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# Social Media and Hate Speech: Implications for Socio-Political Stability in Rivers State

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SOCIALMEDIAANDHATESPEECHIMPLICATIONSFORSOCIOPOLITICALSTABILITYINRIVERSSTATE

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# Social Media and Hate Speech: Implications for Socio-Political Stability in Rivers State

Fiberesima Patience Aduko [α], Past. Prof. Abomaye-Nimenibo, Williams Aminadokiari Samuel [σ] & George, Sotonye M. D. [ρ]

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## I. Introduction

### a) Background of the Study speech

The fastest way to grow a business empire in this 21st century is through social media and networking in this era of globalisation.

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One of the greatest innovations of men that have brought people together from every race, religion, and nationality is the Internet with social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Gab. These are continually connecting billions of people and accepting their ideas opinions instantly. These so-called ideas and thoughts to share on the Internet sometimes bear several ill consequences and online harassment, trolling, cyber-bullying, and hate speech.

Twitter defines hate speech as any tweet that promotes violence against other people based on racial segregation, ethnicity, nationality differences, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or diseases. Although several governments and social media sites are trying to curb the hate speech, it is still plaguing our society.

Facebook is said to have spread hate speech by United Nations investigators in playing a leading role in the possible genocide of the Rohingya community in Myanmar.

Sri Lanka has also accused Facebook of instigating anti-Muslim mob violence that left three people dead. With hate crimes increasing in several countries or states[5], there is an urgent need to understand better how hateful posts spreads in online social media to curb it, if not eliminating it.

Social media sites namely Twitter and Facebook, Gab promotes free speech and allows users to post contents that may be hateful without any fear of repercussion which has led to the migration of several Twitter users who were banned/suspended for violating its terms of service, namely for abusive or hateful behaviour (Zannettou et al. 2018a).

Hate speech provides a unique opportunity to study how the hateful content would spread in the online medium if there were no restrictions.

Many social networking sites emerged in 2000 to ease the interaction between people who share a common interest in music, education, movies, and how businesses conducted their transactions and advertisements and in the marketing of their products.

There are many scholarly ideas about the first occurrence of social media. Carton (2009) argues that technologies that make it easier for us to communicate with each other have been advanced throughout much of human history. Emile Durkheim, a French scholar, named by many people as the father of sociology, and



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Ferdinand Tonnies, a German sociologist, is considered pioneer inventors of social networks during the late 1800s. Tonnies argued that social groups could exist because members shared values, beliefs, and conflicts. His theory deals with social contract conceptions of society. Durkheim combined empirical research with sociological theory. In the late 1800s, radio, and telephone use for social interaction was rampant, albeit one-way with the radio (Rimskii, 2011, Wren, 2004). However, when social networks have evolved over the years to the modern-day variety which uses digital and more advanced media technologies, communication becomes free and easy to use, having the barrier of a one-way flow of information removed.

In the 1960s, the email was invented (Borders, 2010) but, the Internet was not available to the public until 1991. The email was initially invented to exchange messages from one the computer to another requiring online services (Abamye-Nimenio & Abomaye-Nimenibo (2019). Email servers accept and store messages easily accessible by recipients their convenience (Simeon O. Edosomwan, 2016).

Social networking started in the 1990s. According to Daniel (2010), social media is hard to define and is a two-way street that gives you the ability to communicate. Social media is a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting. Social Networking is a tool for connecting people (Cohen, 2009; Stelzner, 2009). Furthermore, Cohen (2009) reported that differences between the duo are not just semantics but also features and functions embedded into these websites by their creators, which dictated its use.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines, Social media is a form of electronic communication which is a Web site for social networking and blogging whereby users create online communities who share information, ideas, messages and other contents (Merriam-webster Dictionary). In support of the Merriam-Webster definition, Cohen (2009) and Hartshorn (2010) define social media as a media used to transmit or share information among the audience. Social networking is an act of engaging people with shared interests to build relationships through community.

Social media is used for:

i. Promoting communication between employees and management.
ii. The engagement of employees to share project ideas, knowledge and experiences.
iii. Promoting webcast and videos.
iv. Communication with current and potential customers.
v. Receiving feedback on product development and providing customer service and support.
vi. Encouraging the company's employees to interact with members of a well-recognised business community.
vii. Therefore, social media becomes a venue for discussions and a classic goal of marketing and communications, and the companies must ensure that they adhere to social media's rules and business etiquettes.

Social media may be a disadvantage to man rather than maximising social networks' benefits for holding the administration accountable and promoting indigenous businesses. The disadvantageous use of social media is known as Hate speech as far as this study is a concern, which has been in existence since the days of the biblical Cane and Abel, the crucifixion of Jesus, the persecutions of the early church and the slavery and colonisation of Africa. Similarly, looking back at history, we see hate speech prevalent in society and has done unprecedented ills to nations and the implications has been devastating as such speeches have led to genocides, civil wars and death of millions of people over the years.

During World War II in the early nineteenth century, Adolf Hitler tortured and killed over six million Jews (the holocaust) due to hate speech and deprived orientations. Similarly, hate speech has crawled into the socio-political system in Rivers State and Nigeria at large. This hate speech has been an endemic problem and cankerworm in our societies. The Social media is seen as an avenue to spread hate speech faster than a snake's venom because of the potentials of the social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Gab, and others. Without proper modalities for regularisation and control of this endemic problem, the social vices such as electoral violence, terrorist attacks and other forms will increase in our society (Nigeria).

The Internet being a good platform for men being a rallying point has brought people from every race, religion, and nationality on earth together; and through the Social media sites such as Twitter Facebook and Gab have connected billions of people and allowed them to share their ideas and opinions instantly. This study observes that hate speeches tend to spread faster, farther, and broader; within a blink of an eye, such hate-speech messages are viewed or seen by billions of people worldwide using those social media platforms.

Whether verbal or written, hate speech is an attack on individuals based on religion, ethnicity, political beliefs, race, gender inequality, sexual orientation, or disability, which hinders development and peaceful co-existence among diverse groups not limited to only democratic cultures. Hate speech has fueled violent conflicts, civil wars, and genocide, World War II, the anti-Muslim campaign in Bosnia, and the anti-Tutsi hate campaign before the Rwandan genocide. Hate speech has a much higher spreading velocity. The posts of hateful users receive a much larger audience

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and as well at a faster rate. As a case study, we shall investigate the detailed account characteristics of Robert Gregory Bowers, the sole suspect of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittsburgh_synagogue _shooting).

According to Joel, Jennifer (2014) Hate speech in Nigeria is branded by violent outbursts by public officials, academia and is demonstrated in several exchanges on the streets, online forums, and sectarian print media in different parts of the country. With hate crimes increasing in several states, there is an urgent need to understand better how hateful posts spreads online in social media and should be inept.

When World War II reached its climax, living conditions in Nigeria had deteriorated to the extent that an average Nigerian could hardly afford three square a day. Following several crises resulting from hate speech, the colonial administration yielded to political independence in 1960. In the face of these crises, ethnicity becomes an instrument of sub-group security and survival (Nnoli, 1978). The use of ethnic groups by political leaders during elections encouraged hate speeches. For instance, in 1959 election, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) garnered 77 per cent of the northern votes among the Hausas but was unable to win votes in the south because of hate speech.

Nnoli (1993) remarked that the economy's speed declined after the affluent was never anticipated or predictable. Egwu (1993) remarks that ethnic considerations continue to affect resource allocation, employment in the public sector, and public institutions' admission. In 1979, during the Second Republic, each of the parties contested the presidential election-maintained dominance in their ethnic bases. In 1983, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) had a clear leading in the North among the Hausas. The Unity Party of Nigeria led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo had a landslide victory among the Yorubas in Western Nigeria while the Nigerian Peoples Party led by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe won in Igbo states in Eastern Nigeria. This ethnicisation in Nigeria politics manifests itself in the inter and intra ethnic conflicts, election violence and civil war (Nwachukwu, Aghemalo & Nwosu, 2014).

Ethnic politics played an insignificant role during the 1999 presidential election. What happened was that all the ethnic groups massively voted Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (a Yoruba man) because of his political party-the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party). During the 2003 and 2007 elections, Nigerian followed a similar voting pattern in voting in their political party candidates.

The 2011 and 2015 presidential elections revealed that ethnic cleavages re-emerged to play a dominant role in polls' results. General Buhari's victory in North-West and the North-East States and President Jonathan's winning in South-South and South-East during the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections followed the same voting pattern. Voting for ethnicity and political party allegiance and religious dogma trail Nigerian politics carry with it hate speech. Ethnic polarisation also trailed Nigerians at the death of President Musa Yar'adua and the collapse of the PDP zoning arrangement being the handiwork of hate speech of ethnicity. The zoning principle in Nigeria by PDP was to solve the problem of political inequality and ethnic nationality politics. President Olusegun Obasanjo was voted massively into power in the 1999 and 2003 elections through the zoning formula. On 29th May 2007, late President Musa Yar'adua (a Northerner and Muslim) also massively voted based on ethnic, regional and religious divides. The president did not complete his tenure in office but died and was replaced by his vice, Goodluck Jonathan (a Southerner and Christian) as the President in May 2010. This election caused some rancour in the Northern elites who want to complete their tenure. As a result, they expected President Jonathan not to contest the presidential position in the 2011 election.

Contrary to their expectations President Goodluck Jonathan contested and won the PDP primary election ticket for the 2011 presidential election, thereby bringing the zoning arrangement to an end, and mutual suspicion between religious, regional and ethnic groups heightened. Campbell (2010) noted that a divided PDP poses a problem to security and stability in Nigeria. However, while Nigeria is working to consolidate democracy, hate speech is also increasingly becoming a challenge. At the same time, hate speech occurs regularly in Nigeria's media and public discourse.

With over 250 ethnic groups and religious and social diversity; coupled with a political system characterised by intense contestation for power and a winner-take-all environment, Nigeria provides a conducive environment for hate speech to fester. As a result, post-1999 elections have seen violence stoked by hate speech, which has caused election-related rioting, public ferocity, thuggery etcetera, resulting in thousands of unaccounted deaths Nigerians, destruction of properties; and economic destruction, etcetera.

There should be remedies toward putting to an end of free speech of hatred, political and controversial electoral rights. An election in developing nations especially in Africa has been worrisome, as the period for the elections has been characterised by a 'do or die affair', as individuals group themselves and political parties as it is the chief means and process for acquiring power in a democratic state. The election period comes with several activities as political parties conduct primaries to select an aspirant that will represent them in politically elected governments. Being a candidate seeking a public; requires creating awareness in the masses by presenting their manifesto and campaigning vigorously across the nation. In the course of that, hate speeches are incessant.



