

PREVALENCE OF HATE SPEECH ON SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG YOUTH OF SELECT STATES IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study analysed hate speech on social media among youth of select States in Southeast Nigeria. The social media platforms studied were Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Survey research design was used to conduct the study. Hence, questionnaire was used to generate data for the study. The Australian Calculator was used to arrive at the sample size of 385. However, 372 copies returned and found valid were used to analyse the views and opinions of Southeast residents of hate speech on social media. Frustration aggression theory was used as theoretical underpinning for the study. Findings showed that social media influence youth to spread hate speech and this is to a high extent; the factors responsible for the use of social media for the propagation of hate speech includes: ethnicity, politics, religion, culture and the social standing of the individuals. Findings also showed that political hate speeches are majorly spread by the youth on social media. The researchers conclude that on the grounds that social media enable information dissemination, people also leverage on them to spread hate speech and other vile speeches that may be injurious to the fragile peace of Nigeria. On the basis of the findings, the study recommended among others that Southeast youth should come up with better ways to communicate their feelings and thoughts rather than resorting to hate speeches.

Keywords: Hate speech, communication, media, youth, social media, Nigeria

Introduction

The lack of and/or poor regulatory mechanism on social media platforms constitute a major issue faced by the Federal Government of Nigeria in controlling the proliferation of hate speeches online. It is now common to see on social media posts, tweets, videos, audio with a content that is capable of instigating violence, strife and enmity between people of different ethnic nationalities, political or religious standings. Nigerian youths are assumed to form the majority of people who use social media networks. Most social media users are between 16 and 25 years and are, therefore, thought to make use of social media channels

to propagate hate speech (Mbanaso, Dandaura, Ezeh & Iwuchukwu, 2015).

The social media provide youths with the channel to communicate and/or make public their opinions and feelings on issues making the rounds in the polity. Abiodun and Bamas (2018) note that the Head of the Atiku Media Office, Paul Ibe, during the time he was campaigning for the 2019 Presidency, said: "The majority of people we are trying to reach are between the ages of 18 and 35 hence the social media is the preferred mode of communication for them. If you are defining any plan that does not include the social media, you are not in the 21st century." Social media have become veritable tools for

reaching out to the society most especially the youthful population.

Many vile and hateful comments dominate the discourse among Nigerians on the social media space (Ende & Dzukogi, as cited in Auwal, 2018). It is common to hear, nowadays, that there is a Twitter war or Facebook war. In most cases, it is usually youths engaging in hurtful conversations based on their tribal, religious or political standings. The relative freedom enjoyed by social media users coupled with the weak legal framework regulating the cyberspace are considered as major reasons for the proliferation of hate speech across various online platforms in contemporary world.

Inasmuch as it is thought that youths are the arrow head of hate speech on social media platforms, some public figures in Nigeria had been noted to make hate speeches capable of heating up the polity, and causing disaffection among people. Thus, while the dreaded coronavirus pandemic infiltrated Nigeria, well-meaning Nigerians including the National Assembly were clamouring for President Buhari to address the nation and assure the citizenry of his readiness to checkmate the spread of the virus. The co-convenor of the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) movement, Aisha Yesufu, who is an ardent critic of the President, on her verified Twitter handle – @AishaYesufu – tweeted: “Dear Nigerians, we do not have a President. No need of wasting energy asking for a Presidential address.”

The former Minister of Aviation, Femi FaniKayode, on September 4, 2019, on his verified Twitter handle – @realFFK – declared that President Buhari was a curse to Nigeria. “South Africa kills Nigerians. Czech Republic pays Nigerians money to leave and never come back. Angola says it does not want Nigerians. Congo storms and takes over the Nigerian Embassy. Libya buys and sells Nigerians. Ghana persecutes and humiliates Nigerians. Buhari is a curse!” he tweeted.

The statements above are seen as hate speeches which are capable of inciting the public against the government and create animosity between people of different socio-economic and political fronts. Social media serve as veritable channels of disseminating hate speeches today. Thus, with social media platforms such as Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, among others, people can make their opinions, perceptions and thoughts on issues known. In this light, Auwal (2018) states that this technological breakthrough social media has given the liberty in access for Nigerians to express their views on national issues which opportunists are grossly abusing. Nigerian social media space is replete with many instances of hate speeches bordering on personalities, gender, religious groups, ethnic groups, political groups, nationalities, races among others.

