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**Journalistic Concern about Uncivil Political Talks in Digital News Media during the  
Electioneering of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria**

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### ABSTRACT

That digital news media now form an integral part of political communication is no longer news. Perhaps what is of more interest now is how to instill more decorum and responsible use of the platforms to make the gains more enduring. This study investigated journalistic concerns about uncivil political talks in digital news media during the electioneering of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the social responsibility theory. The survey research method was adopted. 200 registered journalists were randomly selected from Kaduna, Lagos and Enugu metropolis. Findings reveal that many digital news platforms were used to disseminate hate speeches and inciting messages by politicians and their supporters during the electioneering of the said elections. The study notes that such acts are unethical, unprofessional and condemnable. The study recommends institution of monitoring mechanisms of digital news media to minimize the inherent weaknesses and maximize the intrinsic values in electoral process. It also recommends periodic enlightenment campaign on the political use of digital news media and development of applications to monitor, track and report hate, unruly, uncivil and inciting comments on digital news media.

**KEYWORDS:** Digital News Media. Journalistic Concern. Uncivil Political Talks. 2015 Electioneering. Way out.

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### INTRODUCTION

Though the 2015 general elections in Nigeria have come and gone, but the experiences of the period will go down the memory lane of electoral process in Nigeria as one of the most historic and radical. The reasons are obviously numerous; first, the elections were devoid of the predicted post electoral violence and crises due to the maturity some key politicians displayed towards the outcome of the elections. Although

this does not suggest that the elections were totally violent free, but it was less considering the charged atmosphere and the heated polity that precipitated the period. Second, the elections represented the first time incumbents at different levels were massively defeated and transition took place without skirmishes against all odds [1]. Finally, the electioneering campaign was engulfed by litany of uncivil political talks, personal abuses, personal vendetta, negative commentaries and avalanche of name callings. For instance, some of the uncanny statements include: “Wetin him (Buhari) dey find again? Him dey drag with him pikin mate. Old man wey no get brain, him brain don die kpata kpata, “credited to Patience Goodluck Jonathan during the campaign trail; “Buhari shall die in office”, by the Governor of Ekiti State, Ayodele Fayose; “Buhari is a bloody dictator,” by Ahmadu Ali, the Director General of Goodluck Jonathan Presidential Campaign,” and other numerous smear commentaries [1]. It is disheartening that such foul utterances capable of destabilizing the peace and tranquility of the country could be spewed carelessly by not touts but enlightened, educated and informed politicians just to gain political advantage over their opponents, thereby, relegating their sense of reason and wisdom to the backdrop.

More worrisome is that, the digital news media, that ought to be purveyor of positive information and education, played vital and significant role in aiding and abating this ugly trend that reigned supreme during the 2015 electioneering campaign by reporting, covering and spreading negative statements, personal abuses and uncivil utterances without applying professionalism. Most digital news media platform such as blogs, websites, BBM, Facebook, Vlog, online news channels of conventional media houses covered, recorded, saved and spread sporadically, these hate speeches emanated from the cancerous inflicted mouth of the politicians cut across different political parties. The resultant effect was a charged and tension soaked environment sitting on gun powder waiting to explode but for the unexpected and rare show of patriotism and maturity by the

leading politicians, the country would have been drowned in deep sea of political conflict and crisis [1].

Wassawa (2013) [2] cited in Oyenuga (2013) [3] while commenting on the role of social media in the Kenyan 2003 election, observes "...that social media can provide another avenue, where unscrupulous politicians and supporters can spread hate speech, propagate falsehood, and insidiously incite their members to violence (p.5). This was exactly the case in Nigeria during the campaign activities of the two major political parties, the PDP and APC as different digital news media provided the avenue and lee -way for politicians to utilize and pour different aspersions on themselves [4].

Despite this, nevertheless, the digital new media also contributed positively towards the success of the election. They ensured that the voting class was adequately engaged and politically literate about each political development, agenda of the aspiring candidates and vigilance during and after casting of ballot [5]. However, this paper is not concerned about its positive contribution; rather, it's focused on highlighting and querying the preponderance of uncivil talks and negative statements on digital news media which negated all the ethics of journalism profession.

