

Hate Speech in Religious Discourse: A Study of Apostle Johnson Suleiman and Bishop Oyedepo's Sermons

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Abstract

This study is a religious discourse on hate speech, using Apostle Suleiman and Bishop Oyedepo's speeches as a case study. Many researchers have dived into research on religious discourse, some of the prominent names are Talal Asad, Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood but much has not been achieved, especially in the field of hate speech. It is this questioning gap that this research wants to lay its thrust on. Search engines like Chrome, Google etcetera were used as medium to get their sermons online for study, while Apostle Suleiman and Bishop Oyedepo were the clergymen selected for this work, and their data were chiefly used. This study revealed that hate speech varies and could be in support of an opinion or against it, moreover, hate speeches were/are made by individuals especially, clergymen in addressing strong situations. Judging from what this research came across, it is recommendable that the house of senate and other bodies in charge of both religious and social affairs should look into religious hate speech and come to resolution on whether to sustain it or consider placing it under a ban.

Keywords: Hate Speech, Religious Discourse, Apostle Suleiman and Bishop Oyedepo's Speeches.

Introduction

It is surprising that Nigerian churches and other religious bodies in Nigeria which are perceived as house of worship are derailing from the doctrine, norm and tradition of which formed their religious faith and foundation. Hate speeches are provocative utterances which promote violence and conflict, religious leaders, through their words can incite or condone hate speeches. Their platform could be used by them to promote intolerance or indiscrimination against certain set of people, their speeches can also encourage others to take drastic harmful actions against the people in question. Bishop Oyedepo accepts that you cannot beat a child and tell him or her not to cry, he believes so much that the use of hate speech is the only avenue that will make the voice of the people especially depressed ones to be heard and watch the affected people swing into action for good, this is one of the captions of his speeches: Oyedepo's Speeches" "Bishop Oyedepo Condemns Hate Speech Bill, Tells Nigerians To Be Critical Of Government"- 4th Dec. 2019. "Church Gist - Bishop Oyedepo for against Hate Speech..." etcetera. Oyedepo sees hate speech as a form of blasphemy to religion and a threat to the values of religion. Apostle Suleiman, on the other hand, is an anti-gay hate preacher who strongly supports the opinion which states that lesbianism, gay should not be welcomed, he perceives it as a severe danger to the morality of the people which in turn, will demote the standard of people's well-being. In 2016, he called for the arrest and the imprisonment of people who are identified under LGBTQ and reemphasized that those set of people are not supposed to be in Nigeria.

The effects of hate speech on the society, individuals, religious bodies, organisations, groups, nations etcetera have posed as threat to the cohesion of a given society therefore has been a topic for discussion. It covers all forms of expressions which promotes unruly behaviour, injustice, insubordination and other examples of humiliation. This study views hate speeches as public speeches that portray dislike or as speeches that encourage violence. In addition, if the issue of hate speech is not addressed properly, it will normalise and with time, will become a part of the system, thereby increasing the rate of crime as words will pose as weapons to influence the negative attitude the speaker has in mind. According to Hernandez (2011); "when hate speech is permitted to be propagated, it encourages a social climate in which particular groups are denigrated and their discriminatory treatment is accepted as normal."

The rate of hate speech in Nigeria is increasing and the users do not know its Implication. The clergy, is not helping matters at all, indirectly, they are teaching the masses through their congregation, planting a wrong seed and ideas in them through their sermons which the listeners may or partially find interest in at the moment. Gradually, the negative messages will seem to make sense to them and this is where its nurture comes in and will finally give birth to violence through explosion by using a particular group to explore their attack because of the negative sentiments those listeners have gotten, sentiments which may or may not true.

Statement of the Problem

It has been discovered that hate speech promotes hatred and unnecessary counter among individuals of different religious setting and is capable of destroying the society's foundation if not handled properly. It promotes personal transformation and freedom of speech.

Religious hate speech is like a canker worm that has eaten deeply into the fibers of Nigeria's places of worship as a result of some of the clergy men seeing their places of worship or their doctrines as being standardised and preferable to other religious bodies. This reason has trampled upon the freedom and inequality of individuals and if allowed to continue will cause more harm to the expectations and target of religions.