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It is common in Africa to find the political system denying the electorate of their rights, privileges, and democratic freedoms. The absence of democratic rules among groups and individuals have cause barbaric actions and violence during elections in Nigeria. This assertion was confirmed by Collier (2010), who stated that elections in Africa are frequently accompanied by violence despite their claims to multi-party democracy. We see most recent electoral violence in African countries of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe to mention but a few. Actions of electoral commissions and the immaturity of politicians are some of the reasons for electoral violence in Africa according to Hoglund (2009).

Violent exchanges of hate speech between Igbo traders and Hausa/Fulani traders in Northern Nigeria, according to Osaghae Suberu (2005) was the root cause of the Nigeria-Biafran civil war from 167-1970. Almost half a century later, the upshot of the violent Boko-Haram sect is gradually leading Nigeria into a state of anarchy. The term 'Boko-Haram', loosely translated as ' Western Education is forbidden', refers to a violent sect from the North, who has claimed responsibility for bombings of the UN headquarters in Abuja's Nigerian capital city, National office of the Police Force and numerous unspeakable damages. They, who have expressed its chief goal to be the 'Islamization' of the Nigerian nation, express ethnic and religious intolerance that extensively pervades social interaction in Nigerian. Presently, we have the Fulani herdsmen/ farmers clashes and killings, and bandits in Nigeria.

The nation experience hates speech during the 2011 and 2015 general elections, where politicians, religious figures, public officers, citizens, and ethnic nationalists although it was detested in the electoral cycle. In the traditional and social media, derogatory speeches were made in local dialects to label and demean opponents. The Nigerian media always favour elites who sometimes use it to promote hate messages against their opponents. A common site is that the African Independent Television (AIT) owned by a People's Democratic Party (PDP) stalemate, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) owned by the Federal Government but controlled by members of the ruling party - the All Progressive Congress. These stations are used continuously to propagate hate speech during the 2019 election campaign brings. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), did not enforce her powers given by the Federal Government to enforce punishment for hate speech offences, and by not accepting the broadcast, finds it hard to impose sanctions due to the attention widely gained as a result of broadcasting hate speech against the opponents.

In 2015, top politicians associated with President Goodluck Jonathan employed Cambridge Analytics to produce and distribute an Islamophobia video to scare the electorate from voting for the opposition - General Muhammadu Buhari as a sponsorer of Boko Haram. The latter inflict or perpetrate much violence (Isola, 2018).

The people in Rivers State having divergent cultural practices, religious beliefs (Christianity, Islam, Traditional and others) with different dialects are not free from hate speech. Hate speeches are gradually dividing the Municipal because of political tussle among Public figures and party loyalists who struggle for political hegemony.

Hate speech is an expression of hostility toward individuals or social groups based on their perceived group, membership, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion debility, gender or sexual orientation. All forms of expression which spread or incite or promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and base on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination, hostility etcetera against minorities people of immigrant origin etcetera (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 1997).

Historically, six state elections have been conducted so far in Rivers State between 1999 and 2019. A review of these elections revealed that Rivers state witnessed both pre and post-election violence. Electoral violence in Nigeria was attributed to animosity, religious dichotomy, pervasive poverty and weak institutionalisation, political parties, the Judiciary, and law enforcement agencies (Nwolise, 2007; Campbell, 2010 and Orji & Uzodi, 2012). Africa and beyond is noted for hate speech. Most notable examples are the 2007 post-electoral violence in Kenya, 2011 post-electoral violence in Nigeria as reported by the FGN, 2011; Chedotum et al., 2013). The nexus between hate speech and post-election violence in Africa was studied by Ezeibe (2013). Ezeibe argued that the seed of hate speech campaign has matured in Africa, but no extensive work has been done, the little one did was under-reported; even though they are apt and scientific yet, none of them examined the effect of hate speech and hate campaign on Nigeria's electoral violence.

Although no law in the Nigerian constitution has expressly prohibited hate speech, the Criminal Code has laws related to libel, slander, blasphemy, perjury, and similar offences. The Nigerian Electoral Act of 2010 under section 95 did not vividly explain the prohibitions. Although registered political parties have signed a code of conduct stating that no party or candidate may distribute inflammatory statements, there has not been prescribed sanctions. The 2015 Cyber Crime Act under section 26 places ban on the publication of racist and xenophobic materials. However, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) code and that of Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) carry some provisions that are against hate speech. There is no strong political will to prescribe punishment

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for those who use hate speech during elections. Even though these laws are enacted, there been no prosecution of offenders of hate speech. So, there is no legal precedent for offenders of hate speech. However, in February 2018, the Senate considered a bill to making hate speech punishable by death, but the explanation of hate speech is ambiguous and associated with the fight against terrorism. Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, the Vice-President of Nigeria, has stated that hate speech is a form of terrorism. The bill was frustrated and strangled to death as it attempts to silence government critics.

Social media and hate speech in Rivers State resulted from power tussle among chief political leaders and their supporters, especially during electioneering periods and campaigns. Hate speech in the Nigeria context is promoted or predicated by religious and ethnic related feuds or hostilities. The political leaders in Rivers State use Machiavellian tactics to discredit their opponents through hate speeches when addressing their supporters and sympathisers. The use of hate speech was incessant during the 2019 electioneering processes when the political actors throw insinuating words regarded as insults upon each other both in radio stations, local and national television networks, and the news media.

Hence, the Rivers State at various phases of development and consolidation has experienced hate speech and its ill-effects in no smaller measure. Election campaigns are fertile ground for hate speech and incitement to hatred. Elected officials, political parties, candidates, other opinion makers, and members of "civil" society are all in the corridors of hate speech.

The statement "all men by nature are a political animal" is only right, when it comes to the relationship between media houses, social media bloggers and their users who parley with politicians to shield truth. This axiom also holds sway for party loyalists and sympathisers that carry out their benefactor politicians and party stalwarts' commands. We have media report on https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/03/27/politics-war/human-rights-impact-and-causes-post-election-violence-rivers-state that carried the news of Rivers State' most powerful gang leader, Sogboma George, escaping from jail while awaiting trial for murder in 2005. The Nigeria Police did not make any effort to rearrest him and went about as a free man until the time of his assassination. Similarly, in 2007, Sogboma George was arrested and remanded in a Police cell for a traffic offence, and armed men loyalist to him broke the police cell and set him free. He was again left untouched or rearrested by the Police.

Rivers State politicians sponsor the gang leaders or cultists. Much of the July and August 2007 fighting rutted by Ateke Tom, leader of the Icelanders/ Niger Delta Vigilante group, against his former boy Sogboma George, the criminal gang leader was that of a struggle for supremacy. The then Ateke Tom it was rumoured rose from obscurity during Rivers' 2003 elections to fame when he was paid and armed by Rivers State government officials to help drive opposition supporters out of his hometown Okrika. While late Sogboma George emerged during the Rivers' 2007 elections which later became the most powerful and politically connected gang leader, with close ties to Rivers State's administration, then-Governors Celestine Omehia and Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi. These warlords were able to swindle the Rivers State Government's hand by causing mayhem of violence in Port Harcourt to be patronised.

Rivers State and the World witnessed a blood bath on 31st breaking 1st January 2019 night in Omoku where Christians were killed by a notorious gang leader Don Wanny. YouTube displayed video footages of the blood bath with the recorded hate speeches uttered by Don Wanny. The Rivers State Government later granted him an amnesty.

While the political actors use aggressive words even in the last concluded State election, they instigate their foot soldiers to act accordingly against the oppositions. Examples displayed in the All Progressive Congress hierarchy; Senator Magnus Abe vs Rotimi Amaechi preferred candidate Tonye Cole. Their action led their supporters to destabilise their former APC State Secretariat at Forces Avenue, Old GRA. Social media sites displayed videos of these events with each faction making hate speeches against another.

During a court sitting in Port-Harcourt, hooligans hover around the court's Premises at Moscow road before the Nigerian Police dispatch them. The aftermath was an eye saw as the Police could not disperse the protesters. Social media and hate speech have no doubt been used by the Political actors to intimidate, scare and witch-hunt their opponents in Rivers State. Without calling names, we cannot help but get records of some Assembly-men who have one way or the other have perpetrated cult-related activities in the Rivers State in this present administration.

This study's feasibility is to proffer workable solutions that can make Rivers State institutions work in full gear to either eliminate social media hate speech or reduce it to its barest minimum. Below are few selected organisations to be used to accomplish this task of socio-political stability in Rivers State, and they are:

i. Media Houses in Rivers State often resort to hate speech which either stabilises Rivers State's polity or mar it.
ii. Owners of Radio Stations either divulge the truth to the public or distort information, giving room to people to utter all kinds of hate speeches in media houses; and sometimes moderators allow some hate speeches that suit their interest, and bar others that go against their loyalists or political godfathers.



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iii. The Radio Biafra station is noted for media house hate speech.
iv. Some social media bloggers are financed and sponsored by some people to spread propaganda and fake news about their opponents. Therefore putting their benefactors in a good light, and their opponents in the dark was a brain cause of the clash between Governor Ezenwo Wike Nyesom and the former Governor of Rivers State, the Federal Minister of Transportation Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi convoy at Trans Amadi Industrial Area in 2018.
v. A group of individuals use the media for insults and hate speeches that negate civil society's liberty. Political party supporters and their youth followers make all kinds of absurd statements on social networks as hate speeches.

However, the media houses are expected to impact the society by serving as an ombudsman to political office holders, moderate the civil order activities, and cause the dissemination of correct and accurate information through televisions, media houses, blogs and other additional arrangements. The correct and accurate presentation and addressing of societal matters in the media had a long-lasting dint in people's minds. Also, the content of any message is capable of motivating if not otherwise, the audience and eventually cause an optimistic or adverse action.

In 2015, the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) stated that 70 per cent of the people in Nigeria disseminate hate speech in social media whose identities are not hidden. Our society needs to be put in place specific restrictive measures to curtail hate speeches in the social media which negates the reason for setting up these platforms. Hate speech can stir up socio-political instability in Nigeria's social order and by extension, any other nation.

