

**FACEBOOK AND PROPAGATION OF HATE LANGUAGE/SPEECH
IN OWERRI MUNICIPAL**

by

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Abstract

The study set out to explore Facebook as a transmission instrument for hate language /hate speech campaigns. The rationale was to examine if Facebook influence Owerri-based users' exposure to hate language /hate speech. The objectives are among others, to determine the extent to which Facebook users in Owerri are exposed to hate language /hate speech and examine whether Facebook influences exposure to hate language /hate speech among users in Owerri. The study adopted the survey research design and the questionnaire was the tool that was utilized to collect data from 400 Facebook users. Following the data analysis, it was found that Facebook significantly influences exposure to hate language /hate speech and several factors/media influence Owerri residents' exposure to hate language /hate speech. It was recommended that while there are justifiable concerns about unchecked censorship by social media organizations, the overwhelming preference reported by these participants was for social media campaigns to increase their efforts to remove hate language from their sites. Thus, the need for censoring social media sites by owners of this social media network is eminent, as this goes a long way to reduce the all-growing strength of hate language on social media.

Keywords: Facebook, Propagation & Hate speech

Introduction

Communication has occurred in different forms since man's existence. From

communicating with signs and symbols, using sounds, the bark of trees, walls, etc., to using papyrus roll. With the invention

of printing technology, humans started communicating with books through reading and writing. Over the years, humans kept on acquiring knowledge which led to the invention of the radio, television, and lately the new media of technology for the transmission of information.

Meanwhile, global advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs) is "traced to the fundamental change in the production and utilization of information in the twilight of the 20th century popularly referred to as Information Revolution", (Iwokwagh & Obagwu, 2012). Generally, success in this direction was given impetus by Marshall McLuhan's hypothesis of a "global village" which is fast giving way to what we call a "global compound".

According to Festus (2014), Information Technology (IT) is understood to be the global system of information management through telecommunication and the computing media. "The emergence of IT has repositioned contemporary societies for sustainable development" (Umechukwu, 2014). Put another way, communication and IT scholars agree alike that Information Technology has engendered fundamental paradigm shifts in human societies, including Nigeria. Little wonder why Medium (1995), in Iwokwagh and Obagwu (2012), observe that "IT has created profound changes in the way we live, work and it has become so pervasive that the total Nigeria environment of the 20th century will experience a quantum leap in socio-economic transformation".

Keghku (2005), pushing the frontiers of this argument further, observes that "developments in Information Technology in contemporary Nigeria have provided several facilities to reconfigure and create new and more enabling environments for realistic development dissemination within the shortest time possible". Social media allows individuals all around the world to communicate about an organization, product or service. The rise of social media has expanded media organizations' reach and made media material more accessible to audiences (Auwal, 2018).

Nigerians have helped shape the direction of policy formulation and the outcomes of many societal events by expressing their views on social media. One prominent example is the role played in rallying Nigerians at home and abroad in opposition to the elimination of fuel subsidies in 2012, which influenced the outcome of the issue. The use of social media by political parties and candidates in educating and mobilizing public support, as well as its use during the 2023 general elections, particularly in the collation and announcement of results (Ejem & Nwokeocha, 2023), contributed to promoting the democratic ethos and enhancing the credibility of Nigeria's electoral process.

While social media has been used or is still being used to chart a direction for social-economic and political transformation in Nigeria recent accrues indicate that many Nigerians employ the use of hate comments and speech, threats, abusive language, and assassination of character on social media to out anger, frustration and register their dissatisfaction about

political-economic, religious, security and social issues in the society (Ende & Dzuhogi, 2012). Ring (2013), observed that "because of the decentralized nature of social media platform, it has become a perfect place for amateurs and professionals alike to share ideas, information, images, videos, art, and music. Hence, it has become populated with sites that are dedicated to inciting hatred against particular ethnic, religious, racial or sexually-oriented groups". A glance through the comments section of a racially charged YouTube video, for example, demonstrates how pervasive the problem is.

Hate speeches are such comments/speeches that evoke dislike, anger or intense hostility towards somebody or something (Philip, 2009). It denotes the extremely negative feelings and beliefs held about a group of individuals or a specific representative of the group because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. According to Ola and Kunle (2016), "hate speech is understood by covering all forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin".

