Anti-Hate Speech and Listeners' Perception of Authority Radio Fm Nnewi

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ABSTRACT

The study surveyed listeners' perception of anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM Nnewi. It sought to find out listeners' exposure, the extent of their comprehension, factors contributing to their incomprehension, and the influence of hate speech on their behaviour. The research was hinged on the social responsibility theory. A total of four hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and data were analysed using the simple percentage approach. Results showed a majority response rate of: 79.2% exposure, 46.8% incomprehension, 31.1% message presentation in the English language, and 55.8% ability to influence behaviour. The study recommended a lingua franca version (in the native language of the listeners) of anti-hate speech messages and establishing community channels for monitoring and reporting anti-hate speech to regulatory bodies, including a lawful framework for punishment defaulting radio stations.

KEYWORDS: Listeners, Perception, Anti-Hate Speech, Community Radio, Messages

INTRODUCTION

The primary objectives of the media in society is to inform, educate and entertain. Even though media operations are aimed to do more, the general welfare of the audience is uppermost in the business of information gathering and sharing with people or, as Chukwuma (2013) says, to serve the general welfare through information and to enable them to make judgments on issues devoid of hate speeches. Hate speeches are viewed as wars waged on people employing words (Kayambacintthn and Moyo, 2002). They include speech, gestures, conducts, writings and displays that could incite people to violence as prejudicial actions capable of robbing people of their dignity and rights. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013, p.4) condemns hate speech and describes it as disseminating ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, incitement to hatred, threats or incitement violence against persons or groups.

Most doctrines establishing freedom of speech and expression in Nigeria included a clause to protect against hate speech to promote human dignity, societal cohesion and peace. Section 39 (1)

of the 1999 Constitution, as amended in 2011, provides that every person has an entitlement to freedom of expression. Other legal frameworks that abhor derogatory language in Nigeria are the Political Party Code of Conduct (2013) and the Abuja Accord (2015). Despite these legal frameworks, there was a considerable increase in hate speech before, during and after several elections in Nigeria.

It is evident that hate speech is predominant in the political system without mincing words, as politicians take pleasure in criticising negatively. The overheating of politics in Nigeria leads to a series of external and internal ethnic-based conflicts, civil war election violence and civil war (Nwachukwu, Aghemalo & Nwosu, 2014). Historically, Nigeria has organised eleven general elections and numerous regional/state/local elections between 1954 and 2015. A review of these elections revealed both pre and post-election violence.

Nwolise (2007); Campbell (2010); Orji & Uzodi (2012) have traced hate speeches to electoral violence in Nigeria, animosity, religious dichotomy, pervasive poverty and weak institutionalisation of democratic architectures like political parties, election management bodies, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. Also, hate speech leading to electoral violence has escalated in Africa. Most notable examples are the post-electoral violence in Kenya and the 2011 post-electoral violence in Nigeria (FGN, 2011; Chedotum, 2013). Examining the nexus between hate speech and post-election violence in Africa, Ezeibe (2013) lists cases from Nigeria and Kenya and argues that the seed of hate speech campaign has matured in Africa even though the phenomenon is primarily understudied and underreported.

THE PROBLEM
Hate speech is a ravaging illness across media in the world today. Concerned stakeholders are speaking up against the menace of hate speech replete in the media. Ishola (2018) notes that in the 2011 and 2018 general elections, politicians, religious figures, public officers, citizens and ethnic jingoists employed hate speech throughout the electoral cycle. It has been observed that political contenders openly deploy derogatory words and terms in local dialects to label and demean opponents.