*b) Statement of the Problem*

From all empirical standards and permutations, the Social Media platforms and Social networking sites in this 21st century plays a dominant role in Rivers State economic growth and development. The social media is the platform that sends out information faster, and swifter, and its robust potential contribution in terms of asking the state government for public accountability. It also compels the international communities for prompt interventions, but the reverse is seen due to some perceived abnormal functionalities of social media users as they create demeaning havocs on networking sites by making frivolous comments are known to be hate speeches in this study.

The fundamental issues are the socio-political havocs and instability this new culture so displayed in the media industry has to incur Rivers State's demeaning effect. These particular acts have resulted in countless violence resulting in deaths of loved ones and casualties in Rivers State, leading to socio-political imbalance and instability in the polity. Therefore, this demands that Rivers State institutions and Nigeria adopt a more suitable approach to manage and provide appropriate measures to curtail this endemic disease that is gradually bed-rocking the social media communities and negates speedy economic growth in Rivers State.

Curtailing hate speeches seem onerous because the top pioneers of these endemic problems who do little or nothing to imbibe ethics needed to win popularity during the electioneering process without the normal blame-game and propagandas seem to be diluted truths, thus, leading to hate speeches. Therefore, a way forward in solving these endemic problems inherent in social media, institutions, and society needs investigation to curtail or eliminate hate speech.

One of the biggest challenges in Rivers State in particular and Nigeria at large is the inability of the political leaders to see everybody from the Rivers State as one or brothers and sisters so that when appointments and employments when made, eliminates ethnicity consideration and be thrown overboard. The Rivers State's various stakeholders will be contingent upon forming strategic partnerships and alliances and working collaboratively with one voice against hate speeches. Recording of tremendous achievements, in scope, scale, and sustainability of success, this social media platform needed to work closely with existing mandates, capabilities, and resources of government institutions, independent agencies, and civil society as per laid down principles or policies that, will ultimately tend to make a significant impact in reducing societal vices to its barest minimum, especially in Rivers State. The famous question that readily comes to mind is whether this hate speech can reduce socio-political instability like ballot box snatching, assassination, kidnapping and other cult and gang-related vices to its barest minimum? There are other thought-provoking questions arouses our interest to undertake this study.

*c) Objective of the Study*

This study's general objective is to ascertain whether partnering with stakeholder's forums will meet-up demand for reducing hate speech in society now and in the future.

The specific objectives of the study are:

i. To examine the extent to which social media users influence hate speech.
ii. To examine how social media hate speech, negate socio-political stability of Rivers State.
iii. To assess the establishment of stakeholder's forum for significant reduction of socio-political instability in Rivers State.
iv. To examine how Policy-Makers and media houses can help tame hate speech in Rivers State.



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*d) Research Questions*

To effectively carry out this research, there are pertinent questions that are relevant to the study as follows: -

i. Can social media users influence hate speech?
ii. Can social media stop hate speech from negatively influencing socio-political stability in River State?
iii. Can the establishment of stakeholders' forum through social media significantly impact reducing socio-political instability in Rivers State?
iv. Can policymakers and media house help to tame hate speech in Rivers State?

*e) Research hypotheses*

The following hypotheses will guide the study. They are:

i. $H_0$: Social media cannot stop hate speech from negatively influencing socio-political stability in River State?
ii. $H_0$: Social media users cannot influence hate speech.
iii. $H_0$: The establishment of the stakeholder's forum will not significantly impact reducing socio-political instability in Rivers State.
iv. $H_0$: Policymakers and media houses cannot tame hate speech in Rivers State.

*f) Significance of the Study*

This study will be a source of information to aid the Federal, State and Local governments in curtail potential threats emanating from hate speeches that can hurt the State's polity.

This study's results are believed to be an eye-opener to both Governments and the general public and call for a stakeholder's forum to nib the bud.

The study will also encourage Nigerian policymakers to initiate good policies that will forestall peace and tranquillity in the nation as hate speech is collectively and eradicated in Nigeria using this research's recommendations.

Our findings will also be a reference point to other researchers and will contribute to knowledge.

*g) Scope of the Study*

The research covered the period 2005 – 2017. The survey understudies Rivers State as one of Nigeria's largest populated cities with Five Million, One Hundred and Ninety-Eight Thousand, Seven Hundred and Sixteen (5,198,716) 2006 National Census. Rivers State has twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas with millions of this population acquainted with social media and social networking sites. The Local Government Areas that come under this study are Port-Harcourt, Obio-Akpor, and Okrika LGAs analysed for generalisation to other states and countries in the world.

*h) Definitions of Terms*

*Social Vices:* These are the various crimes perpetrated in society due to the hate speech made on social media and political actors. These vices could be thuggery, assassination, kidnapping, armed robbery, civil unrest and violent protests.

*Political figures:* These are the top politicians in the State who have followers and hold public office.

*Media users:* This section refers to the public that participates with any online and social media interactions, mostly through Twitters, Facebook, WhatsApp, Gob, email etcetera.

*Media Houses:* refers to Television and Radio stations.

*Bloggers:* These are online organisations that create a social media account for specific purposes.

## II. Literature Review

The literature review provided the researcher avenue to critically view previous scholarly works and studies about the topic, which helps a researcher select appropriate objectives and methodology to enhance knowledge. Furthermore, this section of the research will build on the lacunas or loopholes that concern the study.

*a) Literature Review*

The word "Social Media" means collecting applications by Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Gab, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other websites linking people to share information and make them aware of social networking events. The 21st century has witnessed unprecedented patronage of social media, and people belonging to different age groups use these social media houses. Social media has touched the lives of people in Rivers State. Information Technology (IT) has the capability of changing the living standard of people. As a tool, social media provides several ways of interaction and different opportunities to learn foreign languages worldwide. Today's world is a global village due to disseminating information on social media in no distance time with users connecting within seconds and share ideas and make comments by video conferencing. People of different cultures discuss freely on any issue of interest. Social media made this possible by linking the people to their culture through diverse documentaries. Through social media, people also get information about other regions and countries. Social media influence or impacts on the lives of adolescents, both positively and negatively. Students use social media for learning purposes, for entertainment, and innovative researches, etcetera.

Students join different social, cultural and religious groups on Facebook and other media to interact with one another and discuss divergent topics. The uses of Social media are numerous. Social media



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provide platforms of opportunities to young men and women to seek for jobs. Some companies post their adverts for recruitment and even selection online. Some of these companies create their group or page to inform their employees about their company's operational activities or situations; while other for advertisement.

According to Chukwuere J.E (2017), there has been a drastic improvement in technology over the years. Social media is popular among students for conveying data. The World Wide Web (WWW) has increased knowledge acquisition and information transfer more comfortable and faster. Therefore, it is common today for people from all walks of life to easily share information, pictures, and post-motivated thoughts on social media and advert jobs. Advancement in technology, makes work done even in one's bedroom, at his/her convenient time through the use of smartphones, tablets, or personal computers and what is available. However, we noticed a demerit in social media users globally, as many female students have used up their precious times playing games instead of using the mass media wisely to acquire knowledge. Also, many of them devote most of their time on things that add no value to their academics, such as constant chatting and uploading pictures. Social media is an online tool created for interaction and content sharing among people in the community, and its broader context includes; web-based technologies like YouTube for social video sharing service, text messaging, blogs etcetera. , Microblogs activities on Twitter and social networking services are carried out such as Facebook, MySpace, WhatsApp explorations.

The use of social media by youths has become a way of life, and personal activities are made public, according to Edge (2017). Studies on students usage of social media, its impact on their social behaviour, education, academic performance as well as the positive and negative effect, has been carried and the results revealed that there are factors that influence the usage, ethical usage and many more (Al-Sharq, Hashim & Kutbi, 2015; Wolf, Wenskovitch & Anton, 2016; Mingle & Adams, 2015). Khan (2012) conducted similar research which focused on social media websites impact on students. While Ahn (2011) study covered the social media effect on adolescents' academic advancement and social wellbeing.

According to Rajeev (2015), social media impact different area of our society in allowing individuals to make their views and life public. Shabir, Hameed, Safdar and Gilani (2014), suggested that social lifestyles of youth's rest upon Social Media, which impact can be undesirable sometimes. Social media has gradually become part and parcel of our society.

According to Al-Sharq, Hashim & Kutbi, (2015), social media is becoming part of our society and changing social norms and culture. Wolf et al., (2015) stated that information and content sharing are now a social desire, which has changed so many people including students' especially female students, how they interact, communicate and socialise in the learning institutions. The news media has provided robust connectivity, communication and content sharing among students and society. Students can now participate in social discussions, posting comments, pictures, images, share ideas and many more. At this point, one can say that Social Media influences youths daily, and affects their life path and particularly students (Rajeev, 2015).

i. *Concept of Media*

Social media is a form of interactive media that lets users communicate through posts, videos, blogs, forums and messages. Social media is the content we create and share.

Mass media means technology intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication amongst the vast majority of the general public within seconds when the messages are out. The mass media platforms include newspaper, magazines, radio, TV and the Internet. Whenever one wants to listen to his/her favourite song, watching his/her favourite TV shows, or listen to current news and events in the world, or turn up to a particular station, it is most likely that one will have to tune on to a specific station of interest in TV, Smartphones or computer. These sources that we turn on to get information are all considered to be mass media.

Media means the plural form of medium and medium means communication and a mode of expression centred on expressing views of people and their possessions with characteristics that help to direct people's opinions. It uses both technical and institutional methods of production and distribution to reach out to the audience. It also involves the codification of symbolic form and separate contexts in the production and reception of information. It is for information distribution to communicate the products of mass-production that spread the news about a product to many of the audience at whatever location. The question that readily comes to mind is what effect does the mass media have upon people?

Considering the above question, we found in the literature that, different news media have their particular characteristics and effects on people based on accessibility, and audience. Media effects on society in this 21st century is so much, and it ranges from entertainment to creating awareness and education. These effects on people make them outstanding as agents of change and act as sources of information of facts to the listening audience or society.

Media plays a crucial role in democracy, like being a watchdog, such as establishing democracy and safeguarding the existing tenets in democratic values like public officials' accountability and entertainment through music, drama, films, and dance etcetera. Media



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productive in those aspects also tend to play a significant role in the company's products' business, and marketing displayed and introduced to the general public through media and ultimately results in the nation's economic growth.

Generally, social media is categories into three as follows: -

*Print Media:* They include Newspapers, Magazines, Booklets, Brochures and house magazines.

*Electronic Media:* Television, Radio and Films, New Age Media: Mobile Phones, Computers and Internet.