It's worthy of note that the negative activities of the different digital news media during the 2015 elections negated the professional practice of journalism, that is, they were against the different acts and codes governing the profession globally, national and locally respectively. The issues concerning accuracy and fairness, privacy, decency, discrimination, violence, public interest, social responsibility, and, press freedom and responsibility as contained in the code of ethics governing journalism practice in Nigeria were not adhered to. The reason for the negligence of the code is linked to the modus operandi of the digital news media which empowers citizens to create and publish content online without verifying the authenticity of published information. Oyenuga, (2015) [3] captures the situation thus; " most times, the information on the social media are

unregulated and sometimes, they tend to be biased, presumptuous, and might even be tentative. Aside from these, the population of bloggers is uncontrollable as many have the ability to create blogs and channels, where information are circulated [6].

In view of the foregoing, the researchers believe that if study of this nomenclature is ignored, the mistakes of the past would become a trend in the consequent election, leading to election violence and crisis if not managed appropriately. This study examined the use of uncivil talks in the digital news media during the 2015 general elections, its implication to journalism practice in Nigeria and advise on how to curtail the incident in the future election [7].

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To what extent did digital news media publish unruly or negative statements from politicians during the 2015 electioneering.
2. To determine the implication of uncivil statements in the social media to the journalism practice.
3. To find out if politicians used the digital news media for uncivil political talks during the 2015 elections in Nigeria
4. To discover some of the uncivil political talks used by the politicians and published on the digital news media.
5. To find out what can be done to mitigate the use of digital media in broadcasting unruly statements.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent did digital news media publish unruly or negative statements during the 2015 general elections?
2. What is the journalistic concern about uncivil political talks on digital news media during 2015 electioneering?

3. What are implications of broadcasting uncivil statements in the social media to the journalism practice during the election?
4. Did the politicians use the digital news media for uncivil political talks during the 2015 elections in Nigeria?
5. What could be done to stop use of digital news media to broadcast unruly statements in the future?

## CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA

The concept of digital news media or social media has no universally accepted definition. Scholars, media experts and ICT experts have defined the term from different perspectives. According to Morgan (2010)[8] , social media are “those internet based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute and search for information online. Okoro and Nwafor (2013) [9] see social media as “web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system”. Onwukwe and Okeugo (2011) [10] conceptualize social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user generated content”. Viewing it from a practical point of view, Sweeter and Lariscy (2008) [11] define social media as “read-write web, where the online audience moves beyond passive viewing of web content to actually contributing to the content”. One can suggest that social media simply involves the process of creating and publishing information to many people using the internet as a platform. One common thread that runs through the numerous definitions of social media is that of user-generated participation[8]

Typical example of social media tools include Interactive websites that employ ‘Web 2.0’ strategies to motivate user-supported content and comment; private or public blogs

that are interactive; micro-blogging services like twitter that enables instantaneous self publishing and short messages to which people can subscribe to; photo and video sharing applications like Youtube and Flickr that allows self publishing and production and finally, social networking services such as facebook, Whatsapp, 2go and the professional network LinkedIn, which enable subscribers to create online profiles and connect to and interact with friends, associates and organizations[12],[13],[14].

Sweeter and Lariscy (2008)[11] observe some characteristics of social media to include; accessibility, affordability, immediacy, permanence and high level of penetration. According to them, these characteristics differentiate social media from traditional media.

### SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTION

The invention of internet and the subsequent development of social media have revolutionalized human communication and interaction. Wasserman and Faust (1994)[15], argue that the participatory, interactive and cost effective nature of the social media has empowered everyone making anyone who can operate and use it, a journalist or “mass communicator”. Indeed, the latest trend has brought to fruition the prediction of a “global village” by Marshall McLuhan in 1964 when he predicted a world so connected that information could be disseminated instantly and simultaneously around the globe. Writing on this development, Wasserman and Faust (1994)[15], succinctly put that in the present world, “one can stay right in his bedroom and access information, entertainment, events and enjoy full interaction with the world just by processing a button”.

