



**HATE SPEECH IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA: A STUDY OF USERS' VIEWS IN EFFURUN,
DELTA STATE**

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Abstract

Hate speech has become a common phenomenon in the social media especially during the last few years in Nigeria. Hate speech is a comment or remark against ethnic groups, religious groups, individual or group of individuals and race. The paper examines users' views of hate speech in the social media. The study is anchored on the social identity theory, which explains how an individual is influenced by information relevant and prevailing among the group members. To ascertain users' views of hate speech in the social media, 314 copies of questionnaire as instrument for data collection were administered to social media users in Effurun in Delta State. Results showed that hate speech in the social media is capable of jeopardizing the unity of the country if not checked. The result also showed that it is against freedom of speech and expression to monitor the social media. However, in the case where hate speech and comments in the social media may lead to violence or crises, the law should take its course. It is recommended that social media users should be mindful of the things they post on the social media. The unity of the country should be priority to all social media users.

Key words: Fake News, Hate Speech, Social Media, Users, Views

1. Introduction

Hate speech is not a new phenomenon. Hate remarks and comments cut across race, religions, tribes, political parties, nationality, local communities and groups. Hate speech is widely spread by the media. It was because hate speech was made in the mass media that the concept of 'Hate Radio' was developed. There are examples of hate speech having disastrous, deadly results. It is widely believed that hate speech played a significant role in the massacre of 800,000 Tutsis and Hutus in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In the aftermath of the December 2007 presidential elections in Kenya, violence erupted, mainly between Kenya's three largest ethnic groups. More than 1,100 people were killed. A popular radio broadcaster, Joshua Arap Sang, was accused of using his position to encourage ethnic attacks. Text messages were widely circulated calling on one group or another to "exterminate" ethnic rivals. Since then, Kenya has passed new laws prohibiting hate speech on any medium of mass communication (from the Agency for Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO, 2016). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of the UN treaty calls on governments to prevent hate speech. Article 20(2) says: "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law (CEPO, 2016).

In Nigeria, hate comments made in the media have triggered violence between Moslems and Christians for several decades. In 2017, during the hot agitation of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) for secession, the social media were used as platforms for hate speech and remarks between the IPOB and the Arewa Youths Consultative Forum (AYCF). In July 2017, the AYCF gave an



ultimatum to the Igbos living in the Northern part of Nigeria to leave before October 1st, 2017. This “quick” notice to vacate was carried by both the mass media and social media as it became a hot national issue in the country. It was a threat to national unity and capable of destabilising the peace and unity of the country. On one hand, the Igbos and the Niger-Delta Avengers (a militant group in the Niger-Delta) gave the Hausas ultimatum to leave the South-east and the South-south. This hate development made President Muhammadu Buhari in his national broadcast, after returning from a long medical vocation from London, to complain that some of the discussions on the social media in his absence crossed the line and left him distressed. Invariably, social media users aggravated the situation by posting fake and panic news on the Internet.

Hate news and fake information in the media are capable of jeopardizing the the unity of the country if not checked. In the same 2017, the Nigerian Military embarked on a social responsibility exercise by giving vaccine to children in the South-east. The exercise was to be for primary and secondary school pupils and students. It was a period of the Monkey Pox disease that first occurred in Bayelsa State. It was also a period of the Indigenous People of Biafra’s (IPOB) hot agitation for secession. The vaccine exercise started in the South-East, Anambra State at a time when the army launched operation ‘Python Dance. Operation Python Dance was to quell the civil unrest by the IPOB in the Abia State in the South-East. Fake news in the social media went viral that the army was going to use the immunization exercise to eliminate the Igbos. Out of fear, parents and guardians went to school to pick up their children and wards. The unverified news also went viral in different parts of the country. the Nigerian Army in a press statement said that the fake news about ‘killer vaccine’ as the people call it was the work of mischief makers using the social media to discredit the army.

However, many Nigerians blamed the Nigerian Army for not carrying out enough sensitization and enlightenment campaign on the immunization exercise. The aftermaths of the hate speech situation in the country made the Nigerian Army to say that they had set up machinery to ‘monitor’ what has been seen as hate speeches phenomenon in the social media capable of distabilising the unity of the country. Major General John Eneneche, Dircetor of Defence Information, observed that the social media have become a place for hate speech, anti government and anti-security activities in Nigeria.

