

Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)

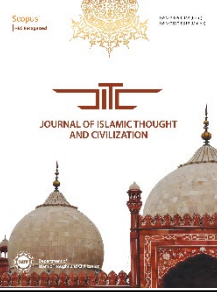
Volume 13 Issue 2, Fall 2023

ISSN(P): 2075-0943 ISSN(E): 2520-0313

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/JITC>



Article QR



Title: Hate Speech in Nigerian Politics: An Islamic and Christian Perspectives

Author (s): Shuaibu Umar Gokaru, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, Ahmad Faisal bin Abdul Hamid, Youcef Bensala, Mustaffa Abdullah, Abdul Karim bin Ali


Affiliation (s): Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.20>

History: Received: September 04, 2023, Revised: December 04, 2023, Accepted: December 19, 2023, Published: December 29, 2023

Citation: Gokaru, Shuaibu Umar, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, Ahmad Faisal bin Abdul Hamid, Youcef Bensala, Mustaffa Abdullah, and Abdul Karim bin Ali. "Hate Speech in Nigerian Politics: An Islamic and Christian Perspectives." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (2023): 309–323.
<https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.20>

Copyright: © The Authors

Licensing:  This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Conflict of Interest: Author(s) declared no conflict of interest



A publication of

Department of Islamic Thought and Civilization, School of Social Science and Humanities
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Hate Speech in Nigerian Politics: An Islamic and Christian Perspectives

Shuaibu Umar Gokaru *

Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor

Ahmad Faisal bin Abdul Hamid

Department of Islamic History and Civilization, Academy of Islamic Studies,
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Youcef Bensala

Department of Fiqh and Usul, Academy of Islamic Studies,
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Mustaffa Abdullah

Department of Al-Qur'an and Al-Hadith, Academy of Islamic Studies,
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abdul Karim bin Ali

Department of Fiqh and Usul, Academy of Islamic Studies,
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

The prevalence of hate speech in Nigerian politics is alarming. This paper aims to examine the remedy for hate speech in the Islamic and Christian perspectives. To achieve the designed objectives, qualitative methods involving historical and contextual approaches were used in data collection and analysis. The findings reveal that nowadays, in Nigeria, hate speech causes political sentiments and manipulations, religious insinuations and misinterpretations, and tribal jingoism and still is being used by some undesirable elements among the politicians. The findings further show that hate speech leads clergies and tribal jingoists to cause disaffection and civil insurrection among Nigerian citizens. This caused a huge setback to Nigerian sustainable development, both religiously and economically. The paper, therefore, recommends that Muslim scholars and priests should endeavour to create a conducive environment where a public lecture would be organized to emphasize the impacts of peaceful coexistence among Nigerian Muslims and Christians just to remedy the disease of hate speech.

Keywords: hate speech, manipulation, Nigerian politics, political sentiments, remedy

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-religious African country with more than hundred and fifty ethnic groups.¹ Afolabi² and Nwadior³ in their research asserted that Nigeria is the most populous, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic country in Africa. Even though religion has played an important role in the lives of Northern Nigerians since the 15th century when Islam made remarkable inroads into the region stereotyping religious perspectives. Centuries later, Christian missionaries successfully evangelized

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Shuaibu Umar Gokaru, Department of Islamic History and Civilization, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at gokaru@um.edu.my

¹Siraj B Abdulkarim, "Religion, Peace and National Development: A Look At Interreligious Conflicts in Nigeria," 2009.

²Oluwaseun Olawale Afolabi, "Religious Violence and National Security in Nigeria, 1999–2011," *International Affairs and Global Strategy* 42, no. 2 (2016): 23-31.

³Kanayo Nwadior, "Good Governance and Effective Human Relations: Pathways to Fostering Ethno-religious harmony in Nigeria," *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* 1, no. 1 (2019): 01.

some people in Northern Nigeria⁴ that forced people to experience real success in Christianizing traditionalist peoples.⁵ Therefore, religion became an important phenomenon in Nigeria.⁶ Although history has shown that there was an indirect peaceful co-existence amongst all the Nigerian citizens since it emerged after the British Colonial Government amalgamation of 1914.⁷ Thus, the British Colonial Government and its geopolitical influence became a reason for economic interest for the people residing in the Northern and Southern people. With time things changed; thus, modifying the country's goals; however, one may assume that cultural and religious diversities are among the prominent reasons for the negative changes that Nigeria is currently witnessing. A study on the recent circumstances, witnessing Nigeria's economic situation indicated that hate speeches were the main content of campaigns with particular reference to the 2015 campaigns.⁸ This also showcased that for a long time, hate speech has been damaging the peaceful coexistence of citizens residing in Nigeria and the political stability of the country. Therefore, the current study intends to analyze the noteworthy roles of Islamic and Christian perspectives in providing solutions to avoid hate speech among the people residing in Nigeria whether they are Muslims or Christians.

2. Hate Speech: Concept and Definition

Hate speech, conceptually means different things to different people as it indicates prejudices in the speech against individuals or groups based on internet characteristics. Till now, much has been said regarding the commonly accepted definition of the concept. However, some have argued that it may be connected with expressing violent or insulted terms, ridiculing an individual personality, or a group of people who believe in a particular object.⁹ Hate speech is best understood as a family affair,¹⁰ and hate speech in the form of racist and sexist remarks is a common occurrence on social media.¹¹ In other words, hate speech can take many forms, such as attributing false assumptions about religion, attributing heinous facts to a religious community, mocking their traditions and practices, or in the most extreme cases, using threats and verbal abuse against a specific community.¹² Similarly, in recent era, beliefs and their professors or adherents are often subjected to hate speech,

⁴Thaddeus B Umaru, "The Challenge for Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria," *Religious Stereotyping and Interreligious Relations* 10, no 11 (2013): 123-133.

