Article

Digital Platforms and the Promotion of Ethnic Chauvinism: Implication for Social Cohesion and Online Discourse

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Abstract: In multi-ethnic societies, sentiments cannot be overruled as ideas and issues are perceived and interpreted based on ethnic opinions and positions of the people. This study seeks to unravel the usage of social media in bantering and bullying an ethnic group based on previous events undertaken by some members of that particular group. Some social media users transfer ethnic sentiments to the media space and perceive the outcome of societal occurrences based on the success or failure of actions that one ethnic group had taken in recent times. The study examines how ethnic sentiments influence further engagements in the digital space. Social media comments that ensued as a result of the fallout from the 2023 presidential election where each of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups presented presidential candidates formed the data for this study. Qualitative content analysis was adopted as the methodology to analyse user-generated content in the study. Thirty-eight online tweets with two hundred and twenty comments on X (formerly Twitter) were purposively selected to unravel ethnic jingoism and banters expressed by users. Uses and Gratifications Theory provides the theoretical grounding for proper analysis of the study. The study reveals that motives, choices and needs shape the interest of media users and consequently determine their devotion for the achievement of intended satisfactions. Issues that threaten national cohesion and peaceful coexistence among social media audience should be strictly avoided by users because they constitute nuisance to the sociological and psychological wellbeing of the audience.

Keywords: Banter; bullying; ethnic chauvinism; ethnic identity; gratification; politics; social media platform

Introduction

The proliferation of digital platforms has revolutionised how people connect, communicate, and distribute information. Sites like Facebook, X, Instagram, Tik Tok or YouTube are the main digital platforms where people show their individual identities, thoughts and values due to the emergence of the platforms being deeply embedded into every day human life, shaping public opinion, political movements and social conversation (Fuchs, 2017). These platforms allow users to have public and private conversations,

influencing the way people connect worldwide (Tufekci, 2015). Equally, while improved connectivity has had positive influences, digital platforms have also been criticized for furthering the dissemination of harmful ideals, including ethnic jingoism.

Ethnic chauvinism, the belief that one's ethnic group is better than others, generally through articulation of discriminatory practices, hate speech and demonization of ethnic minorities (Del Vicario, Vespignani, Bessi, Zollo, Caldarelli & Quattrociocchi, 2016; Smith, 2020). Its promotion on digital platforms, as opine by Putman (2000), is an issue of great concern that needs to be addressed, especially in pluralistic societies where social harmony serves as a guarantee for peace and stability. Social cohesion is an important aspect of democratic governance and collective wellbeing, which refers to the unity, trust, and mutual respect within a society (Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz & Cuddy, 2016). In contrast, the propagation of ethnic chauvinism is likely to sabotage these very principles by creating divisions and disputes instead of unity. The proliferation of ethnic extremism in cyberspace will have far reaching and dire implications for social cohesion, especially in ethnically, racially, or culturally plural societies (Taskeen, Saleem & Shehzadi, 2014; An, Wanner, Yu & Ono, 2017). When chauvinistic narratives proliferate on the Internet, they can exacerbate social divides by reinforcing stereotypes, entrenching prejudice and sowing distrust between ethnic groups (Kteily et al, 2016; Bakshy, Messing & Adamic, 2015. Papageorgiou and Papaioannou (2018) have shown that settings with negative, ethnocentric content lead to more toxicity and less productive online discourse. The detrimental effect of the spread of ethnic chauvinism - dissolution of social basis of life, leads to the destruction of mutual understanding between different ethnic groups (Mbachirin, 2018; Ayantayo, 2021; Dubinsky & Harvey, 2022). Consequently, digital platforms inadvertently promote ethnic chauvinism by giving disproportionate attention to extremist viewpoints, which undermines the possibility of constructive, balanced conversations.

Raising digital platforms to top level as the main ground for public debate, the scope of online interaction has a barefaced impact on societal unity in general. Therefore, this work portrays the mechanisms through which digital platforms foster ethnic chauvinism, it also highlights the influence of algorithms as well as anonymity, echo chambers, and filter bubbles in fostering such content and how it may potentially undermine trust and mutual respect in society. This study is unique as it is undertaken to unravel the usage of social media in bantering and bullying an ethnic group; unmask how ethnic sentiments influence further engagements on the digital space.