It is against this background that this study looks at hate speech in the social media. Many studies have looked at social media and hate speech from different perspectives but based on time and location differences, this looks at social media and hate speech not from the journalist narratives but from the public perspectives. The study, therefore determines the views of users about hate speech in the social media and to ascertain users views of government monitoring of hate speech in the social media.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Literature

The study focuses on review of empirical studies on social media and hate speech. In the view of Nockleby (2000), hate speech can be described as speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display against a person, group of persons, tribes, religion, race on the basis of their membership of the group. The Agency for Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (2016) in Berlin, Germany, defined hate speech is a communication that denigrates people on the basis of their membership to a particular group. This can include any form of expression, such as images, plays and songs as well as speech. According to CEPO, hate speech is not freedom of speech. Hate speech is forbidden in many countries by law because it not only incites violence but it distablises an individual.



The lineage of hate speech, which had taken a serious and offensive dimension in the social media is traceable to the collapse of the socio-political system in Nigeria. Dambazau (2014) shared his thought on this when he argued that security challenges posed by violent crimes, ethno-religious conflicts, resource-based conflicts, election induced violence and insecurity of lives and property are as result of the collapse of the economic and political systems. The central factors responsible for the collapse of the socio-economic system, according to Dambazau, were poor governance and lack of effective leadership at all levels of governance. The collapse of the socio-economic and political system and failure of governance had led to frustrated aggressive approach by restive youths in the Niger-Delta as arm militants, insurgency in the North-East; and in the South-East, IPOB agitation for succession. Aggrieved people took to social media to express their thoughts bordering on corruption, insecurity, kidnapping, injustice and negligence of the Niger-Delta, Fulani-hersmen and farmers clashes, poverty, unemployment and many other issues affecting the generality of Nigerians.

This is in line with CEPO's (2016) (Agency for Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation) findings on the factors that drive hate speech in the social media. These are: children affected by or involved in violence at earlier ages; proximity to conflict; learning to hate; breakdown of positive norms/values; and youth who feel frustrated. Also, lack of political accountability; misconception on cultural diversity; and, lack of policies to guide online freedom of expression, ethics and privacy are driving factors for hate speech in the social media. On this, the social media offer an open platform which can further entrench hate.

Hate speech posted on the social media also charged people for a revolutionary course. The Arab Spring or the Social Media Revolution that occurred in 2010, 2011 in some parts of the Arab nations was as a result of the social media to incite street protests. Protests in some Arab countries as a result of the social media usage brought about political change in countries that have been considered as hard-rock in religious and social beliefs. This was after violence and civil war in some places or countries like Libya. Reason oppressive governments often try to censor the Internet and social media is because they are mechanisms or catalysts for change. Social media provide a source of information as well as a venue for collaboration. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are the most effective tools in today's media-driven society for spreading ideas informally, especially among youths. This was particularly evident in Egypt, where it was widely known that the youths were driving force for the revolution. Frustrated young people took to their computers and smart phones to spread messages of freedom and change.

Social media also inspired protests in Bahrain, Libya, Iran, Algeria, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan and even faraway China. The protests were spurred by extensive use of social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, which are seen as the tools of revolution. Pro-democracy activists use these tools to reinforce political rhetoric and develop a foundation of support. On January 28th, 2011, Egypt's ousted President Hosni Mubarak ordered all Internet providers to shut down their services within the country. This Internet blackout followed a like manner in other places (Akpoghiran, 2014). People have used the social media to occasion social change and good governance in different parts of the world but this has not worked in Nigeria.

Major social media company like Google's YouTube, Twitter have their own policy regarding what content can be considered as hate speech or what they can be defined as hate speech and fake news. For example, in late 2012, Google was publicly criticized for its decision to remove a hate-propaganda film, "The Innocence of Muslims," from its video-sharing site (YouTube) in certain countries (Ring, 2013). The film mocked Prophet Mohammed and was highly offensive to many Muslims. It sparked violent riots throughout the Middle East. Google blocked the content in seven



countries while in Pakistan, 19 people were killed in the resulting riots, and critics blamed Google for allowing the content, which they said was directly responsible for global upheaval (Sengupta, 2012). Becker in 1975 cited in Olayiwola (2013) described the media as 'manipulative media' on a susceptible citizenry..