It is obvious that many scholars have made attempts on religious discourse, but some of the notable names like Talal Asad, Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood have done research on religious discourse using hate speeches of various religion. Asad's book "Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity" (2003) explores the relationship between religion and secularism, while Hirschkind's book "The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counter publics" (2006) looks at the role of religious discourse in the formation of Islamic communities. Mahmood's book "Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist but much has not been done on the area of using religious discourse to find out why men of God choose hate speech over secular speeches. This work intends to fill the gap by using discourse analysis to re-evaluate the power of languages of hate speeches in sermons using Suleiman and Oyedepo's speeches as a case study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Investigate and understand the level of hate speech messages meted against the worshippers by the two selected Nigerian men of God.
2. Determine the impacts of freedom of speech on the people.
3. Discover the effects of these messages on the listeners and society at large.
4. Grasp the direction hate speech comes from during religious speeches.

Conceptual Framework

Hate Speech

Hate speech means different things to different people. To an average person, it means harmful statements whereas it means more than an insult. Hate speech is designed for humiliation, abuse, to instigate hatred and all manner of severe painful acts that are portrayed through verbal modes, symbols, meme, photos, videos or in physical form. It is perceived as an offensive act notwithstanding the way it comes. Waltman (2015) cited in Waltman & Asheley (2017), define hate speech as a type of deliberate discourse aimed at drawing public attention to social disparities in groups and then manipulating those differences to the benefit of certain groups and the harm of others. This is trying to reveal the power of hate speech on individuals and is capable of constructing a healthy group and a fatal one. The quote also revealed how hate speech could be used to identify the fatal and disastrous group which poses as a threat to the value and the traditions of the healthy group. According to United Nations (2011), "hate speech refers to offensive discourse targeting a group or an individual based on inherent characteristics (such as race, religion or gender) and may threaten social peace". The above quote implies that hate speech is directed to individuals or group of individuals hence does not involve communication or criticism of symbols, public officials, states, religious leaders etcetera. "Hate speech is perceived as any medium of communication whether in oral form (speech), written form or through behaviour with traits of pejorative or discriminatory language which aims at attacking a person or a group on the basis of whom they are, judging from their religion, ethnicity, colour, race, nationality, gender other forms of identity". Kudirat, A. & Ramat, S. (2018).

Bhikkhu (2012 p.56) listed below some examples of hate speech from different countries which are punishable by law as hate speech. They include;

- A. Shouting "[N-words] go home," making monkey noises, and chanting racist slogans at soccer matches.
- B. "Islam out of Britain. Protect the British people."
- C. "Arabs out of France."
- D. "Serve your country, burn down a mosque."
- E. "Blacks are inherently inferior, lecherous, predisposed to criminal activities, and should not be allowed to move into respectable areas."
- F. "Jews are conspiratorial, devious, treacherous, sadistic, child killers, and subversive; want to take over the country; and should be carefully watched."
- G. Distribution by a political party of leaflets addressed to "white fellow citizens" saying that, if it came to power, it would remove all Surinamese, Turks, and other "undesired aliens" from the Netherlands.

- H. A poster of a woman in a burka with text that reads: "Who knows what they have under their sinister and ugly looking clothes: stolen goods, guns, bombs even?"
- I. Speech that either denies or trivializes the holocaust or other crimes against humanity.

How Name-calling is used to Dehumanize the Targets of Hate Speech

We live in a society where communication has become inevitable, increasing in digital form and the act or the process of name-calling is being practiced at high rate. Name-calling, to a great extent, has supported the creation of new words thereby increasing and adding words to the word stock of the language family it found itself. Perpetrators of this act seek refuge on the use of provoking slang in order to get at their victim, using all sorts of ill names to subdue their opponents.

Name-calling is the deliberate use of abusive or insulting language on a person or a group of people so as to express anger or a different negative opinion. It has to do with referring to an individual as an animal, a fool or other non-human thing. This behaviour, though it is common to individuals of a given geopolitical zone, reduces the value and the respect of an individual. They intentionally release those words to instigate shame, pity, belittlement not minding how the receiver(s) will perceive it or feel about the rude word(s).