Statement of the Problem

As a country with different ethnicities, religious orientations and cultures, Nigeria is always prone to hate speeches which directly or indirectly make for misunderstanding and conflict between the populace. Based on this, Joel (2013) explained that these differences have been a source of tension and division beginning from the colonial era under British rule hitherto now. However, its current manifestations are rapidly dividing the country into pockets of religious, ethnic and sectional/regional cleavages.

Corroborating the above, Brown (2017) in Adum, Ojiakor and Nnatu (2019) notes that hate speech comes in the form of an intense dislike or passionate and extreme aversion for or hostility towards somebody or group. Hate speech or messages imply various ways of subordinating, wounding, humiliating, or degrading personalities or groups. Orlu-Orlu (2018) clarifies that hate speech is not a mere defamatory statement or insult against an individual or group but that the ill statement or abuse is made against the individual or group, not ordinarily, but on

account of its attributes like religion, race, colour, political affiliation, kingship, disability, gender, business or profession or any other personal or group trait. In essence, the utterances that are classified as hate may have significant negative implications on the peace of a people. In Nigeria, this is quite pronounced in the sphere of politics where the use of derogatory words and speeches has inflamed political violence and unrest in the polity (Inobemhe, Salisu, Santas, & Udeh, 2021).

Therefore, Ezeibe (2015) states that any speech, gesture, conducts, and writing or display which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action make for hate speech. Nsereka (2018) stresses that of all the spheres where hate speech thrives, religion and politics seem to be more pronounced. For example, when Igbos hear people from other ethnic divides like Hausa, Isoko, Nupe, Gwari, Yoruba, Itsekiri, Efik/Ibibio, among others, say that they love money too much, it amounts to hate speech to them. When Hausas hear Igbo people call them *aboki*, it becomes offensive to them. Whereas, when Yorubas hear Igbo people call them *Ndiofemmanuor* referring to them as those accustomed to dirtiness, it amounts to a hate speech. These ethnically provocative perceptions, in most cases, make for violence between different ethnic groups.

More so, owing to the high volume of hate speech across ethnic and regional lines in the country, there has been serious agitation for secession in the north, east and southern regions, the foremost being the movement in the south-east. Apparently, it could be deduced from the foregoing that the growing crescendo in the spate of hate speech on social media platforms in Nigeria most particularly among the youth can fuel these agitations. This study therefore seeks to analyse the prevalence of hate speech on social media among youth in south-east Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the frequency of hate speech on social media among Southeast youths
2. Examine factors that are responsible for the use of hate speech on social media among youths in Southeast Nigeria.
3. Determine the extent social media influence south-east youths in making hate speeches

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered:

1. What is the frequency of hate speech on social media among youths in the South-East region of Nigeria?
2. What are the factors that trigger hate speech among youths in the region?
3. What is the extent of the influence of social media on the tendency to make hate speech among the youths.

Literature Review

Review of Concepts

A conceptual review of key concepts used in the study is necessary to provide a contextual base for the study. Accordingly, the concepts of hate speech and social media were reviewed under this section.

Hate Speech

Hate speech is seen as bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of some of their actual or perceived innate characteristics (Aminah, as cited in Rumadi, 2017). It expresses discriminatory, intimidating, disapproving, antagonistic, and/or prejudicial attitude towards those characteristics, which include gender, race religion, ethnicity, colour, national origin, disability or sexual orientation. Hate speech is intended to injure, dehumanise, harass, intimidate, debase, degrade and victimise the targeted groups, and to foment insensitivity and brutally against them.

Hence, stemming from this, hate speech must be based on hostile and intolerance attitude, caused either by issues of religion, ethnics, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability. Therefore, this limitation needs to be established to build a clear division between what can be conceptualised as hate speech and what cannot (Rumadi, 2017). Examined closely, hate can be seen as strong and irrational emotion taking form as insults or hostility and hatred towards a targeted group due to their specific characteristics. A scan through the comment sections of social media platforms in Nigeria often reveals comments that are not healthy to the collective peace of the country (Garba, Santas, & Abubakar, 2020).

