

Hate Speech and Its Effects on the Nigerian Communities: A Case Study of Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State

Adedokun Mary Olufunke (Ph.D).

Faculty of Education, Department OF Adult Education and Community Development,
Ekiti State University, Ado- Ekiti, Nigeria.

E-mail: mary.adedokun@eksu.edu.ng
funkadedokun@yahoo.com

Abstract

The issue of hate speech is not a new phenomenon. It is a recurrent issue not only in Nigeria but the various communities the world over. This study, therefore, examined the effect of hate speech on citizens in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The population consisted of residents of Ibadan, Oyo State estimated at over 6,000,000. A sample of 200 respondents was purposively and randomly chosen for the study. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Hate Speech and its Effect on Communities (HSEC)" was used to gather data for the study. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed that hate speech permeates the Nigerian society and has the potential of disrupting the progress and development of the nation as its tenets are against tolerance and respect for human dignity. The findings amongst others showed that hate speech affects its victims to the extent that some can become distressed and withdrawn from public debate. The study also showed that there were no legal laws on hate speech. It was therefore, recommended among others that every Nigerian should make effort to end the menace of hate speech by being conscious of their utterances so as not to incite hatred. Also awareness should be created in schools, churches, mosques and in communities to educate people on what constitutes hate speech.

Key Words: hate speech, social media, legal laws, speech codes, and incitation.

Introduction:

In Nigeria today, one hears so many news on radio, television stations and in various newspapers. Some of the news items are validated while some are not before being aired. Some are true, some are false and others are exaggerated. All these invalidated speeches coming from media houses, newspapers and those found on social media have created a lot of problems not only for individuals indicted and their families but it has led to disunity and conflicts of various types in Nigerian communities. Unfounded and unverified stories have led to killings and crises of various types in the country. This is why the Federal Government of Nigeria thought it is expedient to draw the line on hate speech declaring hate speech as a form of terrorism (Mamah, Akinferon, Agbakwuru and Afer, 2017).

Hate speech (es) in its entity connotes 'hatred' in all ramifications. It may be hatred expressed towards a nation, ethnic groups, marginal groups or personalities especially among the politicians. It is a fact that freedom of expression is one of the important

basics and foundations of any society, especially in a democratic society because it is a tool by which progress and development could be achieved (European Court of Human Rights 2017). The document states further that

it is applicable not only to information or ideas that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the state or any section of the population (European court of Human Right 2017)''.

For a society to be truly democratic there is need for tolerance and respect for the equal dignity of all human beings as this will pave way for progress and development. It is however discovered that, most times, freedom of expression is abused and this is why though some societies are democratic; there is the need to impose sanctions to curb/prevent all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on intolerance.

Due to the lackadaisical attitude of people to speeches, the Vice President of the Federal Government of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbanjo referred to hate speech as a specie of terrorism (vanguardngr.com, 2017). To him, hate speech is the unlawful use of violence or intimidation against individuals or groups especially for political aims. The law on hate speech terrorism 2011 in Nigeria defines hate speech as an act deliberately done with malice and which may seriously harm or damage a country or a population. (Ndah-Isaiah in Leadership.ng, 2017).

Hate speech has been described in various ways. In the document of European Court of Human Rights, several examples were given as to what could constitute hate speech. Some of which were the following:

- When newspaper articles, cartoons (drawings) provoke a certain public reaction, capable of stirring up violence and demonstrating a plausible impact on public order in the region, nation or country.
- Inciting to hatred and hostility on the basis of a distinction between social classes, races and religions, also when leaflets that incite people to violence are circulated.
- Openly inciting the population to hatred and hostility on the basis of a distinction founded on membership of a religion or denomination. (Extremist ideas)
- Publications bothering on dissemination of propaganda against the indivisibility of a state promoting enmity and hatred among the people may amount to hate speech. This may be through media, or internet, repeated programs on television or radio which are contrary to principles of national unity in territorial integrity and likely to incite violence, hatred, racial/tribal discrimination. (European Court of Human Rights, 2017). Other descriptions of hate speech include;

