

PERCEPTION OF HATE SPEECH BILL IN NIGERIA AMONG NDOKWA RESIDENTS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

By

Abamba Bosede Rita, Ph.D

Department of Mass Communication,
College of Management and Social Sciences,
Novena University, Ogume.
08060234277, abambarita06@gmail.com

Abstract

The controversy generated by the introduction of the hate speech bill into the country, have left in its wake a milieu of divergent views and conflicting opinions that portend grave consequences for unity of the country especially if not properly checked. It is in view of this, that, the study investigated the Perception of the Hate Speech Bill in Nigeria among Ndokwa Residents of Delta State. The study was anchored on Perception and Information Integrated Theory. Survey method was adopted with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. Taro Yamane's model was used to determine a sample size of 400 from a study population of 548,466. Findings revealed amongst others that majority of Ndokwa residents are not exposed to the hate speech bill in Nigeria because the level of awareness about the bill is very low. It was further found that the residents perceive the bill as unfavourable and not in their interest. The study, therefore, recommended that the media should consistently provide information about the bill to the people; and the government on their part, should make concerted effort to dispel fear and doubt surrounding the bill in the country.

Keywords: *Perception, Hate Speech, Anti-Hate Speech Bill, Ndokwa Residents*

Introduction

The hate speech bill, has since its introduction into the country, been trailed with public outcry and reactions among Nigerians. The bill, as introduced by Senator Sabi Abdullahi, seeks to sentence to death by hanging any body found guilty of any form of hate speech that results in the death of another person. The bill defines hate speech as “when a person uses, publishes, presents, produces, plays, provides and or directs the performance of any material, written and or visual, which is threatening, abusive or insulting or involves the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behavior to commit an offence “ (Punch editorial, 2019).

So far, controversy generated by the bill has given rise to different views and notions. No doubt Nigerians perceive the hate speech bill differently. To some citizens, the bill is an attempt to gag the press and its citizens. Wole Soyinka for example, opined that the bill only seeks to silence the voice of opposition; a view upheld by the major opposition party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which described the bill as “illegal and warned that the bill would destroy the democratic order, strip the constitutional provisions, the rights of the citizens and usher in a full-blown despotism” (Tijani, 2019). Other criticisms of the bill are that, it poorly defines Hate speech; weakly differentiates between hate speech and offensive speech and that it provides a red herring cover for the government to attack free speech (Adibe, 2018).

Conversely, some Nigerians have said the introduction of the bill is a good idea with the objective of promoting national cohesion and integration by cultivating unfair discrimination (Eke, 2020). They argue that hate speech has been responsible for many killings and violence in the country. President Mohammadu Buhari gave credence to the bill following his promise for firm and decisive action on anyone found spreading hate-speech in Nigeria (Ogundipe, 2019). Meanwhile, there are still some Nigerians with little or no knowledge of the existence of the anti-hate speech bill, there are even those that are indifferent to the bill and its implication.

As part of its constitutional obligation, the media's key roles are to inform, educate, enlighten, mobilize and create awareness about the bill and other government policies to Nigerians. This was the point of Mrabure (2018). The writer holds the view that the media has a role to play in curbing issues of hate-speech. According to him, the state should partner with the media to curb incidences of hate-speech capable of causing violence and creating anarchy. Tambuwal (2019) opined that the media should mobilize Nigerians to defend democracy, remain vigilant as well as educate them about the hate speech bill.

It is against this background of the variegated perceptions about the Hate speech bill in Nigeria that the study sought to investigate the perception of the hate speech bill in Nigeria among Ndokwa residents.

Statement of the Problem

Though the hate speech bill has not been passed into law, the evident political process to bring it into existence has instilled fear in some Nigerians who believe that the bill will impact negatively on the society (Adibe, 2018).

In this category are politician and human right activists who have warned that the bill is politically motivated to silence the voice of opposition. On the other hand, the sponsors of the Hate speech and social media bills, Senator Musa Muhammad and Sabi Abdullahi in separate interviews with the Punch newspapers insisted that the bills were to create a society that would serve the overall interest of Nigerians. They argued that Nigeria needed such bills at its current stage of development (Aborishade, 2019). Meanwhile, Tijani (2019) opined that, most information about hate speech in the social media are misleading; portraying Hate speech as when you talk against the present government and other state institutions.

This milieu of divergent views and conflicting opinions about the Hate speech bill among Nigerians portends grave consequences for the unity of the country. Rather than perceive these reactions as a babel of voices, these expressions of public opinion should be subjected to serious scientific scrutiny. To the researcher's best knowledge, a study like this has not been conducted in Ndokwa nation. Therefore, the problem of this study is to empirically situate the perception of the Hate speech bill among Ndokwa residents as a basis for eliciting appropriate political responses on the side of government.