⁵Andrew E Barnes, "'The Great Prohibition': The Expansion of Christianity in Colonial Northern Nigeria," *History Compass* 8, no. 6 (2010): 440-454.

⁶Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause and Hilary Chukwuka Achunike, "Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013," *Religion* 3, no. 18 (2013). 45-57.

⁷Achebe's, "Ethnic Schism in Nigeria: A Socio-Literary Study of Chinua" (Doctoral Thesis: Department of English Studies, Faculty of Arts, Ondo, Nigeria: Adekunle Ajasin University, 2014), 1-5.

⁸Emmanuel Osewe Akubor, "Campaigns and electioneering: Reflecting on the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria," *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 49, no. 4 (2020), 72-86.

⁹Alexander Tsesis, "Dignity and Speech: The Regulation of Hate Speech in a Democracy," *Wake Forest L. Rev.* no 44 (2009): 497.

¹⁰Alexander Brown, "What is Hate Speech? Part 2: Family Resemblances," *Law and Philosophy* 36, no1 (2017): 561-613.

¹¹Zeerak Waseem, and Dirk Hovy, "Hateful Symbols or Hateful People? Predictive Features for Hate Speech Detection on Twitter" (Paper Presented at the Proceedings of the NAACL Student Research Workshop, 2016).

¹²Carmen Aguilera-Carnerero and Abdul Halik Azeez, "'Islamonausa, not Islamophobia': The Many Faces of Cyber Hate Speech," *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research* 9, no. 1 (2016): 21-40.

which was regarded as abominable in the past.¹³ There is a serious debate globally about how the issue of hate speech should be addressed. Moreover, this situation is nearly identical in both the US and UK. For example, in the UK, Section 4 of the Public Order Act 1986 (POA) clearly states that "It is an offense for a person to use "threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause, another person harassment, alarm or distress"¹⁴ the law has been later revised over the years to include "Racial and Religious Hatred."¹⁵

On the other hand, in the US, even though there is no guarantee of a law concerning hate speech because of freedom of speech, the amended US constitution, at the federal level vividly states that "Hate crime laws, include crimes committed based on the victim's perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability."¹⁶ In Nigeria, the law on hate speech/terrorism 2011 defined hate speech as an act deliberately done with malice, which may seriously harm or damage a country or population.¹⁷ It is important to acknowledge that hate speech regulation typically differentiates between a severe assault on a group or its members, which may qualify as hate speech, and an attack on an individual or a group of individuals with specific beliefs. The latter is considered deserving of protection, even if the expression is strongly worded and impassioned.¹⁸

The inquiry revolves around determining the criteria and timing for classifying insult, criticism, and mockery as instances falling under the umbrella of hate speech. Several discussions have opened a new horizon concerning hate speech and its attributive dimensions, which inferred that it has developed as an expression having various orientations. It is also argued that in underdeveloped countries, many criticisms are considered insults whereas in developed countries many insults are considered criticisms.¹⁹ This indicates that a clear and acceptable definition should be established to avoid double standards that exist in both developed and underdeveloped countries. For this reason, some intellectuals/academics call for the adoption of a theoretical research framework to come up with an acceptable definition. Therefore, there is a crucial need for academic research on hate speech and its diverse impact on the contemporary Nigerian politics. Moreover, this study contends to address the imperative adherents to religion guided by the principles of their inherent faith. This entails that this guided formulation has paved the way for specific laws, serving as a mechanism for peaceful coexistence in a society.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative method with contextual and historical analysis. The data was collected from religious sources (Islam and Christianity), such as from the Glorious Qur'an, *Sunnah* (Sayings, actions, and silent approval of the Prophet *SAW*), and the Holy Bible. Categorically,

¹³Victor Witter Turner, and Richard Schechner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publication, 1988), 1-36.

¹⁴Ibid., 2.

¹⁵Soo Chung Kim, "Countering Terrorist Propaganda and Speech in the Information Age: Comparative Study on the Legal Provisions in the United Kingdom and the United States," (Masters Thesis, Republic of Korea: Seoul National University, 2020), 6-7.

¹⁶Dillon B Yang, "COVID-19 Hate Crimes: Why Hate is Rising, and What the United States Can Do About it," *Journal of Legislation* 49, no. 1 (2023): 166.

¹⁷Adedokun Mary Olufunke, "Hate Speech and Its Effects on the Nigerian Communities: A Case Study of Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State," 2, no1 (2019): 55-66.

¹⁸Richard Moon, *Putting Faith in Hate: When Religion is the Source or Target of Hate Speech* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 01.

¹⁹Mohsen Kadivar, "Freedom of Religion and Belief in Islam," in Edited by Mehran Kamrava, *The New Voices of Islam Rethinking Politics and Modernity: A Reader* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California, 2006), 198-220.



Qur'ānic verses dealing with rumors, backbiting, slander, attributing lies to others, and mockery were quoted and analyzed to establish the probation of hate speech and its remedies in the religious context, concerning the Nigerian politics. It is in line with the method that Qur'ānic verses, such as Al-Hajj 2:30, Al-Baqarah 2: 83, Al-Isra 17: 70, Al-An'am 6: 108, Al-Qasas 28:55, Al-Ahzab 33: 70-71, Al-Nahl 16: 105, Al-Zumar 39:3, an-Nisa 4: 148, and Al-An'ām 6:38 were collectively analyzed in this study along with their exegetical explanations from the renown Qur'ān Exegetes like Al-Jalayn and Ibn Kathir as well as additional explanation of some scholars like Badruzzaman and Al-Alusi. Additionally, the ḥadīth of the Prophet (*SAW*) reported by Abu Dawud, Al-Nawawi, and Al-Bukhari were quoted on the prohibition of hate speech to support the discussion from an Islamic perspective. Meanwhile, to balance the analysis, relevant verses from various chapters in the Holy Bible, such as Mathew, Corinthians, Colossians, and Timothy, were quoted to explain the prohibition and condemnation of hate speech and its causes in Christianity. For this purpose, the statement of priests were also used to have an in-depth explanation regarding hate speech and its position in Christianity. Hence, this study deductively established the theoretical framework relying on the methods and theological perspective of Islam and Christianity, conclusively indicating remedies that may benefit Nigerian politics, politicians, and its citizens in general.