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Social Identity Theory. The social identity theory was propounded by Henri Tajfei in 1979 and later John Turner developed it in 1980. The social identity theory deals with individual's sense of belonging to a group. It is a sense of identity in the sense that the individual feels he/she belongs to a group, and a group is influenced by information relevant and prevailing among the group members. In today's world, the social media influence people's way of doing things. The platform also gives a sense of identity and belonging.

The social identity theory also posits that group or groups an individual belongs to is a source of identity. The group could be religious, family, age, business associates, academics, social or sport club; they influence and make individual identity through information shared.

Assumptions of the Social Identity Theory: The core assumptions of the Social Identity Theory are that individuals are identified by the group they belong to, and groups are affected by information received and shared, in this theory, groups are divided into 'them' and 'us' or in-group and out-group based on a process of social categorization. The 'them' and 'us' is a way of differentiating from other group and identifying with our group; social identity theory states that the in-group (us) will discriminate against the out-group (them) to enhance their self-image. For instance, political parties like APC and PDP will always discriminate against each other; and we identify with the group we share the same ideologies, beliefs and information with.

The Social Identity Theory also finds its bearings with Benesch's Model of five variables for analysing the dangers of hate speech, as cited in the Agency for Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO) (2016). These are the degree of the speaker's influence over an audience; the grievances or fears of the audience that can be cultivated by the speaker; whether or not the speech act is understood as a call to violence; the social and historical context (such as previous episodes of violence); whether the means distributing the speech is also influential (such as when a media outlet is the sole broadcaster of information in that area).

In the light of this study, the social media by virtue of its nature enable people to identify and form social groups. Based on the attributes of the social media namely instructiveness, social and heavy presence, degree of usage and autonomy, the social media are capable of affecting users' beliefs, attitude, perceptions and behaviour. Such groups are affected by the information they received and shared. On daily basis, So many items are posted in the social media and so many people visit the social media on daily basis. People identify with groups that they share the same ideas or beliefs. These ideas or beliefs on the social media formed their attitude. People can identify with hate speech when it suits their ideas, interest and belief. Some of these groups in the social media post hate speech comments.

3. Methodology

The survey research method was adopted because it allows respondents' to express their ideas, feelings, views, opinion, attitude and behaviour on the subject-matter. The sampling method was purposive technique.



The conceptual scope of the study is hate speech in the social media specifically, Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter. YouTube, Instagram. These and others are major social platforms in Nigeria especially among young people. The geographical scope is the Petroleum Training Institute (P.T.I) in Effurun in Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State. The Petroleum Training Institute (P.T.I) was chosen because it is oldest Federal institute in Delta State and one of the oldest institutes in Delta State, as well as the first petroleum training institute in West Africa and again, one of the oldest in Africa. The P.T.I was established in 1973 by the federal government as a prerequisite for the membership in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to train indigenous middle level manpower to meet the labour demands of the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and West Africa sub-region. The Petroleum Training Institute runs both National Diploma Programme (ND) and Higher National Diploma Programme (HND). As an institution of higher learning, its major publics are students who are equally youths. Youths are the dominant users of the social media. Demographically, the scope was limited to youths, and older adults who use the social media. The users were purposively determined through the effort of research assistants hired for this purpose.

The population of the study comprises the students who were offered admission into the Petroleum Training Institute for the 2018/2019 academic session. The population was 1, 896 (see www.portal.pti.edu.ng). In order to determine the sample size for the study, the Krejcie Robert and Morgan Daryle sample size was adopted. The Krejcie Robert and Morgan Daryle determination of sample size was developed in 1970. It has been used by many researchers over the years. For example, if the population ('N') is 270 the sample size ('S') is 159. If the population is above a hundred thousand (100,000) to a million or millions, the sample size remains 384. Since the population is 1, 896, then the sample size as shown in the Table below is 317.

Table 1: Sample Size

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	***317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note: "N" is population size; "S" is sample size

Source: Sample size by Krejcie, Robert V., Morgan, Daryle W. (1970)

Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data. Seven (7) research assistants were hired. The research assistants were students from the same PTI. They were instructed to administer and return the questionnaire at a specific period given (3 weeks). The research assistants were instructed to administer the questionnaire to only those who use the social media by asking the respondents if they



were users of the social media. Each of the four research assistants was given 45 copies. The copies of the questionnaire (317) were not proportionally distributed but were purposively distributed to social media users. However, three hundred and fourteen copies were returned (314). This represented 99.1% of the questionnaire returned. The questionnaire was presented in Likert scale of a 5-point option like Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (UD), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The data were analysed using average mean. Data in Tables 1 and 2 were analysed using mean. The point of acceptance or rejection to a statement or item in the questionnaire was 3.00.