Facebook as a social media platform, however, seems to contribute immensely to the amplification of hate speeches among individuals in Nigeria, or war waged on others using words. Little wonder why Kayambazinthu and Moyo

(2017), "hate that through sound media platforms, speech risks violent reaction, as it incites hatred contempt or discrimination against members of a ground on the national or ethnic origin". However, it is on this foundation that this study tries to explore Facebook as a transmission instrument for hate language /hate speech campaigns.

Statement of the Problem

There is no doubt that freedom of expression is one of the most fundamental rights guaranteed by both international and domestic legal instruments; however, the emergence of social media and the misbehavior of individuals amid anger and, by extension, hatred have negatively revolutionized the freedom of expression. Social media can be a tool for confusing, fueling, and supporting hate speech among users around the world. Notably, violent disputes, whether electoral communal or ethnoreligious in nature, have always been the final result of hate speech distributed via social media. There is a concern about a surge in hate speech among Nigerians on numerous social media sites.

According to a report by the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) (2019), "60.3 percent of hate speech recorded came from Facebook, 5.9 percent from the newsletter, and 4 percent from blogs. It also revealed that 63 percent of perpetrators of hate speeches are prominent people while 39 percent of them are ordinate speeches surveyed are instrumented against politicians, political parties and political proceedings". As the most active media ecosystem in Africa (Anyanwu et al., 2015), to what extent are

people exposed to hate speech/hate language in Nigeria? Does Facebook influence Owerri-based users' exposure to hate language /hate speech?

Objectives of the Study

The Objectives of the study are to:

- i. Find out whether Facebook users in Owerri are exposed to hate language /hate speech;
- ii. Determine the extent to which Facebook users in Owerri are exposed to hate language /hate speech;
- iii. Examine whether Facebook influences exposure to hate language /hate speech among users in Owerri;
- iv. Investigate the extent to which Facebook influences exposure to hate language /hate speech among users in Owerri; and
- v. Find out the other factors that influence exposure to hate language /hate speech aside from Facebook.

Justification of the Study

Over the years, the significance of Facebook to all works of man's endeavours is highly appreciated. However, the expedient employment of Facebook for hate language should be frowned upon later. Thus, this study will reveal to owners of the numerous social networking sites the need for censorship on Facebook as this will ensure the drastic reduction of hate language among Nigerians. Also, the

findings of the study will reveal to Facebook users the need to grow against hate language to foster unity in the Nigerian system.

The findings of the study will reveal to government officials the need to live up to expectations as well as live a justified political life, devoid of misconduct so as not to give room for hate language among the Nigerian population.

Finally, this study will serve as a dependable source of reference material for future researchers who will deem it necessary to investigate related areas of this study as well as add substantially to the existing body of academic/ media knowledge.

Review of the Literature

Social Media: Its History

In the words of Eribo (2018), "The history of social media platform can be traced to the intervention of the bulletin board system (BBS), an online meeting place for that function independently producing chunks of codes that allowed users to communicate with a central system where they could post a message and download files and games.

CompuServe was another avenue for social interaction long before the internet exploded into mainstream consciousness. CompuServe was a business-oriented mainframe computer communication solution that allowed its users to share files, interact through numerous platforms, send messages to friends through email, and access news and events (Eribo, 2018).

Social media got its big breaks in 2002 with the launch of Friendster which operated on the premise that an online community can only exist between people who share many similarities with dating sites and was even once referred to as a dating site that isn't about dating by its CEO, Jonathan Abrams. Friendster was a major success. It had more than 1 million registered users within a year of its launch. It had since evolved into an online gaming site after a series of technical difficulties and bad management decisions ruined its early success.

LinkedIn made its entrance in 2003; as a more serious approach to the social media phenomenon. LinkedIn is different from other platforms as it was and still is the platform for business-minded people who want to interact with other professionals. LinkedIn boasts 300 million users currently (Eribo, 2018).

In 2003, another platform appeared. It was called My Space. My space was a less serious approach to networking as compared to LinkedIn and its target audience was young adults. My area allowed users to download music and music videos and it had a funky feel to it which is undoubtedly intriguing to young adults.

Facebook, arguably the most successful and popular social media platform, was founded in 2004 at Harvard University by two Harvard students, Mark Zuckerberg, and Eduardo Saverin, and remained a campus-based experiment for two years before being made public in 2006. Facebook's early promise enticed some

Silicon Valley heavyweights, like PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel, to invest.

Twitter first came to prominence in March 2006, and it was officially launched in July of that year. It also allows users to send, read and interact with short messages called tweets. It gained massive popularity worldwide with more than 302 million active users as of May 2015 (Agbanu, 2013).