4. Theoretical Framework of Hate Speech in Islam and Christianity

Several attempts have been made to establish a common definition of hate speech, although there is no globally accepted definition of this concept. Therefore, several theories have been developed to achieve this general definition. However, a theoretical framework of hate speech from the theological perspective has not yet been developed, so this study fills this existing gap in the literature to provide a constructive designed method, which will address the gap from Islamic and Christian perspectives. Hence, the current study is an attempt to achieve the designed objectives of the study because conducting a theoretical framework from a theological perspective cannot only serve as a remedy to avoid hate speech but also help the Nigerian government to enact and implement laws that would safeguard and protect the dignity and religions of its citizens. Hence, this brings immense benefits to the world. That is why it is suggested that all the spirited stakeholders of various religions in Nigeria must create an avenue for meaningful dialogue to check the monster of religious intolerance, insensitivity, self-will, and fanaticism to pave the way for peaceful coexistence and sustainable national development in Nigeria.²⁰

5. The Impact of Hate Speech in Nigeria

Prior literature has indicated some crucial aspects regarding hate speech and what constitutes it, it is noted that Nigeria due to its complexities and as a nation has experienced several challenges for the consequences of hate speech and its negative impact on Nigerian communities. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates facilitated the peaceful coexistence among Nigerian communities. Since the return of democracy in Nigeria, it has been argued that hate speech poses the most difficult moment for peacebuilding in Nigeria during elections and reconciliation that can be difficult even after the elections are over.²¹ However, the Nigerian legislative and the senate proposed a punishment of imprisonment, fine, and even further death penalty for the proponents' of

²⁰Kitause and Achunike, "Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013," *Religion, Research on Humanities and Social Science*, 3, no.18 (2013): 45-57.

²¹Tope Shola Akinyetun, Dare Deji Odeyemi, and Jamiu Abiodun Alausa, "Social media and electoral violence in Nigeria: Sustainable Development Goal 16, a panacea," *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2021): 189-215.

hate speech.²² Similarly, Funke²³ asserted that hate speech affects the progress and development of any nation, especially Nigeria in terms of its unsustainable development.” As witnessed, hate speech did not maintain peace and tolerance nor did it establish a peaceful coexistence in any given community.²⁴ Nigeria is; therefore, a clear example of this. Nowadays, politicians use several events and talks to praise or attack, condemn, and criticize their opposition in the name of winning the minds of their supporters.²⁵ This is not limited to the election period in Nigeria; it has been extended to include religious leaders and their supporters to hail a large number of audiences.²⁶ For the local region, this means from Northern Nigeria to Southern Nigeria and vice versa.²⁷ Some of the identified causes of hate speech that could have the most grievous consequences include ethnic rivalry and mistrust, religious intolerance, impunity, roles of the media, domestic xenophobia (as in Nigeria, north versus south), low level of education; low level of awareness and enlightenment, class warfare between the rich and the poor.

Additionally, Onah and Uroko²⁸ suggested that “Hate speech has been on the increase instigating ethnic and religious sentiment, mistrust, and conflicts. The study also suggested that peace, social justice, and political inclusion should be adopted in running the affairs of the nation.²⁹” Therefore, it is understood that the reason why Nigerian politics is in a critical dilemma is the hate speech that is caused mostly by the political and religious differences. Without fear of doubt or exaggeration, the current political crisis in Nigeria is being witnessed by hate speech. For example, the ruling political party in Nigeria, the All-Progressive Congress (APC), agreed to the nomination of a Muslim Presidential candidate from the southwest and his running mate, who is also a Muslim from the Northeast of the country. This creates confusion among Nigerians, particularly Christians, over their belief that Nigeria is tactically Islamised. The causes of this discombobulation were because Muslim/Muslim tickets should be avoided according to those who understood that it was done to favor the Muslims; however, the case is different. First and foremost, there is a lack of mutual recognition. This shows that some Muslims believe that Christianity does not recognize Islam as a legitimate religion; therefore, it does not recognize their (Muslims’) other rights. Secondly, there are hate and blackmail campaigns all around in Nigerian politics, which again is a prevailing reason for spreading hate speech countrywide. This means that both Christians and Muslims are actively engaged in anti-Christian campaigns. This manifests itself in a variety of ways, including incitement and distortion of facts about each other, particularly during elections (this is still happening in Nigeria since the return of democracy), and stifling each other's opportunities, as demonstrated by Shari'ah

²²Nat Ofo, "Effectiveness of Capital Punishment as Deterrence to Kidnapping in Nigeria," *SSRN*, 01, no1 (2010): 01.

²³Daniel Funke, "Global Responses to Misinformation and Populism," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2021), 01.

²⁴Zakiyuddin Baidhawy, "Building Harmony and Peace through Multiculturalist Theology-Based Religious Education: an Alternative for Contemporary Indonesia," *British Journal of Religious Education* 29, no. 1 (2007), 15-30.