An act of intense hostility and insult which may derive from fear, anger or sense of

injury; an act of feeling extreme enmity towards or active hostility (Merriam Webster,2017), while the legal definition has it as speech that is intended to insult or offend or intimidate a person because of some traits such as religion, racial traits, sexual orientation, rational or disability. Nockleby (2000) defines hate speech as that speech which attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

Enahoro (2017) sees hate speech as polluted statements, especially by Nigerians, attacking each other on the basis of ethnicity or religion. Nadim and Fledmoe (2016) describe hate speech as any persecuting, degrading or discriminating speech on ground of the recipient's minority group identity; and that such speech that will be regarded as hate speech must be conveyed publicly or in the presence of others and be directed at a certain group or on individuals' assumed group identity. Their research was based on the nature and extent of hate speech and they found among others that ethnicity and sexual orientation constitute the comment ground for hate speech and that immigrant descent from Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa are more exposed to derogatory comments than the majority population.

Alkali, Faga and Mbursa (2016) examined the problem created by hate speech and foul language on social media platforms in Nigeria and their moral and legal implications on the society and journalism practice. They found that though many people understood what hate speech was yet did not understand its legal consequence. They found that hate speech and foul language is mostly prevalent on social media platforms in Nigeria. They, thus recommended that there should be awareness as to what constitute hate speech; and that a monitoring mechanism agency should be put in place to identify and remove hate speech content on social media platforms.

Each country has devised legal ways of dealing with issues of hate speech. However, the effectiveness of handling the laws dealing with hate speech remains questionable in Nigeria because dealing with perpetrators depends on one's personality. The European Court of Human Rights states that when speeches do not incite others to violence, resistance or revolt, it is either negationist or insulting; it cannot be termed hate speech.

When dealing with cases concerning incitement to hatred and freedom of expression the ECHR made use of two approaches. The approach of exclusion from the protection of the convention provided for by Article 17: Prohibition of abuse of rights which is aimed at preventing persons from inferring from the convention any right to engage in activities or acts aimed at destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth in the convention; where the comment in question amounts to hate speech and negate the fundamental values of the convention.

The second is the approach of setting restrictions on protection, provided for by Article 10, paragraph 2 which is restrictions deemed necessary in the inherent national security, public safety, the prevention of disorder and crime, the protection of health or morals

and the protection of the rights and freedom of others. This approach is adopted when the speech in question, though considered as hate speech, is not meant to destroy the fundamental value of the convention. (European Court of Human Rights, 2017).

The above submission implies that much as freedom of speech is allowed in countries of the world, such must not be abused to the detriment of other people or the nation. Hate speech in some countries is not a legal term and it is constitutionally protected while in some, a victim of hate speech may seek redress under civil law, criminal law or both. Restrictions on speeches become necessary as some critics are of the opinion that hate speech is used to silence critics of social policies that have been poorly implemented, especially with the use of internet which is a major part of media communication. Thus, George Orwell in wikipedia.org (2017) states that Directors of Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Twitter should agree on European Code of Conduct obligating them to review articles to be aired and give notification for removal of illegal hate speech posted on their services within 24 hours. However, with the signing of the agreement, social media websites still found it difficult to identify and remove hate speech from their sites.

Several laws have been promulgated to prevent people and groups from hate speech. Such include: The international convention on civil and political Rights. (ICCPR) which states that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement or discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law. (Wikipedia.org)

Hate speech laws have different goals in different countries. For example, in Australia, hate speech laws seek to prevent victimization on account of race; in Belgium it is targeted at making acts of racism or xenophobia illegal, while in Brazil it is targeted at racism with no right to bail for the defendant. In Chile, it is a punishable offence for anyone who through any means of social communication makes publications or transmissions intended to promote hatred or hostility towards persons due to their race, sex, religion or nationality and this law extends to expressions transmitted via internet.

