

The Role of Social Media in Instigating Ethno-Religious Crises among Higher Institutions Students in Kaduna State

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of social media in fueling ethno-religious crises among students of higher institutions in Kaduna State. Specifically, it aims to explore how social media contributes to the instigation of ethno-religious conflicts and to identify potential solutions for mitigating its negative impact. The research employed a survey design, targeting a population that includes Christians, Muslims, clerics, laypersons, women, and youths across four metropolitan local government areas. A total of 400 respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed and validated by the researcher, with a reliability coefficient of 0.87. The study was guided by three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses. Demographic data and research questions were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test the hypotheses. Findings indicate a significant relationship between the use of inflammatory social media and the occurrence of ethno-religious crises among students. Similarly, the study revealed a significant relationship between proposed solutions and the mitigation of such crises. Based on these findings, it is recommended that social media be strategically utilized to promote ethno-religious harmony among students. Religious leaders are encouraged to use their platforms in churches and mosques to advocate for peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the heads of institutions and academic staff should serve as champions of interfaith understanding and unity within Kaduna State and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a significance role in determining where the society swings. It has become a phenomenon in religious pluralism and ethno-religious discuss in our society today particularly among higher institution students due to its wide acceptance. It is an instrument that has come to stay in our society, used by all strata in Nigeria and Kaduna State in particular. Suffice it to say that social media could bring cohesion or crises due to it spread, speed and acceptance,

across all strata of the society and particularly among the students.

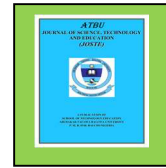
In the words of Majid, (2018) social media is easily manipulated to send information fast across various groups. The information can be on different topical issues. These topical issues ranges from religious, academic or social and could instigate religious pluralism, inter-religious and inter-cultural divides among people. This depends on how the user that is, the sender of the

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information structures it and how the receiver perceives the information.

Adebayo, (2010:34) see social media as important tools for integration among people where everybody can share, exchange, comment, discuss and create information and knowledge in a collaborative way. Some social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, tik-tok, e-mail, too-go, telegram, google classroom, Instagram among others is rapidly changing communication landscape among students in Kaduna state. Their emergence has impacted people significantly on how people learn and the way information is passed. According to Guerra, (2013:7) Social media is defined as the application that allows users to converse and interact with each other to create, edit and share new forms of textual, visual and audio contents and to categorise, label and recommend existing forms of content.

Inter religious divides may basically involve students of the two major religions of Christianity and Islam in Kaduna state. The practitioners of these religions seem to be at logger head with each other due to lack of understanding of basic principles of their faiths. In most cases, there is mutual suspicion among the students. In the words of Okpanachi (2012:10) The persistent inter-faith crisis in the country and the enormous security challenges it poses has made the country a fragile state. He further opines that a fragile state refers to a state where the government cannot deliver core functions and responsibilities to its people especially during ethno-religious crisis.

Gamble, (2012:214) says that Nigeria is a pluralistic and heterogeneous state with over 350 ethnic groups with the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo making the majority tribes. Nigeria has witnessed series of sectarian crises and other insecurities. Statistics shows that most of the ethno-religious crises in Nigeria occurred in the Northern part of the country such as the recent Bokoharam onslaught in Kaduna, Borno, Adamawa and Yobe State Since 2009 and banditry in Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Katsina States. The Maitatsini crisis of 1981 in Borno that spread to Kano State, the Tiv and Jukun conflict in Benue State, the Birom and Hausa in Plateau

State and the Ife-modakeke crisis of year 2000 in Osun State, South west Nigeria just to mention but few (Adebayo, 2010:87).

The 2011 general election crisis was a point in view where lives and properties were lost especially in the Northern part of Nigeria and Kaduna State is not exclusive where some students were active participants of the crisis. Idris (2013:5-6) supports the above in his studies of the 2011 post-election crises and opines that post-election violence in the Northern Nigeria, following the victory of president Goodluck Jonathan, who was a Christian from the South. More than 150 people were killed in the violence in Kaduna city of Nigeria. Rioters also burnt down churches in the city. In the presidential race, General Muhammadu Buhari charged his followers that there were widespread irregularities in the election, he also alleged in voice of America radio station that his supporters in the Southern part of the county were not allow to vote. According to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News of 20th April 2011, Nigeria is divided by rivalry between predominantly Muslims in the North and the mainly Christian South, so that the presidency has often rotated between people who came from the two halves of the country in an attempt to keep the peace.