Research Questions

1. Are Ndokwa residents exposed to the Hate speech bill in Nigeria?
2. What channel did Ndokwa residents access information about the bill?
3. What is Ndokwa residents' perception about the bill?
4. What are the factors that influenced the perception of Ndokwa residents to the hate speech bill in Nigeria?

Conceptual and Empirical Review

Hate speeches are utterance, typed documents, advertorials, music or any form of literature that are used to attack an individual or group, religious, social, political business, gender or race (Ezeibe, 2020). The author added that, Hate speech is any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display that could incite people to prejudicial action. The British institute of human rights summarized hate speech to be all forms of expressions 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 (Ahmad, 2018). According to (Kukah in Ezeibe, 2020), hate speech is any communication that denigrates a particular person or group on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion or other characteristics, it can be in form any speech, gesture, writing or display and usually marks incitement, violence or prejudice against an individual or group. Eke (2020) opines that hate speech in itself is wrong, if it threatens the country's unity; peace and efforts of the government in nation building and widens the social gap between Nigerians. Hate speech is all communication (whether verbal or written symbolic) that insults a racial, ethnic and political group, whether by suggesting that they are despised or not welcome for another reason (Nesser in Abdul, 2019). Hate speeches are the catalyst that fosters disunity and uproar in the society (Ayih & Elkanah, 2019). It is because of this potential danger of hate speech to the body polity of every nation that governments and its peoples must recognize the delicateness and sensitivity of the subject and consciously guard against its dire consequences. Esimokha, Bob-Manuel & Asaolu (2019) stated that electoral violence is the greatest consequence of hate speech. This they said manifest in forms of killings, looting, destruction of property, assault and death threats, violent street protests and hooliganism, arbitrary detentions and arrests without warrant and abduction. According to Ezeibe (2020), political leaders and their supporters who are based on ethnicity, region, or religion are primarily responsible for hate speech in Nigeria. He claims that "hate speech is used by political leaders in Nigeria to incite ethnic and religious groups during their campaigning, which leads to all kinds of violence, especially those related to elections." The hate speech bill was required in order to provide a check on the detrimental effects of hate speech.

Senator Aliyu Abdullahi argues in favour of the hate speech bill, claiming that hate speech is the newest threat to peaceful coexistence globally and that it needs its own regulation (Aborishade, 2019). In the meantime, the bill was said to be proposing the creation of an Independent National Commission for Hate Speeches in a 2019 story published in the Guardian Newspaper. It is anticipated that the new commission will uphold the nation's anti-hate speech legislation and guarantee that hate speech is eradicated (Onyedika, 2019).

The hate speech and social media bills, in contrast, have been characterised as "a cynical attempt by some anti-democratic forces in government to curtail the freedom of expression contained in section 22 of the 1999 constitution as amended" by Ifedayo Adedipe, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. The measure is terrible legislation, ill-motivated, evilly conceived, and not in the interest of the country, according to him. The supporters were adamant about pushing Nigeria into tyranny and fascism (Onyekwere, 2019). The proposals were criticised by Anyakwee Nsirimovu, Executive Director of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL), who stated that "they are not reasonable, humane, civilised or progressive" (Onyekwere, 2019). Osmond Ugwu, President of Solidarity for Peace and Human Right Initiative lent credence to this statement when he called on Nigerians to rise up and reject the hate speech bill... especially as caging free speech meant the death of any democratic process. Similarly, Atiku Abubakar, a former presidential aspirant of Nigeria and a member of the

opposition party has cautioned senators against moves to pass the bill. According to him “Freedom of speech and other elements of civil liberties which Nigerians enjoyed between 1999 and 2015 should not be taken away by the current administration (Iroanusi, 2019). In an article titled “Nigeria, hate speech bill and dying democracies, “Socrate Mbamalu, a writer with This is Africa (TIA), a leading pan-African digital media platform lamented the shrinking state of Nigeria’s democratic space. He claims that Nigerian lawmakers have evolved into nothing more than the military regime that allowed tyranny to flourish there. According to him, Nigerian lawmakers are killing democracy in the country, and if people in the country keep quiet, they would lose what little freedom they still have (Mbamalu, 2020).

Eke (2020 p. 31) submission reads thus:

It is a truism that the right of every citizen to free speech should not be abused, and the government could place restrictions on rights necessary to protect the rights of other citizens or public confidence in the government and its systems. However, such powers by the government to make laws or regulations affecting the fundamental rights of citizens should not be misused.