In 2007, Google launched its platform called Google Plus (Google +). If different from Facebook and Twitter it wasn't a full networking site but rather a layer of the overall Google experience. It allows users to sign/login, in and chat with online friends and other social networks. Like Instagram and Skype, they have also bridged the communication gap as Skype can be used in a work environment for video calls, connecting colleagues and investors in different parts of the world.

Social Media Website

Because social media is a broad term, it covers a range of websites. However, one common feature of these websites is that users can interact with the website and its other visitors. Some of the social media websites are Social networking, Facebook, Myspace, internet forums, Wikis, Aggregators, video-sharing, photo sharing, social bookmarking, presence apps, WhatsApp, etc (Agbanu, 2013). (Agbanu, 2013). These websites aren't all-inclusive. They aren't the only social media platforms available. Any website that invites users to interact with the site and other users falls into the social media category. Let us discuss a few of them.

Social Networking

These are websites that allow people to create a personal profile about themselves and chat, discuss and share information with other people such as friends and family members who may be in distant places but are linked with the website (Agbanu, 2013). Social networking is an online service platform or site that focuses on the building of social relations among people who may share interests. A social network service consists of each user's profile, social links, and a variety of additional information. An example of social networking is e-mail services, events, and interests within their networks. People in academia, politics, business, and other fields of human endeavor now use Facebook to share important information and interests. During the 2011, 2015, and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, politicians interacted with their supporters and admirers via Facebook.

(a) Facebook

Facebook is a social networking service launched in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his friends Edwardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes all of Harvard University. For one to be a Facebook user, he/she must be a registered member of the website which allows the user to create a personal profile and add other registered users as friends. The membership allows them to share information (texts and photos), as well as receive automated birthday notifications and profile updates. Also, the user may join common-interest user sub-groups that share similar characteristics. The website's

name was inspired by the nickname "Facebook" given to students by the Harvard administration once they were admitted to the university. The book, which contains a directory of images and basic information on the pupils, aids in the students getting to know one another (Agbanu 2013). The founders of Facebook first restricted membership to Harvard students. The membership was later thrown open to other students and later, the general public

In recent times, there has been growing concern about privacy and security on Facebook, and the use of the website for social ills. To allay privacy concerns, Facebook enables the user to choose their privacy setting and see specific parts of their profile (especially private information) and the information they send out. Also, the website suggests that people should accept friendship requests from only those they know, as failing to comply with this guidance has partially been the origin of some of the social vices associated with Facebook.

(b) MySpace

Myspace is one of the early social network websites created in 2003, Myspace has its HQ in Beverly Hills, California. Rupert Murdoch, the media mogul, bought the website in 2005. As the name "Myspace" says the website allows its users to construct web pages through which they connect with other users. Myspace users may post blogs, upload videos, and images, and construct profiles to advertise themselves, their abilities, products, or services. It provides a platform for people

to make new friends and reconnect with old ones from all over the world.

My space began as a place for aspiring musicians to share their music and concert dates, but it has since evolved into a more complex site where users can create profiles with photos, blogs, and music or movie preferences. Other features of the site include chat rooms, forums, newsgroups, and an avenue for sharing videos or music. It is a site that allows one to share his/her opinion and personality with the world. This is done by using a customized Myspace layout for the display of such a profile. People who want to promote their businesses or products make use of such Myspace layouts which they upload after giving it a unique look.

Critics claim that some users use the service to spy on other users, similar to how Facebook has been criticized. To solve this issue, Myspace designed privacy settings that allow users to decide who should have access to their profile and personal information.

(c)Wikis

This is a website that was created collaboratively by a community of users that allows any user to publish or edit content as well as share information about a subject, issue, or topic. Wikipedia is still one of the most popular wikis on the internet.

Hateful Remarks

On the other side, the term 'hate' refers to a feeling that evokes hatred, fury, or strong antagonism against someone or something (Auwal, 2018). It denotes the severely

unfavorable thoughts and views held about a group of individuals or a specific representative of that group because of their race, ethnicity religion, gender, or sexual orientation. As a result, "hate speech" will be defined as any form of expression that spreads, incites, promotes, or justifies racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, or other forms of intolerance based on intolerance, as manifested by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination, and hostility toward minorities, migrants, and people of immigrant and immigrant-origin (British institute of human rights, 2012). Furthermore, the definition and dimensions of hate speech vary, as the phrase has come to represent a variety of opinions.

