level for members of the collective. It draws from the ability to use pathos to emotionally muster qualities such as courage, solace, unity, and inner strength to keep going. The words resonate with those who may feel emotionally burdened by the plight of the schoolgirls, suggesting that no matter how long the hardship lasts, hope can and will continue to endure. The slogan thus offers an emotional sense to those affected and reassures them that even in dire conditions, hope stands firm.

The narration of hope carries a persuasive element. It encourages solidarity among individuals and a collective who have endured similar experiences. It demonstrates the resilience and strength of the collective to hold on to their beliefs even when conditions are unfavourable. In a tweet, Ezekwesili posits that true hope endures despite difficult circumstances: “It is DAY852 of OUR #ChibokGirls abduction. Yet our #HopeEndures. True Hope NEVER DIES. It STAYS ALIVE. WE STAND DEMANDING & HOPEFUL” (@obyzeeks). The rhetoric of hope is naturally rooted in emotions. It is the act of persuasion based on feelings and sentiments. By emphasising the universality of hope, this post creates an emotional connection among the collective, reminding them they are not alone in their fight for justice. The words in capital letters, “NEVER DIES. It STAYS ALIVE. WE STAND DEMANDING & HOPEFUL” infuse a powerful motivational call not to lose faith but carry

on. It evokes visions of resilience that stir sentiments of pride and courage, fortifying their resolve to endure and connect with others in solidarity who share in this hopeful expectation.

Four rules govern hope, according to Averill and Sundararajan: the Prudential rule, which involves dealing with an unpredictable future but follows a curvilinear pattern rather than a linear one; the Action rule, which requires individuals to take necessary steps to achieve their desired outcomes, such as working harder, putting in more effort, being more innovative, or taking risks to achieve the desired goal; the Moralistic rule, which places moral limitations on hope in recognition and adaptation of prudential considerations; and the Priority rule, which dictates that hope should take precedence over other types of wishes, wants, and aspirations (134–35). The #BBOG movement leans more toward the action rule of hope. In its expression of hope, the movement engaged in various activities to advocate for a better outcome. Initially, the movement concentrated on global mobilisation to secure international support, and subsequently, it sought to educate the public about the victims and Boko Haram’s responsibility for justice. Currently, a decade later, the movement’s tactics have evolved from mobilisation and sensitisation to communicative memory activism, remembrance, and commemoration. Rooted in emotions, the rhetoric of hope is a persuasive call to action to meet the initial objectives of the movement and to eulogise and remember the victims.

In a tweet, Ezekwesili defines hope as a perpetual and infinite faith that is consistent and resilient: “DAY663 of OUR #ChibokGirls. Everlasting Hope Inexhaustible Hope. Unfailing Hope. Unrelenting Hope. Hope against Hope. #HopeEndures”, #NeverToBeForgotten!!” (@obyzezs). This tweet implies the unwavering support is required to aid the girls. The tweet is an emotional appeal for readers to uphold faith and remain hopeful despite doubts about the fulfilment of their desires. It acknowledges that the campaigns and advocacy have contributed to the freedom of half of the Chibok girls. Consequently, they will not stop the advocacy until all the girls are back. “Today is #YouthDay. 113 of our #ChibokGirls have had a dreadful 1,216 days taken from their youth! We must #BringBackOurGirls #HopeEndures” (@BBOG_Nigeria). A persuasive tactic is to appeal to the young by highlighting the abducted girls’ loss of youth and innocence. After the first 21 girls were released, Ezekwesili asked in a tweet, “Imagine how it feels for parents of OUR 21 #ChibokGirls to behold & HUG their Daughters after 913 DAYS of their captivity. #HopeEndures on!” (@obyzezs). By asking her readers to imagine the joy and emotions of parents reuniting with their daughters after 913 days of captivity, Ezekwesili instils hope that the rest of the parents will also experience similar joy and happiness. Thus, the slogan “hope

endures” cultivates optimism and the expectation of eventual freedom for all the schoolgirls, regardless of the length of their wait, thereby appealing to empathy.

This illustrates the potential of online activism to encourage global solidarity and political momentum. However, while the tweet frames the release of the 21 Chibok girls as a victory, there is a gap between the celebratory online rhetoric and other complex realities such as the fate of the remaining girls still in captivity. The online discourse on the return of the girls typically highlights themes of joy, triumph, and the success of the advocacy campaigns. These narratives play a role in sustaining engagement, reinforcing collective solidarity, while also indicating the campaign’s progress. This rhetorical approach employed by the activists is effective for sustaining activism momentum in the digital space. By portraying the release of some of the girls as a positive outcome of the advocacy efforts, it encourages continued participation and nurtures an enduring hope that all the girls will be liberated.

Conversely, beneath this triumphant framing lies a more complicated reality that is accompanied by psychological trauma and critical social challenges. The released girls have endured physical and emotional abuse, and their reintegration back into their communities is far from straightforward. In some cases, rather than being welcomed back as survivors, they face the risk of facing stigma and exclusion. Cultural perceptions may cast them as “tainted,” particularly if they were forcibly married or had children during captivity. These issues are complex challenges that require wisdom and sensitivity in addressing them.

This disparity between online rhetoric and offline lived experiences underscores a key limitation of digital activism that has a tendency to oversimplify complex social issues. While hashtags and viral campaigns such as the #BBOG online campaign can effectively mobilise a call to action, they often lack the depth needed to address the long-term consequences of the issues they advocate for. The case of the #BBOG campaigns reveals how the persuasive power of activism (although necessary) can sometimes obscure deeper, ongoing struggles such as physical and emotional trauma experienced by the victims.

Through the use of logic, the slogan posits that hope is a sustaining force, rationally reinforcing efforts to advance the advocacy for the girls’ liberation, thereby establishing it as a foundation for the overall campaign. The logical reasoning of the slogan suggests a correlation between the abduction of the Chibok girls by Boko Haram and the campaign to have them reunited with their families. It indicates that hope is a consistent and enduring element in human existence. The conveners reflect on the importance of education and the need for general sensitisation about extremist behaviours and rationales. Everyone is a key player in the fight against extremism and terrorism. Any form of learning plays a key role in individual personal

growth. The importance of having an educated population in diverse fields ensures the growth and development of the nation. Referring to this importance, the conveners suggest, “We all need to educate ourselves and others on the dangers of extremism. We all have a responsibility to do so. #HopeEndures #BBOG” (@BBOG_Nigeria). By emphasising the collective responsibility to educate ourselves and others on the dangers of extremism, the conveners suggest that overcoming terrorism and extremist behaviours is a shared duty. When everyone takes responsibility and becomes sensitised about the dangers of terrorism and the benefits of peaceful coexistence, society will become a better place.

Also, the slogan “hope endures” offers a logical argument that hope is not a temporary feeling but a sustained force necessary for both survival and progress. It is essential in building resilience; without hope, it will be much more challenging to persevere. Through resilience, it is a motivation for progress that sustains long-term efforts to build and ensure positive outcomes. This appeals to a rational understanding as to why members of the BBOG movement continue to campaign even when the anticipated outcomes do not come to fruition immediately.

5.1.4. “Until all are Free”

By the seventh anniversary (2021), BBOG began emphasising “Until All Are Free” – an expansive slogan that universalised the cause. It broadened the moral scope from one set of abducted girls to a universal principle: as long as any girl or woman remains in Boko Haram captivity – or any extremist captivity anywhere – our obligations do not end. The logic is that partial victories (such as the negotiated release of 21 girls in October 2016 and another 82 in May 2017) do not signal the conclusion of activism. Instead, they intensify the call for the freedom of every individual victim. This rhetorical expansion re-situated the campaign within global discourses of human rights, aligning it with anti-trafficking, anti-kidnapping, and anti-terrorist movements worldwide. Its rhetoric represents a hope and belief that no matter how long it will take, the movement will continue to fight for the liberation of the remaining girls held in captivity. Rather than focusing solely on the Chibok or Dapchi girls, “Until All Are Free” ties the movement’s demands to global norms of dignity and freedom. No one should remain in captivity – whether they be other kidnapping victims, hostages, or forcibly displaced people worldwide. The narrative of the Aboke incident in Uganda, where rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army abducted 139 female students from St. Mary’s College Secondary School on 10th October 1996, provided hope to the BBOG movement. Ten years after, by 2006, all but two had either negotiated their release or managed to escape from their captors. On 14th March 2009, Catherine was reported as the last Aboke girl to have escaped with her 21-month-old

baby born while she was still in captivity (Martin par. 8). The BBOG movement draws inspiration from these protracted but ultimately successful efforts to reunite the abducted Aboke girls with their families, remaining steadfast in awaiting the liberation of every Chibok girl, no matter how long it would take.

Fundamentally, “Until All Are Free” appeals to a shared perception of justice and a commitment to ethical responsibility. The ethos of the slogan asserts that genuine freedom for anyone living in any society is unattainable unless all members share equal rights and liberties. The ethical discourse is grounded in the assertion of the fundamental equality of every person, drawing upon the principles of justice that demand the eradication of discrimination, oppression, abuse, and any form of violation. The phrase is inspired by universal ethical principles, spanning from human rights laws to even religious doctrines that uphold and emphasise the sanctity of human dignity to the right to life and freedom. The conveners, through their posts and hashtags, advocate netizens to embody the virtues of equality, compassion and justice. The principle in the slogan emphasises that the fight for the freedom of the remaining Chibok girls in captivity is the collective responsibility shared by all members of the society. This assertion implies that those who have never experienced the Boko Haram insurgency firsthand, and who live in relative freedom and safety, have a moral responsibility to reflect on their own ethical standing and join in the advocacy to help liberate the victims who have lost their freedom “Seven years is too long for Chibok schoolgirls to remain in captivity. Join us as we continue to call for their rescue until they are returned to their families #BringBackOurGirls #7YearsTooLong #UntillAllAreFree” @obyzezs. In this post, Ezekwesili portrays herself as a moral arbiter committed to the pursuit of justice, as she reinforces the movement’s aims and lends more credibility to its overarching message.

The words “until all are free” effectively resonate with strong emotions of sympathy, empathy, hope, anger, etc., in the collective struggle for emancipation. The slogan’s emotional impact stems from its capacity to evoke a collective remembering and longing for freedom, while simultaneously raising awareness and advocating for the ongoing suffering of Boko Haram victims. Freedom is conceptualised as a work in progress, denoted by the conjunction “until.” It characterises emancipation as a continuous pursuit amid persistent oppression by speaking to the urgency anticipated, hence creating an emotional response to indifferent or complacent behaviour. Even though the slogan leans more toward the emotions of anger, pain, and frustration on one hand, it also appeals to the emotions of anticipation, aspiration, and hope on the other hand. It anticipates a future characterised by complete freedom for the Chibok girls and all other victims of Boko Haram, presenting a vision that motivates readers of the post

to proactively participate in the campaign. By using the expression “seven years too long,” Ezekwesili highlights the timeframe of the prolonged suffering and injustice endured by the rest of the Chibok girls still held in captivity. This also conveys the agony and trauma that the families of the abducted girls have endured during their extended wait, evoking the emotional and cognitive response of sympathy, empathy, and indignation. The tweet goes on to make an appeal with the phrase “until they are returned to their families,” which puts emphasis on the prolonged emotional trauma of being separated from family and loved ones. The hashtags “#7YearsTooLong” and “#UntilAllAreFree” at the end of the post make an emotional appeal to social media users by provoking their empathy, consequently serving as a global call to action. The words “seven years is too long” build a logical argument that seven years is a long period for anyone, especially young schoolgirls, to be held in captivity. Mentioning the duration, the post builds a logical argument for renewed urgency, suggesting that prolonged silence and inaction demands an immediate response. The statement’s established cause and effect relationship suggests that the longer the Chibok girls remain captive, the greater the urgency for intervention and action.

The logic of the slogan “Until All Are Free” appeals to an ideal of common humanity, resonating with various religious and philosophical frameworks that champion the inviolability of freedom. In the same phrase ethos emerges again, as co-conveners position themselves as defenders of an ethical principle that transcends local politics. References to seven years of captivity evoke sorrow and righteous anger, reiterating that the partial releases do not erase the moral debt owed to those still missing. The emotional impetus is clear: if one girl remains under captivity, the entire movement must continue to engage in advocacy campaigns, until all are free.

5.2. Function of the Slogans in Building Collective Memory

Collective memory refers to the shared memories of a group, community, or society, passed down through generations, often shaping identity, social values, and collective action. The slogans already analysed, while each distinct in the choice of words, interweave to strengthen the collective memory and simultaneously advocate for a call to action rooted in that memory. The slogan “Never to Be Forgotten” encapsulates the core principle of collective memory: the ability to remember the past aids in the fight against social injustice and oppression because the collective memory of a group, as seen by the efforts of the BBOG conveners, holds the power to sustain a cause and keeps the demand for justice alive even after years have passed. “Never to Be Forgotten” reinforces the importance of keeping historical injustices alive in the

public consciousness, thereby ensuring that future generations understand and recognise the implications of past social injustices. It ensures that advocates who fought against the social injustice, the victims, and their stories and lessons learnt remain at the crux of the social fabric. “Hope Endures” also leans into this narrative by emphasising that hope, built on the memory of a past event, sustains the struggle and advocacy years after its inception. The resilience of hope is a reflection of remembered past struggles and experiences. It lasts as long as individuals are able to remember the objectives of a cause and what they are fighting for. In this context, the collective memory of a group functions as a moral guide, directing society to acknowledge and recognise its past mistakes and to work towards pursuing a future that avoids the reoccurrence of such social injustices. The slogan and hashtag “Never to Be Forgotten” used in the online campaigns serve as a protective measure put in place against forgetting these significant events and movements, while “Hope Endures” fosters the enduring spirit of resilience, determination, and strength.

The slogans also emphasise that memory is a tool for accountability and responsibility. “No More Excuses” and “No More Delays” are slogans that call for both accountability and responsibility from past failures. Collective memory activism through the slogans indicates that excuses and delays have often been used as justifications for inaction or delayed action. By addressing the use of dynamic forces to stall progress in the fight against terrorism, the slogans explicitly reject the continued use of these tactics, deeming them ineffective. “No More Excuses” directly challenges historical patterns of evasion and avoidance of action. “No More Delays” similarly draws attention to past trends of postponement and procrastination, serving as a reminder that waiting or delayed action exacerbates the problem. Consequently, memory then becomes a tool that holds individuals and institutions responsible and accountable for their inactions or actions. The recognition of past mistakes and failures, which are embedded in the shared memory of a collective, is accentuated, hence underscoring the importance of and urgency for immediate action.

The slogans used in the movement also underscore the time and weight of collective memory. The slogan “7 years too long” refers directly to the passage of time, using memory and remembrance to keep a record of the timeframe of inaction and delay to meet the demands of the movement. The measure of time over the years with slogans edited on every anniversary with hashtags “#3YearsTooLong”, #4YearsTooLong”, #5YearsTooLong”, #6YearsTooLong”, #7YearsTooLong” draws attention to how long the social injustice has persisted year in, year out. The collective memory of the advocates’ posts and hashtags online anchors the significance of time. They are not just a collection of arbitrary years, but a timeline filled with waiting,

promises, unfulfilled expectations, etc. Each year that elapses and expectations are unmet, pressure is added to the weight of memory; the failures and injustices stack up and are directly remembered by the collective. They convey a collective discontent over the lost time in efforts to rescue the girls, asserting that as each year is added to the memory of struggle, the demand for justice grows stronger.

Repeated references to #BringBackOurGirls, #NeverToBeForgotten, #HopeEndures, #NoMoreExcuses, #NoMoreDelays, and #UntilAllAreFree serve as mnemonic anchors that keep the story present even after global media interest wanes. As the historical record accumulates, these hashtags facilitate easy archiving and retrieval of posts, creating a continuously dynamic digital memory. The online environment thus becomes a living archive where each new tweet referencing the day count reaffirms the ongoing tragedy and re-legitimizes the movement's mission. By embedding references to the abduction in daily discourse, the movement frames "not forgetting" as a moral duty. This rhetorical emphasis aims to shame or confront any social tendency to turn the page or "move on". The direct call to memory compels individuals, whether they are local citizens, diaspora communities, or international observers – to adopt a stance of continued moral vigilance. Memory is thus harnessed as an instrument of accountability. The transformation of #BBOG from an urgent protest to an enduring commemoration underscore how activism, particularly in protracted crises, often transitions into memory work. It is not enough to demand justice in the moment; the group must also preserve the incident's significance so that future generations, policymakers, and even the abductors themselves are reminded of the moral outcry. Over time, these calls become cultural signifiers integrated into the national consciousness.

Social media, especially Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram functioned as living archives for the BBOG movement. Because each platform has its own user interface and algorithmic approach, the movement adapted its content accordingly. On Twitter, activists favoured short, pithy statements of moral urgency and trending topics drew ephemeral but intense bursts of attention, which the movement strategically harnessed around anniversaries. The use of slogans is particularly central in communicative memory, where it functions as a rhetorical device that captures the ideologies, shared experiences, and sentiments of a collective or a movement. When these slogans are constantly reiterated by the collective, they can penetrate the public consciousness over time, subsequently influencing the societal narratives of the group. When slogans are used by movements, they instil multifaceted ideas into a concise, memorable phrase or hashtag that resonates with both the sentiments and objectives of the organisation. The persuasive nature and the choice of words used in the construction of

the slogans aim to inspire the public to rally for the cause with the intention to foster change within the socio-political state of the society. Thus, the discourse and narrative capture the urgency of the demands by invoking the shared memory of social injustice.

These phrases or mottos coined to align with the objectives of a movement or campaign contribute to what may be remembered as the “communicative or collective memory,” a construct that symbolises the collective recollection of experiences, struggles, and aspirations of a group. In this context, the hashtags and slogans #NeverToBeForgotten, #HopeEndures, “No More Excuses” amongst others, have become mnemonic devices, helping social media users that come across the hashtags to remember the story, ideals, and objectives of the movement. The hashtags evoke memories of social injustice, violence, resistance, resilience, and the continuous fight for social justice. The merging of an emotional appeal with social commentary in sloganeering can muster the mobilisation of those who come across the slogans, hence enhancing their relevance and impact on socio-political issues. As one can conclude, slogans and hashtags play a role in the formation of collective memory because they simplify complex ideas and experiences into concise and memorable expressions or statements. These digital forms of remembrance often originate in offline commemorative practices, such as vigils, marches, and annual lectures, which are then adapted and amplified through social media, creating a reciprocal dynamic between physical/offline activism and digital/online memory campaigns. In this way, when offline events are mediated or subsequently remediated in digital spaces, they actively reshape memory practices by extending their reach, archiving their content, and enabling global participation in campaigns like #BBOG, which are otherwise rooted in specific socio-cultural contexts. The repetition, or remediation of these offline activities over time in the digital space creates a form of ritualistic engagement among digital media users, turning online participation into a form of symbolic witnessing and affective solidarity.

5.3. The Role of Social Media Visuals in Commemoration and Strengthening Collective Memory

In this subchapter, I analyse remembrance practices that originated in offline commemorative events but were shared, reframed, and amplified online through different frames and episodic events that marked the commemoration of the Chibok girls on social media. I am particularly interested in how commemoration and remembrance of the #BBOG campaign are portrayed and visualised on social media. Over the years, the campaign has shown that the satisfaction that comes from being politically active on social media also stretches to actions that help

people remember and honour the Chibok girls and other Boko Haram victims. These practices and online discourse sustain public attention, foster collective memory, and continually advocate for the remembrance of the victims who are still being held in captivity.

My focus in this subchapter is on the visual expressions of collective memory as they are shaped through online discourse on Twitter. I argue that the visual representation of memory on the social media platform influence public perceptions, narratives and how past events are perceived. I contend that these visual connotations form narratives that do more than just reflect history; they actively shape collective memory by emphasising certain aspects of events through visual representations. I view these visual expressions and representations in the form of pictures and images shared online as acts of commemoration and remembrance. When shared with hashtags, they become primary forms by which collective memory is expressed on social media platforms. Unlike textual activism, which relies on written narratives and arguments, visual representations designed and distributed as advocacy tools employ imagery, colour, and symbolism to evoke immediate emotional responses, transcending language barriers. Visual expressions have the ability to instantly make complex issues more accessible and memorable. This, in turn, can create a lasting impact that may potentially span into a viral online sensation.