²⁵Jayeon Lee and Weiai Xu, "The More Attacks, the More Retweets: Trump's and Clinton's Agenda Setting on Twitter," *Public Relations Review* 44, no. 2 (2018): 201-213.

²⁶Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought: The Response of the Shi 'i and Sunni Muslims to the Twentieth Century* (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005), 01.

²⁷T Ojoye, "Hate Speech is Bad for the Economy," in *Effect of Hate Speech in Nigeria, Verbum Eccles, Pretoria* 42, no.1 (2021): 1-10.

²⁸Nkechi G Onah and F Uroko, "Hate Speech and Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Implications for Political stability," *MAHABBAH: Journal of Religion and Education* 2, no. 2 (2021): 161-193.

²⁹Ian Manners, "The Normative Ethics of the European Union," *International affairs*, 45, no1 (2008): 45-60.

and the Organization of Islamic Conference issues (OIC). Thirdly, there is a genuine desire among participants to understand each other's beliefs and culture. Fourthly, there is extremism.

Given the above reasons, it was observed that Nigerian politics cannot be judged on a religious basis because nothing is religious. The danger of hate speech depends on the ignorance of its consequences. According to some religious scholars, hate speech containing religious statements and hate is a serious problem in secular liberal thought. It has been argued that secular liberal thought and political practice frequently misunderstand the nature of the harm caused by a speech that violates the sacred.³⁰ Therefore, religious teachings must be respected.

6. Hate Speech in Nigerian Politics from the Islamic and Christian Perspectives

Considering the issues that constitute hate speech, it is argued that forms of speech must be understood before categorizing hate speech. Therefore, in Islam a form of speech is divided into two namely, 'sayings and actions. The first one covers any expression that comes from direct or indirect speech, which includes declarations, rumours, e-mails, messages, and insulting cartoons among others. The second one includes any action that creates or supports hate speech, whether publicly or privately. The discussion here is in line with the Qur'anic injunction in which Almighty Allah says, "...So shun the abomination (worshipping) of idol and shun lying speech (false statements).³¹ This signifies that Islam enjoys its adherence to staying away from abominable acts and lying speeches. It is understood from this verse that not only hate speech but everything that incites hate speech, is prohibited from the Islamic perspective. In addition to this, Allah says, "... and speak well to people (enjoin righteousness and forbid evil, and say the truth about Muhammad (SAW), and perform prayers and give Zakat.³²

Similarly, Almighty Allah clearly stated that human dignity must always be respected, irrespective of religious differences. To understand this Allah says, "An indeed We have honored the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with *Al-Taiyyibat* {lawful good things} and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preference."³³ This indicates that Almighty Allah honoured the Children of Adam that is (al-Karamah al-insaniyyah). This reveals one of the most significant bounties of Allah given to human beings that must be respected. Thus, human dignity must be valued and safeguarded. Transgressing or ridiculing it is the transgression of the limits set by Almighty Allah. Most of the renowned *Mufasssirun* translated honors (*al-Karamah*) to include many things. For example, Imam Al-Jalalyn asserted that knowledge, speech, and funeral birth are among these.³⁴ In this regard, Bodruzzaman suggested that human beings fundamentally deserve respect.³⁵ In addition, the famous al-Qur'an *Mufasssir* Al-Alusi (commentator) asserted that "everyone and all members of the human race, including the pious and the sinner, are endowed with dignity."³⁶

Ā'ishah RA was reported to have said, "I said to the Prophet (SAW): It is enough for you in Ṣafīyyah RA, that she is such and such meaning that she was short-statured. He (The Prophet) replied, ' You have said a word that would change the sea if it were mixed in it. She said: I imitated

³⁰Andrew F March, "Speech and the Sacred: Does the Defense of Free Speech rest on a Mistake about Religion?," *Political Theory* 40, no. 3 (2012): 319-346.

³¹Al-Hajj 22: 30.

³²Al-Baqarah 2:83.

³³al-Isra 17:70.

³⁴Al-Muhalli, Jalalu'd-din, *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn* (United Kingdom: Dar At-Taqwa Ltd, 2007).

³⁵AKM Bodruzzaman, "The Role of Islamic Laws in Combating Hate Speech," *Journal of Shariah Law Research* 5, no. 1 (2020): 75-94.

³⁶Al-Alusi, Al-Bağdādī and A.A. 'Aṭīya, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm wa-'s-sab' al-Maṭānī* (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiya, 1995).

a man before him (out of disgrace)." He said: "I do not like that I imitate anyone even if I should get such and such."³⁷ In another ḥadīth, Nana Aisha stated, "A woman came to see us. I gestured with my hand as she walked away, implying that she was too short. "You have mocked her," Allah's Messenger said."³⁸ The Prophet (*SAW*) declared that one of the characteristics of *Jahiliyyah* is mocking and ridiculing. Abu Tharr, RA, neglected a man one day by calling his mother a derogatory name, which aggravated the situation. "O Abu Tharr! Did you slander his mother? You still have some *Jahiliyyah* traits."³⁹

Christians, on the other hand, were called to maintain the peace in the Bible.⁴⁰ This means that Christians are called to avoid and disregard anything that incites hatred toward anyone or a group of people. "It is wrong to use words to incite others to hate Muslims," it is stated. The Bible also commands Christians to love their neighbours and not to speak ill of them.⁴¹ Cobb also claimed that Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your conversation always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Some Christians violate this command by acting negatively as they disregard the biblical instructions. Others among Christians, on the other hand, are said to be speaking the truth but in the vilest way. This implies that speaking hatefully contradicts Christ's teachings. Westboro Baptist Church and its "God hates fags" slogan are two prominent examples. Westboro Baptist Church is correct in proclaiming the Bible's teaching that homosexuality is sinful, but they do so in such a way that it intends to offend others.⁴² In another biblical verse, Timothy says, "Keep a close watch on yourself and the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."⁴³ It is noted that in countries where Christians are an ethnic minority, anti-Christian rhetoric may occasionally include claims about the rooted characteristics of group members. Furthermore, anti-Christian speech frequently involves criticism or ridicule of Christian beliefs. Similarly, the harm that may result from the speech is unlikely to be the marginalization of Christian groups or the threat of violent action against its members, but rather the hurt or humiliation felt by the group's members when what they regard as sacred is denigrated.⁴⁴