Adjudging the public outcry and controversies that have trailed the introduction of the bill and considering the reactions of many Nigerians, one would be tempted to agree with them that the bill might be politically motivated after all, with traces of political undertone being evident. A retrospect at Nigerian history has shown that the media have witnessed different media laws that have threatened its very existence especially in the pre-colonial, colonial and military era. The birth of democracy gave rise to a more stable media in the country but not without some seemingly threatening situations as well (Ezeibe, 2020). Some Nigerians have watched to see the reaction of the media to the introduction of the hate speech bill. Mrabure (2018) has said that the media has role to play in curbing issues of hate speech. According to him “the government should partner with the media to curb incidences of hate speech as it is a recipe for violence and anarchy”. Tambuwal (2019) that the media have a duty to educate and mobilize Nigerians to defend her democracy as well as educate Nigerians about the hate speech bill.

In a Punch Editorial titled ‘ICYMI: Senate, kill the hate speech bill’ published November 21, 2019 page 35, it reads thus:

The senate slide further into impropriety, last week when it ushered a monstrous, anti-hate speech bill through its first, reading. Draconian and nebulous, the senate should squash the bill immediately; law makers should aspire to take the country into the club of successful liberal democracies. It is only autocratic and theocratic states that criminalize free speech, Nigeria is neither (Punch, 2019).

No doubt the tone of the editorial suggests disapproval of the hate speech bill.

According to Tambuwal (2019), the bill is quite frightening and has caused people to question the genuine intentions of those pushing it. In a different argument, it was stressed that the Nigerian government’s support for the bill signifies a concerning increase in the attempts of the authorities to censor and penalise social media users for freely expressing their opinions, as well as to make government criticism punishable by up to three (3) years in prison. According to Emmanuel Onwubiko, coordinator of the Human Rights Writer Association of Nigeria, the bill violates the right to free speech. Mayowa Tijani of AFP Nigeria, a reputable international news agency, takes a different stance and claims that the majority of posts on Facebook and Twitter regarding hate bills are false. According to the Senate, hate speech occurs when someone criticises the current administration and other state institutions, such as the army and intelligence service, or when they lead a nonviolent protest against corruption, nepotism, crime, injustice, lawlessness, bad governance, extrajudicial killings by the Nigerian military, illegal arrests, and other issues (Tijani, 2019). The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is merely carrying out its mandate as a regulatory authority, according to an unidentified source. He maintained that it is impossible to watch since many forms of offensive content clog up the broadcast space.

Meanwhile, Ezeibe (2020) opines that the freedom of the media has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade. He says the fundamental right to seek and discriminate information through an independent press is under attack and unexpected source...which have made explicit attempt to silence critical media voices and strengthen outlets that serve up favourable coverage.

Media freedom has been declining globally over the past ten years as new means of expression have taken hold in both authoritarian nations and society, according to Freedom House, an independent watchdog group committed to the advancement of freedom and democracy worldwide. The 2019 Freedom in the World Report.

According to a provision in the hate speech bill, hostility towards members of any ethnic group might also be defined as ethnic hatred. It states that discrimination against another person occurs when someone treats another Nigerian citizen less favourably than they treat or would treat other members of their own ethnic group,

another ethnic group, or that person on the basis of ethnicity without having a legitimate reason to do so. The bill also states that an individual found guilty of ethnic harassment may be held accountable if their actions are justified and have the purpose or effect of infringing upon the dignity of the victim or creating an environment that is intimidating, hostile, demeaning, humiliating, or offensive to them. (2019, Punch Editorial)

The hate speech bill stipulates that any person who knowingly utters words to incite feelings of contempt, hatred, hostility, violence or discrimination against any person, group or community on the basis of ethnicity or race commits an offence and the offender shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not less than five years, or to a fine of not less than ₦10 million, or both. In Naira Marley Focus Blog analysis, it states that the absence of a collective identity by ethnic groups in Nigeria worsen its experience of hate speech. He observed that discussions on Naira land, a popular online forum in Nigeria often generate into ethnic religious hate speech, characterized by name-calling, threats and call for violent actions. (Osewa, 2019)

Barigbon (2018) avers that comments made on religion, like those on politics, have a high propensity to either make or mar the entire political wellbeing or otherwise of the country- He posits that in Nigeria, there has been no government response to ethno- religious hate speech, although there have been calls for restriction of internet access due to wide condemnation of public officials.

Meanwhile, the Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN) has decried the existence of the bill. They complain that the bill will affect the church. CAN describe the bill as an ill wind that blow nobody any good. The Christian Association of Nigeria under the leadership of Samson Ayokunle, has asked the National Assembly to discard the social media and hate speech bill because of its potential to gag citizens including the church (Sahara Reporters, 2019).