The collective memory, commemoration, and perpetual unforgetting of the girls can be observed through the recollections of the campaign's founders and conveners, along with those of other social media users. There has been a wealth of research documenting the various perspectives from which collective memory of past events can be understood. A sociological approach, influenced by scholars like Maurice Halbwachs, opines that memory should not be viewed as an individual cognitive process, but rather a recollection of the past rooted in social contexts and interpersonal relationships (38). Another scholar, Pierre Nora, suggests that we can understand collective memory in the context of historical events and their interpretations (7). A cultural perspective from scholars like Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka examine how collective memories contribute to the formation of cultural memory and narratives (102). The memory of a group can also be viewed from a political standpoint that analyses collective memory in terms of power dynamics, propaganda and political agendas (Serubavel 10). A psychological perspective probes the mental processes involved in memory formation and remembering within the group (Landsberg 45). This perspective explores how group dynamics, trauma, and social identity impact the collective remembrances of the shared experience. Ann Rigney in "Remaking Memory and the Agency of the Aesthetic" suggests that collective memory can be understood from the role the media and creative arts play in shaping and

transforming collective memory (14). She also argues that art, literature, film and other aesthetic forms actively remake memory, influencing how societies perceive the past (19). This approach concentrates on the mediation and dissemination of collective memory across diverse channels, including digital platforms. By making historical events emotionally persuasive, these aesthetic forms play a crucial role in shaping the collective memory of members of the group by determining what is remembered or forgotten. This underscores that collective memory is not static, rather it is continuously shaped by cultural forms and practices that evoke sentiments, command attention and influence public consciousness.

Ann Rigney, in her research on memory studies, highlights the importance of the mnemonic as fundamental in the mediation and remediation of historical events. To her, mnemonic devices do not only serve as tools for the individual recollection of the past but also contribute to the larger framework of structuring the collective remembering and interpretation of the experiences of the group (Rigney, “Dynamics” 345–50). These mnemonic devices, which may include texts such as slogans and hashtags (as seen in the previous subchapter), or monuments, artifacts, and various other symbolic representations (to be explored in this subchapter), function as mediators between historical events and their representation in the present. The mediation and remediation of slogans of protest that evolve to become slogans of memory reinforce shared values, grievances, mobilise participation and action and help unify individuals of a collective. The simplicity and emotional resonance of slogans and hashtags facilitate their ability to endure time, becoming ingrained in the cultural memory of societies as representations of significant events. For instance, the narrative of the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls will always be associated and remembered with the phrase “Bring back our girls”. Slogans and hashtags function as rhetorical devices structured not only to influence public opinion but also serve as symbols of identity, resilience, and resistance that endure in collective memory.

These visual representations shared on, and, as such, mediated by social media have provided a unique space that encourages the collective to actively engage in the online discourse in participatory ways. Unlike traditional forms of commemoration, such as buildings, monuments, or official ceremonial sites and ceremonies, social media interaction based on visuals allows for a dynamic process of remembering, where images, memes, infographics, videos, and other visual content are continuously created, mediated, remediated, and interpreted and thereafter shared in different ways. This fluid and decentralised approach enables more inclusive narratives, allowing marginalised voices to construct and contribute their perspectives to the collective memory of the group. As such, social media platforms

become sites of contested memory, where different interpretations, content, and narratives of the past coexist, interrelate, and in some cases, challenge dominant mainstream narratives. Moreover, the visual culture of social media enables a more immediate and emotionally impactful connection to collective memory. These visual connotations often mediate a strong emotional response that makes past events feel more present and hence become relevant.

Beyond the slogans and hashtags analysed above, the #BBOG anniversaries introduced another dimension of remembering: visual commemoration. Through images, symbols, and shared visual narratives, these commemorations not only reinforce collective memory but also evoke an emotional resonance that sustains public engagement, and transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, making the act of remembering more immersive and impactful. The constant repetition of the same images in the digital space tend to prompt netizens to join in the conversation and re-connect them to notions and ideas that are also implied in the slogans and hashtags. The two kinds of discourse, thus, the textual and the visual re-enforce each other, all the more so as some netizens resonate more powerfully to either one or the other, but once the connection is created between the visual and the textual, their impact is amplified. The commemorative discussion practices, including the use of visuals, become interventions in contemporary struggles that challenge socially constructed notions of nationality, nation-building, and cultural memory across time, as elaborated in the following section.

5.3.1. Empty Seats and Desks

On 14 April 2019, the movement commemorated the fifth anniversary of the abduction of the Chibok girls by setting up 112 empty seats and desks with the names of the girls, symbolising the remaining Chibok schoolgirls who had been in captivity for over five years. Each desk bore the name of a still-missing girl, along with a seat representing Leah Sharibu from the separate Dapchi abduction. This was arguably the single most iconic visual arrangement from the BBOG campaign, which was meticulously photographed and shared across platforms. On Twitter, these images trended widely, accompanied by captions such as “112 girls still missing, 5 years later: #NoMoreDelays.”

A tweet posted by Ezekwesili to commemorate and remember the abducted girls states “Today @ the Unity Fountain we arranged 112 empty seats & desks of our remaining 112 #ChibokGirls and Leah Sharibu our #DapchiGirl... look at the emptiness” @Obyezeke. Oby Ezekwesili draws her audience’s attention to the emptiness depicted in the photo, highlighting a situation that should never have occurred. The empty chairs symbolise three key points. Firstly, they emphasise the importance of girl child education in civil and appropriate

conditions. Secondly, they serve as a reminder that the girls' abduction occurred while they were at school, leaving their seats empty to this day. Lastly, they serve as a tribute and a representation of remembrance, emphasising the need to provide a safe environment for young children to learn and receive education without the fear of insecurity.

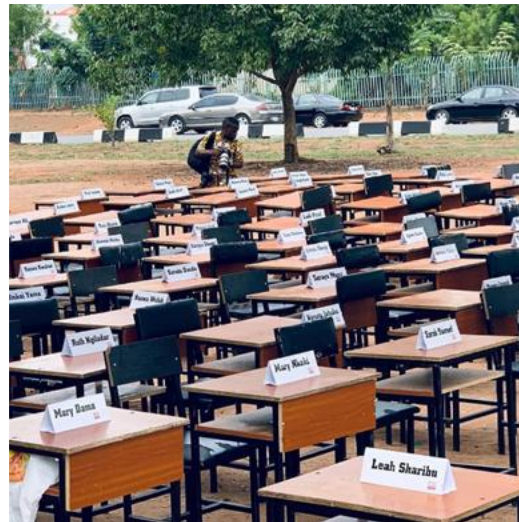


Figure 9: 112 Empty Desks and Seats Tribute (@Obyezeks)

The photograph is set outdoor with school desks and chairs arranged in rows, each representing the remaining girls held in captivity as of April 2019. Each desk has a nametag of a girl printed in black on a white paper. Some of the identifiable names include “Leah Sharibu,” “Mary Nkeki,” “Sarah Samuel,” “Mary Dama”, among others. The empty and unoccupied desks symbolise the missing abducted Chibok girls who as a result are absent from school. This connotes a rapid disruption of education and learning. It also evokes memory, emptiness and loss; a loss of time in educational pursuit and a loss of the girls themselves. The photograph of the unoccupied desks induces an emotional sense of pain and sadness, serving as a reminder of the tragedy and a life that could have been for the girls and their families. The names of the girls on the nametags ensure that the memory of the girls is kept alive. The nametags promise to preserve their plight and experiences, remembering each girl individually by name and collectively as a group. Personalising the loss by the individual names of the girls transforms the installation from being a mere statistical representation into a collection of personal narratives. This, in turn, highlights the distinct tales of every girl. In this way, the movement in 2019 brought a fresh perspective on the remembrance of the Chibok girls. The conveners individually recounted the stories of each girl on their respective timelines. On Twitter, Shonibare shared the story of Rifkatu Galang: “5 years on... It was so difficult sitting at these

desks, depicting the empty school seats of our Chibok girls. I represented Rifkatu Galang, daughter of Yana Galang - a woman whose tears have been ceaseless. I pray God breathe on these calls and cries. #BringBackOurGirls". @BukkyShonibare. Aisha Yesufu shared the story of Mary: "Mary Dama Her mother died of stroke in 2015. The mother never had BP until after her daughter's abduction. Her father & eldest brother were shot dead by Boko Haram in front of their house in 2017...", and also the story of Dorcas: "Dorcas Yakubu was the youngest amongst the #ChibokGirls. She was 15 and now 20. Her Mother has been battling heart related problems since her abduction and had stroke a few weeks ago". Each of the girls' stories shows something about her personality, her story, and her personal experiences. But when put together, they highlight their shared experiences as victims of Boko Haram.

The cultural significance of labelling school desks with each girl's name holds deep socio-cultural meaning. School desks represent education, learning, growth, and a better future for those who have acquired an education or learnt skills. The photograph memorialises the abductions, reinforces the urgency for collective action and underscores the social and cultural impact the abductions have had on Nigeria. It calls attention to issues of security and the need to put an end to the insurgencies in the nation, the importance of education for the girl child, and the rights of girls and women and children. The photograph of the empty desks with the individual names of the girls in Boko Haram's captivity strongly evokes themes of loss, emptiness, remembrance, and advocacy. Each element contributes to the story of the girls' individual and collective experiences. The image reflects the importance of remembering each girl by name.

5.3.2. Ecological Memory: Tree Planting in Memory of the Abducted Girls

To mark the third anniversary of the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls, the conveners of the movement decided to erect a permanent memorial for the girls as a symbol of remembrance and planted trees and tied ribbons to commemorate the day. See Figure 10 below.



Figure 10: Tree-planting remembrance event visuals (@AishaYesufu)

This is how the commemoration event is recalled in the words of Aisha Yesufu:

“Today is a thousand and ninety days they have been taken away and they are not yet back. So as long as we see those red ribbons we remember our Chibok girls that are out there, and so whoever is walking by and seeing the red ribbons it’s just to remind them and say to them: look, 195 Chibok girls are waiting for your voices, come lend that voice and ensure that the government does the right thing and bring them back home,” @AishaYesufu.

The planting of the tree took place in the Sarius Palmetum Botanical Gardens in Maitama, Abuja, and was a part of a week-long series of activities culminating in the anniversary and remembrance of the abducted Chibok girls in 2017, the tree symbolising hope and resilience in honour of the girls. This living memorial creates a lasting tribute, embodying the community’s enduring commitment to remembering the abducted girls. The photographic documentation of the event further reinforces this act of remembrance. The image on the left captures a young tree planted in bare, rust-coloured soil, accompanied by a sign reading “Chibok girls tree”. And the photograph on the right depicts a group of men, women, and children, some in red attire, gathering solemnly around the signpost and the newly planted tree. These images do not only document the physical act of tree planting itself but also convey the community’s collective grief and solidarity, reminding the viewers of the experiences of the Chibok girls.

The tree planted by the group was a moringa tree (*Moringa oleifera*), a fast-growing, drought-resistant tree, the symbolic significance of which was pointed out by Aisha Yesufu in a tweet by drawing a parallel between the strength and resilience of the abducted girls and the characteristics of the moringa tree: “Moringa tree planted for its resilience and usefulness. Just as we have seen our # ChibokGirls resilience # 3YearsTooLong” @AishaYesufu, 8 April 2017. *Moringa oleifera* also goes by the alias, the ‘miracle tree’. Almost every part of moringa

oleifera, from the seeds, flowers, leaves, and barks, to the roots, is edible and holds numerous nutritional benefits. David Mainenti asserts that in herbal medicine, mostly in Africa and Asia, parts of the tree have been used in different forms to treat most ailments ranging from body aches, fevers, malaria, diabetes, wounds, tumours, etc. Packed with phytochemicals and antioxidants, parts of the tree are believed to be antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-inflammatory (1). Using the symbol of the moringa tree as a memorial of the girls in a way gives hope that, though they may be in captivity, they will ultimately heal, grow and flourish despite the circumstances and conditions they are currently in. By selecting this particular species, the BBOG movement not only commemorates the missing girls but also embodies a collective aspiration for healing and restoration. The eventual rescue of the girls would usher in a true recovery for their families and community. Furthermore, the tree's capacity to purify soil and water symbolises the desire to cleanse the community of the trauma inflicted by the abductions.

The arid-looking rust-coloured soil in the first photograph represents the difficult and uncondusive conditions and traumatic experiences that the girls and their immediate families endured. They are resilient like the moringa tree that flourishes even in drought and unfavourable climate conditions. The tree planting commemorative event itself was also a symbolic reference to the hope the activists had amid a landscape of devastation and vulnerability. The tree served as a "living" tribute to the abducted girls, representing the continual commitment of the BBOG movement to see that the girls are reunited with their families. The presence of women, men, and children in the photo indicates the community's involvement and sustained efforts to keep the memory and cause of the campaigns in public discourse. It underscores the inclusive and communal nature of African feminism, which advocates for a collective struggle rather than a movement that is specific to a gender. This reflects Ogundipe-Leslie's principles of stiwanism, which argues that African feminist movements should focus on a holistic social transformation that includes the collective participation of everyone in the community (Ogundipe-Leslie, *Recreating Ourselves* 1). This can be achieved by addressing systemic issues such as political oppression, economic disparity, and cultural marginalisation that affects everyone in the community, both men and women. The involvement of men in the #BBOG campaigns demonstrates that the struggle for gender social justice against women and girls is a societal imperative. Many Nigerian advocacy campaigns that focus on women and girls draw from indigenous African traditions of communal responsibility, where the well-being of one group or the lack-of therein affects the entire society. This perspective challenges the misconception that feminism does not favour the representation of men in the African cultural context. In contrast, it affirms that men also have

a role in dismantling oppressive societal structures and need to work towards supporting women's empowerment that ensures an equitable society for all. The activism for the Chibok school girls, as seen in the presence of men in the commemorative visuals of the moringa tree planting event, aligns with stiwanism's call for practical and socially relevant solutions rather than abstract ideological battles. This further strengthens the argument that when men advocate for women, it encourages a collective effort aimed at creating a balanced society where structural inequalities are addressed collectively.

The collective gathering of the group around the tree signifies communal grief, commemoration, solidarity, and encouragement. The narrative also builds on the unity in diversity the movement created: a unity that encouraged national mobilisation and participation to join the campaign irrespective of one's religious, cultural, gender, or ethnic differences. Even in the darkest hours, collective unity offers hope. The repeated emphasis on enduring hope at annual commemorative practices and events encourages victims' families to find inner strength amid adversity. It is also a rally and a worldwide call for help, with the hope that the effort to free the girls will not wane and that people will stay hopeful and resilient like the moringa tree.

The ecological environment provides the basic physical conditions and framework for human existence, shaping the conditions that allow the healthy and successful social lives of people. The planting of trees as a symbol of remembrance and commemoration changes the shape and form of a landscape. The structured symbols introduced to a new scenery become part of how the place is identified. The act of planting the trees instilled pride in conveners of the movement as they made a meaningful contribution to the landscape and the ecological environment, which is increasingly faced with desert encroachment. They hoped that the tree would not only be a symbolic representation but will also serve as a source that provides nutritional, medicinal and ecological utility for the community and the environment. It symbolises the process that as the tree grows, the remembrance and commemorative practice of the movement will serve as a constant reminder that the story of the Chibok girls will go on to provide healing and nurturing to the nation. The planting of the moringa tree created a special place, a location to visit, pass through, be in and reflect on the historical event. The potential of tree planting as a commemorative practice can establish diverse forms of social places, possibly emerging as established monuments in time and space.

The tree planting remembrance event for the Chibok girls illuminates the community's resilience and the enduring disposition of collective action. The moringa tree planted is not just a symbol; it is a living commitment to hope and resilience. It also is a reminder of the lives unaccounted for, the lives liberated or still held in captivity and a pledge to nurture a future

where such tragedies are not forgotten. By sharing these activities on social media platforms like Twitter, the movement transcends geographical boundaries. It establishes a global community of strength and solidarity that amplifies the call for justice, healing, and remembrance. In this simple yet powerful act, we witness the convergence of remembrance, commemoration, and memory activism, where life and growth echo the resilience of the collective that stays hopeful.

Moreover, online advocacy plays a key role in sustaining memory activism by ensuring that acts of commemoration of ongoing campaigns that have lasted years do not fade out of public consciousness. When shared over the course of time, anniversary posts and hashtags form digital archives, reigniting conversations, urging people to remember a past event. The resilience embodied in the planted moringa tree is mirrored in the persistence of the online movement as well, and despite the passage of time, the online visual representation remains a space for remembrance, advocacy, and hope. Through the power of online engagement, the movement created a worldwide network of supporters who stand in solidarity, continuously amplifying the call for justice, healing from trauma, and accountability.

5.3.3. Visualising Time: Protest Photos as Sites of Memory

With the current technological advancements of our age, online discussions on social media platforms are shaping the way societies engage with historical events and socio-political issues. Visuals play a central role in online activism, they sustain engagement, evoke emotion, and reinforce memory through hashtags. In the #BringBackOurGirls movement, the sharing of personal photographs and graphic imagery became central to the online advocacy, keeping the plight of the abducted girls in the public consciousness. One of the most striking examples of this visual strategy is Bukky Shonibare's consistent use of images in her activism. As pointed out before, she played the role of the movement's "timekeeper" or equally, the "calendarist", with her over 28,000 #BringBackOurGirls tweets. From the campaign's inception until 30 April 2021, her engagement and involvement in the online discussion resulted in the highest volume of Tweets and interaction published by any of the conveners for the online campaign on Twitter. Through her daily posts, she consistently shared pictures of herself holding a sign that calls attention to the period since the abduction of the Chibok girls in 2014 (see figure 11 below):



Figure 11: A sample of Bukky Shonibare’s daily photo series (@BukkyShonibare)

In all the pictures, Shonibare is looking directly at the camera, with stern and sombre expressions, accentuating the severity of the situation. The placards she holds with inscriptions signify the passage of time since the abduction, marking specific numbers of years and days. In all her posts, she includes hashtags such as #BringBackOurGirls, #ChibokGirls, #3YearsTooLong and #NeverToBeForgotten. The hashtags and the precise message act as a collective appeal for ongoing support and advocacy from other online users of the platform. Also, the hashtags not only convey a message of advocacy and remembering, but they also indicate that they are part of the #BBOG organised social media campaign that has lasted for a significant time. The prolonged suffering demands prompt action.

Her daily entries on her Twitter handle underscore the significance of time in the #BBOG campaign. Much like a chronicler marking the passage of time and events, Shonibare’s posts consistently recorded the number of days the Chibok girls remained in captivity, transforming the movement’s timeline into a form of digital memory. Her updates not only documented the duration the Chibok girls were held in captivity, but also served as a temporal structure, providing narrative milestones that highlighted key stages in the campaign’s progression and or evolution. Stages such as the abduction of other schoolgirls from Dapchi in 2018, to the abductions of aid workers, to the release of over 100 Chibok girls after negotiations were held between the government and Boko Haram to release the girls, and other bullet headlines as the days went by.

Her page became, among others, her personal, visual diary, which she openly shared with the rest of the world. Throughout the history of diaries and personal experience documentation, writers have primarily recorded their own entries for reflection, self-exploration, or memory preservation. Most of these writings were often intended for personal use and reflection, but other readers have occasionally accessed them, whether in a manuscript form or as published texts that transform private narratives into public artifacts that hold cultural, historical or literary importance (Steinz 43). However, the daily entries made by Shonibare show how social media platforms have become public and partly visual diaries that keep records of day-to-day activities of their frequent users. Their online pages, feeds, or walls transform into a public diary that is instantly made available for public consumption as soon as the writers publish their post.