Hate speech, according to Idiong (2015), means any speech, gesture conduct, writing, or display that could provoke individuals to violence or discriminatory action. In essence, such comments degrade the dignity of others, including all promotion of beliefs based on 'racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means; incitement to hatred, contempt, or discrimination against members of a group based on race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin; threats or incitement to violence directed at individuals or groups based on race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin; expression of insults, ridicule or defamation of persons or group or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds of their race, colour descent or national or ethnic origin when it amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination; participation in groups and

activities that promote and encourage racism.

Hate speech also includes any communication (verbal, written, or symbolic) that insults a racial, ethnic, or political group, whether by implying that they are inferior in some way or implying that they are despised or unwelcome for any other reason. Hate speech has also been described as "verbal terror" or a verbal war waged on others. Hate speech not only puts people in danger of physical harm but also puts them at risk of violent retaliation (Batta, 2012).

Research Methodology

For this investigation, the survey research design is deemed adequate. "A survey is a research approach that focuses on a representative sample generated from the complete population of the study," writes Nwodu (2017). The population is the "study's target," according to Obasi (2013). It specifies the total number of items or people from whom data for the study is collected." However, the population of this study is the whole Owerri youth. The sample size for this study is 400, which was calculated using Taro Yamane's Yard's formula, which was published in 1946 and quoted in Kasunic (2005).

The study will adopt the multi-stage sampling technique. Multi-stage sampling entails two or more steps of sampling to decrease or eliminate huge clusters that cannot be applied directly and, at the same time, it's pointless to collect data on every piece in sample clusters.

Purposive sampling, on the other hand, is the first approach to be used. "Purposive

sampling" is defined as "a circumstance in which a researcher selects objects for the sample deliberately; this choice concerning the item stays supreme," according to Akunna (2008). In other words, the researcher will purposefully choose specific units of the universe to make up a sample on the assumption that the participant they chose out of a large group will be representative of the entire.

To distribute copies of the questionnaire to the individuals, the systematic random sample technique will be employed. Only individuals who utilize social media and are familiar with the subject will be given copies of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is the tool that will be utilized to collect data for this investigation. The questionnaire will be broken into two sections and will include seventeen (17) closed-ended questions. The first segment (A) has questions relating to the demographic status of respondents and the second section (B) has questions connected to the research questions and objectives of the study.

To ensure that the items in the questionnaire are well structured, and questions likely to be understood by the respondents, the questionnaire will be first submitted to the co-researchers for thorough vetting and approval to make sure that the instrument is structured to agree with the research questions and objectives of the study.

The information for this study was acquired via a questionnaire that was delivered to 400 people, then compiled and

evaluated in tables using frequency counts and simple percentages.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected with the aid of research instruments were present and analyzed in tables using frequency counts and simple percentages.

Table 1: Responses on Whether Respondents Own Smartphones

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	334	90
No	38	10
Total	372	100

Data presented in the table above revealed that out of 372 respondents, 334 (90%) said yes, they own Smartphone, while 38 (10%) said No, they do not own a Smartphone.

Table 2: Responses on Whether Respondents Have a Social Media Account

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	286	86
No	48	14
Total	334	100

Table 2 above revealed that 286 (86%) own a social media account, while 48 (14%) said they don't.

Table 3: Responses on Whether Respondents Frequently Login to their Social Media Accounts.

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	281	98
No	5	2
Total	286	100

Table 3 above revealed that out of 286 respondents, 28 (98%) said yes, they frequently log in to their social media accounts, while 5 (2%) said no, they do not.

Table 4: Responses on the Social Media Respondents are mostly exposed to

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Facebook	74	26
WhatsApp	31	11
Twitter	66	23
YouTube	71	25

Instagram	16	6
LinkedIn	16	6
Skype	5	2
WeChat	2	1
Total	281	100

Data in the above table revealed that 74 (26%) are mostly exposed to Facebook, 31 (11%) said it is WhatsApp, 66 (23%) said Twitter, 71 (25%) said YouTube, 16 (6%) said Instagram, 16 (6%) said LinkedIn, 5 (2%) said Skype, while 2 (1%) said WeChat.

Table 5: Responses on Whether Respondents are exposed to Hate language on Facebook

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	226	80
No	55	20
Total	281	100

Table 5 above revealed that out of 281 respondents, 226 (80%) said yes, they are exposed to hate language on Facebook, while 55 (20%) said otherwise.