Empirical Review of Related Literature

A study carried out by **Esimokha, Bob-Manuel and Asaolu (2019)** examined the “Perception of Nigerians on Hate Speech Bill (A Study of Akungba- Okoko Residents, Ondo State)”. The study assessed the level of awareness of hate speech bill among Akungba- Okoko; the notion they have about the hate speech bill and their views on the relationship between the hate speech bill and freedom of speech. Their findings revealed that majority of the respondents were aware of the bill and they strongly agreed that the bill is irrelevant in the present democratic dispensation. The researchers concluded that majority of the respondents were not favourably disposed to the passage of hate speech bill into law. They believe it would jeopardize freedom of expression in the country. They described the bill as “anti-people”.

Drawing on the research of Esimokha, Bob-Manuel, and Asaolu (2019) regarding the connection between hate speech and freedom of speech, Mrabure (2018) discovered that hate speech is real and that the right to free speech can occasionally be restricted when hate speech is expressed, whether orally or in writing, and poses a threat to national security, public safety, or unity. He suggested that laws be enacted and that suspects, regardless of their rank, should be the target of investigations and prosecutions. In order to stop hate speech, which is a surefire way to incite violence and chaos, he contends that government organisations charged with this duty should work with the media to actively educate the people.

It's interesting to note that hate speech has been connected over time to election violence in the nation. Ezeibe (2020) examined the relationship between hate speech and electoral violence in Nigeria in light of this. In order to investigate the impact of hate speech on election violence in Nigeria during the 2011, 2015, and 2019 presidential elections, the study employed a mixed method approach with a qualitative focus. The article shows that a key, often-ignored cause of electoral violence in Nigeria is a deeply ingrained culture of hate speech. The study came to the conclusion that enforcing the current anti-hate speech rules offers a chance to safeguard minority groups' rights, encourage political participation, and stop election-related violence in Nigeria and elsewhere.

In response to Ezeibe's (2020) contention that hate speech is used by political leaders in Nigeria to incite ethnic, regional, and religious groups to engage in violent acts, Abdul (2019) conducted an analysis titled "Hate Speech, Twitter, and 2019 Election: An Analysis of Tweeting habits of Selected Politicians in Kaduna State." The study looked at lawmakers in Kaduna State's tweets to distinguish between hate speech and free speech. Politicians during this time were found to have made hate speech, according to a content analysis of some of their tweets. Its conclusion also demonstrated that Twitter did not take any action to suspend or delete these accounts. The study recommended that the politicians involved, be called to order by civil societies organization to forestall unrest in the state.

In a similar study, Ahmad (2018) conducted a research on Social Media and Hate Speech Analysis of Biafra Agitation, Arewa Youths' Ultimatum and their Implications on Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria. With an emphasis on the Facebook pages of particular media outlets, the study looked at user comments on the Arewa Youths' ultimatum to Igbo people in the north and the Biafra agitations. The tone of remarks that disparage or show support for a specific ethnic or religious group, as well as those that criticise the president's character due to his regional and ethnic affiliations, were investigated, along with their implications for the peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, using the critical discourse analysis method. The users' comments were found to be polarized along religious and regional lines, with some publishing hurtful and derogatory remarks that had the potential to set the

country against itself. This was ascribed to social media's pervasiveness, which allows people to read content anonymously and respond with disparaging remarks that disparage or mock the various population of the nation's ethnic, political, regional, and religious ties. The study suggested that in order to mitigate the detrimental effects of social media on peaceful coexistence, a clear policy framework for social media moderation is necessary.

While this study's contents, structures, context, goals, methods, and conclusions differ and overlap with those of the previous works, none of these studies looked at how Nigeria's rural population felt about the hate speech bill. It is this gap in literature that this study intends to fill.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on two theories: Information Integrated Theory and Perception Theory.