The appeal of using social media platforms as visual personal diaries, as Shonibare did, lies in their promised exposure of the personal thoughts and sentiments of those who publicly share their opinions and ideologies on these platforms. Through her daily visual posts, Shonibare constructs a narrative that extends beyond the text, allowing her emotions, experiences, and association to the #BBOG campaign to be visually represented and interpreted. This process, in a way, facilitates the mediation and remediation of experiences by merging internal and external components that overcome temporal limitations, establishing the persona of the individual publicly documenting their daily thoughts online. As such, in contemporary online culture, the daily posts become the user's open or public diary. This dynamic process creates memories that serve multiple purposes. It allows the writer of the digital content to relive their own experiences and memories through the re-reading of their entries, especially when their posts get interaction through retweets, likes, or shares. In that way, people who follow the person can also read the post and understand the shared experiences. This is because the inherent characteristics of social media platforms render these posts public and available to anyone with access to these digital platforms. This leads to the transformation of personal recollections into a collective narrative in the digital space. These posts and interactions transform into public diaries and entries, contributing to the ongoing online discourse. Through Shonibare's daily visual posts of photographs of herself holding a protest placard inscribed with hashtags, campaign information, and statistics, her experiences and advocacy are visually documented. This not only reveals her experiences, thoughts and sentiments but also reinforces her contributions to the #BBOG online campaign, allowing her activism to be processed and engaged with in an impactful way.

With the advent of online commemoration and remembrance practices, social advocates who share their posts no longer serve as the primary characters in the online diaries they create. Instead of recounting their own experiences, they advocate for victims and others. The daily posts become therapeutic not only for the advocate but also for the group as a whole. It turns into a way for advocates to retell the stories of other people through their own words and thoughts.

Shonibare's daily display of the images signifies a continuous remembrance of the girls, with thoughts of them being revived daily through her "visual diary entries" that serve as a daily prompt for online discourse, remembrance, and commemoration. Daily reminders from Shonibare included the number of days the abducted Chibok girls remained captive, as well as details about other women and girls in captivity. Daily online posts by Shonibare documented the stories of all those abducted by Boko Haram, providing first-hand updates on all the cases. This effort contributed to the creation of an online archive that provided information to other social media users. In addition to presenting the daily count and duration of the girls' captivity, her daily entries also provided information on all the victims as the events unfolded. In some cases, her posts capture the exact moment when the event occurred. Online visual representations, such as protest photos, play a powerful role in enhancing advocacy, remembrance and commemoration, transforming individual activism into collective memory. By capturing moments of resistance through visual expressions and symbolic imagery, abstract causes are made tangible, evoking emotional resonance and engagement across time and space.

5.4. Commemoration through Arts

Societies have used arts as a medium to remember, honour and commemorate historical events. Artistic representations, ranging from ancient monuments and sculptures to contemporary installations and performances, provide a means of communicating shared experiences and upholding past memory. By evoking an emotional response, art has the potential to create a long-lasting impact that echoes through generations and establishes a stronger bond with the past while inspiring a reflection about the present and future (Aleida Assmann 37). Various forms of artistic mediums, such as painting, music, sculptures, literature and the digital arts, play a role in shaping how, as a people, we remember, interpret, and give meaning to our shared experiences (Sturken 63). Commemorative artworks serve as a potent means of remembrance, because artists portray and interpret the experiences of individuals and events in a manner that supports the collective recollection of historical events. They also serve as symbolic reminders preventing a negative experience from reoccurring.

5.4.1. Freed Girls Immortalised in Portraits

The historical event of the abduction of the schoolgirls has been effectively documented using photographs and images. These visual representations not only serve as evidence but also emphasise the importance of preserving, remembering, and honouring the memory of the victims involved. In a bid to preserve the memory of the past amid the turn of events, professional photographer Adam Ferguson and reporter Dionne Searcey from *The New York Times* embarked on a journey to Abuja, Nigeria. Their mission was to capture images of the abducted Chibok girls that had recently been released in a manner that had never been depicted before. The news story which was shared on Twitter by the official page of *The New York Times* as a weblink was bookmarked 11 times, reposted 162 and liked 421 times. See Figure 12 below:



Figure 10: The New York Times' Twitter post on #BringBackOurGirls (@nytimes)

The teenage girls, who were captured by Boko Haram, had since matured into young women. In an article titled “Portraits of Dignity: How We Photographed Ex-Captives of Boko Haram” published on 11th April 2018, just three days prior to the fourth anniversary of the schoolgirls’ abduction, Ferguson took portraits of 83 of the captive girls who had just been released (Searcey par. 13).

We wanted to photograph the young women whose images the world knew mostly when they were teenagers, in dark robes with sad faces, from a video Boko Haram released about a month after they were kidnapped. Our hope was to portray them through a series of portraits in a dignified manner, as the young women they had become. (par. 13)

Their intention was to capture dignified portraits of the young women, contrasting the widely known images of them as young teenage schoolgirls and victims in distress after their abduction. This was to showcase their growth, poise, strength, and resilience as they have matured into young women.



Figure 11: Adam Ferguson's interpretation (The New York Times)

The New York Times photo series by Adam Ferguson holds cultural and political significance, consciously crafted to resonate deeply with its audience. The portraits feature Nigerian girls who escaped Boko Haram captivity, depicted in poised and dignified stances. Ferguson's collage in Figure 13, featuring the portrait of Rahab Ibrahim on the right and the painting that inspired the series, Ademiluyi's Tutu, on the left, mirrors a shared visual syntax between the two images. The composition draws a visual and symbolic parallel between the grace and composure of Ibrahim and the iconic stillness represented in Tutu, inviting a reflection on dignity, resilience, strength and cultural memory. This deliberate portrayal of the Chibok girls not only honours their resilience but also draws a visual parallel to Ben Enwonwu's iconic 1973 painting of Princess Adetutu Ademiluyi, known as "Tutu". Enwonwu's "Tutu" emerged in the post-Nigerian Civil War as a symbol of national reconciliation and unity, celebrated for its representation of grace and strength. (Brown par. 2). By echoing the compositional elements of "Tutu", Ferguson's photographs invoke a rich intertextual dialogue, linking the girls' personal narratives to broader themes of national healing and identity. This visual interplay also foregrounds political concerns to wider debates on gendered-based violence. Enwonwu's

“Tutu” was revered as a national icon, embodying aspirations for harmony in a post-conflict Nigeria. By mirroring this imagery, Ferguson’s portraits not only highlight the individual courage of the survivors but also comment on the nation’s ongoing struggles with insurgency and the quest for unity. The photographs serve as a contemporary extension of “Tutu’s” legacy, suggesting that the resilience of these young women is emblematic of Nigeria’s enduring strength. This layered visual narrative enriches the audience’s understanding, offering a nuanced perspective that intertwines personal stories with the nation’s collective memory and aspirations.

The portrait of “Tutu” presents her adorned with a headscarf, typically an emblem of religious, ethnic and cultural identity and heritage. She is draped in a flowing blue garment and gazes away from the viewer, evoking an aura of depth, anonymity and mystery. In many cultures, the colour blue carries multifaceted symbolism: it represents serenity, inspiration, and stability, yet also conveys sadness, coldness, and the weight of pain and misfortune. Simultaneously, blue is often regarded as the most spiritual of colours, embodying the boundless nature of space, thought, and dreams (Charles and Podoksik 25). In the early 1900s, several artists embraced the emotional and evocative resonance of the colour blue, incorporating it as the main elements in their paintings. Pablo Picasso, for example, used more blue and green tones in most of his paintings between 1901 and 1904 to evoke melancholy and pensiveness. To Picasso, as cited in Charles and Podoksik, the colour blue “is the best of what exists in this world. The colour of colours” (26). Similarly, the dark tones in the painting convey the subject’s melancholy, which, in turn, underscores her enduring strength rooted in her cultural heritage. The painting’s artistic style, viewed literally, symbolises the passage of time and the subject’s experiences.

Ferguson’s photograph of Rahab Ibrahim mirrors the same visual syntax as Ademiluyi’s “Tutu”. Ibrahim is photographed wearing a headscarf and dressed in blue. Her headscarf carries layers of meaning, symbolising identity, conversion, resilience, and survival in the context of her abduction and the hardships endured. The photograph’s lighting is deliberately evocative, with the light source illuminating her from the left, casting a shadow on the right side of the subject. This interplay of light and shadow against the black background creates a stark contrast, emphasising her physical and facial features. This duality between visibility and invisibility mirrors the global movement that brought attention to the experiences of women and girls caught in the ongoing insurgency, particularly through the lens of the Chibok girls’ ordeal. Ibrahim’s pose, like that of “Tutu”, is neutral and pensive, her face slightly turned away from the camera. This subtle aversion suggests a reluctance to fully reveal herself, evoking

vulnerability, introspection, and melancholy. Her expression reflects the complexities of her traumatic experiences, highlighting the delicate balance between her exposure to the public eye and her need for privacy and protection. Conventionally, direct eye contact while posing for a photograph establishes agency and presence of the subject. However, Ibrahim's pose represents a paradox of a survivor who appears before the world to validate and at the same time protect the entirety of her experiences from the period of her captivity to the time of her release that can never be fully shared or expressed. Her pose visualises the negotiation between testimony and self-protection of her experiences. It allows viewers of the photograph see her resilience in her calm averted gaze while also recognising the personal boundaries symbolised by her closed lips.

The subject matter and composition of the portrait capture a specific moment, fulfilling its primary purpose of preserving memories. It navigates the delicate balance between the peace experienced after release and the persistent shadow of past trauma and memories. Photography as an art form becomes a powerful medium for exploring the interplay between time and space, evoking connections to remembrance or oblivion, presence or absence. Through the camera's lens, visual representations summon personal and collective memories, reflect current realities, or ignite yearnings for new experiences. In this context, the portraits of the schoolgirls document a traumatic historical episode embodying a yearning for both physical and emotional liberation, freedom that exists within the boundless dimensions of time and space.

The juxtaposition of the painting and the photograph weave intricate narratives of identity, strength, resilience and the struggle for recognition and acceptance in three ways. First, the shared formal representations foreground identity as an aspect of cultural continuity and symbolism rather than mere art of personal portraiture. Second, the posture of the subjects and the lighting convert the identities to represent strength. Third, the act of pairing a post-war reconciliation icon ("Tutu") with a twenty-first-century Boko Haram survivor translates survival into socio-cultural public symbolism. It casts the contemporary representation of Ibrahim as the living proof of historical endurance, thus narrating resilience across different generations. In a socio-cultural context, the juxtaposition represents a struggle for the recognition and acceptance of the experiences of women irrespective of their status in the society. Ferguson's photo of Ibrahim also underscores both the individual and collective trauma endured by the Chibok girls during their captivity, while also reflecting on the possibilities for healing and progress, for the girls themselves and for the nation as a whole alike.

These images when shared online conveyed powerful messages about the movement. Elisa Serafinelli's research explores how photo sharing platforms like Instagram and other

social media platforms extend and amplify the traditional use of photographs. Drawing on Susan Sontag's (1979) concept of the *remembrative* function (1), Serafinelli emphasises photographs' enduring capacity to facilitate memory and remembrance. Serafinelli further suggests that photography, since its inception, has been used as a method for preserving memories. By providing the ability to capture fleeting moments in time and subsequently through the passage of time, it provides access to revisiting and sharing those moments. Thus, photography plays a crucial role in preserving the vitality of memories. In the age of social photography, capturing and sharing photos has become a ubiquitous and instantaneous process, thanks to the widespread use of mobile devices. This shift has intertwined photography's memory-preserving role with numerous social and communicative functions. Photographs no longer remain static memories; instead, they are shared widely on social media platforms, connecting communities and users through shared interests and values as reflected in the images. The 'remembrative' function evolves into a form of collective memory, extending beyond individual recollections to encompass a group's shared experiences. Moreover, the online sharing and transformation of photos through memes, edits, or other reinterpretations do not erase the past memory conveyed by the original image. Instead, it highlights how memories are reimagined and adapted over time, demonstrating the dynamic ways the past can be remembered and remediated in new, evolving forms. These photographs shared online serve as a powerful act of visual redefinition, countering the limiting and traumatic narrative of victimhood previously associated with the young women after their abductions. By presenting them with dignity and agency as dignified and resilient women, the portraits reclaim their narratives, reinforcing the role of visual expressions in remembrance, advocacy, and collective memory.

5.4.2. Sites of Memory; Mural Paintings on Pillars of the Bridge

In May 2017, contemporary artist Polly Alakija was commissioned by the Lagos State government to transform the underside of the Falomo bridge that connects Lagos Island and Victoria Island. The project aimed to revitalise a neglected area, creating an interactive communal space while simultaneously serving as architectural social infrastructure. Alakija's murals, painted on the bridge's pillars, featured women and girls as a tribute to the 276 abducted Chibok schoolgirls (see figure 14 below).



Figure 12: Polly Alakija's Artistic Interpretation (@PollyAlakija)

The murals capture vibrant, oversized faces and torsos of women, each pillar uniquely illustrating cultural and ethnic diversity within Nigeria. Intricate details make every mural distinct, celebrating the nation's rich heritage. The symmetry of the artwork is enhanced by the bridge's structural design, with the bridge itself forming a vanishing point that draws the viewer's gaze to the murals on either side. The bold, bright colours of the murals contrast sharply against the muted tones of the concrete, ensuring the artwork commands attention in the urban landscape. These columns have become monuments of remembrance and homage to the Chibok girls. The reimagined space under the bridge acquired a new significance, evolving into a site of collective memory and action. It became a convergence point for the #BBOG movement in Lagos and hosted various events, including theatrical performances and community activities. The symbolic positioning of the murals, on a bridge linking two critical areas of Lagos, underscores their broader meaning. The tragic experiences of the girls are symbolically recontextualised as emblems of resilience on the pillars of the bridge. This visual strategy encourages unity among Nigeria's over 250 ethnic groups, drawing global attention to the plight of women and girls in Sub-Saharan Africa. The bridge murals also highlight the active participation of grassroots communities in memorialising the Chibok girls. Memorial art, at its core, pays tribute to individuals or historical events through visual representation. By sharing these murals on social media, the artworks extended their reach, mediating the artist's expression and shaping how the Chibok girls are remembered. The photos of the murals celebrate not only local art and culture but also the global solidarity and advocacy they inspire, ensuring the girls' story remains a powerful symbol of resilience and hope.

5.5. Consolidating Collective Memory in the Digital Space

Conventional methods of cultural remembrance are often static, centralised, and shaped by dominant authorities, mirroring the perspectives of those in power. In contrast, as seen from the examples above, the use of digital media has transformed how members of a collective articulate their memories, ideologies and identities allowing for diverse memory representations that influence the collective narratives of the group. Hoskins posits that social media allows users to share their own stories, often related to cultural or historical events, challenging traditional narratives (270). Social media platforms amplify the agency of users to actively shape a society's cultural memory, giving marginalised voices the opportunity to contribute to or even redefine what is remembered or forgotten. The interactive and participatory nature of these platforms fosters a dynamic engagement in memory work, allowing individuals and groups to respond to and address pressing social issues. For instance, as pointed out above, the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls not only mobilised individuals to join the campaign but also served as a digital archive, capturing a wide range of experiences and perspectives. The evolving collection of memories related to the BBOG movement is continuously enriched through ongoing contributions. Kaun and Stiernstedt highlight the collection of memories as an example of "connective memory", where social media platforms facilitate and foster the intertwining of personal experiences with public discourses, creating a broader and more inclusive collective memory (1160). These digital commemorations are characterised by their fluidity; they function as ongoing online discussions that reflect shifting social and political contexts, thereby challenging the static nature of conventional memorials and records.

A growing body of empirical research shows that multimodal representations, particularly those that combine both visual and auditory elements, significantly enhance user engagement and create emotional resonance and invite connection with the content. Van Dijck suggests that this, in turn, enhances the transmission of collective memory from one generation to the next (78). These representations increase the democratisation of memory by offering diverse avenues for engagement, enabling users to connect with a group's collective narratives in personally meaningful ways. By incorporating visual elements and interactive features, multimodal representations appeal to a variety of senses and modes of participation. This inclusivity fosters more accessible and diverse memory practices, accommodating different preferences and significantly expanding the reach and acceptance of collective memory.

The communicative memory of a group, encompassing personal memories shared through texts and visual media on social platforms, plays a crucial role in how societies remember and interpret significant events. Keeping the abduction of the Chibok girls and their prolonged captivity in the public consciousness exemplifies how collective memory, driven by social activism, can raise awareness and mobilise action. Over time, the content generated on Twitter and other social media platforms has transformed the personal grief and outcry of the girls' families and campaign organisers into a global movement of memory, remembrance, and advocacy. Assmann and Czaplicka emphasise that the convergence of individual recollections into a shared narrative highlights the critical role of storytelling and visual media while shaping collective memory within a society (130). The #BringBackOurGirls campaign demonstrated the power of communicative memory by amplifying the victims' stories and using textual and visual representations to engage a global audience. These digital practices not only pressured the Nigerian government to address the crisis but also garnered international support for the campaign to secure the release of the remaining girls. The use of hashtags and visual storytelling showcased underscores the impact of social media in transforming personal experiences into a worldwide call for justice and action.

The interactive nature of social media platforms, which encourages an active participation in user-generated content, allows the instant dissemination of information across geographical boundaries. These social media platforms create spaces where personal memories, shared through hashtags or keywords linked to trending discussions, can evolve into a society's collective remembrance. The efforts of campaign conveners, through posts that include photos, videos, web links, and other forms of testimony, have significantly shaped the communal understanding of the Chibok girls' abductions and plight. The content generated by netizens, frequently updated, shared, re-shared, and discussed globally, has amplified awareness and deepened engagement. This process aligns with Erll Astrid's concept of "transcultural memory" (69), wherein the memory of a historical event transcends local contexts and is enriched by a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. These global contributions help transform individual experiences into a broader, shared narrative that resonates across cultures and boundaries.

Social platforms serve as a mediation of memory, sharing the collective's ability to remember the past through the specific form of media or medium used to communicate them. In the case of online social movements and campaigns like the #BBOG campaign, we see that the accessibility and immediacy of social media allowed for real-time engagement in the online discourse as events were happening. This enabled a continuous flow of information that

generated an emotional response to the experiences of the Chibok girls. This framing of the collective memory of the group, often generated around a trending hashtag, slogan or trending visuals, continuously remediates and renews the discourse in the public sphere. It also establishes an online archive or record of the online discourse, which can be found by searching for the hashtag or keywords. Hoskins argues that such mediation processes and user-generated content are not passive; rather, they influence how individuals and society interpret past events (272). Through social media memory activism, recollections of historical events are presented, reshaped, and remembered in ways that emphasise the collective identity of the members of a group. This also promotes solidarity from other social media users, ultimately altering the historical narrative to reflect ongoing social concerns and aspirations of an online campaign.

Furthermore, the mediation and remediation of memory through art and structural components creates an environment that conveys societal and cultural meanings, giving activist voices a platform to advocate for a cause and contribute to public discourse. The #BBOG campaign, with its powerful visual imagery, textual statements, and physical structures, highlighted both local and global narratives on gender, security, social injustice, and human rights, influencing how the narrative of the abductions is perceived. As Garde-Hansen asserts, mediated memory can act as a form of resistance, challenging and influencing dominant narratives and at the same time advocating for societal change (15). The framing of such events within the broader context of communicative memory shows how both personal and collective recollections of past experiences shape not only a society's public or cultural memory but also influences socio-political policies and action. This suggests that social media shape collective memory by influencing how societies recall and interact with past experiences.

Using signs, symbols, and narratives, digital platforms have become powerful spaces for documenting experiences as they happen, hence creating collective identities through shared experiences. The images, hashtags, and personal posts shared online serve as symbolic markers that not only record events but also contribute to the commemorative and remembrance practices used by advocates to understand and remember them. These digital symbols, often in the form of hashtags, memes, GIFS or visual documentations, act as modern mnemonic devices, reinforcing shared emotions and ideas around the past events that are remembered. For instance, to mark each anniversary of the #BBOG movement, the online campaign employed powerful imagery and symbols that resonate across cultural and national boundaries, embedding itself into the collective consciousness as a call for justice and solidarity for all the victims of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. This process of symbolic representation and documentation helps unify individual experiences into a broader collective

memory, consequently reinforcing a shared identity of resilience and solidarity that transcends geographic borders.