Literature Review

1. Language in the Social Media: Instrument for Promoting Ethnic Identity

Language is germane to the culture of any community as it reflects the thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs and the experiences of a people in a logical and symbolic way (Alolade, 2021). It has been established that the mechanism which possesses cultural and linguistic assets by enabling users to strive for fluency, comfort and high status is language. Craith (2007) has it that language is used by the speakers to achieve economic, social, cultural and political power as well as status, both in local and global society which is subject to change and can be used to demonstrate human complexity. The usage of language has been lucid on the social scale which include prestige, honour and educational credentials such that the tendency to use it appropriately becomes a means of consolidating one's credibility on digital platforms as privilege and prestige can be transmitted through the contents that describes the perceptions and interests of users on social media (Tufekci, 2015; Ogundeyi et al., 2024).

Social media has been fundamental in providing viable alternative to a form of media that is bedevilled with accessibility and censorship (traditional media) by promoting civic engagement, amplifying marginalized voices and encouraging online discourses (Saaida & Alhouseini, 2023; Bakenne & Salawu, 2025). The new media has successfully promoted the vacuum for users to engage in various discussions through online platforms. This is possible as it has become a veritable platform where users interact either in real time or asynchronously with audience who derive value from user-generated content and perception of interaction with others (Ayanwale et al., 2025). Various applications on social media were devised in a way

that users can choose their followers or contents that they can like and unlike (Babatunde & Ayanwale, 2023). Also, users at times post their contents in the public domain such that its access will not be limited to those who follow or like their pages (Figueiredo & Bolano, 2017). One thing that is worthy of note is that users deploy specific dictions and writing styles to enlighten, persuade, inform, educate or entertain their audience (Ishaya & Jen, 2021; Ogundeyi et al., 2024) and reveal their identity due to its utility as an inescapable chunk of everyday life. Here, language functions as an analytical instrument for users to present situations and thus distinguish their ethnicity in more dignifying manners (Gershon & Manning, 2014).

Issues of ethnicity, in the contemporary African society and beyond, is gaining prominence as people mirror their ethnic group in the face of other ethnic groups. The consciousness to maintain ethnic loyalty and identity is deeply entrenched and accorded higher premium in people through their lives, ethnic, interest and considerations (Mbachirin, 2018). Ethnic idea is how people see their ethnicity in the face of other ethnic groups. It has to do with the way people regard the identity of their group in comparison with other ethnicity (Taskeen et al., 2014). An, Wanner, Yu & Ono (2017) are of the view that ethnic language is a medium for sustaining ethnic identity, heritage culture, and an exchange of information. It is used to sustain the behaviour, emotion, and cognition of ethnic members. Ethnic identity is a concept that deals with several dimensional issues which encompass sense of belongings, status identity, knowledge, attitudes, cultural traditions and pride that people hold about their ethnic group through language (Figueiredo & Bolano, 2017). However, people use language to oppress, especially when a person is from a dominant ethnic group. It is used as a tool to cause gratuitous societal pain and punishment upon non-dominant ethnolinguistic groups and individual members of such groups, who can, in response, be motivated in using language to provide needed revenge and punishment on the majority ethnic group through collective efforts of members of minority group (Del Vicario et al., 2016; Dubinsky & Harvey, 2022; Jimada, 2024).). People hold ethnocentric opinion for certain reasons which has surreptitiously crept into their disposition about issues on social media (Ayantayo, 2021). Notably, on X, 'ibobotamus,' 'Yorubastards,' 'Ibo pigs,' 'yanmirin,' are few among the demeaning expressions that users on the X deploy to banter and bully the ethnic group that they oppose.

2. Ethnic Dynamics and Media Narratives of Post 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria

In Nigeria, one of the factors responsible for the advancement of political discourse and political participation on social media is the right to freedom of speech and expression which is enshrined in Section 39 (1) of the Nigerian 1999 constitution as amended. However, social media users fail to understand that there is a limitation to the exercise of the freedom of speech. In the course of 2023 presidential election, social media was a tool extensively employed by presidential candidates presented by different political parties and their supporters (Aliede & Oyelakun, 2023). This is in concord with the submission of Ashibogwu (2023), asserting that political candidates have been on-boarded into the digital space solely for political reasons. Furthermore, Zambuk (2023) and Ayobolu (2024) succinctly evinced that in spite of its seemingly 'success', numerous challenges that bedevilled the 2023 presidential election include the menace of political vehemence, terrorisation, propaganda, disinformation, misinformation, manipulation of public opinion, and threat of cyber-attacks, religion and ethnicity. These were propagated and promoted with the use of social media bots and trolls to negatively inhibiting national cohesion, peace development and growth.