In South Africa, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000, states that no person may publish, propagate, advocate or communicate words based on one or more of the prohibited grounds, against any person, that could reasonably be constructed to demonstrate a clear intention to be hurtful, be harmful or to incite harm or propagate harm (Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000, S.10 (1) Wikipedia.org). However in Nigeria, in the words of the Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, hate speech is equated with terrorism (vanguradngr.com, 2017).

The foregoing review implies that each country knows what constitutes hate speech and decides the penalty to be meted to the offender. Falana (2017), however, states that Nigeria has enough laws to deal with hate speech but the political will to arrest and prosecute those who contravene the law is lacking. He also cites various criminal codes that apply to offences such as criminal defamation, inciting statements, breach of peace,

criminal intimidation, and publication of statements, rumours or reports which may disturb public peace.

Enahoro (2017), however, strongly oppose the Vice President's view on hate speech submitting that hate speech is unknown in Nigeria law and that equating it with terrorism means hate speech carrying death penalty. He submits that there are laws under which police can charge citizens for seditious incitements against government; and that the government must legislate for hate speeches against groups taking cognizance of the International Convenient Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which states that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitements to discrimination, hostility or violence against a group should be prohibited by law.

Such laws can be made to protect human dignity and those meant to maintain public order. Various reasons have been adduced for causes of hate speech in Nigeria such as impunity which makes people to be status drunk, negative roles of media due to the fact that they want advert patronage, failures of governance, low level education, which culminates into low level of awareness and enlightenment and illiteracy. Others include class war, which is due to disparity between the rich and the poor, religious intolerance and ethnic differences among others. Okupe (2018) sums up these causes of hate speech as being a societal frustration; frustration among the rich, the poor, the government and the governed.

Statement of the Problem

It is observed in many parts of Nigeria that there are conflicts of one sort or another, and that hate speeches pervade the Nigerian atmosphere. This study was carried out to determine whether hate speeches could have grievous consequences on individuals as well as the nation by examining its causes and consequences. The main question therefore is "Will hate speech have any effect on the development of individuals in Nigeria and the nation as a whole?"

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to

- determine whether hate speeches are in existence
- examine the causes of hate speeches
- determine whether laws on hate speeches are available and adhered
- examine the consequences of hate speech on individuals and the nation
- examine the roles of media in hate speech

Hypotheses.

Four hypotheses were generated to guide the study.

*H*₁: There is no statistically significant impact of hate speech on development and progress in a democratic setting.

*H*₂: Causes of hate speech will not be significantly related to consequences of hate speech.

*H*₃: There is no statistically significant relationship between the roles of media (internet) and hate speech.

*H*₄: Legal laws will not significantly impact hate speech

Methodology

The study was a descriptive survey. This was done to sample the opinion of people on hate speech and its effect on individuals and the nation at large. The population consisted of people of diverse occupations, and of various political inclinations in Ibadan. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents for the study. Included in the sampled respondents were civil servants, (40) market women (20) politicians (60) college students (40), Artisans (20) and Hospital workers (20). This was done to have the opinions of the strata of the society in hate speech and to determine whether hate speech cuts across nooks and crannies of every profession and/or occupation in the country.

A self-designed instrument titled "Hate speech and its Effects on Nigerian society" (H.S.E.N.S) was used for the study. It was content and face validated by experts in Tests and Measurement unit of the Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University Ado-Ekiti. Test-retest method was used to test the reliability of the instrument. The result gave a reliability coefficient of 0.80 which was deemed good for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed with the assistance of 2 fresh graduates from the university so as to ensure proper administration.

Data gathered were analyzed using descriptive and t-test statistical tools. The responses were measured on 4 point Likert type of scale as Strongly Agree, SA = 4, Agree, A = 3, Disagree, D = 2 and Strongly Disagree, SD = 1.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Hate Speech will not significantly impact development and progress in a democratic setting.