Perception Theory

Perception is the process of interpreting sensory input by constructing meaning for what one sees, feels, touches and hears based on one's personal background of experience (Defleur & Defleur, 2010). People make meaning out of situations based on their previous experiences. Herman Von Helmholtz did the initial background on sensory perception in 1860s. He argued that human beings make sense out of physical stimuli through inference. Man can then, decide what the object or issue is, in a meaningful sense. The theory was later developed further by some German Psychologists who developed a set of insight into the process of perception known as the "Gestalt Principles". Their basic concerns were how we interpret sensory impressions of physical objects and relationships in terms of patterns, which were limited to physical rather than social situations. Later, the idea of mental processes which relates to selective exposure, perception and retention came to be. (Defleur & Defleur, 2010). Perception plays a very significant role in the communication process because it determines how the messages are interpreted, and whether the process ends up a success or a failure (Amodu, 2016). Yolanda (2018) says perception is a way to recognize and interpret information we have gathered through our senses. Perception theory is of great relevance to this study, since the basic assumption of the theory is that when people (Ndokwa Residents) get exposed and pay attention to certain messages (hate speech and its consequences, hate speech bill in Nigeria), they digest the information and try to recall them. This generates an appropriate desired responses from such audience(s). This is, in line with objective three of this study, which sought to assess the perception of hate speech bill in Nigeria among Ndokwa residents.

Information Integrated Theory

This theory was linked to Norman Anderson in 1971. The theory provides explanation to how a person integrates information from a number of sources in order to make overall judgment (Anderson, 1981). This theory further x-rays how attitudes are formed and changed through integration that results from mixing and combining of new information with existing cognitions or thoughts. The theory states that every piece of information has two qualities, value and weight, the value is the evaluation of the piece of message whether it is favorable or unfavourable, while the weight is the information's perceived importance. Norman opines that these two factors (value and weight) greatly influence our attitudes with regards to receiving, accessing and accepting information. The relevance of these theories to this study is seen in the way Ndokwa residents will perceive the information about the Hate speech bill in Nigeria and therefore adjudge it as favorable or unfavourable.

Methodology

Survey research method was employed in this study, with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The area of study are Ndokwa-West, Ndokwa-East and Ukwuani Local Government Area under the Ndokwa/Ukwuani Federal Government Constituency in Delta State, Nigeria.

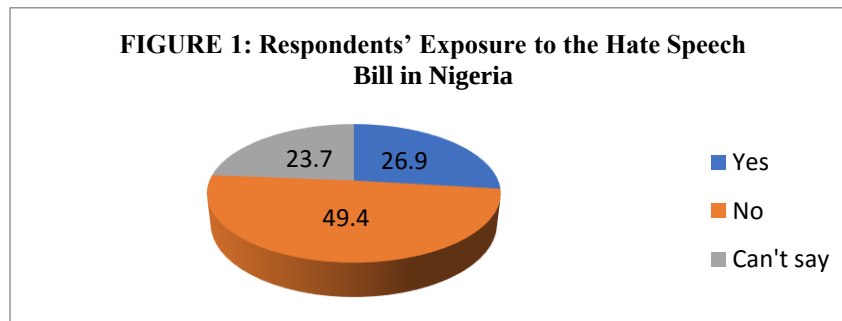
The population of this study as given in the 2006 population census comprise residents of Ndokwa-West (149,325), Ndokwa-East (103,171) and Ukwuani (119,094) LGA. This amounted to a total of 371,590. However, the population growth and time lapse from 2006 to 2023 necessitated a need to statistically calculate for a projected population update using the formula: $P_p = G_p \times P_1 \times T$. Therefore, the population of this study is given as 548,466. Taro Yamane's model was used to determine the sample size of 400 while a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study. The first stage was to follow the delineation of Ndokwa Nation into three local government areas comprising Ukwuani LGA, Ndokwa West LGA and Ndokwa East LGA. In the second stage, using balloting, five communities were picked from each of the LGAs. In Ukwuani LGA, Obiaruku, Umutu, Eziokpor, Akoku and Obinomba were selected; while Aboh, Ashaka, Ibrede, Ossisa and Benekuku were picked from Ndokwa-East LGA and from Ndokwa-West, Utagba-Ogbe, Emu, Ogume, Abbi and Onicha- Ukwuani were selected. The third stage involved using a simple random sampling without replacement to pick two quarters from each of the selected communities.

Data Presentation and Analysis.

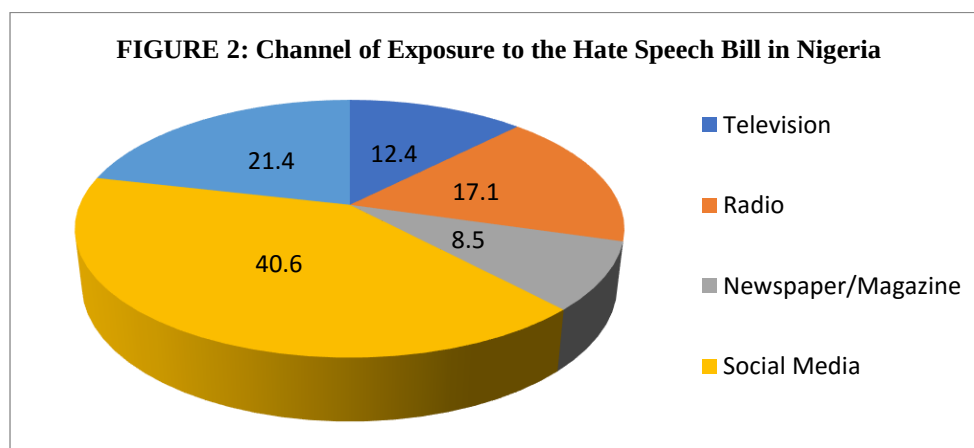
Data generated were presented and analyzed in percentage form and illustrated in a pie chart and