Ethnocentrism is not just a common phenomenon among political adherents; some of the debates around politics of ethnicity and religion were set as agenda by the aspirants themselves, especially when campaigning in their own region or among their own people. In an attempt to secure the loyalty and subsequently the votes of their constituency, such political aspirants tend to appeal to religious and ethnic sentiment of his people. For example, Atiku Abubakar, a presidential candidate of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), in an engagement with the Northern Elders Forum, a northern Nigerian socio-cultural assembly, remarked that "Northerners would reject Yoruba and Igbo contestants for the presidency of 2023 elections because he is the only Pan-Nigerian deserving Northern votes" (Jimada, 2024). Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) was also accused of playing ethnicity and religion in Anambra, a state dominated by Christians.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu was famous for the Yoruba slogan "Emi lokan (it is my turn)" (Altay, Berriche & Acerbi, 2023).

Figure 1: BBC News Pidgin (2023, February 27)

In lieu of the 2023 presidential election, 18 presidential candidates from different political parties were registered and certified by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) sequence to a very dramatic primary election across those political parties (Zambuk, 2023). The final results of the presidential election as declared by INEC triggered series of controversy across the three major ethnic groups within the country. Gyimah-Boadi (2009) posits that post-election events, such as peaceful transition of government and preservation of human right, are crucial in sustaining a poll's viability. Consequent to the official declaration of 2023 presidential election results by INEC, social media users took to different platforms to register either their satisfaction or protest the results of the election. Gradually, ethnic sentiments began to creep in as each ethnic group attempt to superimpose their candidate above others.

Furthermore, Odogwu (2023) opines that following the 2023 elections, there was an obvious emergence of a paradigm shift, where electorates place candidates above political parties, which was an offshoot of the displeasure among electorates as a result of perceived lacunas in the outgoing governments, not minding party affiliation. It would not be out of place to posit that power zoning method among the three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba), adopted by political parties in Nigeria is a causative factor in this regard (Morah & Nwafor 2024).

3. Uses and Gratification Theory

Use and Gratification Theory (UGT) is a theory of communication that had been applied across various fields that include tourism, mass media, commerce, sociology, management and others (Egede, 2013; Kasirye, 2022; Falgoust et al., 2022). Though propounded in the first half of 20th century, it was formalized and expanded by Jay Blumler, Elihu Katz and Micheal Gurevitch in the 1970s (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973).

The theory suggests that people actively choose and use the media to satisfy certain needs as media users are goal-oriented and actively participate in the communication processes (Thurlow, Tomic & Lengel, 2004). UGT avers that people as active users of media consciously select the type of media and how they utilize it (Kasirye, 2022). The theorists opine that the motivations to use the media affect the extent at which individuals are dependent on it (Egede, 2013) as media consumers look for a media source that best suits their needs. These needs are classified into affective, cognitive, personal, integrative, and tension-free (Kasirye, 2022: Moon et al., 2022).

There are five fundamental concepts that UGT can be categorized into as puts forward by Moon et al (2022) include active audience, social and psychological needs, strong motives for media use, expectancy (potential gratifications), and gratifications.

1. Active Audience: The germane assumption of UGT suggests that users of the media actively and consciously decide on the content they consume (Moon et al., 2022; Falgoust et al., 2022). The

activities of users are guided by the choice of satisfying their needs (Ferris et al., 2021). They are not passive in their usage because of their perception as active users who organize and manage communication process. The media behaviour and expectations are determined by the perceptions of the users who select from various types of the media and how specific messages can be interpreted in a particular situation (Moon et al., 2022). Individuals tend to actively display various amount of activity in different communication settings and at various time in the communication process.