Table 1: Summary Table of independent t-test showing influence of Hate Speech on Development and Progress in a Democratic Setting

Hate Speech	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
High	71	24.73	7.16	198	8.828	.03

Low	129	35.91	16.87			
-----	-----	-------	-------	--	--	--

From Table 1, the result shows that hate speech had significant impact on development and progress in a democratic setting $t(198) = 8.828, p < .05$. This indicates that high level of hate speech will significantly affect development and progress. Therefore, the stated hypothesis is rejected in this study.

Hypothesis 2: Causes of hate speech will not be significantly related to consequences of hate speech. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of PPMC showing relationship between Causes of hate speech and consequences of hate speech

Variables	N	Mean	Df	R	p
Causes of hate speech	200	21.73	198	.67**	< .01
Consequences of hate speech		14.28			

In Table 2, there is significant positive correlation between causes and consequences of hate speech among participants at $\{r=0.67; p<.01\}$. This implies that, as there are multiple causes of hate speeches, and will lead to higher consequences in the society. The results did not support the stated null hypothesis and the null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 3. There is no significant relationship between the roles of media and hate speech. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation PPMC, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of PPMC showing relationship between the roles of media and hate speech

Variables	N	Mean	Df	R	p
Roles of media	200	15.83	198	.80**	< .01
Hate speech		24.28			

Results from Table 3 show that there is significant strong positive relationship between roles of media and hate speech among participants at $\{r=0.80; p<.01\}$. This implies that as the media roles increase, there is increase in the use of hate speeches in Nigeria. The results did not support the stated null hypothesis and the null hypothesis was subsequently rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant impact of legal laws on hate speech. It was tested using t-test of independent samples and the results are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Summary Table of independent t-test showing influence of Legal Laws on Hate Speech in a Democratic Society

Legal Laws	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	p
High	105	18.34	6.39	198	10.563	< .04
Low	95	36.82	19.32			

From Table 4, the result reveals that execution of legal laws with regard to the use of hate speech will cause more havoc on development and progress in a democratic setting $t(198) = 8.828, p < .05$. Therefore, the stated hypothesis is not confirmed and therefore rejected.

Discussion

The results revealed that hate speech has effect on progress and development of any nation especially Nigeria. This is because as stated in the document of European Court of Human Right: Hate speech (2017), hate speech opposes tolerance and respect for the equal dignity of human beings, whereas this is the major ingredient that constitutes the formation of democratic societies. Akanji (2017) submits that hate speeches pose threat to national unity and that hate speeches could lead to sectional interests and not national interest and could take a serious negative toll on Nigeria and Nigerians. Akanji (2017) alluding to George Kennan, an American Diplomat and Strategist, who capture the frightful impact of hate speech purveyors said “war has a momentum of its own, you know where you begin, you never know where you are going to end”. The above captures the extent to which hate speech could go to cause disunity in a nation.

On the consequences of hate speech, Salihu (2017) and Lorna (2015) state that one of the perils of hate speech is the effect that it leaves on a victim’s mental health. Victims of hate speech often become depressed, agonized and sometimes suicidal, losing their confidence and self esteem. Salihu (2017) states further that hate speech reinforces stereotype prejudices which are not easy to overcome. Salihu’s analysis indicated the fact that hate speech is a common problem which exists among people of different religion, ethnicity, political parties and geographical zones through exchanging fallacies, illusion

and condemnation to one another in the name of achieving fame and progress of their class of belongings. In line with this submission, Salihu, who is from the Faculty of Communication, Bayero University, Kano, on the awareness billboard, Bayero University, Kano (BUK) the following is displayed:

“Freedom of speech doesn’t justify on-line hate speech. Words have power, be careful how you use them”. ...‘hate speech leads to crisis’

Hate speech could have great negative impact on the nation’s economy because the tension created by hate speech is likely to lead to the exit of foreign investors, thereby affecting local investors as well (punching.com -2017).