This is evident in today’s world where people are able to communicate with large audiences at cheap cost, interact with decision makers directly, cultivate and nurture relationships with individuals far away, build social movement globally, inform and shape news agendas- all via social media. Infact, the emergence of social media has reduced the supposed enormous power of traditional mainstream media as anybody can create content and publish online unregulated.

Its influence in politics, electoral process and democracy cannot be ignored. According to Penplusbytes (2015)[14] social media can serve as a tool to emancipate people from authoritarian regimes by mobilizing citizens against such unpopular government. For instance, the Arab Spring that saw to the overthrow of tyrannical regimes in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt and, subsequent protests against some unpopular policies of government, organizations and corporations like 2012 fuel subsidy protest in Nigeria, Occupy Wall Street protest in New York and other protests are practical examples of how social media could be used to mobilize against unwanted government and unpopular policies (Unwin, 2012; Diamond, 2011)[5],[16]. Aside using social for political and social change, social media can be used for effective and efficient communication between government and citizens. Globally, governments now resort to new media to sort opinion of their people policies and explain such policies to them. Through this means, citizens now make opinions, views, and suggestions and so contribute ideas to the political system. This is made possible due to the interactive nature of social media where officials of government and citizens connect easily.

In terms of politics and elections, social media has ensured that electorates are adequately engaged and actively involved in the whole electoral process making it possible for the process and the outcome to be substantially free and fair. Wasserman and Faust (1994)[15], collaborated this by pointing out that Social media “grants many people the chance to participate actively and get involved fully in the political discourse by adding their voices on issues posted on the social media sites”.

Politicians now use social media tools such as facebook, twitter, Myspace, Youtube to mobilize voters to support their course and political ambition since democracy deals with number hence, the person with highest number of votes always smile home victorious. For instance, Radcliffe, D (2011)[17] cited in Wasserman and Faust (1994)[15], observed that the emergence of President Obama as the as the president of the United States as well as its

successful presidential campaigns in 2008 was largely due to the effective and efficient use of Facebook mobilize millions of volunteers and voters. Outside politicians that use social media to mobilize support for their political ambitions, electorates equally use the platform to hold government and government officials accountable. Radcliffe (2011)[17], while writing on the topic "Can social media undermine Democracy?" argued that social media has been used by protesters to mobilize demonstrations against anti government policies in Spain, Greece, Israel and India. Also communication technology was extensively used to mobilize protesters during the January 2012, demonstration in Nigeria against the fuel subsidy removal which left a litre of petro sold at 120 naira hash tagged occupy Nigeria.

However, social media has been described as a double edged sword that is capable of maintaining peace as well as inciting violence during elections. What is disturbing is that the threat posed by social media is difficult to contain since messages published on the various platforms are neither regulated nor adhere to the ethical code of journalism; hence, some dangerous elements hide under the weakness to publish and broadcast dangerous speeches, falsehood and snide tribal remarks capable of plunging a whole country into mayhem, confusion and anarchy. Wassawa (2013)[2] cited in Oyenuga (2013)[3] while commenting on the role of social media in the Kenyan 2013 election, observes "...that social media can provide another avenue, where unscrupulous politicians and supporters can spread hate speech, propagate falsehood, and insidiously incite their members to violence[5].

Oyenuga(2013)[3] asserts that during the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, that social media was employed by politicians as a weapon to tarnish and undermine the image and character of themselves, especially the politicians in the People's Democratic Party, and All Progressive Party, the two main political party in Nigeria as at then. The implication was that immediately after the election, the country, Nigeria was left more

divided as ethnic tension was the order of the day. Oyenuga (2013)[3] argued that the after election violence that happened in some northern states in Nigeria after the announcement of the result of 2011 elections was as a result of hate speeches and falsehoods war mongers spewed through different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, SMS etc.