A word can strengthen individuals either on a negative or a positive note, because it possesses immense power. Mostly, words associated with name-calling originate from education institutions which, with time, spreads across the society. Bullying work together with name-calling, bullying comes as a choice which drives towards the acquisition of power, people's insecurities and to dominate over peers. People use many harsh words on their victims with appalling meanings with the intention of reducing their self esteem, this particular act makes the victims to appear inferior before the manipulators and giving the victims emotional concern. These days, intimidators see name-calling as nothing this is because they feel superior over the rest of the people when using it. Its rampant usage has made it to be prominent, moreover, no serious legal punishment has been attached to it.

Consequently, hate speech and communication cannot do without the other and when it is used or invited in a context, it is either harmful or even beneficial to another.

The National Commission for the Prohibition of Hate Speech Bill was raised and reintroduced in the Senate on November 12 and pegs death as penalty for anyone found guilty of spreading a falsehood that leads to the death of another person.

Understanding the Concept 'Religious Discourse'

The editorial staff of World Atlas website maintained that Nigeria as a nation has over 270 ethnic groups who speak different languages up to 370 in number. Among these indigenous people and migrants are worshippers of different religious group. Claims have been made several times, though it has not been validated, but according to Pew Research Center, (2010, p.21), about half of the population of the people living in Nigeria are Muslims, 40-45 percent are Christians, while 5-10 percent are practice traditional indigenous religion. Drawing facts from this claim, one can denote that Nigeria has three (3) official religions despite other ones in the background. Inasmuch Christianity and Islam are the dominant religion in Nigeria, none is totally free from the influence of traditional religion. All these religions; Christian, Islam, traditional, Hindu etcetera believe in the idea of a supreme being and each nurses the feeling that its own supreme being created heaven and earth and its contents, they also believe in spirit, the owner and sustainer of their lives. They have a name different from what the other religions call theirs, their leaders preach their sermons linking the messages to their doctrine which at the end, gives room for the believers and the listeners to decide which path to take.

There are many different types of religious discourse found in Christianity. For example, the sermons of prominent Christian leaders like Martin Luther and John Calvin contain are great deal of religious discourse. Additionally, the writings of Christian theologians, people like Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas have been very influential in shaping Christian thought. Moreover, the prayers and hymns of the church contain a great deal of religious discourse.

Islamic religious discourse is known as "fiqh," or Islamic jurisprudence. It's a rich tradition that is culled from the Qur'an, Hadith, and other Islamic texts to address a wide range of issues, including theology, law, ethics, and ritual. Some of the most influential works of Islamic religious discourse include the "Mawatha" of Imam Malik, "Al-Risala" by al-Shafi'i, and "The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence" by al-Ghazali.

There are plenty of other sources of Islamic religious discourse that one can explore. The Qur'an itself, is the most important source of religious discourse in Islam. In addition, many Muslim scholars have written commentaries on the Qur'an, such as Ibn Kathir's "Tafsir ibn Kathir" or Al-Tabari's "Tafsir al-Tabari." Many hadith collections

have contributed to the growth of Islamic discourse, such collections include: Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, which are considered authoritative sources of Islamic law and practice.

Islamic and Christian religion could be found in all the areas around the country but each of this official religion has specific states where they could be found and their worshippers in high number. Northern and Western states harbour high number of Islamic structures and members while Christian religion is traceable to the Southern people of Nigeria and the South-Easterners are its chief occupants. Christians' abode for worship is called Church with their chief instructional material known as the Holy Bible, Muslim; mosque with their instructional material Koran and traditional religion; Shrine and its instructional material staff, cowries etcetera. The wide growth and development of Christian religion gave birth to its subdivision, the most popular ones include: Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventist, Presbyterian, Cherubim and Seraph, Living Faith, Christ Embassy etcetera. Today, Christians are spread all over the nation and its sermon at the peak.

Sermon is a form of religious discourse. Wendy D. Cadge and Lisa H. Dahill (2015, p28), Discourses of religion are forms of social interaction in which a connection to religion is foregrounded". Religious discourse could be viewed as a form of communication that gears towards religious beliefs and practices. It uses various platforms to display its work, textual fragments of religious discourse in the form prayers, sermons, catechism, Psalms, pastoral addresses and laudatory prayers.