The first phrase of media usage began in 1920, and the notion of mass media was generally restricted to print media, including books, pamphlets, newspapers, and magazines. Post World War II, introduced radio, and television. Recordings include gramophone records, magnetic tapes, cassettes, CDs, DVDs, cinema in 1950, the Internet about 1990, and mobile phones about 2000.

Social media is classified into visual and non-visual based on its nature, scope, and society's effectiveness. Press or media evaluated as the fourth pillar of a democratic system which was the prime force in the struggle for independence in African countries. Many freedom fighters started with newspaper and different kinds of literature to address public issues to create nationality among the people before and after independence.

Over the 250 years of media coverage, its status and relevance keep appreciating due to people's support and trust and how it has made life easy. However, after Nigeria's independence in 1960, the media scenario has undergone tremendous changes attributed to globalisation. Indian media and entertainment industry has travelled a long way and grown into a leading media market with over 1.2 billion people. The Indian constitution guarantees free press and free expression, having a press or media without the government's intervention or restrictive regulation.

Free 116 media is an essential source of information in a free society, that when used irresponsibly, can threaten the particular geographical expanse, such as Rivers state. In India, the government takes on the role of the primary regulator of the media. It has established specific law not only to regulate media activities but also to protect their freedom. With the object to regulate media industry, various authorities in India has been established through different legislations from time to time as Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Press Information Bureau, Press Council of India, Central Board of Film Certification, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

ii. *Characteristics of Media*

John Thompson of Cambridge University has identified the following characteristics of media:

i. Compromises of both technical and institutional production and distribution methods are evident throughout the media 's history.
ii. The commodification of symbolic forms of production relies on manufacturing and selling large quantities of the product.
iii. The information distribution is a "one to many" form of communication, whereby products on mass production are widespread to many audiences.

There are different types of media having specific characteristics based on reaching the audience and accessibility. Print media like newspapers and magazines influence people, such as politicians and policymakers who often turn to print media for their news, intended to reach the general public. Radio is available to a broad audience which is suitable to communicate local information. It has an entertainment function and a platform for serious discussions and interaction with call-in shows. Television is a medium for severe news or entertainment, depending on the outlet; some talk shows and news broadcasts intended to entertain and inform, which requires strong visuals for effective communications. Internet is online media, like blogs, and social media news. Media information dissemination in a developed country in terms of communication is operative, and receiving information, but have a low rate of accessibility in developing countries, which can quickly disseminate (accurate or inaccurate) information globally.

iii. *Impact of Media on Society*

The society is affected by the media multifariously. Media plays its role in the social order effectively in Information accessibility in media which means access to facts and documents, which helps a person acquire information and knowledge in preparing the human race for the 21st century. Media organisation and communication hardware expand access to information. The world has become a global world that is closer and cohesive due to data transmission and data transmission. Within seconds, information reaches every nook and cranny of all the countries. Everyone knows the whole lot happening everywhere.

Media serves as a public watchdog, playing a role in shaping, guiding and reflecting the public opinions. The functions of the media help to strengthen the tenets of democracy.

Entertainment is one of the major avenues the media have used to enrich the people. Broadcasting has monopolised the leisure industry. It provides literature, music, drama, dance, sport, avenues for interaction with resourceful persons, culture entertainments etcetera.

The overall human development is directly related to education. Media enable the spread of knowledge through conventional and unconventional methods. Through educating the public, ignorance has



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been on the road to eradication. The social media adds new information to valuable human knowledge.

Economic growth brings about development through the mass media was used for both social and business concerns. They include advertising, marketing, propaganda, public relations and political communication.

iv. *Social Media and the decay in cultural Norms*

The high use of the Internet has a correspondingly high risk, and but there had been no risk of the simple use of the media (Berson and Berson (200). Elola and Oskoz (2008) have stated that social media did not know about risks at the early stage of development and could not quickly develop abilities to make life's choices. They went on to say that social media helped evolve a business relationship with other states and social media positively affected.

Social media is used in educational learning, especially e-learning Brady, Holcomb, and Smith (2010). Similarly, Lusk (2010) stated that students use social media in their academic pursuits, enhancing communication skills through social media. Social media had provided new web tools that the students could use to raise their learning skills. According to Jacobsen and Forste (2011), media hurt grades, and students have used media continuously while doing homework, or in class which negatively affects their examination scores. Kalpidou, Costin, and Morris, (2011) stated that there was a relationship between social media and grades, Ohio State University described in his study that those students had low grading who spent their time on social media, then those who did not spend their time on social media. According to Waddington (2011), adolescents thought social media as the component of their culture; not a craze. It could enhance their ability, and they used it as an educational tool. All the studies discussed above show that social media have different effects on different people.

v. *Social Media's Impact on Social LifeStyle*

Digital media had provided opportunities to contribute to those countries that have ICT (Information Communication Technology). According to Livingstone and Bober (2003), social media was the core cause of the generation gap in several ways like lack of awareness, recognition of domestic rules, and what kids were acting and parents' opinions about their children's doing. People forgot their rituals and traditions because of social media.

Social media has created an alternative new world of information, communication, and interconnectivity order which cannot be activated using face-to-face communication methods (Al-Sharq et al., 2015; Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2017).

With Social Media, pressing issues in societies are discussed and given attention (Shabir et al., 2014). Al-Sharq et al., (2015) have stated that high education institution students have engaged in excessive social media usage, which has coined a debate on whether social media has impacted their social lifestyle, behaviour and wellbeing.

Al-Sharq et al. went on to say that, the level of changes brought by social media has positively impacted tutors, students, education institutions and other stakeholders to improve their interactions and teaching and learning delivery technique. Social Media's adoption into education and life results from its user-oriented features, cheap and easy to use and others (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2017).

Students use The use of social media by students crosses various departments in Schools. Al-Sharq et al. (2015) have advanced some reasons for using social media to communicate with their friends, have access to learning contents and sharing, group discussion forums, chat rooms, wiki, fun and many others. Social media usage among university students brings both positive and negative impacts. Al-Sharq et al. (2015) further stated that Social Media creates a new innovative mindset on students and improves inter-social interaction and relationship between students and educators. This new media can be addictive, time-consuming, distractive, social-gathering, isolation, monophobia and others.

Also, Mingle, and Adams (2015) believed that Social Media usage has negatively caused students depravity in handwriting, being unable to spell words. Social media has made students pass sleepless nights which cause them to be late to their classes and unable to do and submit on time class assignments, addicted to the Internet, have few study time, etcetera, which have a negative chain effect on their social lifestyle, and cultural belief system. Social Media changes educational settings and learner's behaviour (Mingle, and Adams, 2015). These students, according to Edge (2017), are exposed to post unethical contents and views. Nevertheless, Social Media can cause harm (s) to the user despite changes in innovation in the 21st Century (Moate, Chukwuere & Mavhungu, 2017).

vi. *Worldview on Hate Speech*

Hate speech has been in existence from time immemorial; even in time of Biblical Cain against his brother Abel. At the time of the Lord Jesus Christ, His persecutors used hate speech against Him; and the Church age also experienced it. The same odium words were fluently used at the time of the slave trade and Africa's colonisation. History, hate speech has done unprecedented ills to nations, and the implications have been devastating as such speeches have led to genocides, civil wars and death of millions of people over the years. During World War II in the early nineteenth century, Adolf Hitler tortured and killed over six million Jews (the holocaust), due to hate speech and



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misinformation. Osaghae & Suberu (2005) from their findings have said that the remote cause of the Nigerian civil war from 1967- 1970 resulted from violent exchanges of words (hate speech) shared between Igbo traders and Hausa/Fulani traders in Northern Nigeria. Half a century later, the upshot of the violent Boko-Haram sect is gradually leading Nigeria into a state of anarchy. Hate speech has crawled into the system and politics in Rivers State and Nigeria at large that became an endemic problem and cankerworm in our societies. Social media spread hate speech faster than a snake's venom because of social media platforms' potentials.

There is no one unique and universal definition of hate speech, incitement to hate, or other crucial terms within human rights law with the above issues on hand. As a result, this study will take some explanations from notable organisations.

The UN's International Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination defines hate speech as a "form of other-directed speech which rejects the core human rights principles of human dignity and equality and seeks to degrade the standing of individuals and groups in the estimation of society." Similarly, in various countries, criminal codes generally refer to speeches that incite any group of persons to commit an offence against any other group or create enmity between groups as a hate speech.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) defines hate speech as all forms of expression which spread, incites, promote, or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti- Semitism or other forms based on intolerance expression by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discriminative hostility towards minorities, migrants, and people of immigrant origin.

The South African Broadcasting Complaints Commission defines hate speech as the material which when judged within context; sanctions promotes or glamorises violence based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, age, or mental or physical disability, and sexual discrimination. The Commission also referred to hate speech as the propaganda for war, incitement of imminent violence, or advocation of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion and which constitutes incitement to cause harm".

Hate speech is also regarded as an abusive speech targeted at specific group characteristics, such as ethnic origin, religion, gender, or sexual orientation (Warne and Hirschberg, 2012). In recent times, a tweet is regarded as hate speech if it uses a sexist or racial slur as opined by Waseem and Hovy (2016).

More precise definitions from the law are specific to firm jurisdictions and therefore, do not capture all forms of offensives, hateful speeches (Matsuda, 1993). As of June 2016, Twitter bans hateful conduct.

The governments, organisations and the public are interested in controlling hate speech in social media and the perpetrators. However, there is a little or no consensus on what hate speech is.

vii. *Social Media and Hate Speech*

In real life, the consequences of hate speech are increasing, affecting human health and becoming an issue (Burnap and Williams, 2014). Hate speech mirrors readers' opinions only and induces ill feelings (Martin et al., 2013).

Hate speech has recently attracted some interest as a research topic on the one hand, according to Djuric et al., 2014; Burnap and Williams, 2014; Silva et al., 2016.

Social media disseminates hateful messages. Hate speech in Europe is associated with the ongoing refugee crises. As hate speech on social media sites increases, people are more aware of the associated problems and how to deal with it, such as removing illegal messages 24 hours after they are reported (Titcomb, 2016).

Early detection of hate speech and such an automatic detection method can reduce or impair hate speech contents escalating and be a vocal point of eliminating such vile speech via social media.

Therefore, hate speech detection can be considered a classification task when given an utterance, which determines whether it contains hate speech. Training an information classifier requires a large amount of data that does not hate speech-related.

viii. *Case for Freedom of Speech as Against Hate Speech*

Freedom of expression, as stated in Article 19(3) of the ICCPR carries duties and responsibilities subject to the following restrictions:

a. There must be mutual respect for the reputations and rights of other people;
b. The protection of national security, public order, and public health or morals.