Therefore, in spite the array of benefits of social media in elections and democratic dispensation, the fact that the digital new media is unregulated and unchecked makes it vulnerable to be used by unscrupulous politicians to spread rumours, hate speeches, attack perceive opponents and incite violence before, during and after elections.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

The use of social media in elections in Nigeria is no longer new. Scholars believe that the application of social media into elections in Nigeria gained prominence during the 2011 general elections where major candidates used platforms such as facebook, twitter, Youtube, whatsapp etc. to announce their intentions to contest and canvassed the support and votes of the electorates [6],[7],[4]. The reasons for the active utilization and involvement of social media during elections in Nigeria are enormous. According to Policy, Legal and Advocacy Centre (2011)[14], three reasons underpinned the usage of different social media platforms in elections in Nigeria. First, the global shift towards “internet elections” or “e-electioneering” [17]. Throughout the world, the massive increase in internet penetration, availability of smart-phones as well as other digital communication devices and the development of web-based new media such as personal websites, social networking sites, blogs, e- newsletters etc have transformed political communication methods, causing a drastic shift towards the application of social media in the electoral process. For example, the internet growth and penetration in Nigeria has been on the increase. According to the report of internet world statistics, about 51 percent of the Nigerian population use internet. And are about a total of 186,410,197 active mobile lines in Nigeria as at February 2015 showing a twofold increase from 93million reported in 2011 [12],[4]. The increase is hinged

on the growth in mobile web access. A Gallup poll in 2012 showed that about 73 per cent of Nigerians had a mobile phone; the figure is expected to increase to over 80 per cent while over 59 per cent Nigerians used their phones to access the internet [13]. With these statistics, the application of social media in elections in Nigeria becomes imperative as a tool for sharing election related information.

Secondly, the tendency of the political class and political parties to utilize the inherent opportunities offered by social media to reach out to people and canvass support for their political ambitions. For example, during the 2011 general elections, the presidential candidates of the PDP, ANPP, CPC, ACN and other political parties used social media platforms to announce their intention to run for the presidency of the country. Specifically in 2011, Goodluck Jonathan then presidential flag bearer of the Peoples Democratic Party, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change, Ibrahim Shekarau of All Nigeria Peoples Party and Mallam Nuhu Ribadu of Action Congress of Nigeria, all announced their intentions to vie for the presidency of Nigeria and used them vigorously in campaigning during the elections (Morgan, 2010; Onwukwe and Okeugo, (2011)[8],[10]. During the 2015 general elections, the tradition of using social media during election was cemented and consolidated. Virtually all the political parties sort and engaged the services of ICT and social media experts using different social media platforms- Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Vlogs, Youtubes, Online news platforms, Websites etc to reach electorates. For example while the APC engaged the service of StateCraft, a communications company based in Lagos for its digital drive, the PDP flag bearer, Goodluck Jonathan, appointed Obi Asika, the chairman of Social Media Week Lagos as his Senior Special Adviser on Social Media [4]. The idea was not to engage and educate the citizens on the policies of their candidates but to use the tool to systematically malign and destroy the image of opponents through pouring of aspersion, spewing of venomous utterances and circulation of divisive speeches.

The outcome was a community of social media supporters dishing out different prepared invectives, insults, lies, hate speeches and rumours against the opponents of their candidates; thereby heating up the polity while allegations and counter allegations filled the atmospheric air wave of Nigeria. If Nigeria would break, the spate of attacks on personalities, banalities, hate speeches, lies and insults that were broadcasted and published on social media platforms such as blogs, Facebooks, Twitter, during the 2015 general elections would have championed the division and everyone would have been gone to their respective new country.

### **2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: SELECTED CASES OF UNCIVIL POLITICAL TALKS ON DIGITAL NEWS**

The 2015 general elections will for a long time remains a talking point not for the feat that it recorded but the uncivil political speeches, talks and campaigns that were originated by desperate politicians and broadcasted widely on different social media platforms. The different vituperations and careless statements left the country on the verge of collapse. Although it was the first time social media was adequately used during election in Nigeria and also the first an incumbent president was defeated, but the litany and arrays of provocative and inciting statements on social media defeated all the seemingly positives the digital news media offered. Brazen lies were issued by politicians as long as they thought they would score political point. Unwin, (2012)[16] in a paper presented at the National conference organized by the Electoral institute of the Independent National Electoral Commission, described the 2015 general as “ the most rancorous, most threatening to Nigeria’s territorial integrity, and the most empty of ideological content, but full of personal abuses as well as the potentials for personal vendetta” [17].