These series of inter-religious and inter-cultural crises mentioned above were triggered among many other factors by social media users. The information sent through text, visual and audio contents of the gory incidences to viewers who could not control their emotions or people who are beclouded by religious and cultural bigotry will quickly move to action, particularly the youth to carry out the so called reprisal attack on innocent citizens which further snow ball into major crisis. The type of social media commonly used to fuel these crises are; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Google docs, and many more which usually spread like wild fire to trigger crisis. (Hinner, 2017).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

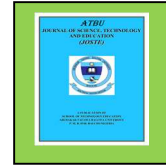
The students' unrest witness years back which majorly snowballed into ethno-religious crises have been the bane of our progress, growth

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and development in Nigeria and Kaduna State in particular. The use of social media among students have been attributed to further polarize this challenge. Olasoje, (2012:14) opines that "during the pre-colonial era, what came to be known as Nigeria comprised of several ethnic groups, kingdom and empires. With the advent of colonialism, these ethnic nationalities were brought under the colonial administration as the Northern and Southern protectorates".

The above brought in the instigation of inter-religious and inter-cultural struggles which degenerated into crises situation. The media have not always been neutral in reporting the crises. The outcome is the continuous struggle for dominance among the various cultural and religious divides which has more often than not, led to unhealthy rivalry through the use of social media. This is occasioned by mutual suspicion on the side of the students using social media to promote unwholesome postings of videos and messages via Whatsapp, Facebook, Tik-tok and many other social media promoting inter-religious and inter-cultural hatred which usually snowballs into incessant crises witnessed, particularly in Kaduna State over the decades with the resultant effects of the wanton destruction of human lives and properties in the school environment. In fact, no society can grow and develop in an atmosphere of rancor, acrimony and lack of peace. It is on this premise that the researcher chose to look at the role of social media in instigate ethno-religious crises among higher institution student in Kaduna State.

Objectives of the Study.

In order to gain directions on this research, the researcher put forward the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between the use of inflammatory social media and ethno-religious crises among students of higher institutions in Kaduna State.
2. To assess the effectiveness of solutions aimed at addressing the influence of social media on ethno-religious crises among

students of higher institutions in Kaduna State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested.

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between the use of Inflammatory Social Media and Ethno-Religious Crises among Higher Institutions Students in Kaduna State.

H_a1: There is a Significant Relationship between the use of Inflammatory Social Media and Ethno-Religious Crises among Higher Institutions Students in Kaduna State.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship in the solution to the use of Social Media and Ethno-Religious Crises among Higher Institutions Students in Kaduna State.

H_a2: There is a significant relationship in the solution to the use of Social Media and Ethno-Religious Crises among Higher Institutions Students in Kaduna State.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is survey design. This is a form of descriptive survey design used when dealing with a very systematic collection of data or information from population or a sample of the population through the use of personal interview, opinion scale, questionnaires. (Murphy, 2016:40). The population of the research constitutes both students who are Christian, Muslim. The data for this study was collected through questionnaire. Purposive random sampling techniques was used to select the two higher institutions that is, Kaduna State University and Kaduna Polytechnic in Kaduna metropolis. Four hundred respondents were selected for the study.

The instruments for this study are questionnaire, structured in the five Likert scale model. The researcher adapted Ethno Religious Sensitivity Scale (ERSS) designed by Holm,

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Nokleinen and Kumar (2011:49). Social Media Sensitivity Scale (SMSS) was developed by the researcher and was taken to experts in the department of Religious Studies Kaduna State University for their input and their observations and corrections were effected. Both face and content validity were established by the experts. Their observations and corrections were effected, and the approval of the corrected instruments served as proof of the validity of the instruments. The reliability, on the other hand, was ascertained by pilot-test of twenty (20) randomly selected

respondents which are not part of the targeted research population. The Cronbach reliability index of 0.87 was established for the instruments. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed in testing hypotheses at 0.05 ($P < 0.05$).

RESULTS

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between the use of inflammatory social media and ethno-religious crises among higher institution students in Kaduna state.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis between the use of inflammatory social media and Ethno-Religious Crises in Kaduna State.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Df	p-value
Use of Inflammatory social media	399	35.07	4.17	.658	398	.000
Ethno-Religious Crises	399	35.99	4.15			

The table above shows that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the use of inflammatory social media and ethno-religious crises in Kaduna State ($r = .658$, $df = 398$, $p < 0.05$). This means that the use of inflammatory social media influences ethno-religious crises in Kaduna State. Therefore, null

hypothesis is rejected while the alternate one is retained.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship in the solution to the use of social media and ethno-religious crises among higher institution students in Kaduna state.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between the Solutions to the use of social media and Ethno-Religious Crises in Kaduna State.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	DF	p-value
Solutions to Social Media	399	31.93	4.72	.181	398	.000
Ethno-Religious Crises	399	35.99	4.15			

The table above shows that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the solutions to the use of social media and ethno-religious crises in Kaduna State ($r = .181$, $df = 398$, $p < 0.05$). This means that the solution to the use of social media influences ethno-religious crises in Kaduna State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate one is retained.

research hypotheses were formulated in line with the objectives of the study.