Table 6: Responses on the extent Respondents are exposed to Hate Speech on Facebook

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Little extent	16	7
Great extent	84	37
Very great extent	126	56
Total	226	100

Table 6 above revealed that out of 266 respondents, 16 (7%) said they are exposed to Facebook hate speech to a little extent, 84 (37%) said to a great extent, while 126 (56%) said to a very great extent.

Table 7: Responses on Whether Respondent's Exposure to Facebook influence their use of Hate Language

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	171	76
No	55	24
Total	226	100

Table 7 above revealed that 171 (76%) said yes, their exposure to Facebook influences their use of hate language in the 2019 election, while 55 (24%) said no, it does not.

Table 8: Responses on the Extent of Facebook Influence Respondent's Exposure to Hate Language /hate speech

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Little extent	8	5
Great extent	62	36
Very great extent	101	59
Total	171	100

Table 8 above revealed that out of 171 respondents, 8 (5%) said Facebook influenced their exposure to hate language /hate speech, 62 (36%) said to a great extent, while 101 (59%) said to a very great extent.

Table 9: Responses on Whether Respondents Think Facebook Has Become a Hub for Incrementing Speech

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	154	90
No	17	10
Total	171	100

Table x above revealed out of 171 respondents, 154 (90%) said yes, they think Facebook has become a hub incrementing hate language, while 17 (10%) said no, it has not.

Table 10: Responses on Whether some other Factors/Media Influence Respondent's Exposure to Hate Language /hate speech Aside from Facebook

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	121	79
No	33	21
Total	154	100

Table 10 above revealed that 121 (79%) of the respondents said yes, they are other factors that influence their exposure to hate language /hate speech, while 33 (21%) said there are no other factors/media.

Table 11: Responses on the Other Factors/Media That Influence Respondent's Exposure to Hate Speech /hate speech Aside from Facebook

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Television	46	38
Radio	13	11
Billboard	18	15
Friends	4	3
Politicians	21	17
Role models	6	5
Opinion leaders	3	3
Teachers	10	8
Total	121	100

Table 11 above revealed that out of the 121 respondents, 46 (38%) said other factor/media is television, 13 (11%) said is radio, 18 (15%) said billboard, 4 (3%) said it is friends, 21 (17%) said politicians, 6 (5%) said role models and 3 (3%) said opinion leaders, while 10 (8%) said it is teachers.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: Are youth in Owerri exposed to Facebook hate language?

Data presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 provided answers to this research questions respectively. Data in Table 1 revealed that youths in Owerri own smartphones. This was revealed when 334 (90%) said yes, they own a smartphone, as against 38(10%) who do not. Table 2 revealed that youths in Owerri own a social media account. This was revealed when 286(86%) said yes, they own a social media account as against 48(14%) who said they do not. Table 3 revealed that youths in Owerri frequently log in to their social media accounts. This was ascertained when 281(98%) said yes, as against 5(2%) who said no. Also, table v revealed that respondents are mostly exposed to Facebook 74 (26%), and WhatsApp 31(11%); Table 4 revealed that youths in Owerri are to Facebook hate language. 22(80%) said yes, while 55(20%) said otherwise.

Findings in these tables corroborate the individual difference theory discussed earlier in this study as cited by Omego and Nwachukwu (2012), that the audience of the mass media get themselves exposed to only those media contents that agree with their psychological position and shrug off those that do not. Thus, the youths in Owerri get

themselves exposed to only those media contents that agree with their psychological positions.

Research Question Two: Two what extents are youths in Owerri exposed to Facebook hate language?

The data in table vii revealed that the audience of Owerri is exposed to social media hate language to a very great extent. This was ascertained when 16 (7%) said it is to a little extent, 84 (37% said) said it is to a great extent, and 126 (56%) said it is to a very great extent. According to Bola (2006), the extent to which people spend time on the media can be attributed to the gratification they derive from such media.

Research Question Three: Does Facebook influence exposure to hate language /hate speech?

Data presented in Table viii provided an answer to this research question. Data in the table showed that exposure to social media influences the use of hate language /hate speech. Data showed that 171(76%) said yes, social media influence their exposure to hate language /hate speech, while 55 (24%) said no, it did not. Data in this table corroborates with Onus (2010) that, social media parades a couple of influences on users. This is so because it is a new media of the new generation. Facebook has fast grown into a centre for information dissemination and assimilation.

Research Question Four: To what extent does Facebook influence Owerri youths' exposure to hate language /hate speech?