Furthermore, Article 20 of the same ICCPR prohibits any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred. Nowadays, most jurisdictions and most scholars accept the necessity of certain restrictions on freedom of speech. As one of the limitations, hate speech has been widely debated and scrutinized in political and academic circles, but a universally agreed definition of hate speech does not exist.

Nevertheless, two elements appear to be frequent to a variety of views. The first is hate speech directed at a person or a group of persons considered inferior because of some characteristics that misconstrue their identity, innate (i.e. race, ethnicity, sexual orientation). Secondly, hate speech incites violence, discriminatory treatment, or the offence to the



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human dignity of a targeted person(s) (Cortese, 2006; Heyman, 2008; Gelber, 2002).

For example, Gelber (2002) is primarily concerned with searching for an adequate response to hate speech, rather than elaborating on its definition. In developing her argumentation, Gelber combines three theories; Nussbaum's capabilities theory, Austin's conception of utterances as 'speech-acts', and Habermas's validity claims model. Gelber starts the discussion about hate speech by challenging the libertarian concept of free speech according to which the goal of a speech policy is simply to restraint on individuals' speech liberty.

Drawing upon Nussbaum's idea that free speech is significant to the development of human capabilities, she offers an alternative conception that accentuates the free speech exercise's participation as the primary goal of a well-designed speech policy (Gelber, 2002; emphasis added). Gelber also challenges the above-discussed distinction between 'doing' and 'saying, by referring to Austin's concept of speech-acts. From Austin, the standpoint of view, the idea that when a person speaks, they are doing more than making a statement was adopted.

In every utterance, three validity claims exist, i.e. the claim to Certainty, the claim to the rightness of norms and values, and the speaker's sincereness. These three validity claims appear as the claim to inequality in the objective ecosphere so that there will be no personal claim to the rightness of discrimination against certain groups, and a sincere hater towards the targeted group. Speaking on systematic power asymmetry, Gelber concludes that a hate-speech-act is a discursive act of discrimination that propagates inequalities.

Furthermore, hate speech refers to the USA Supreme Court's legal practice and discusses two different tests employed in the freedom of expression cases. The first one is the 'clear and present danger' test that allowed to limit freedom of expression only in a speech that represents an immediate danger of substantive evil, e.g. riots or violence of any other sort. The second test – the 'bad tendency' test – that does not allow the presence of any threat or danger. So, the government is permitted to set limitations on free speech 'if such has a natural tendency to bring probable effect (Gitlow v. New York, 1925; cited in Zingo, 1998: 18).

ix. *Hate Speech and Implication to Socio-Political Instability in Rivers State*

From 1999 to 2019, when the Fourth Republic in Nigeria stated and ended, Rivers State has witnessed political violence. Rivers state socio-political stability, has never been obtained but rather the constant vulnerability of hate speech and its devastating ills. Hate speech at election campaigns and its incitement to hatred was the order of the day in Rivers state and Africa at large.

As such, electoral leadership quality can have profound negative or positive impacts beyond an election's success. Strong electoral leadership can mitigate grave challenges to the electoral process, while poor electoral control often exacerbates.

In reality of this study, the political actors and the youths have not done so well with social media in inciting hate speeches in the state. These hate speech acts that come from mostly the politicians have created instability and havoc in the assassination, murder, kidnapping, and other vices.

In response, Rivers State politicians and youths on social media must exercise ethical leadership that co-opts and models concepts such as honesty, justice, and respect for human rights.

Those that propagate hate speech are usually elected officials, political parties, candidates, opinion makers, and members of civil society officialdoms.

According to The Human Rights Impact and Causes of Post-Election Violence in Rivers State (https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/03/27/politics-war/human-rights-impact-and-causespost-election-violence-rivers-state) stated that democracy in Nigeria since 1999 has been an illusion and that hundreds of Nigerians have died in 2003 and 2007 elections.

Rivers State's government is one of the wealthiest state governments in Nigeria. That position is derivative from Rivers State status as the heart of Nigeria's booming oil industry. In recent years, rising world oil prices have flooded Rivers State's treasury with a budget higher than many West African countries. Despite this wealth, Rivers State has some of the worst socio-economic indicators in the biosphere, and people are evenly employed, with less care for a decent education, health care, etcetera despite massive oil revenues to develop the state for the benefit of the entire population, Rivers State politicians have squandered the money through mismanagement and corruption. Ironically, the young men are attracted to well-funded gang activities because poverty and unemployment have helped fuel the same problems and crises.

It is pertinent to note that Rivers State wealth has not just been wasted, but has also put to work in sponsoring violence and insecurity on behalf of ruling party politicians. It was on the net that before the 2003 elections, the then-Governor of Rivers State Dr. Peter Odili and his political associate's funded criminal gangs helped him rig the elections to give the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) a landslide victory. These gangs used the money given them to procure sophisticated weapons; making them better armed than the police.

Over the years, Rivers State politicians initially sponsored gangs have become involved in other forms of lucrative criminal activities, including the theft of crude



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oil, bank robbery, kidnappings for ransom, and other violent crimes. Due to the political connections these gangs have, they have unprecedented immunity and so, their actions or crimes committed were of total impunity, as the police or military were blocked continuously to deal with these miscreants, who lived openly in urban towns where their violent crimes resulted in murder and injury to ordinary Nigerians.

x. *Countering Social Media Hate Speech in Rivers State Polity*

A direct online expression of hate speech or an act of sharing a hateful post is usually impulsive, careless, internally motivated and does not involve significant cognitive or emotional effort. Indeed, it might involve more effort to suppress a hateful or angry feeling than to release it. Unlike hate speech, an act of counter speech is not spontaneous, but responsive, not active, but reactive. It requires a conscious decision and involves considerable cognitive and emotional effort in that, rather than with carelessness, it is more often associated with awareness of the potential consequences of confrontation with the hater, such as attracting their attention and being targeted by insults and even more hate personally hence, highly unpleasant penalties. A decision to counter an act of hate speech requires a usually disproportionate amount of emotional effort and resources compared to the impulsive, self-rewarding and the affective act of posting or sharing a hateful post (Coustick-Deal, 2017). According to free speech advocates and Facebook's official stance, counter-speech is supposed to be a more effective tool against hate speech than removing offensive content by websites administrators (Bartlett & Krasodomski Jones, 2015, p. 4).

Therefore, this study will help bring to the notice of the various sponsors, particularly the politicians, security agencies, and media houses, to be abreast of a range of hate speech issues during an electoral cycle.

The study will explain how to deal with hate speech issues by government officials, security agencies and others, stop incitement to hatred, and hate crimes. Policy administrators are primarily concerned with constitutional provisions, electoral laws, political party laws, and legislation governing media. At the same time, they should be aware of all the legal and regulatory instruments that may come into play. By doing so, government officials can identify other responsible regulatory, oversight, and enforcement bodies to share information and coordinate a response.

Strategists need to be aware that regulatory responses to hate speech are controversial as they revolve around restrictions on access to information, free speech, and political/electoral rights. Fundamental Human Right guarantees free speech and anti-discrimination, but how can free speech be a hate speech challenging to balance. Moreover, regulatory responses are fraught with many other potential problems, including definitional issues, implementation and enforcement challenges, lobbing, and abuse of the law.

During election campaigns, the politician needs to maintain neutrality and treat candidates equally so that appropriate and proportionate penalties appropriated to offenders, and a safe electoral environment is guaranteed.

These stakeholders have vital roles in regulating hate speech in crucial areas that mould the society in Rivers State, and they are:

a. *Constitutions*

Several countries directly reference hate speech or incitement to hatred in their constitutions. Article 16 of South Africa's 1996 Constitution confirms all citizens of their right to freedom of expression, and the right does not in any way extended to propaganda for warfare, or incitement to violence, or advocacy of hatred on account of race, ethnicity, gender or religion, which constitutes incitement to cause harm. Article 17 of Fiji's (1998) Constitution contains similar incitement restrictions to violence and advocacy of hatred. It goes further by unambiguously protecting individuals and groups' rights to freedom of hate speech. However, Human rights activists have raised concerns over some restrictions placed on free speech under Article 17 of the constitution.

b. *Electoral Laws of Timor-Leste*

The electoral Article 13 of the Government Decree 18/2017 *of Timor-Leste* forbids oral or written language that discriminates in terms of race, sex, ideology, religious beliefs, and social status or against any human rights. Therefore, the Public Offices Election Law calls candidates to refrain from delivering speeches on Television and radio broadcast that damages others' dignity and honour.

c. *Media Laws, Guidelines, and Codes of Conduct*

The media is given authority to amplify and should not spread hate speech to a varied audience. Some jurisdictions have accordingly placed responsibilities against the prohibition of incitement to hatred on the mass media. During the electoral period, the Press Council of India's guidelines barred election campaigns among communal or the caste under election rules. Thus, the Media should eschew reports, which promote feelings of enmity or hatred on the grounds of religion, race, caste, community, or language. News broadcasters Standards Authority guidelines for Election has been issued, prohibiting any form of 'hate speech' or other obnoxious contents that will likely lead to incitement of violence or public unrest. News broadcasters are strictly warned to avoid reports capable of promoting ill feelings of enmity or hatred among the people.

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) engaged the country's media representatives in drafting,



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ratifying, and implementing a Media Code of Conduct, which law applies to journalists and editors, operators in the broadcast and print media, and media owners. Thus, their needs further exacerbated because Guyana has neither broadcast legislation nor any media regulatory or watchdog bodies. The Code precisely refers to incitement to hatred and the grounds for incitement.

The Zambian Electoral Commission Media Code of Conduct for Journalists states that all media houses in the country are bound to report news on elections in an accurate manner and should not make any abusive editorial comment, capable of inciting violence or advocate hatred on account of race, ethnicity, tribe, gender, political or religious conviction.

d. *Political Party, Guidelines, Laws and Code of Conduct*

The Kenya Political Parties Act of 2012 includes a Code of Conduct for politicians, Political Party Laws, Guidelines, and Codes of Conduct. In Kenya, this Political Parties Act bars political parties from engaging in violence and encouraging its members and supporters to do so. It places further limits on advocating hatred that constitutes ethnic incitement, vilifying others, or inciting with the intent to cause harm, among other restrictions. Guidelines for Political Parties issued by the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) prohibits hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric during campaigns. The Electoral Commission in India is responsible for ensuring that campaigns adhere to a strict Model Code of Conduct. The first part of the Code stipulates that "no party or candidate shall indulge in any activity that may aggravate differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic ethnicity. The Code provided that political parties must obtain necessary written permissions to hold rallies and public meetings during election campaigns.