In addition, Dentice suggested that "the misappropriation of religious texts to support racism, prejudice, and hate speech must be exposed to halt the spread of prejudiced attitudes among a segment of population that is directed at minority groups and people of color." More orthodox religious adherents, as well as the general public, religious or not, can benefit from understanding how and why some extremist groups misrepresent and misinterpret biblical scripture for malicious purposes. According to this statement, some Christians have misrepresented the actual biblical instructions by doing something that contradicts the majority of its teachings. This is why, according to Dentice, exposing the true text of Christian teachings becomes necessary so that people who, in some way, depicts the Christian viewpoint on hate speech, what causes it, and how it can be addressed. It is understood that neither the Qur'ān nor the Bible calls for a person to mock, insult, or criticize his brother.

³⁷Abī Dāwud Sulayman Ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī al-'Azdī. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Bayrūt: al-Maktabah al-'Aşriyyah, 2006).

³⁸Abī Zakariyyā Maḥy al-Dīn Ibn Sharf al-Nawawwi, *Riyāḍ al-Şāliḥīn* (Mişr: Dār al-Manārah, 2003).

³⁹Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'il al-Ju'fī Al-Bukhārī, *Şaḥīḥ alBukhārī* (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Salām, 2007).

⁴⁰Mathew 5:9, Corinthians 7:15.

⁴¹Mathew 22:37-40.

⁴²Paul E Teed, "God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right by Rebecca Barrett-Fox," *Middle West Review* 7, no. 2 (2021): 79-81.

⁴³Timothy 4: 16.

⁴⁴Ibid.



7. Summary of the Findings

This section sums up the above findings, which might serve as a possible solution for the hate speech that is rooted in Nigerian politics. Moreover, this ingrained pattern has caused serious enmity and hatred towards Nigerians who are currently residing there.

7.1. The Evidence and Remedies of Hate Speech from the Qur'ān and Sunnah

It was earlier understood that the position of hate speech from the Islamic perspective, in which the discussion pointed out that hate speech is one of the social illnesses that must be cured for the religious, social, political, economic, cultural, and moral interests. This further indicated that the disease of hate speech affects every aspect of human endeavours. Providing the evidence of hate speech and its remedies from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* in this paper is of great importance because they are the primary sources of Islam, which if there is any issue should be referred to them for solutions. After all, Almighty Allah Himself asserted that nothing dealing with religion has not been left out in the matters of the Qur'ān as He says, "There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book, then unto their Lord, they (all) shall be gathered."⁴⁵ This portrays that the Qur'ān is the book of Allah, which provides everlasting guidance to Muslims for a better life. Therefore, the discussion will be categorically based on mentioning the disease of hate speech and its evidence from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* followed by the remedies from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* as detailed below:

7.1.1. Hate Speech (False Speech during Campaign and Others)

It is observed that one of the major diseases that affected Nigerian citizens is using false speeches to mobilize supporters during elections. This causes enmity among citizens, and it is indeed condemned in Islam. Allah says, "It is only those who believe not in the verse (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah, who fabricate falsehood, and it is they who are liars."⁴⁶ This verse suggests that those who are telling, fabricating, and spreading lies do not believe in the message of Allah, and Almighty Allah confirmed that this type of people would get his support as He says, "Surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful."⁴⁷ Therefore, false speech in this regard is leading people in particular Muslims to deviation from the mainstream of Islamic teachings. A liar is liable to the divine curse of Allah as He is saying "the curse of Allah be on him if he is one of the liars."⁴⁸ Almighty Allah has discouraged such acts of false speech in public. For example, Allah says, "Allah does not like that the evil should be uttered in public except by him who has been wronged. And Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Knower."⁴⁹ This verse shows that speaking falsely in public is condemned in Islam and by extension campaigning by fabricating false statements for worldly gain is inclusive.

In the Ḥadīth, the Prophet (*SAW*) warns against false statements as he says, "I warn you making a false statement and giving false testimony. I warn you against making a false statement and giving a false testimony." The Messenger of Allah (*SAW*) kept on repeating this (warning) till we wished he should stop."⁵⁰ The Ḥadīth shows the gravity of fabricating false statements and spreading them as well as giving testimony falsely. That is why the Prophet kept repeating it. Therefore, it is an established *Sunnah* of the Prophet if something is important, he keeps repeating it for the *Sahabah* to take it seriously and act upon it.

⁴⁵Al-An'ām 6: 38.

⁴⁶An-Nahl 16:105.

⁴⁷Al-Zumar 39:3.

⁴⁸Al-Nur 24:8.

⁴⁹Al-Nisa 4:148.

⁵⁰*Riyad As-Salihin* 1550, Book 17, Hadith No 40.