The concept of hate speech indicates a bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of some of their actual or perceived innate characteristics. It expresses discriminatory, intimidating, disapproving, antagonistic, and/or prejudicial attitudes toward those characteristics, which include gender, race, religion, ethnicity, colour, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation (Cohen-Almagor, as cited in Elliot, Chuma, Gendi, Marko & Patel, 2016). Hate speech manifest in diverse forms and media in the society today but are more common on social media platforms which are serving as the new public sphere for local, national and global discourse on burning issues.

Social Media

In conceptualising social media, Bercovici (2010) cited in Treem, Dailey, Pierce and Biffel (2016) note that social media as a term appears to have emerged in the early 1990s in reference to emerging web-based communication tools that facilitated online interaction. The emergence of social media technologies and the associated specific applications are often characterised as

establishing Web 2.0, which describes the presence of a class of web-based applications that offer all users the opportunity to write and contribute through posting content, and could be accessed through multiple devices (Beer and Burrows, 2007, in Treem et al., 2016).

However, some scholars use the term social media in favour of the construct web 2.0 which can operate as an umbrella concept that encompasses a broader group of online applications that facilitate expression and interaction (Beer, 2008 in Treem et al., 2016; Nwabueze, 2014). Whereas, Lusk (2010) conceptualised social media to mean the use of Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, My Space and LinkedIn for the purpose of communication, sharing photos as well as videos. On the other hand, social media have been conceptualised as simply the many relatively wide accessible electronic tools that facilitate anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationship. This is powered via the many social networking sites that enable the communication of different kinds across frontiers. Examples of social media platforms include but not limited to Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter/X, Instagram, YouTube, Tiktok among others.

Review of Literature

Prevalence of Hate Speech on Social Media in Nigeria

Hate speech has been a recurring issue of national discourse in Nigeria. Due to the heated and volatile nature of the Nigerian polity, any comment that tends not to be on the side of the government or an ethnic nationality is easily interpreted as hate speech. This has led to diverse ethnic and political-oriented crises. Scattered through the social media space today are many instances and incidences of hate speeches circulating unabated. A critical examination of some speeches made by political and prominent Nigerians opens up on this.

The former governor of Lagos State and National Leader of the APC, Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu, on January 22, 2019, blasted former President Olusegun Obasanjo accusing him of being an election rigger. He made this accusation, among others, in a letter titled ‘Chief Obasanjo – At War with his own deeds.’ “Moreover, Chief Obasanjo should be the last to complain about election rigging. His administration was an unalloyed miscarriage of justice and of the best aspirations of the Nigerian people. We all know he was not elected in 1999. When it comes to elections, he has been a rigger without peer. There is no election which occurred under Obasanjo’s watch or in which he participated that did not involve cheating on his part,” he stated (Adebulu, 2019).

Different hate speeches by groups and individuals are being circulated online via majorly social media platforms due to the porous nature of the platforms. A common was example was the hate speech cum threat shared by Arewa Youth Consultative Forum groups on social media; “From today, June 6, 2017, when this proclamation is signed, the North, a critical player in the Nigerian project, hereby declares that it will no longer be disposed to coexisting with the Igbos and shall take definite steps to end the partnership by pulling out of the current federal arrangement. This conclusion is necessitated by the realisation that it since ceased to be comfortable or safe to continue sharing the same country with the ungrateful, uncultured Igbos who have exhibited reckless disrespect for the other federating units and stained the integrity of the entire nation with their insatiable criminal obsessions (Tauna, 2017).

In a similar instance, the leader of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, on December 13, 2016, during his trial, for treasonable felony due to his activities as the Director of Radio Biafra, at the Federal High Court in Abuja, lost his temper while protesting the

decision of the court to shield witnesses who would testify against him and called President Buhari a mad man. “I will not stand this travesty of Justice. Buhari spoke in public, he accused me in public. I must also be allowed to stand my trial in public. This is nonsense! I will give testimony before this court! By the time I finish, there will be no Nigeria. This is no Sharia court. It is a court that operates under the common law. There will be no screening of witnesses, no fake identities or fake addresses (Ndujihe & Nnochiri, 2016).

The plethora of cases of hate speech on social media buttressed the position of Alakali, Faga and Mbursa (2017) who asserted that social media offer an ideal platform to adapt and spread various speeches and foul language easily because of its decentralised, anonymous and interactive structure. The prevalence of negative speech and foul language on social media bordering on political and national issues, and even social interaction in Nigeria, especially on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn is becoming worrisome. This is because it is contributing to disaffection among tribes, political class, and religion or even among friends in the society.