2. Social and psychological needs: Audiences do not utilize the media in isolation but they deploy the media as members of groups and then participate in social situations (Moon et al., 2022) because their psychological and sociological dispositions affect their choices (Ferris et al, 2021). The users deploy choices to satisfy audience needs by seeking information and providing social education (Moon et al., 2022). This is supported by Falgoust et al, (2022) who argue that media is at loggerhead with other sources to satisfy needs as individual psychosocial differences and environmental contexts affect platform-specific motivations and the satisfaction obtained through media usage (Thurlow & Poff, 2013). These needs are classified into affective, cognitive, personal identity/interaction, social interaction and integration and tension-free (Kasirye, 2022: Moon et al., 2022).

   i. Cognitive need is described by Kasirye (2022) as extracting knowledge and information through the understanding, examination and prying into people's social environments. This need stresses that users choose particular media simply because they are searching for some information and facts which they know the media will provide.

   ii. Affective needs are appealing experiences and needs that relate to pleasure. People use different types of media for personal needs which are pleasurable and or emotional. Though there is need to understand how to cope under certain emotional situations as a particular need may produce certain reaction in a person if not handled with knowledge (Moon et al., 2022).

   iii. Personal identities or interactive needs imply that people choose to use different media platforms to gain credibility and raise their status among their fellows. This particular need is essential to people because it touches their inner feelings. The need concerns self-esteem, personal stability, self-respect, self-confidence, integrity and social status among others (Kasirye, 2022).

   iv. Social interaction and integration needs relate to interacting with family, friends, and relatives. In the contemporary age of technology, users deliberately use different platforms to satisfy their desires of interacting with their family relations and friendship. The need is motivated with the desire to show affiliation with other people, feel a connection to the outside world from their location. This may happen by exchanging information on what each person enjoys while on television, social media, or even on media website (Ferris et al., 2021).

   v. Tension release need (escapism) is a situation that warrants users to use a particular media because they want to escape a specific unpleasant situation and take their minds off the issues that could have been bothering them. This is usually done in anticipation that the time one will spend on a particular media programme will help them calm down and or grab their attention from what was bothering them and instead decide to concentrate on the media programme (Thurlow et al., 2013; Kasirye, 2022).

3. Strong motives for media use: The media is examined to be goal-oriented as audiences have premeditated interests based on their activities (Falgoust et al., 2022). The disposition that influence people's actions can be identified to be their motive as it determines the actions they take to fulfil their needs or wants (Moon et al, 2022). These motives can be to pass time, forget an issue (means of diversion), learn etc. The motives can also be for arousal, relaxation, companionship, or as a habit (Thurlow & Poff, 2013).

4. Expectancy (Potential Gratifications): The concept of expectancy suggests that media users act based on perceived possibility that an action will definitely produce a particular result among the audience. Users also go ahead to assess, appraise, calculate and rank the outcome (Moon et al., 2022). These users are aware that the motivation for using the media is primarily to satisfy needs but the need can

be evaluated. This pattern of media use is expected to produce different consequences as needs, motives and uses determine the potential consequence of users (Falgoust et al., 2022).

5. Gratifications: This concept is somehow vague and implicit based on the perception of individuals but some scholars are of the opinion that the intention that media users have in mind with the anticipation that such intention will be satisfied is their gratification, thus, it is referred and interchanged as satisfaction. This satisfaction is classified into gratifications sought and gratifications obtained (Moon et al., 2022). That is the reason it is the exclusive reserve of the audience to evaluate content presented by the media and the gratification obtained from the usage (Falgoust et al, 2022).

Scholars are of the view that users seek digital platforms where interpersonal needs, motives, choices and uses are subsumed into the fundamentals of UGT (Egede, 2013; Ferris et al., 2021). By strengthening the linkages within ethnic communities, these forums can reinforce common beliefs and occasionally biases. By this, attempts to promote social cohesion may be undermined via these contacts which can deepen the links within communities but also alienate out-groups and increase ethnic conflicts.

The choice of this theory in driving issues of ethnocentric jingoism on the digital platforms is in tandem as users intentionally select media in order to meet their needs. UGT focuses on consumption of individual from the media, their choices and uses as the same media is explored by different audience due to their different needs. The consumers of the media identify their needs and select the media that is suitable to satisfy such needs. This is possible as the theory identifies users as active consumers that have the initiative to select the media that suit them (Moon et al., 2022).