frequency distribution tables. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire distributed, 387 copies were returned representing 96.8% response rate.

Psychographic Data of Respondents



The data in Figure 1, show that majority of the respondents 49.4 percent are not exposed to the hate speech bill in Nigeria. 26.9 percent say they are exposed to the bill while 23.7 percent don't have anything to say.



Data in Figure 2, reveal that the majority of the respondents (40.6 percent) accessed information about the hate speech bill from the social media and 21.4 per cent through face-to-face channel of communication. 17.1 percent of the respondents accessed the information about the bill from the radio; 12.4 percent from the television and 8.5 percent from newspapers and magazines.

Table 3: Respondents' Perception of the Hate Speech Bill in Nigeria

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Hate speech bill is an abuse of freedom of expression	107	27.6
2	The bill is a means of silencing the voice of opposition	124	32
3	Hate speech is aimed at gagging the press	85	22
4	The bill is meant to foster national cohesion and integration	20	5.2

5	Hate speech bill will help to curb unfair discrimination in the country	24	6.2
6	The bill is aimed at curbing violence and anarchy arising from hate speeches	27	7
Total		387	100

The data above shows that majority of the respondents 124 (32 percent) perceive the hate speech bill as a means of silencing the voice of opposition. 107 (27.6 percent) of the respondents see the bill as an abuse of freedom of expression while another 22 percent hold the view that the hate speech bill is a means of gagging the press. On the other hand, 20 respondents (5.2 percent) believes that the bill is meant to foster national cohesion. Meanwhile 6.2 percent of the total respondents opined that the bill will help curb unfair discrimination in the country while another 7 percent are of the view that the hate speech bill is aimed at curbing violence and anarchy arising from hate speeches. The data points to the fact that majority of the respondents 316 (81.7 percent) perceive the bill as unfavourable while the remaining 71(18.3 percent) view the bill as favorable.

TABLE 4: Factors that Influence Peoples' Perception of the Hate Speech Bill

S/N	Item	Frequency	%
1	Political	16	4.1
2	Religious	140	36.2
3	Ethnicity	33	8.5
4	Economic	77	19.9
5	Education	111	28.7
6	Discrimination	10	2.6
Total		387	100

The data above shows that political factor (36.2%) influenced respondents' perception of the hate speech bill in Nigeria. This was closely followed by religious factor with about 111(28.7%). Ethnicity recorded 77(19.9%). Educational factor had 33(8.5%) while economic and discrimination factors had 4.1 percent and 2.6 percent respectively. From the foregoing, it appears that the people see political factor as the major factor that influenced the people's perception of the hate speech bill in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Data from the study revealed that majority of the respondents (49.4%) were not exposed to the anti-hate speech bill in Nigeria, hence their level of awareness about the existence of such a bill was very low. This implies that the residents of Ndokwa land in Delta State were not adequately informed about the hate speech bill. This is in contrast with the view of Mrabure (2018) that the media functions in informing, educating, enlightening, mobilizing and creating awareness about issues in society, such as the hate speech bill.

The study found that the channel through which respondents accessed information about the bill, were majorly through the social media (40.6%) and face-to-face channel (21.4%). Affirming the submission that the social media is fast becoming a major sought-after platform for all kinds of information (Agbaji, Ukwela & Banke, 2018). More so, the advantage of the face-to-face communication over the mass media with regards to mobilization of rural localities like Ndokwa is evident from the data gathered in the present study (Halper, 2021). Face-to-face communication was 21.4%, while television, radio and newspaper/magazine were 12.4%, 17.1% and 8.5% respectively.

Findings further indicated that the respondents (81.7%) perceived the bill as unfavourable and received it with misgiving. This finding corroborates with the view of (Tijani, 2019) that the bill is illegal and capable of destroying democratic order, strip the constitutional provision, the rights of the citizens and usher in a full blown despotism. This position was further buttressed in the work of Esimokha, Bob-Manuel & Asaolu (2019) whose findings revealed that majority of the respondents are not favourably disposed to the passage of the hate speech

bill into law as, according to them, it would jeopardize freedom of expression. Suffice to say there is a very thin line between hate speech and freedom of expression as shown in the work of Esimokha et al (2019) and Mrabure (2018), these studies do not explain in clear terms how hate speech can encroach on freedom of expression and at what point it does so.