Evidences abound of the litany of verbal attacks lashed on different personalities that stood in for the election especially the presidential candidates, by their supporters via the digital news media. Small sample of such uncivil political talks and negative invectives

credited to some politicians and broadcasted on the digital media are as follow; “Wetin him (Buhari) dey find again? Him dey drag with him pikin mate. Old man wey no get brain, him brain don die kpata kpata, “credited to Patience Goodluck Jonathan, on a campaign trail; “Buhari shall die in office”, by the Governor of Ekiti State, Ayo Fayose; “Bughari is a bloody dictator,” by Ahmadu Ali, the Director General of Goodluck Jonathan Presidential Campaign,” “Buhari have no secondary school certificate or forged it”, by Chief Femi Fani-Kayode, the Director of Publicity of the President Goodluck Jonathan Presidential Campaign Organisation, and other numerous smear commentaries that flooded the social media platforms at the time[1],[2].

The main opposition party was not left out of the smear campaigns during the election. The APC through their social media group cast aspersion on the person of the presidential flagbearer of the PDP, Goodluck Jonathan calling him names like “incompetent”, “clueless”, “corrupt”, “ogogoro drinker” (Alcohol taker) etc. The evidences pointed out to the undisputable fact that social media was employed as more of potent tool and lethal weapon during 2015 elections to tarnish image of candidates. Based on this, Oyenagu (2015)[3 argued that the digital news media was used as lethal weapon where videos, voice notes, headlines capable of marring political ambition of political parties and individuals were broadcasted and published, thereby leaving the country at the verge of collapse.

This raised a serious concern for journalism practice in Nigeria since the digital news media have made everybody a journalist, whether trained or not. Journalist who serve as gatekeepers, publishers, editors, or reporters would not have allowed everything that came out to go in because of its perceived negative effect and, also they were trained as well as being mindful of the professional ethics of truth, factual, fairness, accuracy, integrity, service, timeliness etc and they try to abide to them. But, the digital news media do not adhere to the code of conduct or professional ethics that govern the media.

Radcliffe, (2011)[17] captures the situation thus: *The New Media transgress the limits of the print and broadcasting models to the allowance of many to many interactive conversations*[15].

Furthermore, the lack of censorship and unregulated nature of activities published on the digital news media by “citizen journalists” hugely contributed to the massive dissemination of falsehood and inciting messages which filled up the social media space during the 2015 general election.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the social responsibility theory. Social responsibility theory is an offshoot of libertarian theory. It belongs to the normative press theory of mass communication. According to Unwin, (2012)[16] the thrust of the theory is though the media is free to perform its traditional social functions to the society yet such function must fall within the confines of the law. The basic assumption is that freedom comes with responsibility. That is to say that the theory allocates responsibilities and duties to the media (press) in addition to certain freedom. It assumes that anyone can initiate and express an idea using the media but such persons are prohibited from invading privacy, spreading lies, and information capable of destroying existing social structures. In principle the media can be used by anyone who has an idea to express, but they are forbidden to invade private rights or disrupt vital social structures or interests [11].

Applying the social responsibility theory into this study, the creators and users of digital news media for political campaign purposes ought to be responsible and use the tools adequate to educate the electorates on the campaign policies and programmes of their preferred candidates not spreading hate speeches, abuses and attacking personalities as witnessed during the last concluded elections. The politicians and political parties also

need to put the country first and desist from using the social media for campaign of hate and uncivil talks.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research method. This method gives room for the opinion of people to be studied on a particular issue of public interest. According to Onwukwe (2011) cited in Sweetser, Kay and Lariscy, Ruthann (2008)[10],[11] “survey research is concerned with the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting a certain condition, practice, beliefs, attitudes, etc.” it aims at systematically analyzing and ,describing the facts, qualities or characteristics of a given population, events, or areas of interest concerning the problem under inquiry[9] .