Literature also supports the many identified causes of hate speech which could have grievous consequences not only on individuals but the nation as a whole. Such include:

- Ethnic rivalry and mistrust (Esike 2017:linkedin.com)
- Impunity (vanguarding.com)
- Roles of the media
- Domestic xenophobia (North versus South as in the case of Nigeria)
- Low level education. Low level of awareness and enlightenment
- Class war (the rich/the poor)
- Religion intolerance

Okupe in vanguarding.com (2018) says the end result of hate speech is societal frustration. It leads to gross frustration among the rich, the poor, the government and the governed (vanguarding.com) Nadim and Fladmoe (2016) in their earlier study state that hate speech could have differentiated consequences which could lead people being discriminated against to withdraw from public debate and hate speech could lead to a charging atmosphere, where no one believes in one another.

The study revealed that there was a very great correlation between hate speech and the roles of the media. Alakali, Fage and Mbursa (2016) found in their study that hate speech and foul language were mostly prevalent on social media platforms in Nigeria and that though many people understood what hate speech was but they did not understand its legal consequence. These authors state that the media offer an ideal platform to spread hate speech so easily because of its interactive nature. Such social media platforms include; facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Whatsapp and numerous others. Ekhornu, one of the panel members at the vanguard conference hall (2017), states that the media that is expected to edit and curb hate speeches are not living up to expectation because they want to get advert patronage and they don’t want to be blocked out from entering State House. The popularity of social media and the scope of making comments which are not

moderated by anyone in the public has made hate speech to go viral thus, hate speech has the capacity of being spread rapidly and reaching more people within seconds with communication tools.

The study also revealed that there were no laws set apart for hate speech. Adegboruwa(2012), a lawyer and human right activist, states that, there is no hate speech law in Nigeria backing his claim with the Nigerian constitution section 39 of 1999. He states that the section of the constitution has granted freedom of speech to every citizen and that if any speech made violates anybody's legal rights, there is an extant common law remedy of libel actions for damages in civil cases and criminal libel cases. Adegboruwa also disagreed with the concept of hate speech as an act of terrorism and he makes it clear that the National assembly "lacks the competence in law to pass into law any bill seeking to 'gag citizens'". He made his submissions thus;

Any law capable of hindering the freedom of expression granted under section 39 of the 1999 constitution and the African charter will be illegal and unconstitutional. To that extent the National Assembly has no power to make any law that will violate the Constitution. It is ultra vires.pg.256

Falana (2017) is also of the view that there is no law on hate speech; and there is no need for one pointing out that the country has enough laws to deal with hate speech, and that what is lacking is the political will to arrest and prosecute those who contravene the laws. He also made it clear that people have the rights to seek redress in the courts of law to protect their reputation by suing media organizations and individuals who defame them. Enahoro (2017) further opined that there is no legal framework or backing for the vice president's pronouncement that hate speech is an act of terrorism. He also states that hate speech is unknown in Nigerian law and equating it with terrorism means it will carry death penalty. To him Nigeria is a democratic country and that dissent does not necessarily constitute hate speech and that any ill-defined hate speech laws will be used to suppress debate on critical opinion and decimate opposition. He made it clear that there are laws under which police can charge citizens for seditious incitements against government.

Conclusion

The study attempted to examine the concept of hate speech and its consequences on individuals and Nigeria as a nation. The study concluded that hate speech permeates every sector of the nation and that social media play an important role in the spread of hate speech and that there are no specified laws on hate speech.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- Every Nigerian should make efforts to end the menace of hate speech by being conscious of what they say and that such are not intended to incite hatred.