The analysis of the #BBOG campaign on Twitter over the years shows that interactions on digital platforms contribute to a public, dynamic archive thereby shaping how a historical experience may be interpreted in the future. The nature of these social media platforms allows for a continuous interaction and engagement that enables users to revisit and reinterpret past events. As a result, ongoing practices and discussions foster a dynamic archive of memory, allowing for the incorporation of fresh viewpoints and interpretations. By actively participating in the creation and revision of this public record, users not only document events but influence the ways in which these events will be remembered. As a result, digital platforms become spaces where collective memory is negotiated, consolidated, and solidified, often with lasting implications for future generations' understanding of these events. Social media and other digital media platforms play a role in mediating memory. When used for memory activism, they influence the construction of cultural narratives that shape collective remembrance. Through the mediation and remediation of past events online, they create collective memories that connect individuals within a society or from diverse backgrounds. By participating in the online practice of commemoration and remembrance of historical events, individuals actively participate in the creation of a cultural memory that defines collective identity. This joint construction of memory helps shape how societies view themselves and their past, present, subsequently reinforcing values, ideals, and social norms that may influence the future.

As societies reflect on past events and interpret them through digital signs and symbols, they lay the groundwork for future aspirations and societal change. The narratives that emerge from events such as social justice movements or political protests serve as reminders of collective struggles and aspirations for a better future. Using these online platforms influences the construction and transformation of cultural narratives in real-time through practices of commemoration and remembrance of significant historical events, which, in turn, underscores its importance for collective identity.

5.5.1. Online-Native vs Offline-Originated Memory Practices

The emergence of digital platforms as spaces for collective memory effect has introduced new dimensions in how collective remembrance is constructed, circulated, and sustained. An analytical distinction can be made between online-native commemorative acts and offline-originated memory practices remediated in digital contexts. In the context of the #BBOG campaign, these categories reflect both the origin and mediation of memory artefacts, pointing

to the multifaceted ways in which memory is digitally documented. Offline-originated memory practices refer to content that began in physical spaces such as protest marches, vigils, public lectures or symbolic installations but was later captured and circulated on digital platforms to enhance the advocacy campaigns in the online space. Photographs of candlelight gatherings, printed placards bearing slogans, artworks erected as exhibitions, or murals painted in public spaces fall into this category. Their migration into social media platforms like Twitter transforms them into publicly online archived memory artefacts, allowing geographically localised acts of remembrance to attain global visibility. By contrast, online-native memory practices emerge directly within the digital environment and are shaped by the affordances of online platforms, enabling participatory, real-time, and often decentralised forms of activism and commemoration. These include the use of hashtags, infographic designs, quote threads, protest photos and slogans crafted specifically for virtual circulation and discourse. Such practices do not emerge as a result of offline events but are instead designed to perform mobilisation and remembrance within the logic of the platform often shaped by aesthetic clarity by temporal immediacy and algorithms. They represent a form of digital-native commemoration in which users engage in daily or periodic rituals of content creation and posts that sustain the visibility of a hashtag trend or campaign long after media attention has faded.

This distinction underscores a cross-examination as to how memory is constructed differently based on the medium of its performance and utility. As José van Dijck argues, digital media use reshapes memory not as static recollection of historical events but as an ongoing practice of circulation and reinterpretation (17). In this context, the platforms themselves do not just transmit memory but rather they reconstitute its logic, structure, and affective repertoire. Understanding this distinction in the #BBOG campaign allows us to see memory not as a singular act of remembrance but as a multifaceted, evolving discursive narrative shaped by both physical and digital infrastructures.

Offline-originated memory often retains the immediacy and emotional resonance of embodied protest while becoming part of the digital archive through posts, images, videos, and hashtags. In the #BBOG campaign, this remediated content bridged the gap between local socio-political urgency and global visibility. One prominent form of offline-originated memory was the series of annual protest vigils and marches held at Unity Fountain in Abuja, Nigeria where campaigners, often dressed in red, gathered daily (in the first 100 days of the campaign) and annually on anniversaries to demand government action or the release of the abducted girls. Photographs of participants holding placards inscribed with slogans like “No More Excuses” or “Years Too Long”, as well as symbolic arrangements of empty chairs to represent the missing

girls, became widely circulated online as discussed in this chapter. These images, posted with hashtags such as #HopeEndures or #NeverToBeForgotten, were not only visual records but also emotional appeals, mobilising empathy and reinforcing the campaign's visibility in digital spaces. In this context, physical protest sites and activities such as gatherings at the Unity Fountain functioned as affective anchors, becoming memory nodes, that were remediated through digital platforms, hence extending the emotional, symbolic and global reach of the movement. These spaces, through their repeated circulation and digital resonance and use, contributed to what Papacharissi describes as affective infrastructures that sustain collective memory and mobilisation (113).” The photographs captured and shared by the conveners on Twitter of “empty desks”, documenting the previously discussed offline commemorative activity, is another example of offline-originated memory activity, sustaining the collective memory of the girls on one hand and implying the importance and advocacy for the right to education on the other.

Another offline-originated practice was the annual commemorative public lecture series initiated on the third anniversary of the abductions in April 2017. The data highlights that these lectures, beginning with Emir Muhammad Sanusi II's public lecture titled “Where goes our Girl child, our nation goes”, were staged in formal venues such as the Transcorp Hilton in Abuja and later adapted for digital audiences via livestreams on Twitter and Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent years. With each year, the themes sought to anchor the abducted girls' memory within national reckoning over education, security, and the connotation of citizenship narratives. These lectures served as ritualised performances of collective offline-originated memory. Once recorded, transcribed, quoted, and shared online with hashtags and news coverage, the lectures became digitally portable commemorations that possess symbolic artefacts of resistance, sustaining the narrative of state accountability and civic activism. Together, these offline practices; vigil protest visuals and the annual keynote lecture series demonstrate how physical memory rituals are preserved in digital form and also reactivated through platform-specific modes of sharing and online engagement. Their remediation enables a broader, global participation in the act of remembering, affirming the hybridity of memory activism in the digital age.

In contrast to remediated offline events, online-native memory practices and expressions that originate and circulate entirely within digital platforms are not anchored in physical rituals. They are shaped by the aesthetics, tempo, and affordances of platforms like Twitter, each designed to foster participation in the campaign, online engagement and amplify visibility. These posts became temporal markers that formed a rhythmic form of digital

remembering, establishing a consistent thread of memory across years of social media advocacy and activity. Users of the social media platforms, both individual netizens and organisational accounts, participated in these temporal rituals, creating a collective rhythm of remembrance that transcended geography or direct physical participation and involvement in the campaign.

Additionally, conveners and other participants of the #BBOG produced custom digital artefacts such as graphics, videos, memes, and infographics specifically for online circulation. Most of the posts shared by Shonibare fall in this category. These included stylised portraits of the abducted girls, symbolic images such as burning candles or chained schoolbooks, statistical infographics and slogans with high visual contrast optimised for mobilisation and online sharing. Such materials were strategically designed for virality, leveraging affective cues and repetition to maximize algorithmic visibility. Affect-laden digital content shared by affective publics function as symbolic nexus in online activism, enabling emotional alignment among users across diverse contexts. This emotional resonance and alignment does two things, firstly, it fosters solidarity and secondly, it shapes the dynamics of mobilisation by blurring the distinction between digital spectatorship and participation.

Online-native commemorations of the #BBOG campaign also responded to platformization and platform dynamics in real time. For instance, posts using and repeating hashtags, coordinated tweeting around anniversaries, socio-political developments and key narratives became methods of algorithmic amplification, pushing the memory and online discourse of the abducted girls into trending topics on the social media platforms and, in turn, on media agendas. The repetitive use of these online-native posts with key hashtags underscores the strategic management of attention in digital activism. As van Dijck posits, digital platforms operate as participatory archives where narratives and memory are continuously constructed, reshaped, and retrieved (p. 78). Online-native practices and content are not ephemeral. In the absence of formal memorials, they become the primary site of online remembrance, reinforcing counter narratives that challenge state-sanctioned forgetting and inaction. These digital rituals also offer a form of everyday activism, where the act of tweeting, or participating in any online interaction such as liking, or retweeting become daily micro-performances of solidarity and resistance.

Although conceptually distinct, in practice, the digital strategies of the #BBOG campaign do not place a distinction between online-native posts and offline-originated mediated content and expressions. The conveners combined both modes of expression to maximise visibility and public engagement. Rather than functioning as different modalities of

online interaction, these modes in some instances intersect by reinforcing and forming a hybrid communicative ecology. Offline events such as annual lectures, street protests, and symbolic installations or exhibitions were often deliberately designed with digital dissemination in mind. At the same time, online-native practices such as hashtags, slogans and shareable infographics inspired or shaped subsequent offline commemorations. This dynamic relationship illustrates what Papacharissi refers to as “networked affective publics,” where online and offline practices mediate and remediate collective memory and activism through a shared pathos and logos to encourage agency (p. 119). For instance, the annual #ChibokGirls keynote lectures that became annual events starting from the third anniversary in 2017 were grounded in physical locations such as Abuja, Nigeria’s state capital. Invitations to attend and participate in the public lectures were promoted, streamed, and discussed primarily on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Zoom, transforming them into hybrid commemorative acts that bridged physical and digital memory practices. Promotional infographics announcing the lecture were circulated online to attract attention, mobilise participation, and reinforce the significance of the events. Figure 15 below presents a cross-section of the infographics that were shared around the anniversaries of the movement, illustrating how visual design and messaging were used to communicate the purpose of the lectures and encourage broader public engagement. These materials were not merely reflections and invitations of the annual offline events (online provisions were made for virtual attendance); they were affectively charged artefacts designed to generate engagement across space and time. The visibility of the online campaigns did not become accidental trends but based on curated, performed, strategic presentation and affective signalling.

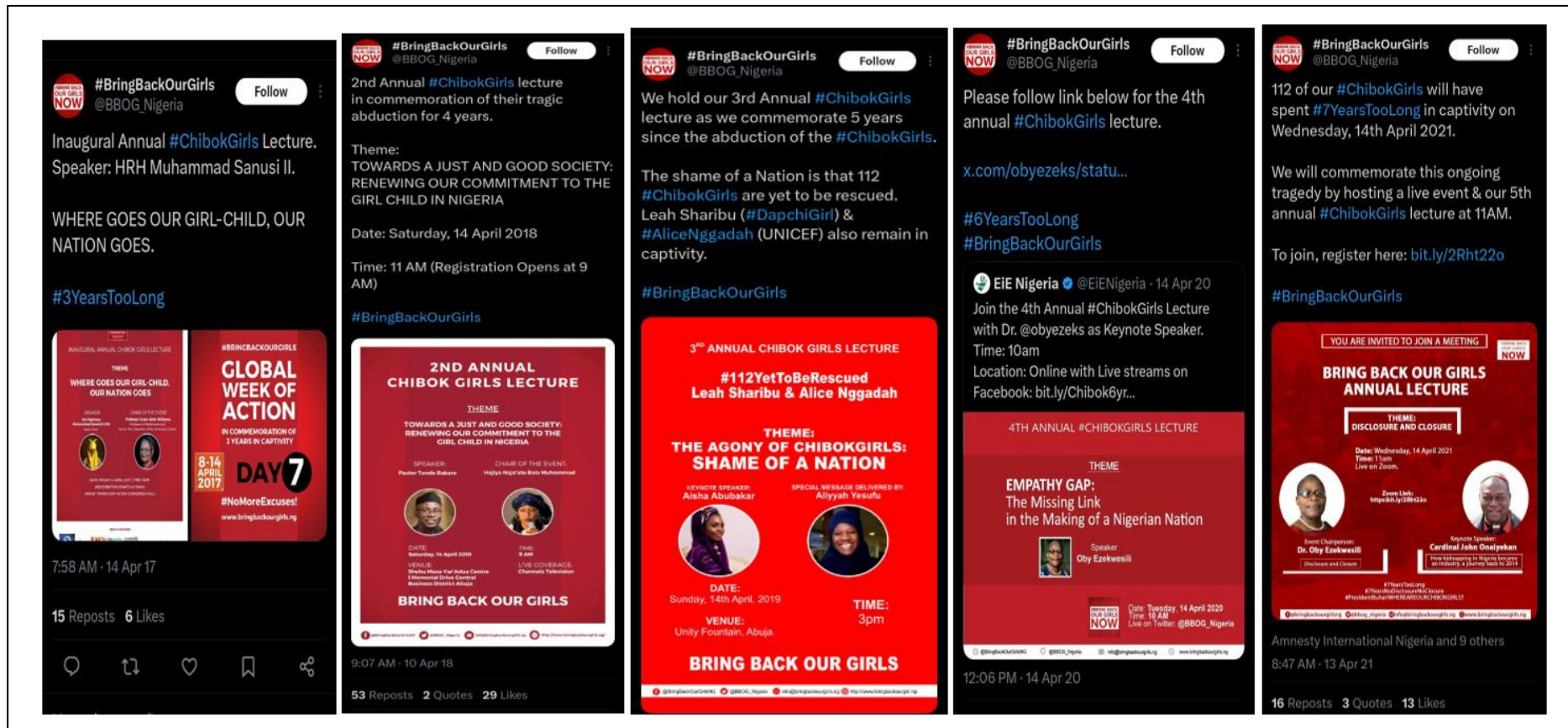


Figure 13: A cross-section of infographic invitations to annual lectures posted by @BBOG_Nigeria between 2017 and 2021.

The invitational annual lecture infographics used visual rhetorics of ethos, logos and pathos using red as backgrounds, detailed and emotionally resonant phrasing and public figures to create a shared emotional texture around the abductions and its political implications. These infographics thus function as visual carriers of sentiment, producing not only awareness and mobilisation but also affective association across spatial divides. They act as annual ritual markers of hybrid commemoration. Each iteration and event correspond to the abduction's anniversary, embedding a temporal rhythm that synchronises public consciousness to the annual remembering of the Chibok schoolgirls. Repetition becomes central to the formation of social memory; it transforms individual acts into collective recognition and acceptance. These annual visuals encourage institutionalising the remembrance outside formal state processes, hence enacting a practise that challenges governmental silence. The choice of speakers for the annual lectures like Emir Sanusi, Cardinal Onaiyekan, Ezekwesili and Yesufu reinforces legitimacy and moral authority. The visuals do not merely commemorate the abductions; they also stage a political counter-narrative rooted in civic agency and accountability. As a result of re-mediation, the infographics become digital monuments that move fluidly across platforms, encouraging advocacy, archiving memory in both offline and online participatory ways. Unlike physical memorials that are fixed in space, these graphics can be searched for and shared across platforms, giving memory activism a digital afterlife that extends its global reach. The integration of hashtags both in the infographics and Twitter posts such as #7YearsTooLong, #NeverToBeForgotten ensures algorithmic visibility, turning commemoration into a practise that is both discursive and technical on the social media platform. This interplay of both textual and visual elements enables the artefacts to become trending discourse, thus reinforcing public engagement in the digital space. Through the use of visuals, the campaign not only resists forgetting but reinvents remembrance as a dynamic, ongoing, and hybrid mode of activism and civic agency.

Conversely, online-native practices often gained a degree of legitimacy or emotional resonance by anchoring themselves in physical moments of protest. These hybrid posts or events blurred the line between digital creation and physical documentation. As van Dijck suggests, memory on social media is always “platformed” (12). This underscores that social media interaction operates through socio-technical systems that encourage the mediating, remediating or blending and looping of online content and artefacts. The distinction, then, is not binary but fluid. What begins as an offline ritual such as a lecture or protest in the case of #BBOG becomes an online-native object and practise through its framing, mediation, and re-mediation. Likewise, what originates as an online hashtag or campaign graphic, or infographic

can reshape the symbolic narrative and participation of offline advocacy efforts and commemorations. This feedback loop underscores the movement's capacity to create a hybrid memory ecology, where both offline and online activity work together to sustain advocacy, collective remembrance, foster visibility, and challenge state silence or inaction. Platform logics end up curating online activity that is shareable, and socio-politically potent, influencing offline projects and physical interaction.

The interplay between online-native and offline-originated advocacy and commemorative content in the #BBOG campaign is not merely a construct of format or medium, it also plays a symbolic and socio-political role. The act of remediating physical protest activities for digital consumption and circulation transforms the original context, with new meanings that construct and extend its resonance beyond the boundaries of time and space. This transformation serves both rhetorical and ideological purposes. It reinforces activist narratives, to mobilise digital publics, and to contest the narratives of state silence and inaction. This process of mediation and remediation transforms ephemeral protest moments into persistent national or even global socio-cultural memory commemorations. This symbolic migration underscores how digital remediation amplifies the authority of grassroots narratives, allowing them to compete with or challenge the state's attempt at narrative and political control. Through the act of remediation, these offline-originated messages are repositioned within the algorithmic flows of social media, gaining new audiences, and connotations. Remediation on digital platforms becomes a strategic re-inscription of memory into new circuits of visibility and meaning and not just a passive process. This is particularly evident in the #BBOG campaign, where the symbolic recontextualisation of offline events become a form of resistance against institutional forgetting. In this context, the remediation process becomes a political tool that preserves collective memory. Subsequently, this form of remediation makes memory contested, resilient, and culturally embedded. It also reflects a broader political struggle over who controls the archive of public memory, and how that archive is accessed, interpreted, and acted upon. The dynamic interplay between offline remediated protest artefacts and online-native commemorative practices echoes a broader reflection in how memory is constructed and mobilised in the digital age. It reveals that commemoration is no longer confined to official monuments erected in physical locations or institutionalised state practices like anniversary commemorations but is now sustained through everyday acts of digital interaction and engagement such as sharing, retweeting, visual mediation and remediation, and slogan repetition.

Whether performed offline or designed for online platforms, each commemorative gesture contributes to a construction of digital archive that reflects civic agency. In this sense, the medium through which memory is circulated and archived becomes integral to how that memory is shaped, understood, and acted upon. As Marshall McLuhan argued, “the medium is the message”, a phrase that underscores how the characteristics of a medium, not just its content, shape the way information is perceived and understood (7). McLuhan developed this argument in the framework of mass communication technologies and theory, emphasising that each medium, whether print, broadcast or digital platforms transforms the scale and pattern of human consumption and interaction with the content. Within the context of digital memory activism, it underscores that it is not only the content that promotes collective memory, but also the technological infrastructure through which it is mediated. In the case of the #BBOG campaign, the shift from physical commemorative practices to digital platforms fundamentally alters the temporal, affective, and political dimensions of remembrance.

5.6. Who Remembers? Memory and Political Silence

The act of remembrance is not a neutral practice. In most instances, it involves a landscape of ideological contestation that either highlights or obscures certain details or historical events. With social media content production, and digital archiving, online platforms have become virtual spaces that resist the act of forgetting. For instance, platforms like Facebook feature historical prompts that resurface users’ historical posts through an annual reminder. Hashtags also function as archival tools, enabling netizens of the platform to search for and re-engage with historical content, hence promoting the act of remembrance. The persistence of the #BBOG campaign exemplifies how digital memory activism prevents the erasure or forgetting of the objectives of the movement. As discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter, the campaign used different strategies to avoid the forgetting of the abduction of the Chibok School girls, especially those still in captivity, and to keep the events that occurred years after the abductions alive in public consciousness. Michel Foucault argues that dominant systems of knowledge often construct forms of institutionalised memory that stabilise and legitimise historical authority. This practice, however, is often countered by what he calls “counter-memory” (113), which he describes as a subversive form of remembrance that challenges normative histories and exposes suppressed truths (Foucault 155–65). Within the context of remembering the abductions of the Chibok schoolgirls, the delayed and often inconsistent state responses as challenged by the conveners of the movement foregrounded the political selectivity of the remembrance.