There are many examples of religious discourse and they vary, each depends on its different religious groups. For instance, in Judaism, the Torah, Talmud, and other Jewish texts contain a wealth of religious discourse. In Christianity, the Bible stands as the central text for religious discourse, and the tradition of Christian theology also contains a great deal of religious discourse. In Islam, the Qur'an and Hadith are key texts, and there is also a rich tradition of theological and mystical discourse in Islam. Each of these religions has its own unique forms of religious discourse, it is their unique nature that mark them out from the other.

According to Stephen, (1982:2021, chapter 3)

The people writing religious texts are often revered and seen to be holding special knowledge - prophets and theologians and the enlightened. They might wear clothes to set them apart. They might write or stand and speak to religious believers from a physical distance. Their words can be seen as inspiring or infallible, or even the very words of the divine. The texts themselves also have power. They can invoke a reality beyond what we can see and they connect the hearer to something beyond themselves, to something ineffable. The words of these texts have power even when they are referred to in passing. The very mention of them has meaning, like a sport fan holding a sign that simply says 'John 3:16'. They have power to make believers act, like when the call to prayer draws people to the neighbourhood mosque.

The language of the religion changes many things when used; mood, behaviour and people's perception over many ideas, in some situations, the listeners feel as if they are in the realm of the spirit because the texts themselves have power and are divine. The words of the religious discourse inspire, it motivated, it invokes unexpected realities and fosters unity in neighborhood as prayers are being made together because its nature has always drawn people to join.

Empirical Review

Bonotti (2017) conducted research on Religious Hate Speech and Non-Domination in the United Kingdom and weighed both the freedom, that is free speech and hate speech, directing them to truth, autonomy and democracy. The study questions the menace of hate speech committed chiefly by religious faithful regarding their religious freedom which should be controlled like every other crime (Bonoti, 2017: 1). The idea supports the fact that in expression of religious freedom, propagation of hatred encourages hostility because hate speech is capable of provoking insecurity and violence for either the victims or the perpetrators. It is hence worthy to note that the domination of hostile languages in the religious affairs should be curtailed to avoid domination which leads to chaos. Before Bonotti's research, Brown (2015) insists that hate speech violates the dignity of their victims; it causes discomfort, distorted progress, jeopardizing cultural diversity and other negativities. Still elaborating the religious perspective of hate speech, ANON (2014) previously has it that even without tagging a religion heathen or satanic, disapproval of religions takes place in expressions of religious messages which amount to denunciation of other religious activities.

Joel (2012) in her study on Ethno-religious Hate Speech in Nigeria maintains that the present conflict between Christian South and Muslim North is as a result of religious hate speech in the country. She therefore warns it should be looked into and strongly maintains that the increasing menace of ethno-religious hate speech witnessing in the country have reshaped the peoples' minds on what speech/statement constitutes hate when it is communicated as comedy and publications in the media.

Total eradication of hate speech among the religious groups in Nigeria will be an obvious threat to the security of Nigeria due to the destructive effect of the menace in Nigeria (as pointed out by Joel) has unconsciously moved Nigerians to the present state of insecurity (Joel, 2012). In the bid to minimize the menace in the country, Mac Arthur Foundation (2012, in Joel, 2012) in 2009 awarded grant of three hundred thousand Dollars as a cushion to eradicating faith-based hate speeches and inculcating the unity of different religions in the nation, given the differences between Christian and Muslims. In line with the above opinion, Maginnis (2012) insists that even in the same religions, hate speech has been directed on other members, he went ahead to use the comment as obviously heard from Muslim that the southern Muslims are partially faithful to their religion, compared to those northern Muslims who claim to be most faithful.

Brown, (2017 p.20) emphasized on the effects of hate speech thus, points out the implications on harm, dignity, security, healthy cultural dialogue, democracy and legitimacy. According to Hernandez (2011), hate speech promotes community discord, harms the target group, and pegs on equality by expressing, supporting, encouraging, promoting, or inciting hatred of a group of people distinguished by a certain trait or combination of qualities.

Mihajlova, Bacovska & Shekerdjiev (2013) went further to suggest that hate speech breeds emotional and psychological distress to victims, it reduces social and entrepreneurial mobility by promoting inequality. It leads to public embarrassment, which endangers the life of an individual and may lead the victims to engaging in anti-social behavior such as drug abuse and alcoholism and it also reduces self-confidence. Mihajlova, Bacovska & Shekerdjiev (2013).