Also disturbing is that media ownership is highly concentrated in the hands of political elites who sometimes use it to promote hate speeches (and messages) against their opponents. Private stations such as Africa Independent Television (AM, Ray Power FM, and government-owned media such as Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), among others, have one way or the other been found in the hate speech complicity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
This study sought to:
1. know whether residents of Nnewi are exposed to anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM;
2. examine the extent to which residents of Nnewi comprehend anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM;

3. ascertain factors contributing to the incomprehension of anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM;
4. investigate the influence of Authority Radio FM's anti-hate speech messages on listeners' behaviour in Nnewi.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The following research questions guided the study:
1. Are residents of Nnewi exposed to anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM?
2. To what extent do residents of Nnewi comprehend anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM?
3. What are factors contributing to comprehension of anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM?
4. Do anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM influence listeners' behaviour in Nnewi?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Hate speeches are utterances, typed documents, advertorials, musicals or any literature that attack an individual, a group or religion, social, political, business, gender or race. In some countries, hate speech is under the law of sedition, incitement to violence, verbal abuse and the like. Ezeibe (2015) writes that hate speech is any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action and rob others of their dignity. Adibe as cited by Segun (2015), states that hate speech employs discriminatory epithets to insult and stigmatise others based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other group membership forms. Segun (2015) adds that hate speech is often the gateway to discrimination, harassment, and violence and a precursor to harmful severe criminal acts.

Writing on the effects of hate speech, Leets (2002) believes it violates the dignity of an individual, causing humiliation, distress and psychological or emotional pain. Similarly, Nemes (2002) avers that hate speech can provoke pain, distress, fear, embarrassment and isolation in individuals. Although hate speech towards groups of people causes inequality, problems and isolation discourage people from participating in the community, creating a feeling of fear and expressing their opinions.. Nielsen (2002) avers that the degradation and humiliation brought by hate speech can silence the 'victims' and reinforce existing hierarchies in society. In other words, it can lead victims to become aggressive and dangerous (Parekh, 2006).

In a study by Ahmad (2018) on social media and hate speech which analysed comments on Arewa youths' ultimatum, Biafra agitations, and their implications on peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, the author finds that Nigerians are often polarised along regional, ethnic and religious lines in their expressions. Hence, damaging and injurious statements reduce social media platforms to a chaotic and indiscreet battlefield where participants engage in a war of words (Jibril & Simon, 2017).

In a related study, Fasakin et al. (2017) report the use of hate speech in political television campaigns involving canvassing, political manoeuvres to get votes, and persuasive strategies to curry the favour and goodwill of the electorate, which often end in propaganda and hate speech. The authors describe hate speech as objectionable, unacceptable and punishable by law. They recommend meeting out of stringent punitive measures for erring stations.

In another study by Hemen et al. (2018) on audience perception of hate speech and foul language in Nigeria, the researchers indicate that promoting hate speech and foul language on social media has moral consequences in society and journalism practice. The impacts include loss of credibility, diverting media from achieving their essential function of serving the public's interest and increasing moral decadence in the society. Among recommendations put forward were monitoring, like UMATI in Kenya, mobilisation of media audience through citizenship education, among others.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The social responsibility theory propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1956 was used as a hinge in the study. As a normative theory, social responsibility theory implies how media should ideally operate in a given society to uphold social values and standards against which the public judges. The theory asserts that media must remain free of government control, but media must serve the public trust in exchange. In performing this stewardship function through reporting events and crises, the social responsibility theory notes that the media must keep professional standards of truth, objectivity, accuracy, and balance to avoid aggravating crises (Oyero, 2008).

The core principle of the social responsibility theory is that the press should have the freedom to perform the roles which the libertarian theory had granted it the freedom to perform, but that this freedom should be practised with responsibility (Okunna and Omenugha 2012, Folarin, 1998). The theory is essential to this study as it preaches responsible journalism devoid of hate speech and other deluding contents capable of inciting violence among media audiences.

METHODOLOGY

The study used Taro Yamani's formula to obtain a sample from the population of radio listeners in Nnewi. The population of Nnewi is 302,27 (National Population Commission 2006). A sample size of 399 was purposively drawn from the total population of 302,277. It was done based on equal representation from the respondents. After the distribution of copies of the questionnaire, the response rate was 385, amounting to 76 per cent. The data were analysed using a simple percentage. Hence the following analyses were made based on retrieved copies of the questionnaire.

DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

Research Question 1: Are residents of Nnewi exposed to messages on hate speech on Authority Radio FM?