Aleida Assmann also distinguishes between what may be considered as “functional memory”, which is institutionally established or sanctioned and “storage memory”, which remembers and preserves what is often marginalised or forgotten (98-127). The Chibok abductions initially risked being relegated to storage memory which often consists of an archive of historical data and knowledge which is stored and not brought to public consciousness. However, the #BBOG activism on digital platforms reframed the abductions as an urgent and ongoing concern. In doing so, it activated the functional memory of the objectives of the campaigns, even though this functional memory is not officially sanctioned institutional memory. This form of memory production, sustained through grassroots mobilisation rather than formal state channels, constitutes what I refer to as “praximnemoarchive”, a hybrid mode of remembrance that goes beyond Foucault’s counter-memory and Assmann’s binary opposition between functional memory and storage memory by foregrounding remembrance as a performative practice. The term fuses “praxis” (which reflects active participation) and “mnemos” (memory). It denotes a memory archive that is constructed not through institutional or sanctioned authority but through continual, participatory actions such as tweeting, protesting, slogan-sharing, and digital storytelling as seen in the #BBOG campaign. A praximnemoarchive is therefore not a passive repository or collection of memory, but an active, affective archive shaped by performance, repetition, and civic agency and intent. In the context of the #BBOG movement, the widespread circulation of hashtags, images, protests, and commemorative rituals online not only kept the memory of the missing girls alive but also challenged dominant narratives of neglect and state shortcomings. Thus, the #BBOG online campaign did not only advocate for the plight of the schoolgirls but also exemplifies how digital memory activism, when enacted through repeated civic engagement, can disrupt the boundaries of institutional forgetting and reinsert marginalised experiences into the fabric of collective consciousness. Social media, in this context, becomes a site and structure of the praximnemoarchive, which underscores a form of mnemonic resistance that reclaims memory through participatory practice, where activists assert alternative narratives of trauma, solidarity, responsibility, accountability, and justice. This form of memory challenges who gets to define public remembrance and reframes the moral construct of national identity and social justice. The memory of the Chibok girls thus challenges state-sanctioned silence and reclaims the moral landscape of national remembrance.

The online advocacy also argues that the Nigerian government has not institutionalised the memory of the Chibok abductions. Official commemorative practices have remained largely episodic, often characterised by short-term acknowledgments rather than sustained engagement or structural memorialisation practices. In 2019, Amnesty international reported

that on anniversaries such as the first and fifth years following the 2014 abductions, government responses were typically limited to brief press statements or controlled public events. These acts of commemoration often centred on narratives of national resilience and emphasised the partial recovery of the abducted girls as evidence of governmental efficiency, with little mention of efforts to secure the freedom of the other girls still held in captivity. The state also omitted references to its early action, or rather inaction, or to the public criticism of the government's response. For instance, during the fifth anniversary in 2019, official statements predominantly highlighted military accomplishments and national cohesion, without acknowledging the ongoing captivity of many of the abducted girls or addressing the broader social and psychological impact on the Chibok community. Similarly, Amnesty International reported that on both the fourth and seventh anniversaries, state communications and reports prioritised narratives of progress while neglecting the unresolved dimensions of the abductions and their continuing effects on affected families and communities (Amnesty International, 2021)¹⁵. This framing underscores how official state discourse on the #BBOG movement operates as a form of memory management, where emphasis on progress strategically serves to sideline ongoing activism and a sustained demand for responsibility and accountability.

The absence of a permanently constructed memorial or designated site of remembrance by the state for the Chibok girls underscores a broader pattern of institutional disengagement with the narrative of the abductions. In contrast to the commemorative practices observed in response to other national or transnational traumas, such as the World War Cenotaph memorial erected in Lokoja, Nigeria, the United States' September 11 memorial or Rwanda's Kigali Genocide Memorial, the Nigerian government has not established any formal monument, or nationally recognised day of remembrance related to the abductions. This lack of commemorative infrastructure thereof suggests a reluctance to integrate the event into the background of Nigeria's official cultural memory. As Aleida Assmann argues, the formation of a state's cultural memory relies on "fixed points" that anchor and facilitate the transmission of shared historical experience through material or institutional continuity (129). In the Nigerian case, the absence of such mechanisms indicates a tendency toward the depoliticization or

¹⁵ Amnesty International. Nigeria: Government still failing victims of Boko Haram four years on from Chibok. 14 April 2018. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/nigeria-government-still-failing-victims-of-boko-haram-four-years-on-from-chibok/>

Amnesty International. Nigeria: Seven years since Chibok, the government fails to protect children. 14 April 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/04/nigeria-seven-years-since-chibok-the-government-fails-to-protect-children/>.

containment of the abductions' public significance. Within this context, strategic civic commemoration may be understood as a modality of memory governance that is strategically employed to foreground state-centred narratives of control and resolution while marginalising unresolved issues related to state accountability, ongoing trauma that grassroots memory insists on preserving. By continually invoking the memory of the Chibok girls in online discourse through slogans, images, anniversaries, and hashtags, activists resist both the passage of time and the state's attempt to move on without accountability. This form of activism foregrounds what Foucault identifies as the "politics of truth", where counter-memory challenges dominant historical narratives and reclaims interpretive authority from official institutions (113–21). This dynamic enables the contestation of government-sanctioned narratives by producing alternative frameworks of remembrance that prioritise absence, loss, and accountability over closure or the government's resolution.

Digital memory activism opens new futures for memory politics that can be shaped not only by official declarations but also by participatory, decentralised practices of remembrance. Social media activism, through hashtags, images, and anniversaries, becomes a dynamic site of memory, where publics archive trauma, honour resistance, and hold power, including the state to account. These platforms offer memory activists the tools to bypass institutional filters and write alternative histories into collective consciousness. Yet these futures are also fragile. Platformization and algorithmic visibility is fickle, digital archives are vulnerable to deletion, and public attention is ever shifting to new trending discourse and world events. The challenge, then, is to preserve the affective and political force of remembrance while resisting the flattening effects of repetition and spectacle. As new movements emerge and old ones are remembered, the impact of the #BBOG campaign directs public consciousness to consider what is at stake not only in what is remembered and forgotten, but to reflect on the reasons as to how and why the society should continue to remember its past, and what the political stakes of erasing memories are.

The #BBOG campaign demonstrates that digital activism in some cases does not end with the peak of visibility. Rather, it transforms into enduring forms of memory activism, where hashtags, visuals, and commemorative rituals sustain collective remembrance long after the initial event. Across seven years (from 2014 to 2021) of tweets, remediated protest images, and anniversary slogans, the campaign evolved into a distributed, networked archive that resists forgetting through daily and annual digital remembrance and practices. By applying memory studies frameworks, this chapter has shown how social media platforms function not only as spaces for networking and for mobilising protest but as a site of symbolic preservation and

remembrance. The distinction between online and offline remediated memory practices highlights the hybrid nature of digital commemoration. Together, they constitute a memory site shaped as much by community ritual as by algorithmic infrastructure. At the same time, the contrast between grassroots memory and state silence reveals the political stakes of digital remembrance. The Nigerian government has offered intermittent responses to the abductions and secured the release of some of the girls, a little over 80 still remain unaccounted for. However, the state has not cultivated a sustained institutional narrative or memorial structure. In this void, online users have produced their own forms of resistant memory, forging a counter-history that centres the girls' identities, documents public grief, and holds the government to account. This chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital platforms serve as contested spaces of history, memory, and advocacy. It affirms that remembrance in the digital age is not passive but participatory, not fixed but negotiated and in most cases political.

CONCLUSION

The Power and Future of Digital Online Activism

To summarise, the evolution of the #BBOG movement from advocacy to memory activism and remembering demonstrates the power of rhetoric in shaping long-term advocacy strategies and public memory. Through a careful interplay of ethos, logos, and pathos, slogans and hashtags used for the movement have transcended from mere words to become potent representations and symbols of resilience, hope, remembrance, accountability, and responsibility. While textual elements played a crucial role in the BBOG campaign, visual representations were equally important in shaping collective memory. These slogans and related images of commemorative activities not only propagate and mobilise support but also serve as enduring reminders of the ongoing struggle for socio-political justice, ensuring that the Chibok girls' plight remains in the cultural consciousness of the society. The shift from online discourse to memory and remembering demonstrates the BBOG movement's anchoring in a rhetorical narrative that persistently challenges societal complacency and advocates for significant change. To overlook this evolution is to risk silence on critical social issues and the need to adhere to basic human rights, thus undermining the very efforts that demand justice and enduring action.

Findings from this research also imply that slogans, images and hashtags are instrumental in representing the collective memory and the shared experiences of movements and historical events. The choice of words in the construction of slogans and hashtags used in social and online campaigns embodies the sentiments and aspirations of a collective, serving as a rallying call to action that promotes solidarity and unity of purpose. Digital space transforms slogans into hashtags, connecting personal and individual narratives with collective historical experiences. With the nature of the internet and social media activity, the slogans used as hashtags are preserved in the digital space, connecting different narratives and trends that can be accessed anywhere in the world by connecting individuals globally who share the same sentiments or are part of the collective. Consequently, this process ensures that the narratives of struggle and resilience are remembered for years to come.

The slogans "bring back our girls", "bring back our daughters", "never to be forgotten," "until all are free," and "hope endures" were appeals to the observance of the basic human rights and needs of the Chibok girls, such as the right to life, freedom, and education. In contrast to common belief about social movements and protest, the #BBOG movement was a response to gender-based violence, social injustice, and state inaction, its rhetoric on digital platforms

was characterised by resistance and also affirmative calls for justice, protection, and dignity. Rather than focusing solely on condemnation or blame, many of the campaign's expressions were actively pro-life, pro-freedom, and pro-education through communicative memory with the hope of keeping the memory of the victims of Boko Haram in online discourses in the digital spaces and through offline practices such as sit-outs, walk-ins, and other commemorative and remembrance practices. These campaign expressions articulated a vision for societal reform. Nonetheless, the slogans used over the years, coexisted with significant rhetorics of fear, dismay, disappointment, sadness, and anger, emotions that were integral to the movement's communicative memory. However, the use of these slogans and commemorative visualisations in the context of communicative memory ensured that the narratives of the Chibok girls had a continued presence in public consciousness, infused with the 'hope of the restoration' of their lives. The discourse online shows optimism that surely, no matter how many years it may take, one day, all the girls will be liberated and ultimately united with their families.

This shows that slogans and commemorative images play a role in not just mobilisation but also in communicative memory activism, a form of advocacy that relies on the collective memory of the past and ensures that negative past experiences are not to be repeated. Using slogans by social movements suggests the communicative memory of the conveners over the years. The frequency with which the #BBOG activists complemented these slogans with powerful images indicates that hashtags, images and slogans play a crucial role in the communicative memory of the Chibok girls and other victims of Boko Haram. Slogans and commemorative visual representations aid social movements by serving as carriers of collective memory.

Through UGT, we see that hashtags, slogans, and visual commemorative content serve beyond mere symbols or fleeting viral trends. Rather, they were also tools for reinforcing collective memory and shaping the communicative or cultural narrative. Each time these activists and other users engage with these hashtags and slogans, they contribute to a socially gratifying process of remembering, commemorating, preserving, and reinterpreting historical events. Through their interactions in the advocacy for social justice and change, they form a collective identity rooted in their shared memories. Consequently, social media becomes a dynamic space in which collective memory is consistently formed, reinforced, mobilised and archived for future use.

While the #BBOG campaign did not achieve the full liberation of the abducted Chibok girls as it is estimated that around 80 girls are still unaccounted for, it generated both tangible

and symbolic outcomes. On a tangible level, the campaign created awareness on the plight of women and girls in conflict communities. This heightened national and international awareness catalysed governmental actions such as the formation of investigative panels and the initiation of rescue operations, which resulted in the release of some of the girls. The movement also drew the attention of global leaders, institutions, and public figures, thereby generating support and prompting diplomatic engagement with the Nigerian government. Symbolically, the campaign represented a pivotal shift in Nigeria's protest culture by foregrounding grassroots activism for the vulnerable such as women and children, and specifically girl children, in the society. It also expanded the scope of civic participation, demonstrating that non-violent, hashtag driven social media advocacy could transcend national boundaries, mobilise global solidarity, and influence both public discourse and state response to the objectives of a social justice cause.

One of the most concrete policy developments enacted by the Nigerian government that can indirectly be linked to the #BBOG campaign is the formulation and implementation of the “National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools With its Implementing Guidelines”, which came to effect in 2021. Although the policy does not explicitly reference the #BBOG campaign, its emergence reflects increased national concern over the safety of schoolchildren, particularly girls, in a school environment, an issue foregrounded by the movement. The policy document acknowledges that Nigerian schools are increasingly becoming a target for violence, including abduction, exploitation, trafficking, gang violence armed attacks, civil unrest and abductions/kidnappings among others (3). This acknowledgement validates core concerns raised by the campaign. The policy introduced structured interventions, such as the establishment of Safety and Security Committees, at the school level, tasked with the responsibility of implementing preventive and emergency responses at both school and community levels (16–20). The policy also outlines protocols for safe school infrastructure, standardised incident reporting procedures, and contingency planning. These measures align closely with the demands of the #BBOG movement for institutional accountability and structural reform in the protection of educational spaces. The policy also acknowledges the vulnerability of girls in insecure educational environments. Section 4. “On safety and security of schools during armed conflict or in conflict areas”, emphasises the socio-cultural importance of addressing the specific needs of each student by incorporating gender-sensitive approaches within school safety frameworks (27–30). These measures include trauma counselling, reproductive health education, and encouraging policies that actively combat gender-based violence and discrimination in the education sector. Lastly,

the policy also introduces a multi-tiered governance model that assigns school safety responsibilities across the federal, state, and local government levels. This approach institutionalises a coordinated and sustainable safety infrastructure that contrasts prior improvised measures. Section 2 outlines responsibilities such as the establishment of “minimum standards for school security and safety before, during, and after emergencies” which include the formulation of action plans at the national level, state level, Local Government Education Agencies (LGEA), and the regular monitoring and evaluation of implementation efforts (24–37). These policies underscore the symbolic influence of the #BBOG movement in foregrounding the safety and dignity of the girl child within broader national security and public discourse.

As one of the earliest and most viral campaign, #BringBackOurGirls redefined the landscape of digital activism in Nigeria. The campaign highlights both the potential to effect positive social change and the challenges of online mobilisation and activism. Through the use of social media and other digital platforms by organisers of movements that focus on women and girls in Africa and beyond, online campaigns have been able to advocate for social change, create awareness on social ills and connect local struggles to global audiences. However, while digital activism empowers movements by making their campaigns visible globally, its limitations, particularly in translating online outrage into sustained policy reforms underlines the paradox confronting modern activism. Global visibility especially on digital platforms does not always lead to desired societal and/or structural change. This research has studied the growth of the #BBOG movement from its inception in 2014 to 2021 through the lens of African feminism and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The analysis reveals the relationship between individual agency, collective activism, and the role of social media platforms in shaping contemporary movements.

Another contribution of the #BBOG campaign was its ability to challenge deeply entrenched patriarchal structures of women’s oppression exerted by Boko Haram, to demand government accountability, and to keep the plight of the abducted schoolgirls alive in public consciousness over a period of seven years and beyond. The integration of feminism with digital activism allowed the campaign to contextualise gendered oppression within broader social issues such as terrorism, insurgency, governance, and global inaction, consequently demonstrating that feminist activism is inherently intersectional as it is linked to other struggles for justice such as security challenges, political stability and human rights. Prior to the emergence of the #BBOG movement, public protest in Nigeria was largely perceived as the domain of organised labour unions, opposition political parties, or university student bodies.

In contrast, #BBOG campaigns redefined civic activism as a legitimate, rights-based practice accessible to ordinary citizens, particularly women. By channelling collective advocacy into sustained civic engagement efforts, the movement expanded the boundaries of participatory politics, and citizen journalism. Also, the campaign's emphasis on inclusivity and digital literacy contributed to the cultivation of a more conscious civic public, increasingly aware of their rights and responsibilities in their communities and beyond. The symbolic significance of the #BBOG movement, thus, lies in its ability to redefine normative expectations of civic participation by making it visible, morally grounded and accessible

The study examined how hashtag activism reshapes the conventional propositions of social movements. Herbert Blumer, one of the earliest scholars of social movements, identified five stages that characterise the lifespan of any movement as cited in Porta and Diani. These are: social ferment, popular excitement, formalisation, institutionalisation and organisational decline (150). Since his work, researchers over the years have refined or renamed these stages. Hiller in his 1975 work on social movement dynamics and development organised the stages of social movements into three stages: interest, protest and perspective (343–58). Christiansen identified the stages as emergence, coalescence, bureaucratisation, and decline (2). Sandoval-Almazon and Gil-Garcia propose a model specifically oriented towards cyberactivism 2.0 on social media, which includes the following four stages: trigger event, media response, viral organisation, and physical response (369). The formulations of the stages of social movements are not entirely consistent. For example: Christensen's emergence phase is a combination of Blumer's social ferment and popular excitement phases; while Hiller's interest phase falls between Blumer's first two stages; also, neither Hiller nor Sandoval-Amazon has a decline phase. Although the models vary in their definition of different social movement stages, they are consistent in describing the beginning, middle and the end of every activist movement. The "end" used here does not always signify a total cessation of activity or the complete disappearance of a movement. For a successful movement, the end may be considered as a noticeable decline in activity or the metamorphosis of the movement into something substantially different.

In my interpretation, the #BringBackOurGirls movement went through five stages, cutting across both the online and offline elements. I use the following five stages, instead of the traditionally recognised stages of social movements, in order to better capture the dynamism of social movements that start online. I term these: awareness; enlightenment and corroboration; mobilisation; social action and decline. Unlike in the traditional view of social movements, these five stages do not occur chronologically over the movement's lifespan but

have components that overlap, portraying the complex nature of online campaigns that eventually become social movements. Online campaigns provide movements with greater longevity, allowing them to resurface on anniversaries or at key events that influence the narrative of the movement.

With the internet and social media interactions, social movements are now experiencing a new period where information and communication technologies have become central for socio-cultural and political activism. I propose a framework to understand the place of hashtag activism within the overall lifecycle of a social movement because the previous models of social movements, described earlier, present a linear progression of the movement, and tend to follow a strict chronological order. I argue that with hashtag activism, different stages of a social movement are interwoven. The awareness stage starts with a hashtag online yet goes on to form a narrative on traditional media (the enlightenment and corroboration stage); and mobilisation campaigns are conducted both offline and online. This then results in social movements living longer in the decline phase than they would have in traditional social movements. In other words, the online element of social media campaigns improves a social movement's longevity.

The preliminary stages of social movements may also be characterised by an unfocused agitation of aggrieved individuals only beginning to engage with the topic. This leads to more discussion online, but also conversations with people within the potential activists' inner circle of friends or family members. In the case of social media activism, a user creates a post or a content that points to a grievance or a demand, and those who see this post become aware of the topic and begin to spread that awareness, if they identify with it. I call this stage the *awareness* stage because without the increased knowledge or perception of the topic, the potential activists' ideas cannot evolve into a campaign, much less a movement. To begin making an impact on the social media space, users utilise texts, pictures, gifs, videos etc., so they also use tags or @mention other users on the platform to create a wider reach. The Twitter content on the #BringBackOurGirls created an online conversation that linked people from all over the world instantly and created awareness among their individual followers on what was happening in Nigeria. Developments like this create further engagement and participation. Once the online campaign becomes viral enough, it attracts the attention of mainstream media outlets that create further coverage supporting the activists in mobilising for the actualisation of their goals.