Factors Responsible for the use of Hate Speech on Social Media

Social media platforms are seen as channels that inspire the proliferation of hate speech. Esimokha, Bobmanuel and Asaolu (2019) explained this when they declared that as regards motivation of hate speech, many scholars have pointed out several factors: tolerance, political clashes, discrimination, enmity and the openness of social media as motivating hate speech online. For example, even before the emergence of social media, Spiegel (1999) as seen in Esimokha, Bobmanuel and Asaolu (2019) predicted that the internet will be another communication tool for racists and hate-mongers to spread their messages, and Nemes (2002) as cited in

Esimokha et al. (2019) considered the internet as an important medium for those who want to spread messages of hatred.

Furthermore, UNECSCO (2015) enumerated and described the characteristics and challenges of hate speech on social media:

a. Permanence: Hate speech can remain online for long periods of time and in different formats across different platforms, and can be repeatedly linked. In this light, the architecture of the platforms influences how long topics “stay alive.” This is why they say that the internet never forgets as one can always get what has been posted years ago.

b. Itinerancy: Even when content is removed, it may be revived somewhere else, either on the same platform with another name or in other online spaces. This is because other people can copy and post what someone else had posted. In some cases, one can make a post and pull it down later. However, before pulling the post down, some people might have shared the post. And in some instances, they take it to other social media platforms other than the platform they saw it.

c. Anonymity or pseudonymity (false names): With the possibility to be anonymous, people tend to feel more comfortable expressing hate, as they will not be discovered or will have to deal with any consequences. There are several social media accounts that are fake and used for dishonest purposes. Some of these accounts have been used to cause disorder and strife between individuals and groups.

d. Transnationality: The transnational reach of the internet enhances the effects of hate speech and also poses complications regarding legal mechanisms for combating online hate speech. What is being posted on social media has no limitations to where it could reach as anyone in any part of the world can see it.

On another note, Adum et al. (2019) argued that more often than not, the media help to fuel hate speech where it is not properly used or when it is used by non-professionals. This is common in the era of citizen journalism and the liberal space of interaction and information-sharing – social media.

Empirical Review

Related empirical studies were reviewed to place the current study in light of other extant literatures so as to find areas of convergence and divergence. Auwal (2018) conducted a study on social media and hate speech: Analysis of comments on Biafra agitations, Arewa youths’ ultimatum and their implications on peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. This study revealed that users were polarised along regional and religious lines in their comments, posting negative and injurious comments capable of turning the nation against itself. This is attributed to the common nature of social media, making it possible for users to anonymously read contents and react with derogatory comments that insult or ridicule the ethnic, political, regional and religious affiliations of the diverse population of the country. That is why some individuals are of the opinion that some level of regulation should be introduced on how people use the social media (Santas, & Inobemhe, 2021).

Similarly, Apeh (2016) did a study on impact of social media on modern journalism. The study evaluated the impacts of social media on modern journalism and discovered that social media is emerging as a powerful phenomenon across Nigeria as showcased by popular citizen journalism websites. In congruency with the Democratic Participant Media Theory and the Public Sphere model, the researcher came to the reasoned conclusion that in this modern age, the social media have emerged as alternative news sources, since audiences now depend on them largely in meeting their information

needs. In as much as social media in Nigeria has broadened people's access to a variety of news, this study suggests that a proper synergy between the modern journalism and social media is recommended to ascertain the best way(s) forward, for effective and efficient journalism practices in the country which will suit the modern age.

In addition, Oruame (2015) did a study on Nigeria 2015 Elections and the Internet of Hate. The study found out that hate and divisive speeches dominate political rallies as the elections heat up a political space already notorious for its violence. Hate and divisive speeches assumed more frightening dimensions online via social media, notably Facebook, twitter and YouTube by cashing in on the fault-lines of religion and ethnicity.

In the same vein, Suntai and Targema (2017) carried out a study on new media and Democracy in Nigeria: An appraisal of the opportunities and Threats in the terrain. Anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory, the study interrogates the extent to which new media platforms liberalise the process of political communication in the country, and the opportunities and threats which they harbour for democratic consolidation. The study noted that sadly, several abuses exist on the social media that are threatening to rubbish the opportunities of the platform such as the prevalence of hate and dangerous speech, increased intensity of lies, mischiefs, falsehood and negative propaganda, and the use of comment sections to attack, verbally assault, bully and demonise co-discussants of political matters raised in the news via the numerous online platforms.