Table 1: Exposure to anti-hate speech messages

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Exposed	305	79.2
Not exposed	60	15.6
Can't say	20	5.2
Total	**385**	**100**

Response from the above table showed that seventy-nine point two per cent (79.2%) of respondents were exposed to anti-hate speech messages. The import was that the majority were aware of anti-hate speech messages while fifteen point six per cent (15.6%) said they were not exposed. Five-point two (5.2%) stated that they could not say.

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Research Question 2: To what extent do residents of Nnewi comprehend anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM?

Table 2: Comprehension of anti-hate speech message

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Comprehend clearly	150	38.9
Did not comprehend	180	46,8
Can't say	55	14.3
Total	**385**	**100**

Table 2 indicated that 150 (38.9%) of respondents understood the message clearly while 180 (46.8%) of respondents confirmed that they did not understand the idea of the message and 55 (14.3%) respondents could not say anything about the comprehension of the message being disseminated.

Research Question 3: Are there factors contributing to the incomprehension of anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM?

Table 3: Factors contributing to the incomprehension of anti-hate speech messages

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Problem in the recognition of fleeting text	61	15.8
The time frame was too short	66	17.1
The presenter was too strict in his answers	74	19.2
Message was presented in English	120	31.1
Examples were foreign oriented	65	16.9
Total	**385**	**100**

Table 3 showed that many factors contributed to the incomprehensibility of the idea of anti-hate speech message ranged from a problem in recognising the text with 61 (15.8%); respondents complained that since it was a radio programme, they did not see any written text, whatever was missed orally could not be understood. Besides, respondents indicated time frame 66 (17%), strictness 74 (19.2), English language presentation 20(31.1%) and foreign oriented presentation 65(16.9%).

Research Question 4: How do anti-hate speech messages on Authority Radio FM influence listeners' behaviour in Nnewi?

Table 4: Influence of anti-hate speech message on listeners' behaviour

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The message was able to influence behaviour	215	55.8
It was not able to influence behaviour	130	33.8
Can't say	40	10.4
Total	385	100

The above table confirmed that irrespective of factors that hinder the comprehension of the message, the message was still able to influence respondents behaviour by dissuading them from engaging in hate speech, as 215 (55.8%) responded to positive influence, while 130 (33.8%) did not, and 40(10.4%) stated that they could not say.

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data from the analysis showed that respondents were aware of a message on hate speech through Authority Radio FM Nnewi. In effect, this helped behaviour change concerning hate speech. The outcome was consistent with what Brun (2010) confirmed: people act with the information they were aware of. The study also found that many factors inhibited the message comprehension and these ranged from a problem in recognition of the fleeting text with 61 (15.8%) respondents complained that since it was a radio programme, they did not see any written text; that whatever was missed orally could not be understood. Other factors listed were time frame, strictness, English language presentation and foreign oriented presentation.

 It is apt to clarify that communication of any kind needs to be presented in the lingua franca of recipients. If it must be communicated in a general language such as English, it is necessary to package another version in the mother tongue of those receiving the messages. This result is in tandem with Owuamalam (2016) when he avers that the issue of script translation is language-oriented. A script would be translated from one language to another in the cultural context. This accommodates and facilitates message comprehension among linguistic groups within the coverage area or the locality of the broadcast station. Thus, if well understood, the broadcast on hate speech can influence audience behaviour attitude and dissuades people from engaging in hate speech.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that countering hate speech through radio broadcasting is possible. This survey showed that listeners were 79.3 per cent exposed to challenges caused by hate speech in their communities. The survey further showed that 46.8 per cent of listeners did not comprehend messages broadcast in English, though 55.8 per cent influence on behaviour was indicated. This outcome is a pointer to the need for repackaging content if optimum influence is expected on behaviour. Following the result, a local language version of anti-hate speech radio broadcast, especially on Authority Radio FM Nnewi and, by extension, community radio in Anambra state, is required. The language version can increase listenership, understanding or comprehension and better influence positive behaviour change regarding hate speech.

Additionally, the government increased monitoring presence through regulatory agencies such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is deemed necessary. As a point of note, a channel for community monitoring and reporting of anti-hate speech to appropriate authorities should be established. Besides, community radio found streaming anti-hate speech programmes or contents should be decisively punished through an established legal framework.

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