In Myanmar, the Union Election Commission actively involved political parties while drafting the Political Party Code of Conduct. The Code was accepted by all the 91 political parties contesting the 2015 elections and promoting ethnical peace during election campaigning. Under the Code, political parties are committed to refraining themselves from incitement of violence, hatred, and fuelling racial, segregation, or tribal trends that could threaten national unity. The prohibition applied to campaign events and no form of evil communications during their campaign periods. While political parties generally complied with the Code, they failed to condemn hate speech conveyed by other groups. Nationalist governments and like-minded individuals, who were not bound by the Code, used social media platforms to incite hate speech and fuel racial and religious tensions.

e. *Implementation and Law Enforcement Issues*

Global experiences have several critical challenges with legal and regulatory frameworks designed to counter hate speech and incitement to hatred. However, there are issues of hate speeches that need addressing, including definition, implementation of law and enforcement issues.

Effective implementation of standards and laws governing hate speech requires several things. First and foremost, hate speech requires a clear, concise and consistent definition of the term. Secondly, it requires a threshold by which adjudicatory bodies can determine whether hate speech has occurred and whether it is legitimately prohibited. Unfortunately, there is no definition of hate speech that is universally accepted, incitement to hate, and other terms within human rights law. As a result, courts and other public bodies in flora and fauna have applied different definitions involving various levels of details, which is not healthy for states and governments even the UNO being the watchdog of the whole earth. The third issue is how to enforce the laws against hate speech when they are not adequately defined and therefore, becomes difficult to interpret and convict an offender according to law. So, arbitrary interpretation of the law to convict the innocents and those on the government's opposing side or religious men and women in the state religion is not the right thing to do.

*b) Theoretical Framework*

i. *John Stuart Mill Theory of Liberty*

Mill's theory of liberty is concerned with the line between the state and the individual, and liberty becomes the things government should be allowed to regulate. This research focuses on the segment of Mill's theory that concerns how the government controls speech and the distinction between hate speech and its regulation. Mill's argument centres on free speech which connotes two core propositions. The first is that free speech is necessary and that it exposes false ideas. To Mill, we do not know what "the truth" is; instead, at that moment, we labour using different hypotheses about what might be the veracity. We ultimately accept a given theory as correct, having seen no other evidence that sticks to falsehood. Free speech makes it easier to prove a hypothesis whether it is untrue and exposes incorrect thesis.

It is no gainsaying that theory we accept as fact today may become false at any other time or moment, as long as we are cleared that the veracity of information available to us at the moment, may turn that Hypothesis false at a later date when fresh truth is exposed to man's knowledge.

We always compare competing hypotheses and choose those provides a better description of the biosphere. Under this approach, we rank sets of



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suppositions such that a superior hypothesis set explains all of the events clarified by an inferior set of principles and additional events that are inconsistent with the substandard. Therefore, facts and falsifiability are inseparable, which is simply a transitional phase in which we have accepted one set of hypotheses over another. As events unfold, generating new information, we will eventually agree to a different set of rules. Since we cannot prove a hypothesis as false without the freedom to express competing ideas, truth itself becomes a function of the extent to which we can freely express concepts. If every government restrains expression, we will hold on to inferior hypotheses due to ignorance of the real truth unveiled. In the course of government allowing people of freedom of speech, it is most likely that those who held on to the exact truth, knowing the truth, will eventually release the real truth without fear or favour; and this will help society move forward in sound health.

Mill's second argument for freedom of expression is that it fosters a society with diverse points of view. In such cultures, where competing hypotheses that conflict with one another exist, there will be an increase in society's knowledge. Furthermore, just as genetic variation contributes to a species' ability to survive random shifts in its environment, differences in beliefs prevent the social order from uniformly adopting a defective lifestyle concerning its environment. Instead, by having diverse points of view, society can correct itself and withstand possible falsehood, thereby preventing accidents and eliminating goods shortages.

Mill has made no particular attempt to make a case for "free conduct", nor has he denounce speech-related conduct which refers to situations in which an actor's speech indicates a plan of action, a threat or an encouragement to act on others conduct. Mill's theory has implied at least one clear boundary between speech and comportment, saying that the government can and should regulate speech-related behaviour that has harmful external effects.

ii. *John Stuart Mill's arguments on Speech and Conduct regulation*

First, assuming that actions can be in one of two categories- hate and non-hate speech centred on their effect. The hate speech category includes those speeches and conducts that are intended and generally hurt its target. An example of behaviour in the hate category is a murder; threats speeches of, "I will kill you!", provided that there is sufficient credibility in that statement. An ethnic or racial slur is another form of hate speech aimed at isolating and humiliating a specific target. The non-hate category includes conduct or words spoken that were not to hurt the other person. Hate speech is hard to defend, but we know what fighting words.

Mill's theory propagates non-hate speech against state regulation, but it supports guidelines of hate conduct. We will refer to it below as "hate conduct" even though such was assumed to be speech-related. We shoulder hate speech to include a speech component, where the government regulates such behaviours and creates concern that the Rivers State government hampers freedom of thought among its citizenry.

However, Mill's framework opines that the government can regulate hate conduct to a larger proportion. Hate conduct crosses the barrier between a "self-regarding" activity-that that aims to and affects oneself, and action that primarily aims and adversely affects others' documented interests.

The question that concerns Officials today is whether, based on an actor's intent, we may increase the penalty on a firm type of conduct which would be a trivial question if it were a matter of examining criminal intent. The criminal law emphasized intentions, but the inquiry focuses on determining ideas in feeling to do the criminal act itself. The more thought-provoking question occurs when the actor's intent reflects an expression that mixes hate and political opinion, such as "I killed him because he is a member of a trade union I do not like." The question then is - Under Mill's theory, can the state assess a penalty against the killer whose motive was on the victim's political affiliation or ethnic group membership? We believe that the government can measure a punishment under Mill's framework. There are two reasons. First, the killer crosses the boundary between self-regarding behaviour to conduct that is aimed at and harms others in violation of accepted norms. Secondly, once this boundary is crisscrossed, nothing prevents the state from identifying a more dangerous group of actors based on their expressed motivations.

The state under Mill's theory is free to determine amongst two persons who is the most dangerous person of one kill for money and the other who kills because he is awkward behind a car's wheel. The state is invariably free to make distinctions among killers based on their expressed motivations. One might argue that the government is essentially creating new law rules by punishing the politically motivated killer more than another murderer. However, the relevant law has already been established: it is illegal to kill. The act of killing loses all claims to protection from regulatory burdens under Mill's theory because it crosses the boundary between self and other-regarding action. Once anybody goes over the boundary line, the state is free to assess penalties in any way that enhances its ability to enforce its laws. In punishing the politically motivated killer more harshly, the Rivers State merely varies the consequence according to the perception of the social danger created by the underlying group.

Mill remarked that George Bramwell murdered his uncle to get money for his mistress, and states that he had done it to set himself up in business, or then



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would he have equally been hanged. These arguments of Mill might have been interpreted as an argument that supports the state when it punishes an actor, and never took the actor's motivation or thoughts into account.

There are two other categories of speech and conduct; namely non-hate, speech-related conduct and hate speech. By non-hate speech-related behaviour, we mean demeanour that is speech-related but not aimed at hurting another person by violating legal and social interests.

Mill's framework in these cases, suggests that if the conduct is to hurt others and does so, the state can regulate it; and that harm must be sensible in light of the social norms that govern, which the government does not have a free hand to control unless an individual's conduct crosses the boundary between hurting others and affecting oneself. Hate speech invokes freedom of expression concerns. As in all other cases, the question is whether it crosses the boundary between self-regarding and other-regarding action, and is entirely a matter of norms or conventions that needed rules that must create a presumption occasion which calls for the non-restriction of speech by the state. So, freedom for individuals to adopt different lifestyles, which may involve different speaking ways, is guaranteed. However, it is difficult to identify existing norms or social interests.

Indeed, ethnic or racial interest group are regularly ready to force others to accept their definitions of ideal speech and conduct; but such an approach is inconsistent with Mill's theory.

The aim of regulation should be to abate harm, not to protect an abstract doctrine. Current courts and commentators are preoccupied with searching for the fixed set of fundamental values that underlie the constitution's efforts to protect expression. As a result, they disregard real pain.

iii. *Pigou's Theory of Externalities*

Pigou's externalities theory provides a theoretical backing for using damage payments or fines rather than command and control statutes. Like Pigou, Mill also uses a theory of externalities as a basis to distinguish permissible and impermissible regulation. Every action of a man can be considered conduct that has a harmful external effect, and that therefore the government is free to regulate all speech-related comportment.

iv. *Karl Popper Paradox of Freedom*

The search for fixed values generates a version of what Karl Popper referred to as the "paradox of freedom." In this context, the paradox is as follows: The state should not regulate speech because it restricts the individual's freedom of thought. However, by refusing to control hate speech, the government gives bullies the freedom to suppress others' expression. A theory must be able to specify the line between too little and too much regulation. With their respective emphases on fixed categories of speech and freedom of thought as an overriding principle, free speech and free thought theories are incapable of doing what it is supposed to do.

v. *Islam nausea (Jihad' In the Media)*

'Jihad' is a concept that has been at the centre of the controversy regarding Muslims' representation. The use of Jihad in Western media is an example of Muslims' treatment as a 'muted group' subject to being defined by a language spoken of by others. The term is conceived widely as "Holy War" in the post 9/11 era as the Bush administration identified this War as Terrorism and is in religious terms, and this is an idea that has stuck to the present day.

With 'jihad' in terms of violent war-like intent emanating from a monolithic 'Islamic world', the definition strongly furthers the Huntingtonian thesis that casts the post-Cold-War World in the framework of a war of progress, and motivating the United States and their rhetoric, portraying the West and the 'Islamic World' as diametrically oppositional and clashing entities.

In the process, the western media 'reduces "jihad" to a one-dimensional caricature of terrorism as religious martyrdom'. This effect is apparent both in the Muslim World and in the West and thus furthers conflict and misunderstanding, playing into the interests of terrorists and warmongers alike.