Hypothesis one which states that, there is a significant relationship in the use of social media and ethno-religious crises among higher institution students in Kaduna State was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The results reveals that there is a significant relationship in the use of social media and ethno-religious crises in Kaduna State.

The findings of the study reveals that the respondents use some of the social media available, the respondents are mindful of what they posted on social media to avoid ethno-

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

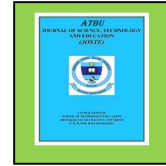
This study investigates the role of the social media in instigating Ethno-Religious Crises in Kaduna State. Two research questions and two

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religious crises in Kaduna State. Also, they believe that the social media is a channel to preach peace to the people of Kaduna State, the respondents maintained self-restraint even when they see on social media that their religious buildings are burnt down. They believe that they cannot post bad image on social media about the other religion, religious crises posted on the social media can be fake and not trust worthy. The empirical study of Murphy, (2016) is related to the current research because of its religious dimension in conflict situation. The result of the psychological effect of the study show a high degree of mental disorder and trauma. There is location gap in this study because they were conducted in different environment.

Hypothesis two which states that there is a significant relationship between the use of inflammatory social media and ethno-religious crises among higher institution students in Kaduna State was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between the use of inflammatory social media and ethno-religious crises in Kaduna State.

The findings of the study indicates that the respondents do not consider people from other religions as threat rather they are considered as people serving one God but in different ways. It is good to have students from different religious background because it brings about unity in Kaduna State, they agreed that people of different faiths have the right to practice their own religion in Kaduna State. The study Bhattacharjee, (2012) using a cross-sectional multi-cluster sample was conducted in the Nangerhar province of Afghanistan. About 1011 respondents aged 15 years and above formed the sample. Nearly half of the population had experienced traumatic events. Symptoms of depression were observed in 38.5% of respondents, symptoms of anxiety in 51.8% and Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in 20.4%. High rates of symptoms were associated with higher number of traumatic events experienced. Women had higher rates than men. There is population gap in this study compared to the current research work.

A study by Idris, (2013) on the influence of religious and ethno-religious conflict on women and children in Northern Nigeria discovers that religious and ethnic conflicts cause physical pain and psychological trauma. The study used four likert scale /structural questionnaire and interview to get the view of 2168 respondents. The result reveals that such conflicts bring about reduction in the economic capability of the family which reduces parents' ability to send their children to school. There is destruction of economic resources and property of individual families. It is also discovered that ethnic and religious conflicts have an inhibition effect on normal worship service due to fear on the part of the worshippers. It also permanently traumatises the lives of many victims. This was in contrast to the result of this study which recommend peace commission to end crisis in Kaduna State. There is a knowledge gap identified in these studies.

CONCLUSION

From the results and implications of findings of this study, the following conclusions are made: The study reveals that the respondents use some of the social media available, the respondents are mindful of what they posted on social media to avoid ethno-religious crises in Kaduna State. There was a significant relationship in the use of social media and ethno-religious crises among higher institution students in Kaduna State. There was a significant relationship between the use of inflammatory social media and ethno-religious crises among higher institution students in Kaduna State. The study indicates that the respondents do not consider people from other religions as threat rather they are considered as people serving one God but in different ways. It is good to have students from different religious background because it brings about unity in Kaduna State

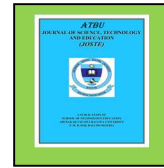
There was a significant relationship between the solution to the use of social media and ethno-religious crises among higher institution students in Kaduna State. The study shows that the traditional leaders are among the medium for peace in Kaduna State, the government should

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institute a peace commission in Kaduna State among the different religious adherence,

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested in line with the objectives of the study;

1. The social media should be used to enhance ethno-religious harmony among higher institution students in Kaduna State and the religious leaders should ensure this through their preaching in churches and mosques.
2. Inflammatory use of the social media should be reduced to its barest minimum among higher institution students in Kaduna State rather, it should be used to preach peace and understanding among the different religious adherents.
3. The institutions' heads and lecturers should be agents of ethno-religious harmony among higher institution students in Kaduna State and across the length and breadth of the Nigerian nation.

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