Methodology

The study adopts quality content analysis to analyse user-generated content in form of tweets as content analysis can be employed to examine a corpus (collection) of users' comments (Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2022). User-generated content, in form of data, was contextually interpreted to identify or interpret related contents that reflect banter, bully and ethnic sentiment on X based on previous actions undertaken by members of a particular ethnic group. Purposively, the content on these themes were followed from January 15, 2024 to February 27, 2025 in order to understand how these issues are linked with ethnic chauvinism and the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

This study examines tweets of social media users to answer questions such as: 'do users employ social media in bantering and bullying an ethnic group? how does ethnic sentiments influence further engagements on digital space of X users?' Purposive sampling was employed to get tweets of social media users who harass a particular ethnicity on X to form the focus of this study. Specifically, snowball or chain approach of purposive sampling was adopted by identifying participants that are relevant to the study and, at the same time, leading to other participants who share similar interests. This notion is supported by Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) who posit that in purposive sampling, snowball or chain sampling helps in identifying a participant who leads to other participants that share the same characteristics. This approach also ensures the location of quality sample without prejudice and bias in order to increase the validity and reliability of the findings so that the paradigm can be used to generalize the whole population. Specifically, incidence of banter, bully and ethnic chauvinism were selected under the hashtags #2023PresidentialElection, #Obidient, #Obidense, #Obidiot, #Obingo, #Atikulate #Yorubastards, #Skullminer #Igbo, #YorubaRonu, #Ronu and #Hausa. The purpose of exploring different X handle was to unravel the usage of social media in bantering and bullying an ethnic group based on previous events undertaken by some members of that particular group.

The researchers first examined the tweets of thirty-eight (38) X users before going through the comments of their followers. Number of views, likes, reposts, comments, quotes and bookmarks that were generated as traffic for each of the tweets form the engagement on the tweets. Not more than five comments were examined from each tweet as snowball or chain sampling of the tweet. Altogether, approximately two hundred and twenty (220) online comments were considered in this study. Initially, it was intended to garner more than 220 comments but the tweets have reached saturation as tweets were being repeated

intermittently, hence, the researchers had to put a stop to gathering of data. These tweets and comments were generated after Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections. The selection of the tweets was determined by the researchers' explorations on X platform.

The Findings

A thematic analysis was used to categorise data into three themes, namely: analysis of ethnic groups bantered and bullied based on selected posts, engagement on the posts of selected X users who bantered and bullied ethnic group, and engagement on the selected comments of the posts of selected X users who bantered and bullied ethnic group.

Table 1. Analysis of ethnic groups bantered and bullied based on selected posts

SN	Ethnic Groups		
	Hausa	**Igbo**	**Yoruba**
1.	@Waspapping_	@twuyi68	@Happinessajayi5
2.	@kj_Janus	@Odunsi047407	@owolanky
3.	@BoluTife	@GOSBIZ	@chiditweets042
4.	-	@ifeanyiakorjuru	@vanidasuwan_01
5.	-	@firstladyship	@GoziconC
6.	-	@VisionNetwork01	@HauwaAllahbura
7.	-	@NoNonsensezone	@yomiable
8.	-	@BayoBilisi	@voiceofigbos
9.	-	@Riddwane	@ala_nso
10.	-	@GuyMrO	@IamTobbee
11.	-	@absoluteOMP	@AJSilverCFC
12.	-	@faveszn	@leoleoqueen
13.	-	@MakeNaijaGA	@Unabombaar
14.	-	@omolisabi1	@rusticfunmi
15.	-	@chukatweet	@akinalabi
16.	-	@ChinasaNworu	@AKakanfo
17.	-	@EjioforBar	@Manlike_ED
18.	-	@247IGBO	-
Total	**03 (7.9%)**	**18 (47.3%)**	**17 (44.7%)**

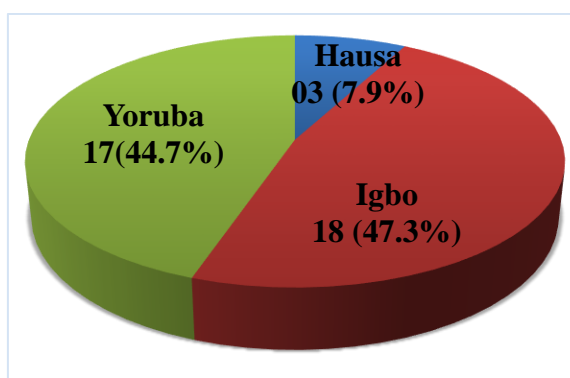The information in the table can be represented using Pie chart thus:

Figure 2: Representation of ethnic groups based on ethnic banter and bullying

The table indicates that Hausa ethnic group is engaged in online banter and bully in three posts which is 7.9% of the selected posts while Igbo is engaged in eighteen and at 47.3%. The Yoruba is bantered and bullied in seventeen posts, relatively at 44.7% in the online content. Unfortunately, some of the ethnic groups were being bullied while exchanging banter on X.

The presence of Hausas on the digital platforms has been less obvious; their contributions to issues of ethnic sentiment have been less prominent, thus being dormant on discourse that pertains to ethnicity on social media. However, the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups were well occupied on bantering and bullying

each other probably due to political differences in their history and the fallout from the last national election in the country. This is in agreement with Peterson and Peterson's (2014) study on cyberbullying and race which pronounce that users utilize the social media to promote preconceive ideas and, at the same time, voice ethnocentric opinions through verbal abuse and harassment towards a particular ethnic group. Christian-Achinihu (2024) is also of the view that cyber representation does not only spark divisive discussions but also acted as a platform where cyberbullying thrives in order to exchange insults, banter and spread information. The thematic issues that led to bullying emanated from post-election crises, with the ethnic groups using their indigenous language to bully their fellow countrymen.

Table 2. Engagement on posts of selected x users who bantered and bullied ethnic group

SN	X Users	No of Views	No of Reposts	No of Quotes	No of Likes	No of Comments	No of Bookmarks
1.	@twuyi68	174	01	-	03	02	-
2.	@Odunsi047407	1,349	03	-	20	-	01
3.	@GOSBIZ	49.6k	30	07	392	190	10
4.	@Happinessajayi5	1347	-	01	01	01	-
5.	@ifeanyiakorjuru	5810	28	02	39	08	12
6.	@owolanky	2954	32	07	136	02	01
7.	@Waspapping_	490k	495	273	4976	1.7k	205
8.	@firstladyship	280k	1372	55	337	142	30
9.	@VisionNetwork01	15.3k	70	07	231	104	09
10.	@NoNonsensezone	16.5k	216	13	431	82	30
11.	@BayoBilisi	35.9k	286	11	773	100	35
12.	@chiditweets042	82.4k	423	11	1785	116	32
13.	@vanidasuwan_01	5,763	64	02	314	52	-
14.	@kj_Janus	881	13	-	48	04	02
15.	@GoziconC	121	346	11	2048	127	48
16.	@HauwaAllahbura	113k	65	125	377	254	30
17.	@yomiable	33.1k	181	08	602	69	28
18.	@voiceofigbos	952	23	01	49	26	03
19.	@ala_nso	6825	53	-	223	20	02
20.	@IamTobbee	4689	02	-	88	09	-
21.	@Riddwane	151k	224	49	721	319	44
22.	@GuyMrO	38.2k	168	05	731	-	21
23.	@absoluteOMP	61.1k	339	17	831	157	144
24.	@faveszn	665k	2,322	561	12.2k	1.3k	326
25.	@AJSilverCFC	2.1m	1,030	838	10.3k	841	482
26.	@leoleoqueen	12k	160	-	598	16	40
27.	@MakeNaijaGA	2,640	09	-	30	02	03
28.	@BoluTife	28k	224	08	787	57	19
29.	@omolisabi1	11.8k	88	-	57	59	05
30.	@Unabombaar	422k	421	121	1,064	541-	355
31.	@rusticfunmi	274k	1,921	31	7,488	141	249
32.	@chukatweet	274k	300	211	1,742	303	196
33.	@ChinasaNworu	892	151	02	96	03	01
34.	@akinalabi	79.7k	349	81	1,224	112	445
35.	@AKakanfo	10k	57	01	236	09	10
36.	@EjioforBar	-	569	01	370	21	-
37.	@Manlike_ED	15.4k	152	11	638	120	19
38.	@247IGBO	134K	1,204	46	2,878	197	319
	Total	**5.29m**	**13,391**	**2,517**	**54.8k**	**7.2k**	**3,156**