Theoretical Framework

This study is channeled to hate speeches in religious discourse using Foucault's Discourse Theory which believes that religion does not exist in itself. The founder of Foucault's discourse theory, a French philosopher and sociologist, Michel Foucault. Foucault's work on discourse focuses on the ways in which language and power are intertwined, and how discourse shapes our understanding of the world. According to Wijzen, (2013 p.30). "Human practices and artifacts become religious because they are placed in a narrative context by the believers." The author shows how religious identities in Nigeria are constructed through the use of discourse analysis, negotiated and manipulated in order to gain material or symbolic profit.

According to Foucault, discourses are systems of knowledge that produce and maintain power relationships. This means that the way we talk about hate speech, and the way we understand it, can help to maintain systems of power. Foucault's theory suggests that it's important to analyze the way hate speech is used and understood, in order to understand how it can be used to maintain or challenge power structures.

One of the ways to use Foucault's theory to analyze Suleiman and Oyedepo's speeches is to examine how their languages point at certain groups as strangers in a given context. For example, you could look at how they use language to construct minority groups as "lesser" or "inferior." This type of analysis could help to understand how hate speech can be used to maintain systems of power and inequality. Foucault's discourse theory could be applied to the study of hate speech in several ways. It could be used to understand the social and political power dynamics of Suleiman and Oyedepo's speeches. Foucault's theory suggests that language is a means of exercising power, and so it could be used to examine how Suleiman and Oyedepo use language to exert power over their listeners. However, Foucault's theory could be used to examine the relationship between knowledge and power in their speeches.

Foucault argued that knowledge and power are intimately bound up, this is to say that one cannot be separated from the other. The importance of this theory to this study is that it serves as a reminder that the sermon has a social responsibility to the people. As a result, its users must make sure that their statements on either social media or outside it are socially acceptable, particularly when dealing with clergymen.

Methodology

This research employed the use of electronic discourse by visiting YouTube to collect the live sermons from these clergymen in order to have the exact words the men used during their preaching that made their sermons to be hate speech-related.

Data Presentation

Apostle Johnson Suleman's Sermons

Apostle Suleman fights against Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders and Queers/Questioning. (LGBTQ) through hate speech.

Excerpts Text 1:

**i don't hate yahoo boys - #APOSTLE JOHNSON SULEMAN SPEAKS
ASK GOD'S GENERALS
3.3K VIEWS. 3 YEARS AGO**

What is involving, it may start small, it's a matter of time. Do not compete with people. Avoid blood money. Some people don't care, they are duping people, they call them Yahoo, they don't come to this church. They said I don't like them and I don't like them. I don't hate them but I don't like what they do. I like their personality but I hate their character.

"Oh absolutely, Suleman that doesn't like Yahoo Boys". Why? No, what is, what is there in Yahoo for me to like? When you are pressing computer and swindling people and you don't understand something, you get money, you buy a Benz, you buy a car but you have mortgage the future of your children's children, (The congregation giggle). So, you, you are a young man now, eh, eh, nothing will happen to me, nothing. Time will tell, time will tell, time will tell. You get money from people, say, say, say; "Papa, it's not blood money, it's their stupidity, they are mugu, mugu, mugu, they are mugu, we are smart. If you are smart, why did you go to a native doctor to help you? Why didn't you use your wisdom? You go to a Herbalist, you go to a Diviner, to empower you swindle people, why? (Music). Am I communicating here? Make up your mind. If it is not from God, I don't need it, if it's not from God. I have lived like that for years, years upon years and it paid off. Most of the things God has given to me that are very huge, I didn't save money for them, I didn't plan for them, I was just following God.

Excerpts Text 2:

Why are some Christians Stupid?

T. B Joshua is not fake

Johnson Suleman Attacks BBC and said this about T.B Joshua

4.2k Views. 1st February, 2024

A platform that is antichrist, they are the one telling you a man of God..., you are stup... (The congregation scream)

You don't hear God, you hear platform. A platform that is antichrist, a copy, an organisation that does not preach Christ wants to do a documentary to tell us who a man of God is, and you are listening to a documentary that is owned by antichrist and them, they are the one telling you who a man of God is? You are stup... (Congregation shout). You are the one, you that don't preach Christ, you don't allow Christ on your platform. You pull down anything Christ but suddenly, you develop interest to now tell us who is the man of God. I should listen to you when I have the holy ghost? When I can connect directly to heaven, to tell me? Any man you struggle to prove is fake is real because you don't struggle to prove fake, fake shows itself. This is the problem some of you have. One day, hear this, hear this, there is what they called 'Comment Section', have you seen that thing online? It's for lazy people. If you have nothing doing, you go through it.