4. Results

Table 2: Determining Government Monitoring of Hate Speech

S/N	Items	SA	A	UD	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
1.	The social media have been misused in many ways by some users in the forms of (nudity; fake news; hate comments and hacking)	169	60	12	22	51	3.87	Accepted
2.	The social media are full of fake news and unverified stories.	96	171	00	37	10	3.97	Accepted
3.	The social media have been used as platforms for hate speech/comments.	165	106	03	19	21	4.19	Accepted
4.	The social media are optional and quick places to get stories that cannot be gotten from the mass media.	247	48	00	12	07	4.64	Accepted
5.	Hate speech is a common phenomenon in the social media. It might be dangerous.	113	42	00	159	00	3.34	Accepted
6.	The social media are places for freedom of expression and speech. Therefore, people should be allowed to say their minds.	208	106	00	00	00	4.66	Accepted
7.	Remarks on other religions, beliefs, sex, height, lifestyles are but expression of opinions and views. It should not be termed as hate speech.	38	23	00	160	93	2.21	Rejected
8.	The social media are the freest places where aggrieved Nigerians can express their minds over failed government system and services.	156	147	00	11	00	4.42	Accepted
9.	If hate speech is not controlled and monitored in the social media, people can use it to distabilise and cause crises in the country.	248	44	00	00	22	4.57	Accepted



S/N	Items	SA	A	UD	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
10.	It is against freedom of speech for the government to monitor users of the social media in the name of hate speech.	11	13	00	187	103	1.85	Rejected
11.	Hate comments are commonly said by politicians during campaigns to opposition candidates and parties in the media. It is part of political campaign.	101	79	05	76	53	3.31	Accepted
12.	The hate speech situation in the social media could be part of government plan to monitor the opposition party.	102	73	01	89	49	3.28	Accepted
13.	The social media in Nigeria have uncovered stories that the mass media have not uncovered. Hate speech was only a way to discredit the social media.	71	84	00	92	67	3.00	Accepted
14.	The social media are hiding places for mischief makers of hate speech, fake news, anti-government and anti-security activities.	186	106	00	11	11	4.41	Accepted
15.	Appealing to the conscience of social media users is the best way to curb hate speech situation.	298	16	00	00	00	4.94	Accepted
16.	Lack of responsible attitude is the cause of hate speech or comments in the social media.	169	89	00	49	07	4.15	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2019



Table 3: The followings described hate speech situation in the social media

S/N	Items	SA	A	UD	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
17.	When people's religions, beliefs, ethnic origins, associations are attacked by other individual or groups.	161	92	00	44	17	4.07	Accepted
18.	When people's lifestyles, characters, personality, language, height and size are ridiculed and defamed publicly.	94	171	02	37	10	3.96	Accepted
19.	When people insult, criticize and defame one another on the mass and social media.	259	55	00	00	00	4.82	Accepted
20.	When political parties and politicians attack one another in the social and mass media	93	73	01	98	49	3.20	Accepted
21.	When the federal government is looking for way(s) to monitor freedom of speech or expression in the social media they term it as hate speech.	09	14	00	186	106	1.84	Rejected
22.	Posting stories on the social media to incite hate it expressing views.	161	60	00	42	51	3.75	Accepted
23.	Posting stories on the social media to incite violence against government and other lawful authorities.	119	66	00	76	53	3.38	Accepted
24.	Posting of rumours or fake news online is part of hate speech comments..	92	71	00	84	67	3.11	Accepted
25.	Hate comment is another way to correct people on what they said or have done or represented in the public.	91	73	01	100	49	3.18	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2019

Based on percentage analysis on respondents' demographic, male respondents were 67.2% of the responses while female respondents were 32.8%. The results on responses on sex category of respondents' imply that male respondents were more conversant with political and national issues in the social media. Males are known to be more interested in national issues than females. On marital status, 98% of the respondents were single. A study had shown that single and younger individuals were more involved and spend more time in the social media than married individuals (Akpoghiran, 2016). This has been proven right by the rate at which users of the social media are increasing. The data on age categories helped to explain why younger adults between ages of 17-21 representing 36.9%; 22-26 representing 34.1% and 27-31 representing 28.9% of the respondents respectively, spent more time with the smart phones and the social media. It also confirmed exposure to various national issues posted and shared in the social media. The respondents showed that they have clear understanding of the questions in the questionnaire and the concept of hate speech in the social media. Students or young people are very versatile with the smart phones and the information and



communication devices as well as the social media. Students and other younger adults occupied themselves so much with the smart phones and the social media.