The second stage of the movement, *enlightenment and corroboration* includes traditional mass media that also have an online presence that allows their news stories and

articles to be shared on social media platforms. In the case of the #BBOG online campaign, the mass media played a crucial role in the formation of the narrative of the social movement. Mainstream media platforms can serve to give credibility to a budding movement, hence the desire of social activists to seek the endorsement of their movements through news stories within established traditional media. Conventional media can serve as a link between the government and its people, often influencing the political or social agenda. However, not all traditional media are government affiliated: independent outlets in the print and broadcast industry also play a crucial role in shaping public discourse while holding authorities accountable. When a social media campaign begins to get coverage within the mainstream media, it does not only gain credibility but enhances its chance of an increased reach. While globally recognised media outlets like CNN or BBC can enhance the international visibility of a movement, many traditional media sources operate on a local level and in some cases report international events in their local transmissions or circulations. In such cases, the mainstream media still plays a crucial role in increasing regional engagement and influencing public discourse within communities that do not have access to social media or technological advancements, which can contribute to the broader success of a movement at the grassroot level. Mass media organisations joined the #BBOG campaign through hashtags, and news stories were shared on social media platforms via links to news organisation websites. Some online activists also shared screen shots (photos) of news headlines on Twitter to back their posts and tweets. Locally, many mainstream newspapers had daily coverage of the campaign's evolution online, including the Nigerian dailies *Guardian*¹⁶, *Vanguard*¹⁷, *ThisDay*, etc., helping to make policymakers aware of the campaign. Internationally, some of the early coverage of the campaign includes major international mainstream sources like the United Kingdom's BBC, *The New York Times*, and CNN¹⁸. These news stories gave more information on different aspects of the campaign and corroborated the major claims of the campaign, particularly from a geopolitical and international standpoint. This enlightenment and corroboration stage is crucial for most social movements.

In the third phase, *mobilisation*, the objectives of the movement are clearly defined. Disparate topics merge into a narrative and informal structures appear to guide the movement

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/07/bring-back-our-girls-global-protests-abduction-nigerian-schoolgirls> *The Guardian Nigeria*: 7th May 2014, "Bring back our girls: global protests over abduction of Nigerian schoolgirls"

¹⁷ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/05/bring-back-girls-worst-best-times/> *Vanguard Nigeria*: 8th May 2014, "Bring back our girls: The worst and the best of times"

¹⁸ <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/01/world/africa/nigeria-abducted-girls/index.html> CNN: 1st May 2014, "Nigerians demand government do more to bring home kidnapped girls"

towards a common cause. Activists who sense the need for social change identify those to be held accountable, directing their discontent towards the relevant authorities. This stage can be likened to Christiansen's coalescence stage, which is characterised by enlistment or recruitment. It involves the recruitment of a large number of people to join the campaign. The movement is no longer covert but overt as activists come together to form a collective group, or multiple sub-groups. They become more aware of each other's abilities and capabilities (Christiansen 3). I call this stage the mobilisation stage because parallel with an ongoing social media activism, recruitment and mobilisation for offline activities occur simultaneously. Activities in relation to the campaign offline and online become interwoven. At the mobilisation stage, the leadership group emerges responsible for strategising and mapping out steps for the success of the campaign. Mass protests occur at this stage too. People come together under a united force to make clear demands based on their core objectives.

With the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, the recruitment and mobilisation of volunteers started only two weeks after the Chibok abductions and within five days of the first tweet containing the hashtag. Organisers called on users to come out in mass to support the cause with posts like "Apr 28, 2014. The procession will meet at the Unity Fountain & proceed to the NASS & Office of the NSA to deliver the letters #BringBackOurGirls"@obyzezs on Twitter. This tweet identifies the government establishments to be held accountable, specifically the parliament (NASS) and the national security adviser (NSA). Another user amplified the time, date and venue (unity fountain) for the protest declaring: "Apr 28, 2014 Venue: Abuja, Unity Fountain. Date: Wednesday 30th April. Time: 3pm - 8pm. Let's do this for our girls #BringBackOurGirls". The online mobilisation for people to join the campaigns both offline and online resulted in the activists meeting daily at the unity fountain for over 100 days demanding the rescue of the abducted girls and addressing other cultural and political issues. This sheer determination led to the spread of processions in other parts of the world in the first 100 days.

The fourth stage, *social action* is the phase where an online campaign matures into a social movement. While this can be likened to Christiansen's 'bureaucratisation' phase, I use 'social action' as it more accurately captures the dynamic and decentralised nature of digital activism. Unlike bureaucratisation, which implies already established or evolving but more and more rigid structures and institutional frameworks, social action encompasses a broader range of grassroots-driven alliance and call to action strategies that advance the objectives of the cause. By this point the organisation has taken shape and is recognised as a legal entity. It may be operating from an office with some staff. It could even run a website. Organisers of the

#BringBackOurGirls campaign sought for partnership with other humanitarian activists around the world, detailing steps these supporters could take. In a post shared on the movement's official Twitter page outlined the following steps supporters could take to join the movement: "To organize a rally/march simply send us a PRIVATE MESSAGE or email at info@bringbackourgirls.us #BringBackOurGirls. [The]Bring Back Our Girls Actions include: 1. write and call your government, demand that they help; 2. Tell all of your friends to join the social media march on Facebook and Twitter; 3. Plan a rally/ march in your city. Send us the date, time and location 4. repeat" @BBOG_NG. In this way, the conveners were able to provide information and support on the steps to organise effective campaigns in an organised manner, while keeping themselves informed of BBOG-related activities.

The campaign created and coordinated accounts across different online platforms including on Twitter: #BringBackOurGirls, @BBOG_Nigeria; on Facebook: facebook.com/bringbackourgirls; on Change.org: Over 200 girls are missing in Nigeria – Please RESCUE THEM! #BringBackOurGirls (the petition garnered 1,094,269 supporters); an email address for press enquiries: info@bringbackourgirls.ng etc. The social media platforms provided updates on the campaign, ranging from background information on the abducted girls (their names, age and photographs) and their families, a daily count of the number of the days the girls had been in captivity, artwork, a record of rallies and procession events over the world in the form of pictures, videos, texts, etc. Contemporary social movements at this stage do not just rely on mass processions and rallies but on a combination of different aspects of the campaign and online tools that aim to make the campaign a success. This phase can last for a long time. When offline campaigns begin to wane and wear off, the use of social media and other digital platforms can revive and sustain the campaign for a longer period of time in a cost-effective manner. In the case of the #BringBackOurGirls, organisers still use the social media platforms, years on, to reiterate the campaign's original goals, reminding users that over 80 of the abducted Chibok girls are still being held captive or unaccounted for.

The *decline*, as the final stage, does not necessarily mean the end of a social movement. This often means that the movement has either shifted its values in favour of other principles as seen in the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. The movement which began as a call for the implementation of democracy in countries like Egypt and Syria ultimately led to an authoritarian resurgence, resulting in prolonged conflict across the region. Others are co-opted by other movements or larger forces, such as the #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement which started as a grassroots campaign and gained momentum in 2020 for advocating against systemic racism and police brutality to evolving into a commercialised activity or used for political

branding by corporations and influencers without fully committing themselves to the cause. Some movements achieved success, like the 2017 #MeToo movement, which led to major legal and cultural changes in addressing sexual harassment and misconduct particularly in Hollywood and corporate workplaces. Other movements faced total failure, as in the case of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street campaign, which, despite raising global awareness about economic inequality, lacked clear leadership and policy demands, leading to its gradual loss of momentum and ultimately its decline.

The #BringBackOurGirls still trends every anniversary of the abducted girls on Twitter. Following the acquisition of Twitter in 2023 by Elon Musk, the platform underwent a rebranding to the company name “X”. This rebranding introduced modifications ranging from the company’s policies, algorithms, and user engagement strategies. These alterations heightened concerns regarding the visibility of advocacy hashtag campaigns such as the #BBOG campaign, which from its inception has depended on Twitter’s extensive reach to maintain global awareness and influence. Nevertheless, X continues to be a significant platform for the #BBOG online advocacy and remembrance campaigns, illustrating the resilience of social movements within a changing social media environment. The #BBOG movement in 2024 commemorated the anniversary of the abductions with different activities such as annual lectures, press releases, interviews, and marches. Also, hashtags such as #10YearsOfChibokGirls, #StolenDaughtersOfChibok, #ChibokGirls10YearsLater, #10YearsTooLong, were used on the Twitter discourse. The long-term effectiveness of X as a tool for activism remains uncertain. However, its current capacity to mobilise global awareness on social injustices and other campaigns and goals is evident.

Tweets that are accompanied with the hashtag BringBackOurGirls usually trend a few days before and after the anniversary date of the Chibok abduction. Twitter activity in relation to the hashtag goes quiet for a while and yet re-emerges in different periods of the year, including the month of February, to remember the anniversary of the similar abduction of 110 secondary school girls from the Government Girls’ Science and Technical College of Yobe in northeast Nigeria on 19th February 2018 by the same Boko Haram group. This time, and largely as a result of the existence of the BringBackOurGirls campaign, the government acted quickly and decisively, leading to the release of all but one of the girls. The sole girl not released by Boko Haram, as mentioned in previous chapters, is named Leah Sharibu, a 19-year-old Christian girl at that time, who refused to renounce her faith. Inspired by the feat of BringBackOurGirls campaign, activists took to social media with an outcry to #FreeLeah. Most users recognised the potency of #BringBackOurGirls to draw global attention to an issue and

therefore use it as an accompanying hashtag for their main demand to free Leah Sharibu. The #BringBackOurGirls is also used online as an accompanying hashtag to amplify other feminist hashtags such as #EndRape, #SheCanLead etc. What has emerged is the lifecycle of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign that suggests that a social movement in the internet era can exist perpetually, leveraging digital technology to fuel its continued, albeit sometimes changing, but related objectives. A combination of both online and offline methods of activism confers greater longevity to a movement.

One of the #BBOG campaign's enduring qualities is its evolution to collective memory activism through acts of digital remembering. Hashtags, slogans, and visual representations do more than encourage participation in temporary movements. They have the ability to embed struggles within public consciousness, ensuring that marginalised stories or the plight of the victims of social injustices are not forgotten. The transition from mobilisation and persuasion to memory-building is evident in how anniversaries of the Chibok abduction continue to reignite discussions, serving as periodic reminders of unresolved injustices. This phenomenon aligns with communicative memory, where digital narratives characterised by short-term, everyday memory ensure that events remain present in social consciousness. These remembrance narratives shared online over a period of time also contribute to creating an institutionalised cultural memory of the #BBOG movement. Memory activism through digital spaces as exemplified by the #BBOG Twitter campaign reinforces the idea that movements do not necessarily come to an end but can evolve into digital archives of resistance through hashtags and other online and offline tools. The #BBOG movement, much like #MeToo, and other feminist movements function as a historical documentation of gender-based struggles, available for future activists to make reference to. The digital footprint left by such online campaigns functions as both an inspiration and a warning. It also reminds the world of the persistent nature of oppression while providing strategic lessons for future advocacy efforts.

Beyond the local and national implications, the #BringBackOurGirls movement has achieved global symbolic resonance. Since its viral emergence in 2014, the hashtag and/or its framing in global discourse has been repurposed in different forms by activists, journalists, and civil society groups across the world to draw attention to the systemic institutional inaction of states to protect women and girls. While the campaign was born in Nigeria, with the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls, its rhetoric that focuses on visibility, urgency, and moral accountability, has proven adaptable to diverse geopolitical crises that affect women and girls. For instance, from 2015 to 2018, the Chad region, which includes neighbouring countries of Nigeria such as Cameroon, Niger and Chad, experienced BH's continued campaign of violence

and attacks on communities. The hashtag resurfaced to maintain global pressure in the fight against insurgency in the region. In South Asia between 2020 to 2021, particularly in India and Pakistan, the hashtag also resurfaced in public discourse as women's rights activists repurposed the slogan and narrative of "bringing back our girls" in response to rising cases of female trafficking and honour-based violence against women and girls in their communities. Also, in 2020 to 2021 human rights groups referenced the original hashtag format while repurposing its framing to report mass abductions and sexual violence against Tigrayan women in Ethiopia. Finally, the most recent repurposing of the hashtag was in 2023 to 2024, during the hostage crises following the Israel-Gaza conflict, when some feminist and human rights groups used variations of the hashtag and rhetoric to advocate for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza.

This transnational repurposing of the #BringBackOurGirls online campaign's rhetoric in global discourse illustrates what can be referred to as the symbolic mobility and/or transversality of digital hashtag activism, where digital symbols, hashtags and slogans transcend their original socio-political context to become globally intelligible and actionable forms of protest. This also underscores the power of networked global solidarity to reframe humanitarian discourse in a connective, intersectional, and digital platformed manner. Thus, the #BBOG campaign has become more than a response to a singular event; it now operates as a recognised global grammar of protest that symbolises a flexible digital repertoire for articulating outrage, remembrance, and demand for justice for women and girls worldwide.

Further Study

While this research primarily focused on the rhetorical, visual, and digital dynamics of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign on Twitter, it acknowledges that the application of media framing theory could have further enriched the study. This would have been valuable in exploring how other social media platforms, such as Facebook, that allow longer textual posts, or Instagram, which focusses on visual content, and mainstream media organisations contributed to shaping the campaign's narrative. Within the context of #BBOG, this theoretical lens would have broadened a nuanced understanding as to the different approaches both mainstream and social media platforms constructed meaning around the campaign. Future research could undertake a comparative analysis of Nigerian mainstream media like The Guardian, Vanguard and The Punch coverage versus international media representations that include Western outlets like CNN, BBC, and FOX News, and/or Pan-African or regional outlets

like Al Jazeera, BBC Africa, and Africanews. It can also focus on how humanitarian organisations like Amnesty International and UNICEF reported and framed the movement. Many of these media narratives that had major headlines and breaking news were actively shared on Twitter during the campaign, often embedded as hyperlinks in activist posts. Media frames shape not only what people think about but also how they interpret the message, especially when content is circulated repeatedly across networks. Examining these cross-platform framings and how their messaging correlates with unfolding events would illuminate how geopolitical, cultural, and ideological differences shaped the public reception of the #BBOG movement. The conceptual media framing of protest movements has the ability to influence how media institutions shape activist discourse to fit normative journalistic practices, which can dilute or redirect the message and its interpretation. Understanding how Nigerian and international organisations aligned with or diverged from the movement's grassroots online framing could yield insights into how activism is co-opted, legitimised, or marginalised in different media ecologies. This comparative framing perspective, situated at the intersection of media and cultural studies, represents a promising direction for future scholarship and would build upon the empirical findings I presented in this thesis.

Also, while in this thesis I focused on the specificities of the #BBOG campaign, future research in this field could benefit from a comparative analysis with other global hashtag movements, such as #MeToo, #SayHerName, or local hashtags like #EndSARS or #OccupyNigeria. Such comparisons would allow for a broader contextualisation of how feminist and/or memory-based activism may resonate with different timelines or socio-political geographics. For example, a comparison of #BBOG's focus on visibility and online memory activism as studied in this thesis to #MeToo's emphasis on survivor testimony and systemic exposure could reveal common digital tactics such as hashtags and slogan formation to advance a cause. This angle and research focus could further highlight the strengths or even limitations of hashtag online activism.

Additionally, while this study includes a multimodal analysis of protest slogans and visual imagery of the #BBOG Twitter campaign, future work could deepen this approach by incorporating a more layered and nuanced semiotic analysis of the movement's visual landscape. Examining the symbolic representations of the different visuals used for the campaign through the semiotic frameworks of Sonia Foss, Roland Barthes, or Kress and van Leeuwen's and other models could provide insight into how visual representation contributes to the long-term remembering of the abducted girls. The approach can also benefit from analysing various semiotic dimensions of protest. For instance, 'the semiotics of protest' to

analyse how visual elements and textual symbols, such as banners, uniformed clothing colour choice and hashtags, influenced mobilisation and advocacy efforts of the convenors of the movement. Similarly, ‘the semiotics of terror’ and how the visual representation of fear can provide a framework to understanding how Boko Haram’s visual tactics, including the release of photos and videos of the abducted Chibok girls and images of insurgents displaying flags, weapons and ammunitions as a form of intimidation, designed to assert dominance. Additionally, the ‘semiotics of motherhood and/or parenthood’ may symbolically offer an interpretive lens to analyse visuals shared of the family members of the Chibok girls. From the dataset, conversations of mothering and parenthood were heightened particularly around the months of March, April and May when Mother’s Day celebrations are observed around the world and coinciding with the April anniversary of the abductions. These representations may underscore how parents, especially mothers, also become symbolic victims of BH insurgency, with their pain, grief and emotional suffering mobilised as part of the campaign’s broader emotional appeal. These different angles may enhance a more nuanced understanding as to how the different kinds of semiotic representations influenced the #BBOG online campaign. Such an approach could also trace how these visual texts and representations evolve over time to reinforce, reframe, or contest dominant narratives. I believe these angles would strengthen a better understanding of how visual memory is actively produced, archived and/or politicised in transnational digital spaces.

The digital space presents challenges for online campaigns that demand critical engagement and global participation. Algorithmic bias, misinformation, slacktivism, clicktivism, Artificial Intelligence (AI), corporate driven censorship, and the commodification of social justice movements raise ethical and social concerns about the sustainability of online activism especially over a long period of time like that of the #BBOG. There is also an increasing corporate control over digital platforms: accounts that share unpopular opinions have a high chance of being suspended, banned or have their accounts deleted and permanently removed from the platforms. This development means that contemporary social movements that rely on digital platforms must navigate a landscape where content suppression, data monetisation, and selective amplification threaten the integrity and/or longevity of their activism campaigns.

As technology exponentially evolves, new tools and platforms will shape the next generation of online activism. A critical issue is the rise of deepfake technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools that can generate videos and photos that can very much be misleading or characterised as misinformation (inaccurate information), disinformation (false information)

and/or propaganda. Such information disorders which can be weaponised against anyone highlights the challenges of online activism in the near future. As online spaces increasingly become digital grounds for ideological conflicts and misrepresentation, online movements must develop strategies to counteract all forms of information disorders and protect the objectives of their campaigns and narratives. Also, in regions with limited access to the internet and technology, the digital literacy and technological divide remains a barrier to inclusion for people in such areas. There is no doubt that the increasing role of AI and algorithm-driven content curation presents both opportunities and threats. One benefit is that AI platforms can enhance activism by automating a global outreach effort and enhance the engagement patterns of campaigns. However, the challenge of using social media platforms for activism is clear: will the digital revolution of online activism continue to serve as a force for justice and equality? The answer depends on ensuring that social media and other digital media platforms remain podiums for empowerment rather than instruments of suppression or corporate control. The future of online activism in the digital age will not only be determined by technological advancements but also by the participatory nature of activism that allows activists to navigate and challenge the structures and policies that govern these digital spaces.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Sample of script used in RStudio to mine #BringBackOurGirls tweets posted in 2014 using academictwitteR package designed by Barrie and Ho (2021)

```
---
title: "BRING BACK OUR GIRLS 2014"
author: "BLESSING DATIRI"
date: '2022-07-11'
output: html_document
---
# BRING BACK OUR GIRLS DATA ANALYSIS
```${r libraries, include=TRUE, warning=FALSE,error=FALSE}
rm(list=ls())
knitr::opts_chunk$set(echo = TRUE)
library(academictwitteR)
...
```${r token, include=FALSE,eval=FALSE}
set_bearer()
bearer_token <-
"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAL9HVQEAAAAAwiobvyW8PCe9YA6mbnv3fDUc7
Hk%3DxXRCJ6ul9Nf5dVNpkiKvdtddimSFx5AZ7nmAwNMPpKJjsFmqXE"
bearer_token
...
# 2014
```${r mining, include=TRUE, warning=FALSE, error=FALSE, message=FALSE}
tweets <-
get_all_tweets(
 query = c(
 "#BringBackOurGirls",
 "#BringBackOurDaughters",
 "#ChibokGirls",
 "#Nigeria"
```