An example relevant to the corpus studied is the reportage of the Boston bombings. An April 2013 New York Times story entitled 'Phone calls discussing "jihad" prompted Russian warnings on Tsarnaev', and how the mention of the word 'jihad', according to the newspaper can sometimes mean Holy War, alerted Russian authorities to the Tsarnaev plot.

Its statement that 'jihad' can sometimes mean 'holy war' is a highly inaccurate deduction, the effect of which is made worse by its flippant and matter-of-fact execution. The phrase 'holy war' is a mistaken and misleading description of 'jihad'. As Tagg states, 'the phrase "holy war" is most appropriately used to describe the Crusades against Muslims during the late Middle Ages' (Tagg, 2009: p. 30).

Another article in the *Times* entitled 'An Internet 'jihad' aims at U.S. viewers' who said 'When Osama bin Laden issued his videotaped message to the American people, a young "jihad" enthusiast went online to help spread the word'. Interestingly, the young enthusiast that went online to support Bin Laden's campaign is a 'jihad enthusiast'. Calling members of terrorist groups as 'jihadists' is another way the media succeeds in misrepresenting the meaning of 'jihad'.

The media use of the concept of 'jihad' has been misappropriated to mean something different to Muslims, leaving the vast majority of Muslims, who have



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quite a different idea of what the word 'jihad' means, entirely disenfranchised.

vi. *Liberal Legal Frameworks*

As a philosophical idea and political reality, freedom of speech has occupied thinkers and scholars' attention since ancient times (Gearon, 2006). Each historical era has defined the scope of freedom of speech; however, it is only in the modern period that liberty to express ideas, opinions and beliefs has become established as a right. In our contemporary World, freedom of expression is sure-fire in international, regional and national legal instruments, just like Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everybody has an equal right to freedom of speech, opinion, and expression, including the freedom to hold opinions without interference or receive and impart information and ideas through any media.

Freedom of expression is crucial for the functioning of democracy and public participation in political processes. Its principal aim is to protect individuals and society in the course of expressing their opinion of a matter; and is notable as a whole from political oppression and authoritarian government.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides one of the most liberal legal frameworks for expressing opinions and beliefs; and accordingly, prohibits Congress from passing any law that would infringe freedom of speech and the press. As a product of the American Revolution, the First Amendment is deeply imbued with the spirit of libertarianism and enlightenment that challenged the authoritarian rule of monarchs and the church and celebrated reason for individual liberty. Hence, American legal settings allow individuals and groups great freedom in expressing all kinds of views, among others those that could be offensive or even harmful.

Furthermore, by pointing out that freedom of speech ought not to depend on individual preference and taste.

Referring to Mill's defence of freedom of speech, Bracken (1994) argues that Mill did not advocate absolute freedom. He reminds us of the harm principle, pointing out that it 'allows "offensive speech" up to the state of becoming a nuisance to someone else'. Bracken suggests that Mill wanted to distinguish between 'speech as "incitement" and speech as mere "advocacy".

Similarly, he develops an argument based on Cartesian dualism's premises – a philosophical position that sees the human mind as entirely separated from the corporeal body. Cartesian dualism, therefore, implies unrestricted freedom of will, as well as the so-called 'mental privacy', i.e. the impossibility of assessing someone's mind or modelling someone's resolve.

We are free to either act or not, based on what we hear or read. Thus, the Cartesian dualist framework – by separating body and mind – also provides a categorical distinction between speech and action. Drawing upon the radical free-will theory, and pointing out that every person is responsible for their actions, Bracken concludes that words are not deeds.

c) *The Gap in Existing Literature*

This study uses qualitative methods to examine the literature gap regarding the relationship between social media and hate speeches. The advantages of social media, the effects of hate speech, identifying the pioneers of the hate speech, victims of violence, and possible mechanisms to reduce such inimical actions for socio-political gains of the state which are missing in the existing literature especially as it regards Nigeria in general and Rivers State in particular. Therefore, we are to review earlier studies of eminent Scholars and their works regarding hate-speech and policies to reduce such conflict. Procedures made regarding media houses are critical links that may shed real light on policy impacts regarding hate speech.

## III. Method of Study

This section comprises the theoretical framework, hypotheses, research design, data collection method, data analysis method, and logical data framework.

a) *Research Design*

The study design for this research work shall be a case study. Case studies have the potential of allowing the scholar to focus on a particular community or individual in his detailed leaning on a specific phenomenon. Case study enabled researchers to do better and thorough research.

Baridanm (2001), stated that research design refers to a framework or plan that guides collecting and examining the study's data. Considering the nature of the research problem, we adopted the descriptive survey method to generate the necessary and required data. Also, the questionnaire was the chief instruments of data collection.

The conduct of surveys in research is essential for describing the characteristics of a large population; which gives high reliability while presenting all subjects with a homogeneous stimulus that ensures eradication of observer subjectivity (Mugenda and Mugenda (1999). Robson (2002), stated that a survey collects information from a group of people interviewed or distributing questionnaires to a representative sample of a group; which design is preferred because large size is feasible, making the results statistically significant even with multiple variables.

We distributed seven hundred questionnaires in three Local Governments to people between the ages of 18 and above who were either working, graduates, and secondary School leavers and are familiar with social



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media events, due to cost and difficulty involved in covering the entire population of interest in Rivers State.

*b) Research Area*

The research responsibility is to create change in the best case and prevent the study environment's identified problems. Most of these challenges resulted from human activity and resolved through societal processes by adopting and enforcing the right policies and government programmes with a result-oriented policy thrust. However, implementing new ideals requires a combination of knowledge and questioning our social and political institutions' human behaviour.

Rivers State in Nigeria has been the hob of the nation's economy, and they are also troubled zones with hate speech and an increase in social vices.

*c) Data Sources*

In this study, both primary and secondary data sources were obtained and used to evaluate the investigation problem. Primary sources of data are first-hand information that the researcher finds from the study population. We collected our prime data from some university students, traders, and the general public. The importance of primary data is that it has not been published yet and is more reliable, authentic, and objective and has not been subjected to scrutiny and bias assessment; its validity is better than secondary data. However, some of the limitations of primary data are; limitation of information sources; and in certain instances, it becomes difficult to obtain data because of either scarcity of population or lack of cooperation.

Secondary data has been processed but might have a link or relevance to the project under review. Our secondary data came from significant publications on the study such as journals, magazines, books, reports and other relevant documents. Some of the secondary data benefits are that it is easier to obtain the required information, and is less expensive.

*d) Population of Study*

Asika (1991) stated that the population comprises all the elements or subjects of interest and maybe finite or infinite. The full set of cases of the sample taken is called the population (Saunder et al. 1997). Therefore, this study's population sample is from three local government areas (Port-Harcourt, Obio-Akpor and Okrika in Rivers state).

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), explained that the target population should have some observable characteristics to which the researchers intend to make a sweeping statement about the study results. Our definition clarifies issues about the sample of the investigation is not homogeneous. Therefore, the researchers intend to examine the sample size of selected people from the general public.

Our target population ranges from the ages of 18 years and above that constitute the respondent. Therefore 700 respondents were selected using accidental and purposive sampling techniques. Our sample size comprised youths of employable age and above, both graduates, secondary school leavers and some artisans.

*e) Sampling technique*

The sampling technique used is the qualitative methods of accidental sampling and purposive sampling that were useful for conducting exploratory research; they are less stringent, very descriptive and analytical. Another reason is that they are cost-effective and consumes less time.

i. *Accidental sampling*

Accidental sampling is a type of nonprobability technique which involves the sample drawn from that part of the population which is handy, that is, a sample population selected because it is readily available and convenient. We shall sample the targeted population's opinions about their knowledge on the gravity of harm hate speech inflicts on people and the possible remedies. The relevance of Accidental Sampling explained by Black (1999) is that it is an inexpensive way of ensuring sufficient numbers of a study. Based on this sense, our population was selected being readily available and convenient.

ii. *Purposive Sampling*

A purposive sample is a non-representative subset of some larger population and serves a specific need or purpose (Trochim, 2005). Purposive sampling will be useful in the study because it consumed a smaller amount of time, and it was less expensive. Concerning the research, this method we specifically talk to some stakeholders in the state like lecturers. We concentrated on this purposive sampling method because it is the best use with small numbers of individuals/groups that may well be sufficient to understand human perceptions, problems, needs, behaviours and contexts, which is justification for qualitative audience research. Another advantage of purposive sampling is the dispensation of people who do not fit into the requirements.

These are methods and techniques the researcher will apply to gather information from different ranges of sources. There are a variety of methods used while the researchers list the ones that will be applicable for the study:

a. Questionnaires
b. Surveys

a. *Questionnaires*

Questionnaires and Survey research are the commonly used method of collecting information and data about a population of interest. The population target comprises a group of individuals (e.g., adults from the age of eighteen to twenty-five, parents of young children) or establishments that take care of early



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educational programs, public and private schools, academia's and professionals.

We have two most common types of survey questions which are closed-ended questions and open-ended questions.

Whereas, in *Closed-Ended Questions,* respondents choose from a list of predetermined answers that must not overlap. An example of a close-ended survey question is, "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements, such as "Can social media users influence hate speech." Please state firmly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?"

We used a Likert scale in the above example, which is frequent as a set of responses for closed-ended questions. Researchers often use closed-ended questionnaires in their survey for ease of counting the frequency of similar responses.

In terms of *Open-Ended Questions,* survey respondents answer questions in their own words in the space provided for them. An example would be, "Please tell me if social media can influence hate speech?"

Therefore, a question can either be open-ended or close-ended. In the previous example, questions on household income asked respondents to choose from a given set of income ranges, considered close-ended.

A well-designed questionnaire is more than a collection of questions on one or more topics. When designing a questionnaire, researchers must consider some factors that can affect participation and the responses given by survey participants.

The length of the questionnaire is always guided so that it may not be unnecessarily prolonged, though it may carry too many questions to cover too many topics. However, the questionnaire is to be of a reasonable length and only central to the research questions.

The questionnaire and the administration methods were tested first, before final adoption for distribution; which goal is to identify any problem with the questions asked and ascertain clarity from test-run respondents of individuals who may or may not be the participants in the main study and whether response options in close-ended questions are adequate.

Based on the pre-test findings, additions or modifications to questionnaire items will be made, and administration procedures made will be used in the main study.

b. *Surveys*

A survey administered to sampled individuals at a single point may be of different samples from the population at different time frames. A survey questionnaire may minister to the same interviewees at various times.

iii. *Ethical consideration*

We believe that we have a valid result because we preserved the participants' anonymity and confidentiality as we reported their aggregate responses. During the survey, we made them know that they are volunteers and could withdraw at any time.