From the table above, over five million two hundred and ninety thousand (5.29m) people viewed tweets from selected thirty-eight (38) X (formerly Twitter) users. Thirteen thousand, three hundred and ninety-one (13,391) people reposted the selected tweets. Two thousand five hundred and seventeen (2,517) people quoted the posts. Over fifty-four thousand, eight hundred (54.8k) pressed the like button on the selected tweets to show their preference for the tweets. Seven thousand, two hundred and more (7.2k) users

commented on the selected tweets. While three thousand one hundred and fifty-six (3,156) users bookmarked the tweets in order to read the tweets later or make it a point of reference in the future. This is in line with the view of Figueiredo and Bolano (2017) who argue that algorithm on the media is the computational system that takes some set of values which transform input into output based on how users command the media software. Saaida and Alhouseini (2023) are equally of the notion that the impressions of the users are used to propagate their agendas, control information and suppress conflicting ideas.

Table 3. Engagement on Selected Comments of Posts of Selected X Users who Bantered and Bullied Ethnic Groups

SN	X Users	No of Views	No of Reposts	No of Likes	No of Comments	No of Bookmarks
1.	@twuyi68	41	01	01	-	-
2.	@Odunsi047407	-	-	16	-	-
3.	@GOSBIZ	20.3k	03	137	27	01
4.	@Happinessajayi5	-	-	110	-	-
5.	@ifeanyiakorjuru	261	-	01	01	-
6.	@owolanky	134	-	-	04	-
7.	@Waspapping_	145.8k	100	1,499	137	30
8.	@firstladyship	24.7k	43	485	12	-
9.	@VisionNetwork01	2118	03	42	28	-
10.	@NoNonsensezone	5320	03	27	14	-
11.	@BayoBilisi	5981	14	175	09	-
12.	@chiditweets042	20.7k	07	327	64	-
13.	@vanidasuwan_01	3,687	01	102	17	-
14.	@kj_Janus	241	01	15	05	-
15.	@GoziconC	40.1k	17	559	67	-
16.	@HauwaAllahbura	22k	39	499	24	-
17.	@yomiable	9.6k	10	180	29	-
18.	@voiceofigbos	-	-	01	136	-
19.	@ala_nso	496	-	04	03	-
20.	@IamTobbee	5231	-	60	10	-
21.	@Riddwane	48k	13	416	43	-
22.	@GuyMrO	6901	15	136	-	-
23.	@absoluteOMP	19.4k	07	184	24	-
24.	@faveszn	76.5k	155	2,298	184	-
25.	@AJSilverCFC	205.5k	234	2.5k	168	-
26.	@leoleoqueen	1501	02	48	10	-
27.	@MakeNaijaGA	09	-	-	-	-
28.	@BoluTife	2.2k	01	39	01	-
29.	@omolisabi1	4,582	05	82	02	-
30.	@Unabombaar	65.6	26	302	07	-
31.	@rusticfunmi	69.6k	48	1,295	95	-
32.	@chukatweet	72.5k	51	185	62	-
33.	@ChinasaNworu	38	-	-	-	-
34.	@akinalabi	10.8k	07	39	04	-
35.	@AKakanfo	2549	03	68	-	-
36.	@EjioforBar	-	02	01	-	-
37.	@Manlike_ED	7.05k	23	133	11	-
38.	@247IGBO	30.8	55	282	09	-
	Total	**1.28m**	**889**	**12,248**	**1,207**	**31**

From the selected comments from the tweets, the engagement of the tweets indicates that over one million, two hundred and eighty thousand (1.28m) people view their comments, eight hundred and eighty-nine (889) repost their comments, twelve thousand two hundred and forty-eight (12,248) users like their comments, one thousand, two hundred and seven (1,207) people made comments on their comments which became a thread. Thirty-one (31) people bookmarked their comments to read at a later time. The media impressions above is an indication that new media occupies more space in individual lives through their interactions and construction in the flow of discourse to control individual's interaction on digital networks

(Figueiredo & Bolano, 2017) and at the same time show ethnic prejudice through their responses and comments to promote inclusion or exclusion (Ayantayo, 2021).