Theoretical Framework

Frustration Aggression Theory

Frustration aggression theory otherwise known as frustration aggression hypothesis was propounded by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and

Robert Sears in 1939, and further developed by Neal Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1969. The theory posits that frustration precedes the condition for aggression-meaning any frustration unavoidably leads to aggression. The theory also states that frustration will elicit hostile aggression proportionately to the extent that the frustrated goal serves the individual's need for significance (Kruglanski et al, 2023).

In the context of this current study, it is apposite to note that frustration serves as a major contributing factor to the high spate of hate speech the youth churn out on social media platforms. Bhandari (2022) stated that there is a close relationship between frustration and negative talk. This underscores the fact that frustration is a contributing factor to the hate being circulated on social media platforms among most particularly the youth. A frustrated youth is likely to use harsh words in communication and the higher the level of frustration the higher the chances of indulging in hate speeches. It is instinctive in the human nature to express frustration through aggression. Hate speech (spoken or written) is one of the means through which aggression is expressed. The theory is used as the theoretical foundation for this study because of its explanatory relevance in relations to the prevalence of hate speech on social media platforms in the South East region of Nigeria.

Methodology

The research method for this study is survey. Survey research method is used to determine what people know, think, own, do, plan to do, their attitudes, tastes, beliefs and value (Berger, 2000 as cited in Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharaeafo and Okpanachi, 2022). The use of survey method is deemed appropriate for this study because it uses a representative sample of the entire population.

The population for this study comprised of youth in South-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The zone is made up of five states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. It would be cumbersome to study the entire five states in the zone. Therefore, three states; Imo, Enugu and Abia were randomly selected as sample to represent the population of youth in the entire zone in the study. The population of youth in the three states are thus; Imo-1,402,429, Enugu-1,300,664 and

Abia-894,688 making a total of 3,597,781(NBS, 2012 youth baseline survey). Accordingly, the three states made up the study area of focus.

The sample size for this study is 385 as determined by Raosoft online calculator (evidence attached in appendix). To arrive at the sample size, confidence level of 95 percent, precision level of 0.05 (5%) and an estimate of variance (proportion) of 5% were used.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Access to Social Media

Access	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	372	100
No	-	-
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

From the research data, all the respondents have access to social media; this therefore makes them the right set of respondents to elicit relevant data for this study.

Table 2: Knowledge of Hate Speech

Knows Hate Speech	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	372	100
No	-	-
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The research table reveals that all the study participants know about hate speech which clearly indicates how ubiquitous hate speech has become on social media platforms.

Table 3: Frequency of Encounter with Hate Speech on Social Media

Fake News Encounter	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once in a day	182	49
Twice or more daily	42	11
Once in a week	101	27
Once in a moth	47	13
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data as seen in the table above revealed that respondents encountered one form of hate speech or another at least once in a way. This implies prevalence of hate speech.

Table 4: Some factors make for the use of social media for hate speech

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	311	83
No	47	13
Not Certain	16	4
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The implication of the data in table 4 above is that hate speech most times do not just happen without triggers as certain factors are responsible.

Table 5: Factors that trigger hate speech in the region

Question	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity	54	15
Politics	47	12
Religion	30	8
Culture	10	3
Social standing	20	5
All of the above	211	57
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

From the table above, most hate speeches used by the youths on social media were within the triggered by factors such as ethnicity, politics, religion, culture, and the social standing of persons in the region.

Table 6: Influence of Social Media on Hate Speech

Social Media Influence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	301	81
No	23	6
Not Sure	48	13
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data in table above showed that social media platforms have influence on the spread of social media. It implies that the platforms serve as a breeding ground where hate speech thrive unabated among the youth as seen in the research data.

Table 7: Extent of Social Media Influence

Extent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	234	63
Average/Moderate	116	31
Low	16	4

Undecided	6	2
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

It is clear that social media wield a high degree of influence on majority of the respondents which buttresses the fact that social media have become potent and veritable tools of communication among the youth today.