7.1.2. Remedies of Hate Speech (False Statement) from the Qur'an and Sunnah

Muslims hold the belief that Allah, the Almighty, has not inflicted any form of ailment, be it physical or spiritual, without providing a corresponding remedy. This is evident in the ḥadīth of the Prophet (*SAW*) which Zayd claimed that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The one who sent down the disease sent down the remedy."⁵¹ It is given this ḥadīth that the remedies of hate speech caused by false statements can be established. It should be noted that the remedy in this regard is step-by-step through observance and compliance with the commandments of Allah and His Messenger. To identify the remedy of a false statement is to do the opposite that is to stop doing it. This is the reason why Allah, the Most High says, "O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah fear Him and speak (always) the truth. (70) He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger (*SAW*) he has indeed achieved a great achievement (i.e. he will be saved from the Hell-fire and made to enter Paradise)."⁵² This verse further suggests that for a man to be remedied from the disease of hate speech must fear Allah and speak the truth. In addition to the above verse, Almighty Allah mentioned something that if a man practices, he will be remedied from the hate speech. To confirm this, Allah says: "There is no good in most of their secret talks save (in) him who orders *Sadaqah* (charity in Allah's Cause), or *Ma'rūf* (Islamic Monotheism and all the good and righteous deeds which Allah has ordained), or conciliation between mankind. He who does this, seeking the good Pleasure of Allah, We shall give him a great reward.

In the above ḥadīth, Almighty Allah mentioned what people do to avert false speech. That is a meaningful talk, which in return gets a reward because the Prophet (*SAW*) in the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Abbas said, "There are 360 joints and each of them owes *sadaqa* every single day. Every good word is *sadaqa*. A man helping his brother is *sadaqa*. A drink/drop of water, which he gives is *sadaqa*. Removing something harmful from the road is *sadaqa*."⁵³ The point here is every good word is *sadaqa*. This indicates that for a man to be cured of the disease of false statements, man should speak the truth and engage in a good conversation which he will be rewarded. This signifies that is a sin for a man to engage in a falsehood conversation.

Another step that should be taken to remedy the disease of false speech is the ḥadīth of the Prophet, which encourages being silent if man does not speak the right. To understand this, it is narrated on the authority of Abu Shuraih al-Khuzai' that the Prophet (*SAW*) observed: "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should do good to his neighbor and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should show hospitality to the guest and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should either speak good or better remain silent."⁵⁴

The above ḥadīth provides a clear remedy for the disease of false speech, which is silence or choosing to speak wisely. If a conversation adds nothing to human values it should be avoided to avoid any worse situation or consequences.

7.1.3. Hate Speech (An Insult) from the Qur'an and Sunnah

Nowadays, it is a clear fact that not only the politicians but most of the people engage in an act of insult knowingly or unknowingly. This usually happens if there is intolerance, disputes, and conflicts among people in a society. It is an act of committing hate speech and is prohibited in Islam. Almighty Allah mentioned in the Qur'an that insult is a blameworthy act of hate speech. For example, Allah says: "And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult

⁵¹*Sahih Muslim*, Book 50, Hadith 12.

⁵²*Al-Ahزاب* 33: 70-71.

⁵³*Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Book 24, Hadith 422.

⁵⁴*Sahih Muslim*, Book 1: The Book of Faith, Hadith 48.

Allah wrongfully without knowledge. Thus, We have made fair-seeming to each people its doings; then to their Lord is their return and He shall then inform them of all that they used to do.”⁵⁵

Given the above verse, Almighty Allah condemned an insult. Even though the prohibition in the verse points to those who curse the idols that others worship besides Allah. Hence, it should be noted that this insult takes various forms, such as statues, fire, animals, stones, sun, moon, worship places, religion, and others. Therefore, in whatever the case and whether it is in any form such an insult is prohibited in Islam. This is because of its consequences among which is the fact that if the Muslims insult what disbelievers worship other than Allah or their religion, then they will curse Almighty Allah or will cause religious blasphemy and division. With this, Allah forbids the believers to insult their gods because if they know that we offend them, it will cause distrust, and they will run away from us.⁵⁶ Therefore, hate speech with an insult destroys relationships, brotherhood, and nationhood.

7.1.4. Remedies of Hate Speech (An Insult) from the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*

One of the remedies for this disease is doing the opposite by keeping peace as Almighty Allah stated. This indicates that whoever wants to be cured of an insult should completely stop it with a clear conviction that would not repeat it. Almighty Allah provided lots of remedies to the disease of hate speech caused by insult. For example, Allah says, “And the slaves of the Most Beneficent (Allah) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words) they reply back with mild words of gentleness.”⁵⁷ Ibn Kathir argues that if ignorant people insult you with bad words, you do not respond in kind, but forgive and overlook, and say nothing but good words. This is what the Messenger of Allah did: the more ignorant the people, the more patient he would be.⁵⁸ He further supported the discussion with the saying of Allah “And when they hear *Al-Laghwa* (dirty, evil, false or vain talk), they withdraw from it.”⁵⁹ This verse signifies that whoever shuns away from retaliating an insult by maintaining peace will be cured of it. Allah stated that the most pious servants of Allah are those who withdraw from any insult and vain talk among others. According to the ḥadīth of the Prophet, Abdullah bin Amr narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “The companion who is the best to Allah is the one who is best to his companion. And the neighbor that is the best to Allah is the one that is best to his neighbour.”⁶⁰ The ḥadīth shows that whoever wants to be the best companion in the sight of Allah should do the best for his neighbour and this by extension includes his friends and others.

Another important remedy of hate speech from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet is spreading words of love and harmony between people, such as saying “Salam” (Peace,) as it has a great effect on people. To appreciate this, the Prophet (*SAW*) said, “You shall not enter Paradise until you believe, and you have not believed until you love one another. Shall I tell you of something you can do to make you love one another? Spread the greetings of Salam (peace) amongst yourselves (i.e. between each other).”⁶¹

⁵⁵Al-An’ām 6:108.