### RESEARCH POPULATION

This study focused on practicing and student journalists in Ebonyi State. The choice of practicing and student journalists as study population is because the topic bothers on getting their perception about the uncivil political talks on the social media during the 2015 elections and the fact that they are familiar with the media and know when media especially the social media are abused by the users. Hence, student journalists (Journalists in training) were selected from the final year class, Mass Communication Department, Ebonyi State University. The final year students were preferred because they had already experienced practical practice of the profession during their internship and have studied the code conduct and ethics of journalism practice in class hence, they are knowledgeable about the code of conduct as well as can discover when people flaunt it. The practicing journalists were chosen because of their practical experience on the field and knowledge of the ethics and code of professional conduct. The two categories also make use of different social media platforms and are aware of different negative statements that flooded the media during the election period.

### SAMPLE SIZE

The overall sample size for the study was 200. 100 participants were selected from each of the category making it 200. This size was arrived at owing to the fact that the researcher cannot realistically observe all the elements in the population, so the need to select some sample and investigate.

### SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The Sampling Technique Sampling works on the premise that a given population is too large for any researcher to realistically observe all the elements therein (Nwodu, 2006). This was the case in this study as studying all the practicing and student journalists concern about the use of uncivil political talks during the 2015 general elections was not realistic. Hence, selection of samples became necessary. In view of this, we chose the purposeful sampling technique. This technique was used because not everybody in the population was literate, and so, concentration was laid on the literate respondents.

### INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The instrument of questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was in two parts comprising of 8 questions. The first part (questions 1-3) was on the demographic variables of the respondents, while the second part (questions 4-8) was directly on respondents' exposition to the issue of study and tends to answer the research questions earlier posed.

### DATA PRESENTATION

**Table 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
18 - 25	70	35
26 -35	80	40
36 - 45	50	25
<b>Total</b>	200	100

Table one showed that respondents between the ages of 18 - 25 years were 70 respondents, representing 35%, those that fell between 26 - 35 were 80 respondents representing 40% whereas those within the range of 36 - 45 were 50 respondents representing 25%.

**Table 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male	90	45
Female	110	55
<b>Total</b>	200	100

Table Two revealed that 90 males representing 45% responded to the questions whereas 110 representing 55% were females.

**Table 3: Career Distribution of the Respondents**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Student</b>	100	50
<b>Journalist</b>	100	50
<b>Total</b>	200	100

Table three showed that 100 respondents representing 50% were student journalists while 100 representing 50% were practicing journalists.

**Table 4: Do you know what a digital new media is?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	200	100%
<b>No</b>	0	
<b>Total</b>	200	100

Table four showed that 100% of the respondents did know the term digital new media.

**Table 5: Do you use the digital new media?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	150	75%
<b>No</b>	50	25%
<b>Total</b>	200	100

Table five revealed that only 75% of the respondents use the digital news media while 25% do not make use of it.

**Table 6: Did the use of Digital News Media promote uncivil political talks during 2015 general elections?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	180	90
<b>No</b>	20	10
<b>Total</b>	200	100

This Table sought to know if the use of Digital News Media promotes uncivil political talks, 180 respondents representing 90% said yes whereas 20 respondents representing 10% said no.

**Table 7: What is the journalistic concern about uncivil political talks on digital news media during 2015 electioneering?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Condemnable</b>	64	32
<b>Unethical</b>	56	28
<b>Unprofessional</b>	80	40
<b>Total</b>	200	100

The table above sought to know the concern of journalists about uncivil political talks in digital news media, 80 journalists representing 40% said that it was unprofessional, 56 representing 32% declared it condemnable whereas 56 representing 28% said it was unethical.

**Table 8: What is the practical implication of such unruly statements on the social media during the last general elections to the practice of journalism in Nigeria?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Bad name to the profession</b>	80	40%
<b>Lack of integrity and trust</b>	56	28%
<b>Low patronage and consumption of media content</b>	50	25%
<b>No Idea</b>	14	7%
<b>Total</b>	200	100%

Table four investigated the implications of unruly statements during the last general elections in Nigeria. The finding revealed that 40% thought that the incident brought bad name to the profession; 28% felt that it dented the integrity and trust people had for the profession; 25% said the incident affected the patronage and consumption of media content at that time, while 7% had no idea of the implication of the incident to the profession.

**Table 9: Did the politicians use the digital news media for uncivil political talks during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>YES</b>	200	100%
<b>No</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100%

In response to question 7 that sort to find out if the politicians used the social media for unruly civil political talks; all the respondents agreed that politicians used the social media to disseminate unruly messages.