- Awareness should be created to make people understand what constitutes hate speech. This should be done in schools, churches, mosques and in communities
- The government should make sure that people are not silenced from speaking the truth by threatening them with hate speech penalties
- The excesses of social media should be curbed by government through putting sanctions in place for unverified reports
- Media organizations should review what is giving out to the public before being publicized

REFERENCES

- Akanji, A. (2017). Hate speech :wrong narrative for national discourse integration. Accessed, 12/3/18. <https://www.thecable.ng/hate-speech-wrong-narrative-national-discourse-integration>
- Alakali, T.T., Fage H.P and Mbursa, J. (2016). Audience Perception of Hate Speech and Foul language in the social media in Nigeria: Implications for Morality and Law *Academics international Scientific Journal* MMxvii (15) 166-183 and extent of hate speech, Norway, Norwegian Institute for social Causes of hate Speech (2018). <https://www.vanguardngr.com/news>
- Enahoro,E. (2017). Hate speeches and good governance. Retrieved on 18/2/2018 from <https://dailytrust.com.ng/news/opinion/hate-speeches-and-good-governance/211055.html>
- Enahoro,E.(2017).Hate Speeches and Good Governance. Retrieved on 20/12/2018 from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/opinion/hate-speeches-and-good-governance/211055.html>.
- Ezike,G.(2017). The cause of hate speech in Nigeria Retrieved on 16/2/2018 from <https://www.linkedin.com/pa/se/cause-hate-speech-nigeria-genesis-esike>.
- Ezeamalu, B. (2017). There is no hate speech under Nigerian Law. Retrieved on (12/9/17) from www.premuimtimesng.com/.../240822-theres-no-hate-speech-nigerian-law-lawyer.html
- Falana, F. (2017). Nigeria has enough laws to curb hate speeches Retrieved on 22/2/2018 from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/08/nigeria-enough-laws-to-curb-hate-speech/>
- Hate speech - European courts of Human Rights -council of Europe. Accesses, (13/1/18) www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_Speech_ENG.pdf
- Hate speech: European courts of Human rights (paragraph 2, Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights) (2018) www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_Speech_Eng.pdf (13/1/18)
- Hate Speech (2017). European Courts of Human Rights-Council of Europe. Retrieved, (11/9/17) www.echr.coe.int/Documents/fs_Hate_speech_Eng.Pdf
- Hate Speech (2017). European Courts of Human Rights-Council of Europe (Paragraph 2, Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights)
- Lorna,C.(2015). Effects of hate speech www.nohatespeech.ie/effects-hate-speech-lorna-costelloe

- Mamah E, Akinferon, D, Agbakwuru, J & Afer S. (2017). FG. Declares hate speech as terrorism. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/08/fg-declares-hate-speech-terrorism/>
- Merriam Webster (2017). Hate speech <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Hate%20speech>
- Nadim, M & Fladmoe, A. (2016). Hate speech, Report/. *Research on the nature and extent of hate speech*. Norway, Norwegian institute for Social Research
- Nda - Isaiah, J. (2017). Hate speech to be treated as terrorism - Osinbajo. <https://leadership.ng/2017/08/18/hate-speech-treated-terrorism-osinbajo/>
- Nockleyby, J (2000). "Hate speech in *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution*", (ed) Leonard, W.L. and Kenneth N.K. Vol 3(2nd edition) Detroit: Macmillan Reference.
- Punch (2017). Hate speech is bad for the economy : punching.com/hate-speech-is-bad-for-the-economy/
- Salihu, J.S.(2017).The menace of Hate Speech <https://dailynigeria.com/feature-the-hate-Menace>
- Vanguardngr.com (2017) Minding your language in today's Nigeria: Conference Hall, Politics/Comments, September 25,2017 www.vanguardngr.com (Accessed 10/10/17).
- Wikipedia (2017). George Orwell meets the OIC Human events - Hate speech. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/hate_speech
- Wikipedia (2017).Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_speech (11/9/17).
- Wikipedia (2017) Hate Speech https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_speech. 10/9/17