*f) Method of Data Analysis*

The statistical tools or techniques employed in the research to process the data collected and arrive at valid points and conclusions are simple percentage and chi-square. In examining the data collected for this study, we used a pie chart in determining the results—the results of the data laid in a tabular form for ease of understanding and interpretation.

Following the nature of the research problem and for clarity purposes; descriptive analysis and the 5-point Likert scale methods were applied for the survey. The former described the data generated while the latter measures the strength of the structured questionnaire.

We also use the chi-square statistical test to validate the research findings' statistical significance, which was considered appropriate to test the differences between the observed frequencies and the frequencies expected based on our stated hypotheses. This result will help us to draw a valid conclusion from the study. The formula for the chi-square $x^2$ statistical analysis is given as:

$$x^2 = \frac{\sum(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where; $x^2$=chi-square

$f_o$= Expected Frequency

$f_e$ = Observed Frequency

The degree of freedom (df) = (n-1)

Where;

n = number of columns

The observed frequencies are closed to the expected frequencies, then the $x^2$ value will be small, showing a good fit, but if otherwise, the fit is poor. A good fit lead to the acceptance of the Null Hypothesis (Ho) whereas, a poor fit lead to its rejection.

## IV. Data Analysis/Discussion of Results

The main variables of the hypotheses are:

i. Independent variable (X)
ii. Dependent variable (Y)



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a) *Likert Scale Data Framework*

*Table 4.1:* Likert Scale Data Framework

| Research Questions | Hypotheses | Sources of Data | Method of Data Collection | Method of Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Can social media users influence hate speech? | Social media users can influence hate-speech | Primary and Secondary sources | Accidental sampling technique and Purposive Sampling Techniques | Likert scale |
| Can social media hate speech negate socio-political stability in River state? | Social media hate speech negates socio-political stability in Rivers State. | Secondary source | Purposive sampling techniques | Chi-square |
| Can the establishment of stakeholder's forum significantly impact reduction of socio-political instability in Rivers state? | The establishment of stakeholder's forum will significantly impact reduction of socio-political instability in Rivers state. | Primary and Secondary Sources | Accidental sampling technique and Purposive Sampling Techniques | Both the Likert Scale and Chi-Square Analysis |
| Can policy-makers and media house help to tame hate speech in Rivers state? | Policy-makers and media house can help tame hate speech in Rivers state. | Primary Source | Accidental sampling technique and Purposive Sampling Techniques | Both the Likert Scale and Chi-Square Analysis |

b) *Logical Data Framework (using Hypothesis)*

*Table 4.2:* Logical Data Framework (using Hypothesis)

| Hypotheses | Number and % of Yes | Number and % of No. | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| Can social media not stop hate speech from negatively influencing socio-political stability in River State? | 130 (18.57) | 570 (81.43) | Social media users can influence hate-speech |
| Social media users cannot influence hate speech. | 100 (14.29) | 600 (85.71) | Social media hate speech negates socio-political stability in Rivers State. |
| The establishment of stakeholder's forum will not significantly impact the reduction of socio-political instability in Rivers State. | 122 (17.43) | 578 (82.57) | The establishment of stakeholder's forum will significantly impact reduction of socio-political instability in Rivers State. |
| Policy-makers and media houses cannot tame hate speech in Rivers State. | 280 (40%) | 420 (60%) | Policy-makers and media house can help tame hate speech in Rivers State. |

The response of the logical data framework (Table 4.2) revealed the followings:

i. Only 130 respondents representing 18.57% agreed that Social media could not stop hate speech from negatively influencing socio-political stability in River State. However, 570 representing 81.43% of the respondents disagreed with this statement meaning that Social media can stop hate speech from negatively influencing socio-political stability in River State.

ii. The second assertion that Social media users cannot influence hate speech was supported by 100 interviews representing 14.29% of the respondents. Whereas, 600 persons representing 85.71% of the total respondents disagreed with the statement, implying that Social media users can influence hate speech.

iii. The third Hypothesis stated that establishing a stakeholder's forum would not significantly reduce socio-political instability in Rivers State. A total of 122 (17.43%) of the respondent agreed with this assertion, and 578 (82.57%) respondents disagreed with the statement, meaning that the establishment of stakeholder's forum in Rivers State will significantly impact on the reduction of socio-political instability in the state.

iv. The fourth Hypothesis states that Policy-makers and media houses cannot tame hate speech in Rivers State. This Hypothesis was supported by 280 people representing 40% of the total people



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interviewed, while the remaining 420 persons representing 60% of the total respondents disagreed meaning that Policy-makers and media houses can tame hate speech in Rivers State.

c) *Point Likert Scale*

*Table 4.3:* Point Likert Scale

| S/N | Research Questions | Strongly Agree (5 pts) | Agree (4 pts) | Weakly Agree (3 pts) | Strongly Disagree (2 pts) | Disagree (1 pt.) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Can social media users influence hate speech? | 300 | 200 | 70 | 100 | 30 | 700 |
| 2 | Can social media hate speech negate socio-political stability in Rivers State? | 280 | 250 | 70 | 70 | 30 | 700 |
| 3 | Can the establishment of stakeholder's forum significantly impact reduction of socio-political instability in Rivers State? | 260 | 240 | 78 | 98 | 24 | 700 |
| 4 | Can policy-makers and media house help to tame hate speech in Rivers State? | 220 | 180 | 20 | 180 | 100 | 700 |

Table 4.3 shows the Likert Point Scale concerning the research questions as follows:

i. Can social media users influence hate speech? A total of 570 respondents agreed, i.e. 300 strongly agreed (5 points), 200 agreed (4 points), and 70 weakly agreed (3points). On the other hand, 130 respondents, i.e. 100 (2 points) strongly disagreed while only 30 (1 point) disagree. The result revealed that social media users could significantly influence hate speech positively.

ii. Can social media hate speech negate socio-political stability in Rivers State? A total of 600 respondents agreed that social media hate speech can negate socio-political stability in Rivers State, i.e. 280 (5 points) respondents strongly agreed, 250 (4 points) agreed, 70 (3 points) weakly agreed; whereas a total of 100 respondents, i.e. 70 (2 points) strongly disagree and 30 (1 point) disagreed. Therefore, the result revealed that social media hate speech could negate socio-political stability in Rivers State.

iii. Can the establishment of stakeholder's forum significantly impact reduction of socio-political instability in Rivers State? The responses revealed that a total of 578

d) *Age Distribution Linkage*

*Table 4.4.1:* Distribution Table

| S/N. | Males | Females | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 – 18 Years | 93 | 96 | 189 | 27.00% |
| 19 – 20 Years | 186 | 194 | 380 | 54.29% |
| 21 – Above Yrs. | 64 | 67 | 131 | 18.71% |
| Total | 343 (49%) | 357 (51%) | 700 | 100% |

In this study, 700 students were randomly selected for the collection of primary data for this study. In these 189 respondents representing 27% are between 17 to 18 years old, 380 students, 54.29% students are between the ages of 19 to 20 years old, and remaining 131 respondents representing 18.71% are 21 years of age and above. From these respondents, 49% are Male, and the remaining 51% are Female (see Table 4.4.1 below).

## V. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

a) *Summary*

This study briefly summarises recent scientific literature on the psychological dynamics of hate-speech and counter-speech on the internet or social media. Media users instinctively engage in various counter-speech activities by making hateful speeches, posts, evoking odium, and even joining online anti-hate communities. In contrast, various anti-hate ventures appeared, making counter hate-speech tools, videos, articles and other resources available to the internet users.

Most available videos and media speeches on networks and internet abound. Research has shown that online hate has much more viral potential to destroy than bring joy or sympathy. Other studies have shown possible devices underlying the viral spread of hate speech and prejudice, fear and psychological trauma.

Other researchers have shown that familiarity with what we call fear immunises people from perceiving a given issue as threatening. Fear makes human beings



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motivated by hateful content and to warn others. Hate and ridicule are weapons often used against anything and any person being afraid of and perceived unfamiliar. Online inconspicuousness of adversaries, combined with a perceived lack of consequences, make people prone to online disposition. A lot of people mistreated might have a temperamental effect on online behaviour abusers.

*b) Conclusion*

We investigated social media's effects as a forum for hate speech, which shows that social media plays an essential role in propagating hate speech. Teenagers mostly use social media to communicate with friends and families and use this medium to reproduce hate speech. Results also depict politicians using social media against their opponents to cause health problems and failure in polls. Social media users have no regards for cultural values, social norms, and Christian and Islamic values.

Online hate and prejudice speeches threaten members of targeted groups. In most cases, it transforms into real-life violence, which endangers our society's victims' physical safety and psychological wellbeing. The fear for one's own life is a factor that cows down many hate speech victims who could not put up active resistance. Only a handful of people are honoured to challenge online hate and are free of hate speech oppression.

Opposing hate speech is responsive and requires concerted efforts.

Crowd-initiated social media counter-action came by anger resulting from hate-speech and goes viral, reaching far beyond the original filter bubble.

*c) Recommendations*

We recommend that:

i. The social media forum should be used for positive purposes and not to disseminate hate speech.
ii. Use of social media in information dissemination should minimise its harmful use. The government has to take some strict actions to curtail hate speech and ban immoral websites that encourage hate speech.
iii. The government should enact laws against hate speech as a crime and enshrine ways of checking the media's unfair reporting, which ruin society.
iv. Social media users should remember the purpose for which media houses are established for and always use them accordingly.
v. Adolescence youths should engage their time wisely instead of wasting their precious time on social networks like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, the television and radio Stations disseminating hate speech.
vi. Civil society organisations, media houses, companies, and influential leaders of the society should mount pressure on influential dangerous speakers to withdraw their evil utterances, which will, in no small extent, checkmate hate speech.
vii. The government should create forums of enlightenment campaigns to bring about meaningful awareness in discussing grave concerns with respect, by organising press conferences, calling on partners and other civil society organisations to do the same.
viii. Media houses should form a critical mass to compel individuals of hate speech to denounce or reverse their comments before the public.
ix. Let condemnation and calls for hate speech statements withdrawals prioritise media houses without fear or favour. They should respond to any dangerous speech made by high-profile public figures.
x. The Federal Government of Nigeria should enact laws banning social media from disseminating hate-speech and making it a crime using media houses.

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