Political factor (31%) was seen as the major factor that influenced the people's perception of the hate speech bill in Nigeria. Interestingly, without prejudice to Ezeibe's (2020) conclusion that the existing anti-hate speech laws, presents an opportunity for protecting the rights of minority groups, promoting political inclusion and preventing election violence in Nigeria and beyond, the study did not put into account, the notion the people have about the hate speech bill in Nigeria, especially with penalties associated with the bill. A major dissimilarity with the work lies in the subject matter. Ezeibe's study was geared towards effect of hate speech on election, which is not the same with the study at hand. More so, Ezeibe's study used a mixed method approach while this study used survey method. Despite bearing some contextual similarities with Ahmad (2018) paper, in the area of hate speech and its implication for ethno-religious affiliation, this study is dissimilar because it focused on the perception of the hate speech bill in Nigeria among Ndokwa residents.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out how the Ndokwa residents of Delta State, Nigeria, felt about the Hate Speech Bill. From the aforementioned, it can be inferred that relatively few people are aware that Nigeria has an anti-hate speech bill in place, and most Ndokwa residents are not exposed to it. In essence, the media's duty to inform, educate, inspire, mobilize the public, raise awareness, and stop hate speech has not had the desired impact on the populace. In light of this, it can be claimed that the conventional mass media did not provide Ndokwa Residents with sufficient knowledge regarding the country's hate speech law. This stands in opposition to Mrabure's (2018) assertion that the media can help reduce hate speech. The quantity of people who were made aware of the bill did so by way of social media and direct contact channels. The study also showed that the hate speech bill in Nigeria was not seen favourably by the people of Ndokwa. This supports the idea that the measure is extremely frightening and has caused many to question the genuine motivations of those pushing it (Osoba, 2019).

Recommendations

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

1. Information about the hate speech bill in the country should be consistently and adequately reported by the media to the people, especially those in rural localities. This will improve on the level of awareness of the people about the subject matter.
2. The need for appropriate channel of communication is necessary. An interface of all the channels of communication will be most effective.
3. The Government should establish policies that would address and proffer solution to some of the factors that have influenced the peoples' negative perception of the hate speech bill in the country.

References

- Abdul, H.A (2019). Hate speech, twitter and 2019 election: analysis of tweeting habits of selected politicians in kaduna state. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Aborishade, S. (2019). No going back on hate speech, social media bills- APC senators. November 16, Retrieved from <http://punchng.org.com/:no-going-back-on-hatespeech-social-media-bill>. Accessed 12/1/2022.
- Adibe, J. (2018). Should the law be used to curb hatespeech in nigeria? October 2, retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu>. Accessed 12/1/2022
- Agbaji, Y.O., Ukwela, C.O. & Banke, O.R. (2018). Discourse on Social Media and national development. *Novena Journal of Communication*, 5, 193-202.
- Anderson, N. H. (1981). Foundation of information integration theory. New York: Academic press.
- Ahmad, M.A. (2018), Social media and hate speech; analysis of comments on biafra agitation, arewa youths' ultimatum and their Implications on peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, *MCC*, 2(1), 54-74