⁵⁶Abi ‘Abdillah Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Abu Bakr Ibn Farh al-Anshari Al-Khazraji Al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir Jāmi’un Li Ahkāmīl Qur’ān*, ed. Abdullah Bin Abdul Hasan Al-Turki (Pentahqiq), 1st ed. (Beirut: Al-Risalah Publisher, 2006), 491.

⁵⁷Al-Furqān 25:63.

⁵⁸Al-Qasas 28:55 in Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur’ān (English Language)* (Conrad Sauer Dr A, Houston, United States of America: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2003),

⁵⁹Al-Qasas 28:55.

⁶⁰Muhammad bin Isa bin Saurah bin Musa bin Al-Dahhak Al-Sulami Al-Tirmidzi. *Jami’ At-Tirmidhi* (English Translation) Vol. 4, Book 1 (Conrad Sauer Dr A, Houston, United States of America: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2003), ḥadīth 1944.

⁶¹Fortress of the Muslims (Hisn al-Muslim), ḥadīth 224.

Given the above ḥadīth, it might be concluded that the spreading of peace serves as a great medicine that can be considered as a remedy of insult and its associates. To sum up, the greeting of Peace (Salam) establishes love, extinguishes enmity, and strengthens companionship. If this is achieved, a society can live peacefully and respectfully.

7.2. Remedy of Hate Speech in Nigerian Politics

In this study, it is noted that if all pointed out by Islam and Christianity as remedies to hate speech are implemented by Nigerian politicians, Nigerian politics will unarguably be free from hate speech, which is causing lots of damage and igniting political violence in the country. It is stated, for example, that political intolerance occurs because individuals from different racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds fail to accommodate each other due to mutual dislike or hatred.⁶² That is why Islam and Christianity are selected to find a lasting remedy to strengthen Nigerian politics from a religious perspective. It should be noted that *Imams* and Clergies in these two religions have a powerful say in calling people to order and to respect the teachings of their religions even more influence than the government. However, the government will also be able to reduce hate speech if it enacts and enforces laws that are consistent with Islamic and Christian perspectives that prohibit people from engaging in activities that incite hate speech.

8. Conclusion

The preceding discussion was critical in highlighting the consequences of hate speech in contemporary Nigeria and the setbacks it has caused politically, religiously, socially, and economically. It is further understood that the impact of hate speech, particularly in Nigerian politics has not been given serious attention by academics and researchers, the reason that instigated this study to come up with possible remedies that may benefit its citizens. It is understood from the discussion that the main target of the paper is to display the roles of two major religions for the Nigerian government to finally settle the bills on hate speech that are yet to be promulgated even though the National Assemblies have made attempts to establish the Law that prohibits hate its punishment. Viewing the discussion categorically, it is noted that Islam based on the available evidence from the primary sources (The Qur'ān and *Sunnah*) prohibited hate speech and provided its remedies as well as called upon the Muslims to abstain from what causes it. Similarly, in Christianity, a discussion was presented from the available verdicts and injunctions of the Bible. This might be understood that neither in Islam nor in Christianity a person is allowed to speak hatefully to his brother. Therefore, the Nigerian government, by applying this resolution, is certainly sustaining the Nigerian politics that is rapidly facing challenges of disunity by using religion as well as prioritizing geopolitical zones over and above competency.

Conflict of Interest

Author(s) declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Funding Details

This research did not receive grant from any funding source or agency.

Bibliography

Abdulkarim, Siraj B. "Religion, Peace and National Development: A Look at Interreligious Conflicts in Nigeria." 2009.

⁶²Christian Ezeibe, "Hate speech and election violence in Nigeria," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 56, no. 4 (2021): 919-935.

- Afolabi, Oluwaseun Olawale. "Religious Violence and National Security in Nigeria, 1999–2011." *International Affairs and Global Strategy* 42, no. 2 (2016): 23-31.
- Aguilera-Carnerero, Carmen, and Abdul Halik Azeez. "'Islamonausa, Not Islamophobia': The Many Faces of Cyber Hate Speech." *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 9, no. 1 (2016): 21-40.
- Akinyetun, Tope Shola, Dare Deji Odeyemi, and Jamiu Abiodun Alausa. "Social Media and Electoral Violence in Nigeria: Sustainable Development Goal 16, a Panacea." *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2021): 189-215.
- Akubor, Emmanuel Osewe. "Campaigns and Electioneering: Reflecting on the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria." *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 49, no. 4 (2020): 72-86.
- Al-Alūsī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Sayyid Maḥmūd. *Rūḥ Al-Ma'Ānī Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Azim*. Bayrūt: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī., 1995.
- Arcan, H Esra. "Interrupted Social Peace: Hate Speech in Turkish Media." *The IAFOR Journal of Media, Communication and Film* 1, no. 1 (2013): 43-56.
- Baidhawiy, Zakiyuddīn. "Building Harmony and Peace through Multiculturalist Theology-Based Religious Education: An Alternative for Contemporary Indonesia." *British Journal of Religious Education* 29, no. 1 (2007): 15-30.
- Barnes, Andrew E. "'The Great Prohibition': The Expansion of Christianity in Colonial Northern Nigeria." *History Compass* 8, no. 6 (2010): 440-54.
- Bodruzzaman, AKM. "The Role of Islamic Laws in Combating Hate Speech." *Journal of Shariah Law Research* 5, no. 1 (2020): 75-94.
- . "The Role of Islamic Laws in Combating Hate Speech." *Journal of Shariah Law Research* (2020): 75-94.
- Brown, Alexander. "What Is Hate Speech? Part 2: Family Resemblances." *Law and Philosophy* 36 (2017): 561-613.
- Bukhārī, Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'il al-Ju'fī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*. Riyāḍ: Dār al-Salām, 1997.
- Cobb, Michael. *God Hates Fags: The Rhetorics of Religious Violence*. London, New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Dāwūd, Sulayman Ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī al-'Azdī Abī. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Bayrūt: Al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, 2006.
- Dentice, Dianne. "Hate Speech, Prejudice, and Biblical Interpretations." *The Journal of Faith, Education, and Community* 3, no. 1 (2019): 1-24, <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=jfec>
- Enayat, Hamid. *Modern Islamic Political Thought: The Response of the Shi 'I and Sunni Muslims to the Twentieth Century*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005.
- Ezeibe, Christian. "Hate Speech and Election Violence in Nigeria." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 56, no. 4 (2021): 919-35.
- Funke, Daniel. "Global Responses to Misinformation and Populism." In *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism*, 449-58: Routledge, 2021.