So, (giggles), one day, no, that thing is deliberately created, carved out for lazy people. One day, one bishop said something about the pastor, I decided to run through. I was just sitting down and I said let me just while. If you see what Christians were saying? "We said it! God is exposing them! This other man said it! That..." I didn't hear; "the holy Spirit told me", I wasn't seeing; 'I had a revelation', no experiential knowledge of God. They found God on social media. Without data, they have no God. Without Wi-Fi, they have no God, because the God they know is online, be careful of an online God. Am I communicating? I've seen people, who the world (speaks in tongue), when you are going through night experience, person will tell you; "God has left you". If you are a prophet, why didn't you see it?

Elisha said; "God has hid it from me". So, no matter the level of accuracy and intensity of your prophetic ministry, there are things God won't tell you because if God tells you everything, you have become like him. If God shows you everything! (Laughs). When people come to my office, there is something they used to do when they come to my office, there is something they used to do when they come to my office, they just sit down, they are looking at me, I said; what? Tell us everything. (The congregation chatter). One lady saw me at the airport, she just grabbed me,

she said; "Are you apostle Suleman?" She was looking at me, I was looking at her. She looked at me, I looked at her. She bent and said; "Do something, what did you see?" I said; "Your nose, your mouth, your eyes." (He laughs alongside the congregation). Some of you came to this conference because you just love God.

Excerpts Text 3

Sunday Service, 15th January, 2017.

Nigeria's Priest Apostle Suleman Urge his followers to Kill Fulani Herdsman

19K View. 7 Years Ago

I've not told my wife, I'm telling you this. Yesterday, she was telling me something and I walked away. Do you know why I walked away? I was battling between telling her or not telling her. Somebody sent me a message and called me on phone and said; "Are you alone? And I said "Yeah". He said; "I wanna talk to you". I said; "What is it?" He said; "There's a plan to send Fulani Herdsmen after you". I said; "After who?" He said; "After you". I said; "Ok". He said; "Why are you saying ok? I'm telling you to be careful". I said; "Careful about what?" He said; "They are gonna run into the road like Herdsmen, begin to cause confusion. While your security men are trying to clear, clear them, and you came out, they will open fire". I said; "Ok". After about a week, after about two weeks, ha called me. He said; "Please, if you don't do that, they might bring them to come around church premises". I said; "Ok. Are you the one they are after? It's me". I said it's ok and told my people, I said; "Any Fulani Herdsmen you see around you, kill him. (Congregation shout). Yesterday, she was talking, I just kept quiet because you know women, there are things you don't tell them and I've told them in the church here, around this premises, that any Fulani Herdsman that just entered by mistake and want to pretend, kill him!! (Congregation shout and hail).

I said I'm not gonna talk this year, so, let me not talk. Am I talking to somebody here? Apostle, why are you saying they should kill somebody? Didn't David kill Goliath? Was that spiritual? Many people in Kaduna are now widows, many people are now fatherless, many are orphans because some people think they own power, kill them. Am I talking to somebody here? Are we Christians? Yes! Are we believers? Yes! You can't be widows, you can't be widowers, you can't be because of some devilish people that said theirs be religion. Am I communicating now? They are shouting; "Biafra wants to go! Biafra wants to go!" Why won't they want to go when you think that the North own the country? Every security operating, every position is for North. Very soon, South-South will start their own truant that they want to go. So, let's leave your cattle for you.

We have lawyers here and we have lawyers in the crowd, there's a lawyer here. Two hundred and twelve people (212) in Kaduna are dead. Nobody is prosecuted, nobody is prosecuted, not one.

Rivers State election, few people died, now there's a panel of enquiry because it's South-South. In a nation, when, in a state when fifty people (50) die, they declare a state of emergency. They caught a Boko Haram member, before we woke up, they said he has escaped. Escaped? And Biafran agitators are still in prison till now and they have not escaped? But Boko Haram member escaped!!