Objective one of the study was to determine the views of users' about hate speech in the social media. Results in Table 2 (items 1--8) and Table 3 (items 17-19; 20-24) provided answers to research objective one. Responses in item 1 of Table 2 showed that at a point where mean obtained and mean-point ($3.87 > 3.00$), respondents' agreed that the social media have been misused in many ways by its users. The misused in the social as the respondents' view it were in the areas of nudity especially by young women; fake news, rumours; inciting hate and violence and internet hacking by fraudsters. Internet hacking by young fraudsters is increasing by the day in Nigeria. This result implies that fake news and rumours in the social media may mislead people and cause crisis. Information in the social media that are not properly managed can be harmful to its users. This is because there are many unverified stories in the social media in Nigeria. It is taken from the result in item 1 that the respondents viewed wrong intention and attitude as some of the reasons of misuse of the social media (also see item 16) for hate speech for example. The social media are not just platforms of sharing information or views but they are social processes by which people's intentions, actions, attitudes are known and shared. Result in item I of the same Table 2 corresponds with the result in item 2, that the social media are full of fake news and unverified stories. This is because many of the information or stories are not verified and many of the social media or sites are not institutionalized. It is difficult most times to trace the true identity of an individual who posted information. Spencer-Smith (2018) believes that hate speech on social media is damaging not just to the wellbeing of users, but also to an open, egalitarian society. Since the social media are not like the conventional mass media, anyone can post news or information to any social site without source-credibility. This is why at a point where ($4.19 > 3.00$), responses in item 3 showed that the social media have been used as platforms for hate speech/comments. Also, this is why the federal government feared that the social media might be used to incite political, ethnic or religious violence. Spencer-Smith (2018) shared the same view when he maintains that the social media are used by terrorist groups to recruit members and organize their crimes. However, at a point where ($4.64 > 3.00$) the social media were the optional and quick places for the citizenry to get stories that cannot be got from the mass media. Invariably, the social media are platforms for citizen journalism.

Even though hate speech is a common phenomenon in the social media (item 5), the views of the respondents' on this is that the social media still remain freest places for freedom of expression and speech, and a place where aggrieved Nigerians can express their minds over failed government system and services (item 8). Therefore, people should be allowed to say their minds in the social media ($4.42 > 3.00$). However, unguided remarks on other religions, beliefs, sex, height, lifestyles should be termed as hate speech (where mean-point obtained: $2.21 < 3.00$). On this, Ring (2013) is of the view that current situation of hate speeches, fake news and insecurity give social media companies' unprecedented power to control what videos, texts, images users may or may not post or access on those social media sites.

The above results in Table 2 showed that respondents viewed the social media as hiding places for mischief makers of hate speech, fake news, anti-government and anti-security activities even though the social media in Nigeria have uncovered stories that the mainstream mass media have not uncovered. The findings above correspond with the adoption of the theory for the study. The theory of social identity explains that individuals are identified by the group they belong to, and groups are formed or affected by information received and shared. The social identity theory is a way to explain intergroup behaviour on the basis of same ideology shared, social status or class,



family, religion, beliefs, same association and shared information. We, therefore, identify with the group we share the same ideologies, beliefs and information with. The respondents shared and identify with the same thoughts that hate speech in the social media can trigger crises if the users do not restrain from hate comments.