**Table 10: What could be done to stop the usage of the digital media in broadcasting unruly political talks during future elections in Nigeria?**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
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<b>Regulation of the digital new media during elections</b>	100	50%
<b>Political awareness of digital new media useage during elections</b>	50	25%
<b>Outright punishment of offenders</b>	30	15%
<b>No idea</b>	20	10%
<b>Total</b>	200	100%

The question 8 sought to know what could be done to reduce the use of the digital news media to publish negative statements in future elections and 50% opted for regulation of social media during elections, 25% called for awareness creation in terms of social media useage during elections; 15% advocated for outright punishment to offenders and 10% had no idea of what the solution should be.

### DISCUSSION

This study is aimed at discovering the journalistic concern on the litany of inciting messages, unruly political talks, falsehoods that floored the digital news media during the 2015 general elections. To ensure that the aim of the study was achieved, a cross section of practicing journalists and student journalists were selected and their opinion sampled on the topic. The data generated from the research have given us insight into the journalist concern on the avalanche of uncivil political talks that greeted the digital new media during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. In carrying out the research, the researchers found it pertinent to look at the demographic distribution of the respondents such as their age, gender and career. The essence was to ascertain how age and gender could affect their professional concern about the influx of negative statements on the social media during the 2015 general elections.

The age and gender distribution revealed that majority of the respondents were young people between the age bracket of 18 to 35 and predominately female. This aligns with some researches that revealed that journalism profession has more female to male professionals.

Table four and five show that majority of the respondents are aware of the digital new media and subsequently make use of them. These questions became imperative to this study because without the respondents knowing about the digital new media and use, they would not be able to air their concern of its useage to disseminate hate or inciting

messages during the 2015 elections. Hence the questions were very vital to the overall outcome of the research.

Based on this, the respondents were able to affirm that the digital news media broadcasted and published different kinds of unruly and uncivil statement, inciting and hate messages during the 2015 general elections thereby answering in affirmation one of the research questions.

Table seven clearly answered the second research question which sought to find out the journalistic concern about the uncivil political talks on digital news media during the 2015 general elections. All the respondents perceived the activities as negating the principles of the profession. Although they used different terms such as 'condemnable', 'unethical' and 'unprofessional' to express their concerns.

Therefore, virtually all the respondents that answered question eight believed that such activities have practical implications to journalism practice in Nigeria. Such implication according to them include, 'bad name to the profession, 'lack of integrity and trusts' and low 'patronage and consumption of media content'. This gave a clear answer to the third research questions. To the respondents, they all agreed that the politicians were the ones who initiated, used and influenced the spread of uncivil political talks via the digital news media during the elections under review. This could be as a result of their desperation to win power at all cost and control the natural and human resources Nigeria is blessed with.

To ensure that such trend is minimized or stopped entirely from helping in future elections, the research question five, offered the participants the opportunity to proffer solutions to the ugly trend. A greater percentage of the respondents thought that regulating the usage of digital news media during elections would reduce or stop the incidents witnessed during the last elections. Others proposed adequate political awareness campaign for digital news media users especially during elections while some proposed outright punishment for offenders. However, 10% of the respondents had no idea or proposed no solution to curtail such incidents in the future election.

### CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the digital news media was used to publish unruly and uncivil statements during the 2015 general elections and journalists perceived such act as condemnable, unprofessional and unethical on the side of people purported or were used to achieve that. It also shows that, the practical implication of such unruly act to the journalism profession if not curtailed will be disastrous as it will lead to loss of integrity, trust, patronage and bring about bad name and reputation to the profession.

This research also reveals some ways to stop the ugly situation of the 2015 general elections from happening again during subsequent elections. Such solutions include, regulation of the digital news media use in Nigeria especially during elections, embarking on political awareness campaign on the positive use of the different digital news media platforms and outright punishment of offenders.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research, we recommend the following:

- A periodic public enlightenment campaign to educate the digital new media users on the best way to use the tools during election.
- A tool or application capable of tracking, monitoring and preventing rude, uncivil and negative political statements during elections period should be developed and effectively utilized like the Uchaguzi in Kenya.

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