```

),
start_tweets = "2014-04-23T00:00:00Z",
end_tweets = "2014-05-22T00:00:00Z",
bearer_token <-
"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAL9HVQEAAAAAwiobvyW8PCe9YA6mbnv3fDUc7
Hk%3DxXRCJ6ul9Nf5dVNpkiKvdtddimSFx5AZ7nmAwNMPPkKjsFmqXE",
data_path = "tweetdata",
context_annotations = FALSE,
bind_tweets = FALSE,
n = Inf
)
bbog_tweets_2014 <-bind_tweets(data_path = "tweetdata", output_format = "tidy")
write.csv(bbog_tweets_2014, 'BBOG_data_2014.csv')
'''

```

## Appendix 2

Table showing dominant themes of the Twitter corpus from 23 April to 31 July 2014 (first three months of campaign)

S/N	Themes	Concepts	Description	Examples
1	Narration of Events of Boko Haram activities	Boko Haram, abducted, kill, Date, time	In this category, tweets reflect on the narration of events, from the abduction of the girls to the beginning of the movement and other Boko Haram activities	#BringBackOurGirls 80 Abducted Chibok High School Girls In Boko Haram Video Identified by parents and relatives ...Details shortly Nigerian teachers to shut schools nationwide, to join #BringBackOurGirls protest News of another boko haram attack in Alagarno village Borno state #Nigeria. Many homes burnt. Reports of 17 dead #Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency says at least 118 people were killed in today's blasts in the central city of Jos Islamist Militants Kill Hundreds of Civilians in Northeastern #Nigeria town Gamboru Ngala "burnt to ashes"
2	Bring Back Our Girls/ Victims of the abduction	Girls, parents, daughters, school girls, abducted	Tweets in this category make reference on the 89cxabducted girls, their parents and/or family and their immediate community	Only God knows where they are and the trauma they must be experiencing now. #BringBackOurGirls" 59 days sorrow and sadness since #BokoHaram abducted our girls. #BringBackOurGirls BBC News - Boko Haram 'to sell' Nigeria girls abducted from Chibok ...#bringbackourgirls Fathers of kidnapped schoolgirls plea for help to #BringBackOurGirls their girls: @UNICEF: This #MothersDay, our hearts are with the mothers in #Nigeria who are missing their daughters. #BringBackOurGirls
3	The importance of education for the girl child	Education, basic education	Tweets in this theme reflect on the importance of education for all children especially access to basic education for the girl child	#BringBackOurGirls #BringBackOurDaughters now! every child deserves an education, every child deserves a childhood free from darkness Girls' dreams for education shouldn't be shattered by terrorists. #BringBackOurGirls Not Just Nigeria: Girls Education Threatened Across the Globe Malala: "Their only crime was no different than my own: all they wanted was to get an education." #BringBackOurGirls <a href="http://t.co/M4gFwdQvqS">http://t.co/M4gFwdQvqS</a>
4	Rally for activism both offline and online	Protest, sit in. walks, procession, solidarity, @obyzezeks	Tweets called for the participation of social media users online to tweet and retweet posts to create awareness. Tweets also called for offline processions. Tweets from leaders of the movement Oby Ezekwesil (@obyzezeks) Aisha Yesufu( @AishaYesufu) The BringBackOurGirls Twitter page (@BBog Nigeria)	#bringbackourgirls EVERYONE RT [retweet] and raise awareness about this saddening news!! #bringbackourgirls Join the #bringbackourgirls campaign today March to THE PRESIDENTIAL VILLA to demand update on the missing #chibok girls is 3pm tomorrow let's turn up. @obyzezeks #BringBackOurGirls @BBOG_Nigeria: @obyzezeks asks: 'Is there anyone here saying we shouldn't go to the villa tomorrow?' We all respond: 'NO!'#BringBackOurGirls Tomorrow, do something: 1) pray 2) call your Senator/Rep 3) join a rally 4) tweet 5) wear red. It'll be ONE MONTH!#BringBackOurGirls

5	Call for action from the Nigerian government	government, president, Nigeria, Nigerian	Tweets reflected the need for social and political proactive action from the Nigerian government that will lead to the rescue or release of the girls	And what exactly has the Nigerian government done about this situation, these girls are Nigerian citizens. #bringbackourgirls 200+ schoolgirls still missing: ask Nigerian authorities to #bringbackourgirls with RT @BBCBreaking: #Nigeria ready to negotiate with Boko Haram to #BringBackOurGirls, government minister tells BBC <a href="http://t.co/wUa6YdLL7V">http://t.co/wUa6YdLL7V</a> President Goodluck Jonathan, #BringBackOurGirls now and alive, or Resign
6	Call for action from the Nigerian security agencies	JTF, military	Tweets reflected on the need for the need for the Nigerian security agencies to rescue the girls	Enough politics! release the marines and #bringbackourgirls EXCLUSIVE: Nigerian Military sights abducted Chibok schoolgirls in 3 Boko Haram camps FG deploys more troops to North East #BringBackOurGirls #Nigeria #BokoHaram #BringBackOurGirls #NEWSALERT: #Nigeria is at war, service chiefs tell Reps #insecurity
7	Boko Haram as terrorists	Terrorists, devils, common enemy, thieves, murderers killers, Barbarians, fools, extremists, shameless, thugs	Tweets in this theme focussed on Boko Haram and their ideologies.	Who is funding Boko Haram, how did they acquire heavy artillery? What can be done to reduce Boko Haram capabilities? #BringBackOurGirls Whosoever abducted our #ChibokGirls is OUR COMMON ENEMY. First priority however should have been to rescue them. On that our FG failed As we sleep tonight, say a short pray for the #ChibokGirls. They are in camps with murderers and killers #BringBackOurGirls This is so DISGUSTING. Get in there, save these poor girls, and capture that smirking barbarian #bringbackourgirls it's time that we all mobilize to go after these thugs and show that the world will not stand for any acts of this kind
8	Call for support and action from the rest of the world	Global, world, support	This theme focuses on tweets that call for support from the rest of the world to join the movement to help bring the girls back	#bringbackourgirls Global concern at a bigger scale is needed. What's being done for those poor school girls for God's sake!" These foreign troops should not only #BringBackOurGirls...they should assist in flushing out shekau and his boko haram men before leaving. This is a global issue, we all should be concerned about it #BringBackOurGirls Israeli counter-terrorism team set to arrive Nigeria to join rescue efforts over abducted Chibok schoolgirls. #BringBackOurGirls All World Leaders: Bring Back Nigeria's 200 Missing School Girls #BringBackOurGirls. SIGN PETITION. Foreign intervention could fuel #insurgency Human Rights #BokoHaram #Nigeria #BringBackOurGirls 6 Reasons The World Must Continue To #BringBackOurGirls #NigerianSchoolgirls Prime Minister says the UK has offered surveillance aircraft to #Nigeria to assist in the search for nearly 300 kidnapped #BringBackOurGirls - Ban Ki-moon expresses deep concern for abducted schoolgirls in Nigeria

9	Celebrity Participation	Top Retweet,	Tweets reflect on celebrity culture and the participation of celebrities in the campaign	<p>@EmWatson: It's important that these men are held accountable for their crimes and that we keep up the pressure to find these girls. #BringBackOurGirls</p> <p>@TheEllenShow: It can't happen soon enough. #BringBackOurGirls</p> <p>@chelseafc: Nigerian international John Mikel Obi has lent his support to the #BringBackOurGirls campaign.</p> <p>Real men don't buy girls. #BringBackOurGirls #BringOurGirlsBack</p>
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### Appendix 3

#### Bring them Home (Bring Back Our Girls) (Akinkugbe 2014)

Empty beds, empty hearts  
We are trying so hard not to fall apart  
Heavy souls, where do we begin  
When the walls of our lives are just caving in  
We come in peace, hand in hand  
And we ask that you listen and try to  
understand  
This endless pain, oh this pain inside  
Won't heal till we have our girls and see them  
smile

(Refrain)  
Bring them home, back home  
Bring them home, back home  
Bring them home,  
Because home is where they belong  
Bring our girls back  
Bring them home

We won't rest  
And we won't sleep  
We can't keep living, living in disbelief  
And we hope and we pray  
That our girls won't be gone much longer  
than today

We want them now  
We won't give up the time is now  
Enough is enough  
We need them now  
Don't let us down

## Appendix 4

Bring Back Our Girls (Official Video) by Abena Akuaba (2014)

...

Since when did the law state that our girls are not to go to school?

I have never seen them written down in the Constitution

I have never seen them written down in the Bible

I have never seen them written down in important documents.

I have never seen it. I have never seen it

(Refrain)

Bring our leaders back

Bring our presidents back

Bring our lawyers back

Bring our doctors back

Bring our sisters back

Bring our future mothers back

Our loving future friends

And the next Michelle Obama

Bring our girls back (3x)

Please, I beg of you in the name of God

bring these children home, bring them home, bring them home.

How do you think their parents feel every morning when they wake up and notice that their children are gone?

Bring back our future leaders

our future mothers, bring them home

I beg you in the name of God

Bring them home, bring them home

## Appendix 5

Sound Sultan & 2Face – “Break the Silence” (2014)

(Bring back our girls)

Bring back our girls (2x)  
Ooh ooh! (2X)  
It's not funny anymore(3X)

One man meat is another man poison  
I don't know what the hell you are thinking  
Wetin you believe I can do what you are  
doing (it's time to break the silence and stand as one oh, speak as one oh)  
So human minds sometimes can be  
poisoned

It's time to break the silence  
Say no to the violence  
Stop the hate and the intolerance  
Life is a gift love the essence  
Raise your voice break the silence  
Build peace stop the violence  
Aid is a trick to existence  
Life is a gift love the essence  
Be your neighbour's keeper  
Eyes on the road and don't be a sleeper  
Deep war is getting Deeper  
Every breaking news make we shiver  
Its dangerous place let's believe that  
Life is not worth the happiness so leave that  
Let's define togetherness and let us live that  
Life is short and that's the real fact

Does anybody care  
Many live in poverty disease and fear...  
K slim say you killing and bombing everybody  
Why we may show some peace and loving  
What is the need when we fight ourselves  
Oh my God this is so so unfair oh  
From the north to the south east and the  
west, When will we rest, rom this unrest  
Iyeah iyeah  
Our mothers are crying cause our children are dying, not from disease but own hands  
Let's give peace a chance. Oh oh...

Its time to break the silence  
Say no to the violence  
Stop the hate and the tolerance

Life is a gift love the essence  
Raise your voice break the silence  
Build peace stop the violence  
Aid is a trick to existence  
Life is a gift love the essence

How can you ever tell me that you don't  
even wanna [want to] care  
How can you ever tell me you don't even  
wanna [want to] share  
How can u ever tell me that you don't  
wanna [want to] know  
Showed you the promise land and I will always show you  
Everything used to be easy like ABC  
Now we counting dead bodies like 123  
This is not the Nigeria I want to see  
Let's go back to living in Unity  
Its reigning in the North today tomorrow  
could be the east  
Why do we have to wait until it falls on  
south and west  
We watching like a movies  
Many helpless people die we cry  
Some take away our life  
Our government still counting

It's time to break the silence  
Say no to the violence  
Stop the hate and intolerance  
Life is a gift love essence  
Raise your voice break the silence  
Build peace stop the violence  
It is a trick to existence  
Life is a gift love the essence

They say action speaks louder than words  
Ama fight to the end that's my word  
United we stand let's come together  
Pray for our Girls to come back safe we  
could whether the storm  
It's a big life(now)  
I got a big dream  
Wake me up (please)  
And the pain in my voice  
Can you hear can you hear

Break silence, stop the violence  
Let's come together  
Stop the violence  
Stop the killing

We need each other  
Fight for freedom  
Rise together  
Love your neighbour  
We all be one let's fight till unity  
Blow my mind  
Break the silence  
Let them be heard  
Bring our girls back  
Let them be heard  
Bring our girls back  
Oh oh oh

I'm tired of all these people  
Killing innocent people  
I pray unto my God to come and save us  
from these evils  
To my brothers and sisters  
We have to stand as one  
And let's give peace a chance  
I hope that you understand

It's time to break the silence  
Say no to the violence  
Stop the hate and intolerance  
Life is a gift love the essence  
Raise your voice break the silence  
Build peace stop the violence  
It is a trick to our existence  
Life is a gift love the essence  
Let's bring back peace to the universe  
Bring back hope to the boys and girls  
Bring back love to every family  
Set our children free

Bring back peace to the beautiful world  
Bring back love to our beautiful soul  
Bring back what the future holds  
Bring back our girls  
Who so ever keep quiet now  
Who so ever keep quiet now  
Stop the violence break the silence  
Say no to it tell it around  
Who so ever keeps quiet now  
Will forever keep quiet down  
So break the silence  
Stop the violence  
Tell it all around  
Bring back our girls

## Appendix 6

Concept word count from Leximancer @Obyezeks

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Relevance_Percentage</b>
Bringbackourgirls	5450	100
Chibokgirls	2301	42
BBOG	1214	22
Nigeria	1213	22
Aishayesufu	1132	21
Now and Alive	1015	20
Nevertobeforgotten	484	9
Day	417	8
Years too long	385	5
Chibok	287	5
Bukkyshonibare	266	5
Eienigeria	261	5
Demanding	220	4
Mbuhari	188	3
FG	163	3
Mkabrik	157	3
Abujafamily	110	2
Unity Fountain	106	2
Hopeendures	103	2
Cryingtoberescued	96	2
Bring	93	2
God	82	2
Boko Haram	73	1
President	70	1
HOPE	69	1
Nigerians	65	1
Policeng	56	1

## Appendix 7

Concept word count from Leximancer @BukkyShonibare

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Relevance_percentage</b>
BringBackOurGirls	25,250	100
Nevertobeforgotten	12228	46
Day	7022	26
Hopeendures	5874	22
Years too long	2859	11
Ynaija, Naijavote	829	3
Ajstream	826	3
Now and alive	800	3
BBOG	518	2
Skynews	481	2
Rescued	419	2
Bukkyshonibare	368	1
UNICEF	331	1
Aishayesufu	264	1
Hqnigerianarmy	262	1
Profosinbajo	251	1

## Appendix 8

Concept word count from Leximancer @AishaYesufu

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Relevance_percentage</b>
Bringbackourgirls	15402	100
Chibokgirls	5595	36
Now and Alive	3041	20
BBOG	2684	17
Nigeria	2684	17
Nevertobeforgotten	2463	16
Aishayesufu	1334	9
Cryingtoberescued	1258	8
Day,	990	6
Hopeendures	883	6
Chibokgirls Abduction	679	4
Chibok	520	3
Mkabrik	497	3
Bringbackourgirls Sit Out	417	3
Abuja	366	2
Bukkyshonibare	353	2
Jeffokoroafor	321	2
3yearstoolong	313	2
Eienigeria	308	2
DAYS	285	2
Today	277	2
God	240	2
Nigerian	235	2
Chibokparents	229	1
Thank	205	1
Mbuhari	203	1
President	202	1
Nigerians	192	1
Unity Fountain	179	1
Ngrpresident	150	1
Florenceozor	137	1
FG	132	1
Boko Haram	130	1

## Appendix 9

Concept word count from Leximancer @BBOG\_Nigeria

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Relevance_percentage</b>
Bringbackourgirls	7578	100
Nigeria	3236	43
Chibokgirls	2306	30
Day(s)	1047	14
Nevertobeforgotten	1035	14
Aishayesufu	982	13
Bukkyshonibare	609	8
Hopeendures	595	8
Mkabrik	480	6
Repwilson	398	5
Eienigeria	381	5
Chibokgirls Abduction	344	5
Cryingtoberescued	282	4
Chibok	277	4
Now and alive	255	3
Today	241	3
Mbuhari	217	3
Join	186	2
Abuja	171	2
3yearstoolong	170	2
Boko Haram	168	2
Leahsharibu	157	2
Unity Fountain	120	2
Jeffokoroafor	117	2
Nigerian	105	1
Ngrpresident	98	1
Florenceozor	96	1
Habibabalogun	95	1
President	83	1
Lagos	81	1
Bokoharam	67	1
Nigerians	62	1
GIRLS	61	1
UN	57	1

## Appendix 10

Concept word count from Leximancer from 23 April 2014 to 31 July 2014

Concept	Count	Relevance_percentage
Bringbackourgirls	1102117	100
Nigeria	226879	21
Nigerian	106882	10
Chibokgirls	70533	6
#bringbackourgirls:	53882	5
Boko Haram	51282	5
Bokoharam	31220	3
Girls	255050	23
Bringbackourgirls	103795	9
Obyezeks	97532	9
Missing	74969	7
Kidnapped	61848	6
Campaign	43238	4
Abducted	42777	4
Omojuwa	40530	4
World	38388	3

## Appendix 11

Concept word count from Leximancer from 7 April 2015 to 21 April 2015

concept	X	Y	Weight