In respond to research objective two, results in items 9, 10, 12 and 14 of Table 3 provided answers. Objective two of the study was to ascertain users' views of government monitoring of hate speech in the social media. As obtained in the study, respondents' rejected the statement that it was against freedom of speech for the government to monitor hate speech in the social media (where mean-point obtained: $1.85 < 3.00$). This implies that it was not against freedom of speech for the government to monitor the social media if hate speech in the social media would be used by people to destabilise and cause crises in the country ($4.57 > 3.00$). It is taken in the study, therefore, that fundamental right of freedom of expression and speech expressed in the social media should not be platform to incite violence and hate. The view of the respondents' therefore, is that social media should not be platforms to incite violence and cause hate. It was agreed by a considerable number of the respondents' ($4.94 > 3.00$) that appealing to the conscience of social media users is the best way to curb hate speech situation. It was also agreed that the lack of responsible attitude was the cause of hate speech or comments in the social media. Therefore, responsible attitude was the best way to curb hate speech in the social media. All the results in Table 2 except item 21 were in the affirmative to the statement made. This implies that respondents' see hate speech in the social media as when people's religion, beliefs, ethnic origin, association are attacked by other individual or groups. Respondents' were of the view that hate speech leads to violence. This is why Spencer-Smith (2018) was of the view that social media companies to a large extent, should police what is and is not acceptable to post on their platforms. For example, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have global users' policies on hate speech and can remove comments judged to be in breach of these policies.

In all, the findings showed that users of social media viewed the monitoring of hate speech in the social media as only right when a comment or remark was a threat to lives and national security. Remarks on other religions, culture or beliefs, sex, height, in Nigeria in the social media should not be allowed. This is because hate speech in the social media is capable of inciting violence if not checked or if responsible attitude is not involved.

All the findings above correspond with the adoption of the theory for the study. The theory of social identity explains that individuals are identified by the group they belong to, and groups are formed or affected by the information received and shared. The information received and shared in the social media in return may affect people's beliefs, religion and association. The theory of social identity also explains that every individual belongs to a source of identity or social group by virtues of their similar and shared beliefs, ideology and association. People post fake news that constitutes hate speech in the social media and people with same beliefs and ideology without verification of the story spread the news via the social media. One of the findings in this study showed that respondents shared and identified with the fact that hate speech in the social media can trigger crises if the users do not restrain from hate comments. The theory of social identity finds credence with objective two of the study. In today's world, the social media largely influence people's way of doing things, and this helps to form a sense of identity and belonging. People with the same sense of ideology can use hate speech in the social media to cause crises if the platforms are not monitored by the appropriate authorities.

All, the findings imply that; the social media platforms have been misused in many ways by some users in the forms of nudity; fake news; hate comments and hacking. The social media are hiding



places for mischief makers of hate speech, fake news, anti-government and anti-security activities; Although the social media are freest places for freedom of expression and speech and where aggrieved Nigerians can express their minds over any national issue, however, users should guard against remarks that are capable of causing violence and other forms of crisis. The social media should not be platforms to incite violence and cause hate. If hate speech is not controlled and monitored in the social media, people can use it to destabilise and cause crises in the country. Therefore, monitoring of the social media is only necessary when it involves threat to lives and properties and national security; it was also agreed that the lack of responsible attitude was the cause of hate speech or comments in the social media.

The distinction of this study from other studies on social media and hate speech is that many studies have not looked at right attitude is the best option to curb hate speech. This study has shown that right attitude is best mechanism to control hate speech. This is by appealing to the conscience.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Hate speech is a common phenomenon in the social media. It is a speech or comment made to attack a person or group on the basis of race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, gender or height. It also comes in the forms of gesture or conduct, writing, or display against a person or group of persons on the basis of their membership of the group. Perceptions of social media users on hate speech are that hate news and fake information in the social media are capable of jeopardizing the unity of the country, if not checked. This however does imply that the social media have not helped in promoting unity and harmony among people as well as helping people get useful information for their wellbeing. The social media are open for all persons to express their views on any issue bordering them. However, users should guide their remarks. The social media should not be platforms to incite violence and cause hate.

Arising from the above, it is recommended therefore that users of the social media should guard against making provocative comments or remarks that are capable of causing violence or disunity among people of different ethnic groups, religion and beliefs. The social media are not just platforms of sharing information or views but they are social processes by which people's intentions, actions, attitudes are known and shared. The uncensored media are the only platforms where people can freely express their minds on any issue; however, it has become a place for hate speech rather than constructive speech. Therefore, monitoring of the social media is only necessary when it involves threat to lives and properties and national security. However, appealing to the conscience of social media users is the best way to curb hate speech situation. The onus to control hate speech in the social media lies in the individual and the individual's attitude. Keith Harell (1999) says, attitude is Everything!

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