Discussion

This study raised three key themes on the usage of social media in bantering and bullying and an ethnic group based on previous events undertaken by some members of that particular group to answer the research questions: Do users employ social media in bantering and bullying an ethnic group and does ethnic sentiment influence further engagements on the digital space? The first key possibility is that users on the X platform consciously choose the contents they want to post for the consumption of their audience in order to organize and manage communication process. They manipulate the perceptions of their audience, as Ferris, Hollebaugh and Sommer (2021) put it, so the audience can imbibe the desire of the users which is the need they want to satisfy. This enable them to select X platform from the array of platforms because banter and bully can be best interpreted in situations where the post can easily be accessed among vast people (Moon et al, 2022; Adeyeye & Salawu, 2025). Secondly, the users display names, which are not necessarily their actual names as their handle, primarily to drive their ethnic intentions, these attract traffic and impressions on their tweets. In like manner, the audience display variety of activities that ranges from view to likes, reposts, comments, quotes, and bookmark so that you can read or use the content displayed at a later time. These activities make the audience to be overly sensitive in the communication process (Egede, 2013). Their psychological and sociological dispositions to issues are dependent on the psychosocial differences and the environmental contexts they find themselves.

Also, the findings of study indicate that the tendency for social media users to identify with an ethnicity, just as stated by Mbachirin (2018) that need for identity is driven by essentialism, instrumentalism, construction and institutionalism, is crucial because ethnic consciousness enunciates entrenched sentiments which can be utilized for personal advantage. The need for cyberbullying was necessitated by the struggle to gain presidential power in the country in which an ethnic group got the power and others do not.

From the foregoing notions, the findings show that users banter and bully an ethnic group by deploying derogatory name-calling in order to dent the image of an ethnic group. This corroborates Ayantayo's (2021) opinion that people with ethnocentric opinion intentionally use demeaning expressions to decorate the ethnic group that they oppose. There is indiscriminate use of linguistic features that include invective/insults and qualifiers are used to generate sentiments on the digital platforms. Though the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) is expected to control the usage of unpleasant expressions on social media like x where user believe they are free to tweet.

Similarly, the users who post contents on the media have specific needs which they intend to meet. Passionately, users compose content that they present to their audience who comment in support or against their view. The notion agrees with the ideal of gratification sought and gratification obtained which indicate that the desire of the users (gratification sought) is satisfied by the people who comment on their posts (gratification obtained) based the choice that their audience make (Moon et al, 2022; Falgoust et al, 2022).

Conclusion

This study revealed that the connection between digital and ethnic chauvinism on X platform, posing a complicated challenge for contemporary societies, especially in respect to social unity and online discussion. It is discovered that users on the X platform consciously choose the contents they want to post for the consumption of their audience in order to organize and manage the communication process. They manipulate the perceptions of their audience in imbibing the desire they want to satisfy. Users deliberately take up names that drive ethnic intentions, attract traffic and impressions on their tweets while audience display activities that indicate their presence on the tweets. It is also discovered that ethnic consciousness enunciates entrenched sentiments which were utilized for personal advantage as users banter and bully an ethnic group by deploying derogatory name-calling in order to dent the image of such ethnic group.

These peculiarities have enabled the dissemination of harmful beliefs and the creation of online groups that strengthen biased and exclusionary perspectives from members of an ethnic group towards

another. The erosion of social cohesion has resulted in widening societal rifts, inter-group conflict and eroding mutual trust which are detrimental to the existence of multicultural societies where inclusivity and collaboration are crucial for sustaining peace. The prevalent ethnocultural marginalisation and stigmatisation compromise the fundamental ideals of equality and common identity essential for democratic and collective welfare.

It is therefore recommended that the adoption of clear and efficient content moderation strategies; promotion of algorithmic modifications that emphasise variety of viewpoints; and creation of online spaces that stimulate courteous discussion, can be guided to enhance constructive social interactions. It is also incumbent on all platform operators to tackle harmful contents as policymakers are expected to promote digital atmospheres that prioritise respect, inclusivity and positive interaction. In achieving this, one can leverage on the advantages of digital spaces to foster social unity and establish platforms where people from diverse background, ethnicity, and cultural beliefs can participate in significant and respectful discussions.

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