Data presented in Table ix provided an answer to this research question. Data in the table revealed that social media influence exposure to hate language /hate speech to a very great extent. This was shown when 8(5%) said it is to a little extent, 62(36%) said it is to a great extent, and 101(59%) said it is to a very great extent. This corroborates the research evidence that confirms that Facebook and other social media narcotize the audience and expose them to negative influences (Anyanwu & Ejem, 2016).

Research Question Five: What other factors/media influenced exposure to hate language /hate speech among youths in Owerri aside from Facebook?

Data presented in table xi and xii provided answers to this research question. Data in Table xi on one hand revealed that other factors /media influence Owerri youths' exposure to hate language /hate speech. This was ascertained by 121 (79%) of Owerri youths who said there are other factors/media, as against 33(21%) who said otherwise. Data in Table xii on the other hand revealed that the other factors/media include: television, 46(38%), radio 13 (11%), billboard 18(15%), friends 4(3%), politicians 21(17%), role model 6(5%) opinion leaders 3(3%) and teachers 10(8%).

However, according to Idiong (2012), the mass media audience is not connected by likes and influence. It is only the media

that connect them. The influence of the media on the audience varies from person to person, as the test and likes differ. What characterizes the individuals are in segments? Thus, since the Owerri youths are not the same in personalities, the influence of the media on the audience differs from person-to-person.

Summary of Findings

Based on the data so far analyzed, the findings study was summarized thus.

- (i) The majority of Owerri youths are exposed to Facebook hate language.
- (ii) The extent to which youths Owerri are exposed to social media hate language is reasonable as they are exposed to social media hate language to a very great extent.
- (iii) From finding carried out, it is revealed that Facebook significantly influences exposure to hate language /hate speech
- (iv) It is obvious that Facebook influences Owerri youths' exposure to hate language /hate speech
- (v) Several factors/media influence Owerri residents' exposure to hate language /hate speech. Such factors/media include television, radio, Billboard, friends' politician's role models, opinion leaders, and teachers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the conclusion that:

While the development of Facebook further enhanced citizens' access to information and rights to reply, this liberty has, in recent times, not been exercised with its corresponding responsibility. Even though Facebook guarantee users access to various point of view discussions among Nigerians on the Facebook space are overwhelmed with tendencies that could promote extreme negative feelings and bring about hatred or incitement to violence against a group of individuals because of their ethnic, religious, or regional orientations.

Whenever electoral issues in Nigeria are discussed, the way and manner opinions are expressed via the Facebook of a truth, wear the toga of incitement. It is, however, imperative to state that hate language can step up the tempo of irredentist clam in a pluralistic society like Nigeria. If the situation continues without proper attention by the government and relevant stakeholders to final lasting remedy to curb these ills among Nigerians, particularly as caused by Nigerian politicians, effects to achieve peace and other development objectives and strides may not see the light of day.

Recommendations

In an attempt to provide a solution to the moral decadence affecting our society as regards these subject matters, the following recommendations were advanced:

(i) While there are justifiable concerns above unchecked censorship by social media organizations, the overwhelming preference reported by

these participants was for social media campaigns to increase their efforts to remove hate language from their sites. Thus, the need for censoring social media sites by owners of this social media network is eminent, as this goes a long way to reduce the all-growing strength of hate language on social media.

- (ii) There is a need for social media companies like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to prohibit anonymity and strengthen the terms of service to be stricter to prohibit racist and misogynistic slurs, along with threats of violence. Thus, social media companies could track and publish descriptions of content removed under the hate speech/ language sections of the community guidelines. This would provide much-needed transparency in the content removal process.
- (iii) Since there is a widespread perception that hate language promotes violence, the lawmakers should make it constitutional that any politician followers/ loyalist found in the act of hate language implication, should be sentenced to life imprisonment as this will help solve the situation of hate language in Nigeria as well as promote peace and unity in Nigeria.
- (iv) On its part, the government should focus on addressing issues of injustice, transparency, and inclusiveness in all affairs. This would go a long way in resolving the increasing agitations by various groups, politicians, political parties, and political jingoists, in addition to strengthening unity among the country's diverse population.

- (v) There is a need for a high sense of responsibility and tolerance among parties' parts in online political discourse to make all appreciate the obvious value of this innovation.
- (vi) There is a need for proper sensitization of the Nigerian populace by governmental agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) Ministry of Information and Culture, and other non-governmental organizations, on the need to shun hate language.

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