BISHOP DAVID OLANIYI OYEDEPO'S SERMONS

Bishop Oyedepo is of the opinion that the government wants to gag critical voices because it had failed to carry out its constitutional responsibilities. He, therefore, is fighting to defend hate speech.

Excerpts Text I:

Bishop Oyedepo Speaks Against Hate Speech Bill

Crazy idea! So, every wrong, they shouldn't tell you that you are wrong? As in, who are you? That you hanged somebody? Road is bad and you cannot say that road because it's hate speech. Come on now (speaks in tongues, congregation cheer him). You cannot silence anybody who is a prophet.

Excerpts Text 2

BISHOP OYEDEPO SPEAKS ABOUT TRANSENDERS AND GAY MARRIAGE

35 likes 1,250 Views

There were waves of things when we were growing up in the field but my dedication kept me safe from being Di wielded. Every region has waves, waves of unbiblical things. Once you are dedicated, you are dedicated and you are preserved, Amen! Stay dedicated. More waves are comingooo! Unprintable things will be happening in the body of Christ.

Are they not joining same sex today? In the church? You said it's government, no! it's your style, it's your style! Can any government policy make us join man and man here? Then, who will make that policy? Where will it come from? No! no! no!

Is there a day now a brother will now come back and say he is a sister? In this church? We cast him out. Not the spirit, we cast him and bundle him out. It won't happen, it's not in this bible. It's not in the world. Men and female are created in Eden. It's from creation. Your gender is determined, not by scientific, you know, engagement. You better wake up ooo! You fall flat. Covid 19 came, we discontented. I mean, it had no respect and it fled.

Excerpts Text 3:

Bishop Oyedepo Reacts to President Buhari's Illegal Arrest and Hate Speech Bill at Shiloh 2019

Now, they are looking for hate speech, they are not looking for hate act. Which one is worst? Hate speech or hate act? Now you see somebody and cut off his head, then you are free but you say to somebody; 'you are stupid', then you die. Can you imagine that? It is a stone-age mentality but I think you are free from it now (congregation shout yes sir!) there is nothing wrong in trying attempt. You think we are all done with this?

What education do you have? Where did you get it from? Bambooizing everyone. You are not doing well, you are not doing well. They must tell you you are not doing well. What's your problem? (Congregation react heavily). Now hear me, please hear me and answer me. Is this government doing well? (The church echoed 'Nooooo!!!!') what's your problem?

The above sermons were defense against hate speech and the users. Bishop David Oyedepo strongly believed that everybody has equal right to speeches and that channel should not be bridge. He sees the act as a challenge to God and the government and expects the two to act accordingly. In addition, the speeches classified the government and its counterparts as people that are found wanting in their various field, people that turned the law upside down, individuals that are looking for something where they didn't keep it, punishing the masses for their own mistakes, mistakes, that wouldn't lead to hate speech if they were corrected on time.

Discussions and Findings

Traces of hate speech on religious discourse from Suleiman and Oyedepo could be categorized into two sections; for and against hate speech. While Suleiman was making his voice count on the area of hate speech being an enemy to progress, Oyedepo is fighting to see that it is sustained, this is because he believes that freedom of speech is very necessary for social cohesion. Rating Oyedepo's sermons, one can deduce that negative behaviours could be replaced with a positive one through hate speech. Nevertheless, this paper has revealed that hate speech should not be allowed in religion talk more of religious sermons.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has made it obvious that no individual is hate speech free. It also revealed many hate speeches that were made by the clergies especially during sermons, using Apostle Suleman and Bishop Oyedepo as a case study. Most of the speeches from Oyedepo signify strong support for hate speech, he channeled most of his hate speeches on government and politics. Judging from the findings, the researchers suggest that:

1. No form of hate speech should be allowed in religious discourse, hate speech from an innocent mind can still be thwarted by unserious individuals thereby constituting a nuisance.
2. Religious Doctrines should be planned and monitored in such a way that religious leaders won't have any avenue for the display of hate speech.
3. Federal government should set a policy for hate speech, those who deviated will be placed on intensive punishment.
4. Seminars and workshops should be set up for this particular issue in order to sensitize the people on the need to be hate speech free.
5. Campaigns should be organized. Through this medium, greater knowledge of hate speech will spread especially on its illegalities and consequences.

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