- Alexander, B. (2008). The racial religious hatred act 2006: A million response, critical period. *Journal of International, Social and Political Philosophy*, 11(1), 11-24.
- Ayih, L.J. & Elkanah, K.A. (2019). A Content analytical studies of hate speeches on taraba online and taraba rescue mission facebook pages. *Novena Journal of Communication*, 9 (1), 166-174.
- Barigbon, G.N. (2018). Hate speech, righteous hatred and political stability: A religious perspective. *School Journal of Arts and Humanities*,
- Busari, K. (2018). New senate bill proposes death sentence for hate speech. March 2, Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesnigeria.com>news>. Accessed 1/3/2023
- Defleur, M. & Defleur, M. (2010). Mass communication theories: explaining origins, processes and effects. Newyork: Allyn and Bacon Publishers.
- Eke, S. (2020). A review of the hate speech bill. January 7, Retrieved from <https://www.mondaq.com>. Accessed 5/8/2023.
- Esimokha, G.A., Bobmanuel, K. B., and Asaolu, O. (2019). Perception of nigerians on hate speech bill (A study of akungba-okoko residents, ondo state), *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 24(11), 59-67.
- Ezeibe, C.C (2020), Hate speech and electoral violence in nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www. Research gate. net.>3252/hate-speech-and-electoral-violence-in-nigeria-html>. Accessed 1/3/2023.
- Freedom in the World (2019). Freedom and the media. Retrieved from <https://www.freedomhouse.org>. Accessed 5/8/2023.
- Halper, D. (2021). How do mass media and face to face communication have different impacts? Retrieved from <http://www.quora.com>.
- http://www.information_integrated_theory. Accessed 1/12/2022.
- Iroanusi, E.Q. (2019) Explainer: important things to know about nigeria's hate speech bill, November 13, Retrieved from <https://www.dubawa.org/Explainer-Important -thing-to-know-about-Nigeria's-hate speech-bill>. Accessed 24/1/2023.
- Jennifer, J. (2013). Ethopaulism and ethno-religious hate speech in nigeria. April 23, 9:11pm Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23268158/ethnopanlism> and ethno-religious-hate speech-in-nigeria-html. Accessed 12/1/2023.
- Kenneth, N. (1978). Information integrated theory. <http://www. jstor. org/stable/30212955>.
- Lanre, O.A. (2006). Perception: A determinant for effective communication. *An africa Journal of Philosophy*, 19(1), 148-152.
- Mrabure, K.O. (2018). Counteracting hate speech and the right to freedom of expression in selected jurisdiction. *NAUJILT*, 160-169.
- Mbamalu, S. (2020). Nigeria, hatespeech bills and a dying democracy, November 26. Retrieved from <https://www.this is africa.me>polity and society>.
- Osewa, O. (2019). Nigerians reject hate speech, social media bill- information nigeria, February 25. Retrieved from <https://www.informationnigeria nigeria reject hatespeech bills>. Accessed 22/1/2023
- Ogundipe, S. (2019). Buhari threatens firm and decisive action against hate speech promoters. October 1, Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimes.ng.com>news>. Accessed 22/1/2023
- Olley, N.O., Umolu, P. E., and Omosotomhe, S.I. (2018). Knowledge and perception of ebola disease outbreak among women in afenmai, edo state, nigeria. *Novena Journal of Communication*, 5(1), 89-102
- Onyedika, A. (2019). Much ado about hate speech bill. November 30, Retrieved from https://www.guardianng.org/much_ado_about_hatespeech bill. Accessed 22/1/2023

- Onyekwere, J. (2019). Hate speech bill is unlawful, illegal, unconstitutional and undemocratic. December 2: 4: 16 am, Retrieved from <http://www.guardianng.org/hate-speech-bill-is-unlawful-illegal-unconstitutional-and-undemocratic-html>. Accessed 22/1/2023
- Tambuwal, A. (2019) Hatespeech Bill: Media Should Mobilize Nigeria to Defend. November 29, Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimes.ng.com>news>
- Osoba, T. (2019). Senate, kill the hate speech bill. November 29, Retrieved from [https://www.guardianng.Org/Senate-kill-the-hate-speech-bill-Tambuwal Osoba.html](https://www.guardianng.Org/Senate-kill-the-hate-speech-bill-Tambuwal%20Osoba.html).
- Punch Editorial (2019). ICYMI: Senate, kill the hate speech bill, editorial, November 21, Retrieved from <https://www.punchng.org.com/ICYM/:senate-kill-the-hate-speech-bill>. Accessed 22/1/2023.
- Rutus, A. & Michael, A.(2019). Hate speeches and disrespect for the opposition parties in nigeria: implications for democratic consolidation and national development, *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 7(3), 132-139.
- Sahara Reporters (2019). Hate speech bill will affect the church says CAN, November 29, Retrieved from <http://www.saharareporters.com/article/hatespeech-will-affect-the-church-html>.
- Sahara Reporters(2019). Should the law be used to curb hate speech in nigeria? October 2, Retrieved from [http://www.sahara reporters.com.article/shoul-the-law-be-used-to-curb-hate-speech-in-Nigeria.html](http://www.sahara%20reporters.com.article/shoul-the-law-be-used-to-curb-hate-speech-in-Nigeria-html).
- Tijani, M. (2019). Death penalty for criticizing nigeria's government? what we should know about the hate speech bill, November 25 . 03:50, Retrieved from [https://www. AFP Nigeria. Com](https://www.AFP%20Nigeria.Com). Accessed 22/1/2023
- Yolanda, W. (2018). What is perception? Retrieved from [http://www.ukessays.com/essays/psychology/theories_perception_2618.php? vref=1](http://www.ukessays.com/essays/psychology/theories_perception_2618.php?vref=1). Accessed 24/8/2023