Bring-backourgirls	0.200126	-0.01158	228337
year	0.197144	-0.12061	144146
Chibokgirls	-0.18721	0.589245	110274
girls	0.086826	-0.16736	102782
Nigeria	-0.12855	-0.30017	91396
Nevertobeforgot-ten	-0.00869	0.679827	69868
missing	0.198641	-0.14677	61098
Chibok	-0.00812	-0.20736	56878
abducted	0.059019	-0.29867	41774
days	0.281878	0.273079	39912
Bokoharam	-0.36761	-0.73696	33956
kidnapped	0.184756	-0.26827	32069
abduction	0.25553	0.21688	31920
Nigerian	0.225322	-0.37349	29752
schoolgirls	0.187373	-0.36425	28882
obyezeks	-0.15802	0.719014	28080
world	0.342493	-0.14779	27076
Boko Haram	0.133793	-0.44544	25040
BBOG	-0.10898	0.37377	22761
omojuwa	0.040754	0.705262	22487
marks	0.120828	-0.26554	22034
forget	0.315811	-0.22804	20048
remember	0.194701	0.532822	19261
kidnapping	0.161788	-0.32667	19021
today	0.016343	0.162569	18179
anniversary	-0.18928	-0.40916	18137
Bukkyshonibare	0.340032	0.293142	17999
CNN	0.409717	-0.23091	17168
forgotten	0.269161	-0.22395	17057
school	0.126788	-0.28236	16953
children	-0.44719	-0.75061	16655
Aishayesufu	-0.14862	0.628347	16309
UNICEF	-0.29889	-0.80528	15913
bringbackourgirls	-0.59556	-0.55934	14979
365dayson	-0.07394	0.622167	14599
Today	0.139892	-0.21758	14295
Day	0.369602	0.19672	14245
day	0.210107	0.232255	12563
violence	-0.41075	-0.85925	12363
Http://t.	-0.44986	-0.06844	11869

Return	-0.26123	0.108851	10084
Http:/	0.018358	0.060479	9614
Nigerians	-0.46787	-0.40541	9445
Women	-0.00113	-0.55413	8989
Mark	0.094983	-0.22426	8893
Home	-0.14198	0.032614	8800
#bring- backourgirls:	0.084334	-0.79227	8798
Remain	0.262357	-0.27679	8544
Yr	0.035802	-0.34216	8484
Time	0.011578	0.349346	7946
Mkabrik	-0.21931	0.745438	7766
<u>Http://t.c</u>	0.20418	0.435679	7695
Pray	-0.29778	0.327262	7488
UN	-0.06893	-0.57553	7431
Taken	0.042193	-0.03517	7351
Continue	-0.23272	0.163735	6818
<u>Http://t.co</u>	-0.044	-0.32682	6623
Families	0.002452	0.147376	6617
Rescue	-0.33884	0.397544	6522
Ajstream	0.059788	-0.22556	6217
Http://t.co/	-0.02875	0.105193	6002
Demand	-0.18173	0.32937	5823
Need	-0.19675	-0.2026	5734
Join	-0.12117	-0.0407	5715
Hope	-0.28004	0.220737	5659
YEAR	0.139736	0.588728	5578
Action	-0.13593	-0.26001	5502
Long	0.133801	0.109144	5350
Rescued	0.066744	0.288177	5339
1yr	-0.06296	-0.24687	5246
Campaign	-0.22926	-0.32458	5214
Alive	-0.3193	0.27635	5133
Safe	-0.36349	0.240498	5032
Daughters	-0.11001	0.237231	4878
Stand	-0.14143	0.155536	4871
Education	-0.36631	-0.22479	4814
Parents	-0.35002	0.565425	4486
Nigeria's	-0.10924	-0.39024	4403
Sisters	-0.02316	0.346362	4244
Failed	-0.41392	0.13005	4241
God	-0.39272	0.552483	4133
Captivity	0.055615	0.400469	3996
Solidarity	-0.14061	0.407799	3973
Hashtag	-0.4033	0.0539	3904

## Appendix 12

Concept word count from Leximancer from 7 April 2015 to 21 April 2016

Concept	X	Y	weight
Bringbackourgirls	0.25159	0.18922	83860
Girls	-0.12059	0.31934	55602
Chibokgirls	0.22338	-0.29197	30297
Bokoharam	-0.5007	-0.63959	26518
Chibok	-0.13374	0.173419	23080
Kidnapped	-0.16507	0.433855	22104
Boko Haram	-0.21685	0.19520	18714
Nigeria	-0.17102	-0.22446	18525
Missing	-0.05091	0.31470	16887
Video	-0.12383	0.37803	15622
https	-0.21158	-0.34047	14414
Abducted	-0.10114	0.05237	14349
Abduction	0.360906	-0.20600	12910
Parents	0.038094	0.56698	11670
Nigerian	-0.23517	0.25777	11623
CNN	-0.11722	0.61184	10748
Hopeendures	0.551774	-0.21099	10670
Life	-0.09942	0.45907	9474
Obyezeks	0.522186	-0.20669	8646
World	0.385308	0.154607	8525
Proof	-0.08325	0.471569	8328
Rescue	0.046137	0.352581	7363
Schoolgirls	-0.27657	0.283478	6952
BBOG	0.316151	-0.27125	6858
Days	0.668807	-0.14407	6581
HopeEndures	0.004487	0.352937	6255
<a href="https://t.co">https://t.co</a>	-0.03119	-0.02107	6101
Aishayesufu	0.438015	-0.37427	6089
Time	0.056857	0.162656	5763
Alive	-0.1572	0.287099	5683
Campaign	-0.0514	0.270073	5614
#bringbackourgirls	-0.48048	0.528302	5567
Children	-0.43582	-0.4007	5014
Today	-0.0708	0.179823	4991
Families	0.040717	0.297942	4660
<a href="https://t">https://t.</a>	0.267789	0.36288	4505
<a href="https://t">https://t</a>	-0.19194	0.036837	4493
<a href="https://">https://</a>	0.200279	-0.04435	4441
Bukkyshonibare	0.731060	-0.18633	4061
Suicide	-0.69978	-0.64601	4058

Education	-0.46947	-0.27597	3984
Yrs	-0.17147	0.008689	3959
Nigeria's	-0.28946	0.23371	3800
Nevertobeforgotten	0.741955	-0.23488	3760
anniversary	-0.00544	-0.16603	3656
Return	0.069917	-0.13931	3449
Bombers	-0.68137	-0.66541	3381
Omojuwa	0.440802	-0.17239	3336
Day	0.136684	-0.18846	3307
kidnapping	-0.2422	-0.00528	3226
School	-0.10965	-0.01814	3206
Mbuhari	0.519687	-0.3404	3204
2 <sup>nd</sup>	0.081337	-0.18692	3098
Child	-0.6277	-0.66957	3010
2yrs	0.01619	0.119459	3006
Today	0.11498	-0.07405	2933
Group	0.21295	-0.36533	2905
Captivity	0.37765	-0.11679	2878
remember	0.11357	-0.10877	2855
Daily	0.14214	-0.62478	2790
UN	-0.34761	-0.05519	2754
Forget	-0.02131	-0.95214	2718
Report	-0.39406	-0.30085	2706
happened	-0.1251	0.349451	2670
bringbackourgirls	-0.58881	-0.05304	2667
Trust	0.146895	-0.64587	2630
Govt	-0.10124	0.075055	2598
government	0.059015	0.073327	2593
Continue	0.018862	0.024657	2567
UNICEF	-0.68433	-0.66237	2475
People	-0.33551	-0.73528	2464
Taken	0.085318	0.27021	2450
forgotten	0.215475	0.15121	2422
Year	-0.21285	-0.38979	2178
Hope	0.255428	0.063455	2165
FG	0.243458	0.242917	2156
Free	0.304419	-0.32346	2136
Violence	-0.39539	-0.45886	2088
Victims	-0.15419	-0.25563	2003
Lost	0.774162	0.354111	1979
Women	-0.46245	-0.47809	1959
GIRLS	0.193449	-0.11194	1915
Used	-0.62388	-0.71958	1715
Home	0.102937	0.045913	1656
#bokoharam:	-0.43045	0.122612	1643
Support	-0.0335	-0.2097	1626
Video	-0.15925	0.092169	1552
Story	-0.68272	0.586067	1551

### Appendix 13

Concept word count from Leximancer from 7 April 2015 to 21 April 2017

Concept	X	Y	Weight
Chibokgirls	-0.23859	0.131908	22089
Nigeria	0.145688	0.118508	21491
Girls	0.157912	0.310508	16675
Bokoharam	0.41054	-0.64652	15708
Missing	0.117509	0.375747	14467
Bring-			
backourgirls	-0.24327	0.39443	14413
Chibok	0.161587	0.376482	13798
Today	0.131702	0.370551	11688
Marks	0.175207	0.381234	10729
Boko Haram	0.227895	0.351023	10112
kidnapped	0.216898	0.384694	10030
BBOG	-0.11365	0.156043	9762
Amaka	0.435731	-0.84686	6275
Ekwo	0.44344	-0.84285	6275
Demand	0.364627	-0.75247	5982
Terrorist	0.438474	-0.84544	5969
abducted	0.005875	0.241418	5882
Group	0.395656	-0.86631	5625
Repwilson	-0.00697	0.019834	5619
3yearstoolong	-0.38479	0.352727	5540
Yearstoolong	-0.1561	0.311733	4593
abduction	-0.23953	0.275699	4141
Nomoreex-			
cuses	-0.3812	0.327192	3583
Days	-0.77152	0.034027	2923
Captivity	-0.35773	0.193016	2899
obyezeks	-0.60926	0.151635	2722
https	-0.27526	-0.18013	2619
Return	-0.09385	0.114152	2468
Suicide	0.37783	-0.43022	2192
Aishayesufu	-0.57859	0.274318	2109
Children	0.424099	-0.44073	2009
Continue	-0.26412	0.064452	1961
Used	0.399801	-0.39629	1906
Parents	-0.17201	-0.2278	1748
Safe	-0.20574	-0.02467	1641
Attacks	0.46766	-0.43596	1545
Mbuhari	-0.35995	-0.17454	1512
anniversary	-0.09197	0.342971	1500
Mmfng	-0.1205	0.358242	1425
Ngrpresident	-0.39621	-0.32399	1405

Bring	-0.05027	0.393413	1327
Fight	0.111551	-0.04658	1327
ISIS	0.485798	-0.81916	1313
Rescue	-0.12763	0.030883	1289
Bukkyshoni- bare	-0.93693	-0.17088	1286
Day	-0.20068	0.245397	1250
Nigerian	0.206005	0.155261	1248
Htt	0.130708	0.143861	1219
Terrorism	0.363961	-0.21593	1213
Profosinbajo	-0.39902	-0.36635	1210
Today	-0.02019	0.333418	1174
Women	0.110188	0.27953	1154
People	0.280706	-0.35114	1146
World	-0.14093	0.02303	1048
Taken	-0.20125	0.301341	1001
Families	-0.08497	0.174071	994
Yrs	-0.19161	0.065216	966
Year	0.037607	-0.08522	943
Rescued	-0.37062	-0.04783	936
Taliban	0.490934	-0.8161	860
Hope	-0.26971	0.124095	842
3 <sup>rd</sup>	-0.22854	0.389378	840
Release	-0.18982	-0.13478	824
Home	-0.07675	0.247991	756
Long	-0.40029	-0.01015	753
UN	0.113778	0.081796	742
Child	0.060313	-0.25776	676
Killed	0.600701	-0.73905	657
education	0.069392	-0.372	652
terrorists	0.285454	-0.373	635
Daughter	-0.15508	0.256658	632
Support	0.085215	-0.06846	566
remaining	-0.13342	0.132174	564
Attack	0.598587	-0.58304	546
Naijama	-0.44231	0.149015	496
POTUS	-0.62028	-0.66362	494
News	0.554794	-0.40838	445
channelstv	-0.95058	-0.05857	388
campaign	-0.15442	-0.26138	329
Take	-0.22305	-0.46985	295
Army	0.590346	-0.74734	289
bring- backourgirls	-0.15291	-0.94003	193
Bokoharam	0.228928	-0.92446	110

## Appendix 14

Concept word count from Leximancer from 7 April 2015 to 21 April 2018

Concept	X	Y	Weight
Chibokgirls	0.086947	0.312419	30401
Contactsal- kida	0.141284	0.530035	19298
Alive	0.105304	0.521199	15012
Tweeting	0.152052	0.521802	12569
Captivity	0.141736	0.516636	10814
Nigeria	-0.10169	-0.53996	10788
Insights	0.167664	0.555127	10097
Bokoharam	0.001106	-0.70757	6759
Bring- backourgirls	-0.10743	-0.43568	6623
Abduction	0.010872	0.206006	6240
Mbuhari	-0.41838	0.049748	5680
Today	-0.25206	0.258381	5396
anniversary	0.03616	0.269738	4688
Girls	-0.03328	-0.5266	4668
Abducted	0.050586	-0.36633	4258
Chibok	-0.04459	-0.45946	4205
Kidnapped	-0.05365	-0.66865	4145
BBOG	-0.2176	-0.36013	3790
4 <sup>th</sup>	0.022373	0.348238	3735
Boko Haram	0.084058	-0.22418	3579
Schoolgirls	0.005136	-0.40248	3548
Today	0.106595	0.221914	3387
Repwilson	0.07711	-0.4957	2874
Days	-0.0112	-0.09941	2793
Tweets	0.093522	0.441572	2742
BH	0.10561	0.452171	2742
Day	0.067734	0.38504	2514
World	-0.0817	-0.63947	2378
Obyezeks	-0.41419	-0.14387	2332
Support	-0.55085	0.047796	2215
Justinwelby	-0.57942	-0.01809	2150
School	-0.08047	-0.67899	2095
Nigerian	0.131646	-0.07274	2075
Parents	-0.07258	0.238979	1935
Dapchigirls	0.130927	0.302688	1890
Missing	0.030399	-0.24404	1889
Group	0.152678	0.074653	1867
Revealed	0.202419	0.501192	1849

Saharareport-ers	0.03058	0.050699	1786
Policeng	-0.54839	-0.38205	1727
Salkida	0.163609	0.162828	1463
Ngrpresident	-0.58146	-0.20748	1438
Members	-0.21943	-0.42623	1203
Time	0.262235	0.324002	1149
government	0.023155	-0.54765	1132
Year	-0.03972	-0.22001	1066
Read	0.245477	0.417189	1053
Return	-0.11397	0.174754	1050
Remaining	-0.10793	0.094255	1023
Thread	0.265663	0.4758	1004
Children	0.040738	-0.71438	963
Release	0.046701	-0.18085	950
Unity Foun- tain	-0.39872	-0.54582	926
Women	0.0418	-0.89595	892
Rescue	-0.30352	-0.04318	814
GOVT	0.301441	0.127475	814
Buhari	0.014766	-0.94141	809
Young	0.013652	-0.84117	808
Life	0.299985	-0.019	733
Remains	-0.20619	0.165288	699
Fulaniherds- men	-0.01575	-0.95225	639
People	0.161114	-0.65673	622
Aishayesufu	-0.13705	-0.07589	622
Killed	0.202997	-0.57581	619
Released	0.133552	-0.46292	604
2 <sup>nd</sup>	-0.19067	-0.09821	526
Families	0.242935	-0.28169	504
President	-0.23354	0.008603	495
Movement	-0.2274	-0.52497	450
Stop	0.228672	-0.7191	433
Need	0.176403	-0.52983	428
Terrorist	0.488208	-0.81773	301
Bokoharam	-0.10695	-0.94636	220
Biafra	0.516984	-0.79985	196
#bokoharam:	0.269775	-0.91337	156
bring- backourgirls	0.669144	-0.6777	137
Gejonathan	-0.86417	-0.4003	129

## Appendix 15

Concept word count from Leximancer from 7 April 2015 to 21 April 2019

Concept	x	y	Weight
Chibokgirls	0.163703	0.423907	15360
Girls	-0.1456	-0.40223	9695
Remaining	0.058638	0.534339	7543
Chibok	-0.1016	-0.21788	6559
Bokoharam	-0.25337	-0.78762	6028
Obyezeks	0.107204	0.688027	5571
Nigeria	-0.21703	-0.05371	5512
Today	0.033449	0.413658	5398
Bring- backourgirls	0.283391	-0.16868	5374
Kidnapped	-0.14389	-0.72816	5279
Abduction	-0.09603	0.181101	4916
Desks	0.04325	0.539044	4809
School	-0.15288	0.014085	3537
Nigerian	-0.23143	-0.86417	3500
Missing	0.149163	-0.17299	3408
Abducted	0.258421	0.0693	3293
Muslims	-0.2535	-0.91802	2828
anniversary	0.324387	0.097606	2442
Salkida	0.508405	0.253881	2427
BBOG	-0.17395	0.183036	2346
Boko Haram	-0.11875	-0.16556	2310
Days	-0.02321	0.397453	2061
Leahsharibu	0.174688	0.704621	1782
Repwilson	0.300436	-0.20197	1772
Marks	-0.12554	7.32E-05	1763
Bukkyshoni- bare	-0.02936	0.472653	1763
Remain	-0.00641	-0.26063	1561
Captivity	-0.06726	0.334251	1524
World	0.144978	-0.42591	1501
Parents	0.196933	0.555981	1371
Schoolgirls	-0.12151	-0.34961	1348
Students	0.076393	-0.53541	1347
Media	0.089546	-0.54598	1274
Aishayesufu	-0.15807	0.510875	1055
Mbuhari	0.166158	0.366719	1005
Group	-0.24273	-0.19317	936
Including	-0.14799	0.047843	906
Continue	0.222681	-0.38174	842
Today	0.008724	0.18797	822
Calling	-0.18928	0.05965	790
Attacks	0.157075	0.842697	724
Fight	0.428562	-0.31116	677

Yrs	-0.19284	-0.08668	660
Children	-0.1127	0.066408	645
Borno	-0.729	-0.61285	643
Join	0.278598	0.910721	632
Held	0.244637	0.025282	631
Eienigeria	0.016934	-0.38522	630
Women	0.085091	-0.28497	611
Abuja	-0.80935	-0.48893	571
Ngrpresident	-0.14351	-0.29135	567
NIGERIANS	0.155066	0.046281	542
government	-0.19577	-0.43302	536
Killed	-0.39152	-0.86818	523
Hope	0.332308	-0.1127	519
Year	0.08583	0.045277	506
Release	-0.17201	-0.23741	484
Terrorists	-0.21841	-0.927	473
Kidnapping	0.052355	-0.16864	464
Naijama	-0.06223	0.280089	454
Released	-0.0437	-0.219	454
Lagos	-0.80722	-0.5054	433
Attack	-0.40036	-0.81388	400
5 <sup>th</sup>	-0.00797	8.43E-04	381
Bring	0.33471	0.622578	375
Terrorist	-0.2798	-0.42155	327
Families	0.32305	-0.36661	286
Time	-0.06311	-0.67545	277
UNICEF	0.008021	-0.01413	266
Believe	-0.08733	-0.91078	238
People	-0.38651	-0.46775	232
Country	0.544523	0.075209	225
Continues	-0.45405	-0.25411	222
Support	0.512479	-0.28855	221
Young	0.290092	-0.08628	219
Security	-0.05805	-0.46763	212
Told	-0.08882	0.546054	205
Campaign	0.064597	-0.17576	199
Insurgents	-0.33158	-0.8928	196
Hqnigeri-			
anarmy	0.04616	0.165231	186
Buhari	-0.23776	-0.42297	177
Rescue	-0.04566	-0.1451	165
Bokoharam	-0.40441	-0.28322	124
Segalink	0.396377	0.50641	121
Need	-0.91521	0.263493	91
bring-			
backourgirls	-0.94464	-0.12117	68

## Appendix 16

Concept word count from Leximancer from 7 April 2015 to 21 April 2020

Concept	x	Y	Weight
Bokoharam	0.033315	0.313776	29066
Leader	0.170105	0.472473	7475
offensive	-0.08981	0.396557	6286
Chadian	-0.06457	0.438535	6164
Trust	0.165608	0.502227	6134
Called	0.185108	0.518858	6056
Nigeria	0.034269	-0.38957	5796
Salkida	-0.07092	0.474871	5476
Chad	-0.05106	-0.02509	5363
operations	-0.07826	0.487448	5187
Killed	0.143767	0.214492	3460
Troops	0.040847	0.547591	3403
terrorists	-0.10935	-0.12134	3300
Army	-0.09172	-0.01021	3182
Chibokgirls	0.080683	-0.94896	2925
Sector	0.040288	0.600576	2866
Arms	0.044616	0.630569	2734
Girls	0.080243	-0.86624	2723
Boko Haram	-0.06366	-0.32564	2640
Chibok	0.098437	-0.67408	2487
Nigerian	0.148418	-0.12517	2367
TODAY	0.106902	-0.69932	2248
captivity	0.104682	-0.83207	2180
Group	-0.29772	-0.29894	2099
Fighters	0.121026	0.084214	2086
UntillAllAreFree	0.091476	-0.87091	1956
remember	0.095645	-0.53112	1941
Attack	0.101889	0.014691	1884
Terror	-0.17304	-0.11875	1868
Attacked	0.37529	-0.03499	1600
Led	-0.37492	-0.26304	1584
Ngrpresident	-0.19699	0.409734	1566
Dead	0.160717	0.363643	1529
Buhari	-0.22938	0.451058	1524
ISWAP	0.067035	0.072196	1482
Hqnigerianarmy	-0.13284	0.143791	1453
Soldiers	0.168241	0.058862	1417
abduction	0.10857	-0.94617	1405
Fight	-0.14042	0.195216	1292
members	0.168859	0.036053	1238
Killing	0.400093	-0.06913	1094
President	-0.02304	-0.32852	1060

Forces	0.476813	-0.03035	988
Bringbackourgirls	-0.03056	-0.95189	966
Lake	-0.05312	0.042538	933
Terrorist	-0.07824	-0.09557	919
Today	-0.04836	-0.95115	906
Left	-0.15929	0.242953	878
obyezeks	0.044703	-0.95133	840
Coming	0.155946	0.170176	830
Mazinnamdikanu	-0.60943	-0.73187	778
Day	-0.51552	-0.53505	753
Fighting	-0.04149	0.36714	751
Days	-0.00618	-0.64809	715
Men	-0.54536	-0.43229	682
NigerianArmy	-0.2326	-0.02417	679
Time	0.264632	-0.17079	622
Army	-0.04475	0.030102	615
Christians	-0.62931	-0.70679	614
Claimed	-0.61348	-0.4868	574
Mbuhari	-0.11752	-0.47744	566
Military	0.007119	0.101119	497
Borno	-0.31813	-0.02206	495
People	-0.35476	-0.11485	473
Africa	-0.03064	-0.13636	458
Covid	-0.48971	-0.77698	457
insurgency	0.073657	0.100999	421
Buratai	-0.76734	-0.56411	400
bokoharam	-0.12222	-0.31747	387
Report	0.264083	-0.05347	371
Covid19	0.177766	-0.33159	335
Death	-0.12821	-0.94371	225

## Appendix 17

Concept word count from Leximancer from 7 April 2015 to 21 April 2021

Concept	x	y	Weight
Nigeria	-0.0284	-0.11591	5733
Chibok Girls	-0.10588	-0.30955	4791
Repwilson	-0.08854	-0.25471	4250
Long	-0.08404	-0.27591	3614
Bokoharam	0.244037	0.483015	3560
Children	0.188549	0.316046	2009
Latest	0.128754	0.231863	1455
Chibok	-0.19114	-0.45413	1383
Girls	-0.1963	-0.48284	1349
Chibokgirls	-0.04756	-0.46374	1227
Nigerian	0.240168	0.418753	1062
Mbuhari	0.237735	0.401071	1013
Bring- backourgirls	-0.14755	-0.59072	718
dialogue	0.360009	0.705589	584
War	-0.723	0.435045	484
human	-0.80757	0.504833	308
people	-0.2961	0.124964	307
bokoharam	0.007148	0.099494	270
Hqnigeri- anarmy	0.304418	0.902418	105

## Appendix 18

### Concept maps from Leximancer 2014 to 2021