- Ibn Kathir. *Tafsir Al-Qur'an (English Language)* Conrad Sauer Dr A, Houston, United States of America: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2003.
- Kadivar, Mohsen. "Freedom of Religion and Belief in Islam." *Islam and Religious Diversity. Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies* (2006): 198-220.
- . "Islam between Free Speech and Hate Speech." 2012. Accessed March 12. <https://freespeechdebate.com/discuss>.
- Kim, Soo Chung. "Countering Terrorist Propaganda and Speech in the Information Age: Comparative Study on the Legal Provisions in the United Kingdom and United States." Seoul National University (Republic of Korea), 2020.
- Kitause, Rimamsikwe Habila., and Hilary Chukwuka Achunike. "Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013." *Religion* 3, no. 18 (2013): 45-57.
- Lee, Jayeon, and Weiai Xu. "The More Attacks, the More Retweets: Trump's and Clinton's Agenda Setting on Twitter." *Public Relations Review* 44, no. 2 (2018): 201-13.
- Manners, Ian. "The Normative Ethics of the European Union." *International affairs* (2008): 45-60.
- March, Andrew F. "Speech and the Sacred: Does the Defense of Free Speech Rest on a Mistake About Religion?." *Political Theory* 40, no. 3 (2012): 319-46.
- Moon, Richard. *Putting Faith in Hate: When Religion Is the Source or Target of Hate Speech*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Al-Nawawī, Abī Zakariyyā Maḥy al-Dīn Ibn Sharf. *Riyāḍ Al-Ṣāliḥīn*. Miṣr: Dār al-Manārah, 2003Nwadiador, Kanayo. "Good Governance and Effective Human Relations: Pathways to Fostering Ethno-Religious Harmony in Nigeria." *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* 1, no. 1 (2019): 1-19
- Ofo, Nat. "Effectiveness of Capital Punishment as Deterrence to Kidnapping in Nigeria." *Available at SSRN 1646867* (2010).
- Ojoye, Taiwo. *Hate Speech Is Bad for the Economy*. <https://punchng.com/hate-speech-is-bad-for-the-economy/>
- Olufunke, Adedokun Mary. "Hate Speech and Its Effects on the Nigerian Communities: A Case Study of Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State." 2019.
- . "Hate Speech and Its Effects on the Nigerian Communities: A Case Study of Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State." *Adult Education and Community Development, Ekiti State University* (2020): 55-65.
- Oluwatobi, O Adeyemi. "Amalgamation and the Crisis of Governance: The Nigeria Experience." *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 8, no. 3 (2018): 2162-7104.
- Omotosho, Abdulrafi Oyewumi. "Religious Violence in Nigeria-the Causes and Solutions: An Islamic Perspective." *Swedish Missiological Theme* 16 (2003): 15-31.
- Onah, Nkechi G, and F Uroko. "Hate Speech and Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Implications for Political Stability." *MAHABBAH: Journal of Religion and Education* 2, no. 2 (2021): 161-93.
- Peter, Ehindola Odunayo. "Ethnic Schism in Nigeria: A Socio-Literary Study of Chinua:Achebe's There Was A Country." BS Thesis, Department of English Studies Faculty of Arts, Ondo, Nigeria, Adekunle Ajasin University, 2014.

- Al-Qurṭubī, Abī ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Abū Bakr Ibn Farḥ al-Ansharī Al-Khazrajī, *Tafsīr Jāmi‘un Li Ahkāmīl Qurān*, ed. Abdullah Bin Abdul Hasan Al-Turki (Pentahqiq), 1st ed. Beirut: Al-Risalah Publisher, 2006.
- Teed, Paul E. "God Hates Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right by Rebecca Barrett-Fox." *Middle West Review* 7, no. 2 (2021): 79-81.
- At-Tirmidzi, Muḥammad bin Isā bin Saurah bin Musā bin Al-Dahhak Al-Sulami. *Jami' At-Tirmidhi* (English Translation) Vol. 4, Book 1. Conrad Sauer Dr A, Houston, United States of America: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2003.
- Tsesis, Alexander. "Dignity and Speech: The Regulation of Hate Speech in a Democracy." *Wake Forest L. Rev.* 44 (2009): 497-532.
- Turner, Victor Witter., and Richard Schechner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. PAJ Publication, 1988.
- Umaru, Thaddeus B. "The Challenge for Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria." *Religious Stereotyping and Interreligious Relations* (2013): 123-33.
- Waseem, Zeerak., and Dirk Hovy. "Hateful Symbols or Hateful People? Predictive Features for Hate Speech Detection on Twitter." Paper presented at the Proceedings of the NAACL student research workshop, 2016.
- Yang, Dillon B. "Covid-19 Hate Crimes: Why Hate Is Rising, and What the United States Can Do About It." *Journal of Legislation* 49, no. 1 (2023): 166-204.