Table 8 Social Media Platform with Hate Speech Prevalence

Extent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	101	27
Instagram	73	20
Twitter [Now X]	198	53
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The data in table 8 above demonstrated that Twitter [Now X] had more cases of hate speech than Instagram and Facebook. Evidently, there are high and diverse posts of hate speech prevalent on X more than any other social media platforms. This may align with the notion behind the ban of the platform aftermath of the #2020EndSARS protests in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study demonstrated that youths in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria have access to social as typified in the responses supplied by the respondents who took the survey. Furthermore, the youthful populations in the region have knowledge of hate speech. Earlier studies have suggested that youth in the South-East region have knowledge what constitute hate speech (Ezeh & Mboso, 2020; Obayi, Okalla, Anele & Uzoechi, 2020). In essence, as they use social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram and others, they come across hate speech and so they became familiar with what constitute "hate speech" within the social media sphere.

The study revealed that on a daily basis, persons in the region encounter hate speech across social media platforms. It was also showed in findings that the youths are triggered by factors such as politics, ethnicity, religion, culture and social standing of the people. It is important to note that politics-related hate speeches were significant. These hate speeches are more frequent during election period (pre-election,

election and post-election events) when the polity is mostly overheated and the people are divided across religious, ethnic and sectional lines by politicians to achieve their selfish aims.

In line with this, Oruame (2015) also added in agreement that hate and divisive speeches dominate political rallies as the elections heat up a political space already notorious for its violence. Hate and divisive speeches took on more frightening dimensions online via social media, notably Facebook, twitter and YouTube by cashing in on the fault-lines: religion and ethnicity. Nigeria, as a country, is troubled with inept leadership. Thus, most youths are always prone to take to the social media to express their frustration cum dissatisfaction with the governments at all levels which normally come with a spice of hate speeches.

The study revealed in findings that social media influence youth in making hate speeches. They, however, noted that this is to a high extent. This was closely followed by those who said it was to an average extent. The implication of the foregoing is that social

media platforms have the power to drive youths into making hate speeches. "Social media have been predicted as a strong force in shaping public opinion especially in issues of politics, social causes and sexuality. Social media have also been an expression of the complexities between the media and society" (Idakwo, as cited in Apeh, 2016, p. 23). Thus, in the course of airing opinions which are mostly varied, the tendency of making controversial comments is high. Also, based on the fact that social media is an interactive media makes it, even more contentious as people would strive to be heard and assert their views as right. A situation as this invariably makes for hate speeches, especially when the argument gets rough and heated.

Findings of the study also revealed that there is prevalence of social media-enabled hate speeches in the region. However, X was found to be the most significant enabler. It is the case because social media platforms provide an avenue for youths to call out highly placed people who occupy political or influential positions to do the right thing for the good of the society. They also use it to bare their mind on issues affecting them of which those in authority should handle. In the course of doing this, some become insulting and abusive in their comments or posts. The social media platform has emerged as the new public sphere having undefined boundaries with respect to freedoms of assembly, association and expression, without adequate regulation thereby being abused by opportunists to spread hate (Auwal, 2018).

Conclusion

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter guarantee easy access to information dissemination to people scattered in different time and place. Therefore, people find it convenient to explore the opportunity they offer to

communicate their thoughts, opinions, views and values on issues that affect them both directly and indirectly. In spite of the multifarious potentials social media possess, the concomitant effects portend serious challenges to the Nigerian fragile polity platforms are used as channels to spread hate speech among the youth. Therefore, there is the need to regulate the use of social media platforms among most particularly the youth who are at the vanguard of using the platform to propagate hate across religious, political, ethnic and sectional lines.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations will suffice.

1. Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should carry out intensive sensitisation for Southeast youths and by extension the entire Nigerian on using constructive ways to communicate their feelings and thoughts rather than resorting to hate speeches.
2. Federal Government should find a way of regulating the social media. However, this should not make for muzzling freedom of expression. In essence, the regulation should not infringe on people's fundamental rights to free expression.
3. Southeast youths should eschew from playing politics of bitterness which involves character assassination, name calling, among others. This is believed to be one of the things that can set the zone on path of reconciliation with the rest of the country and set them on a progress drive.
4. Social media should be seen by the youth and sundry as place to enhance unity and brotherliness, and not an avenue for the promotion of acrimony and hatred. This is achievable if there is self-reorientation among the youth of Nigeria.

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