



Evaluation of Users' Perception of President Buhari's #Twitterban among Users in Anambra State

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Abstract: *The advent of social networks such as Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, among others, has revolutionized communications. The power of social media messages rests on its ability to instantly and simultaneously reach a wide, diverse audience, and transforming social life. While the public has overtime become accustomed to the regulation of conventional media like the Radio, TV and Print establishments by government regulatory agencies, the idea of regulating social media, a space which many users consider to be the major avenue to air their views, is one that has generated mixed feelings. As such the Nigerian government has taken practical steps to regulate the activities of social media platforms including banning Twitter usage in Nigeria for a certain period. This study therefore, evaluated users' perception of President Buhari's #Twitterban among users in Anambra State. The study was anchored on Adaptive Structuration Theory and Public Sphere theory as its theoretical underpinnings. The study adopted survey method in carrying out the research with a sample size of 400 drawn from a population of 1,619,224 which was derived using the Taro Yamane's formula. The Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The study found that the respondents have a negative perception about the #Twitter Ban by President Buhari as they stated that it was wrong to ban Twitter Usage in Nigeria and their freedom of speech were affected by the #Twitter Ban by President Buhari as they could not access Twitter to air their views, connect with friends to share opinion and to use other social media platforms.*

Keywords: *Anambra State, Evaluation, President Buhari, Twitterban and Users' Perception*

I. Introduction

There have been discussions over the optimum type of internet governance to implement in order to prevent abuses. The topic of whether each government in a different country will support the course of regulating the internet (i.e., individually) or whether such attempts will adopt an international strategy has been raised (Palawsky, 2017; Aondover et al., 2025). Furthermore, Palawsky claims that the primary obstacle to creating a thorough framework for social media platform regulation is the variety of laws that have previously been developed by different nations. Nigerians cherish freedom and practice democracy because they have previously experienced both authoritarian and democratic governments.

However, since democracy was restored in 1999, free expression has consistently occupied significant positions in scholarly discussion. In Nigeria, any attempts to restrict free speech have always run into strong resistance. (Aondover et al., 2025). Free speech has recently come under threat, even in the midst of a democratic administration, as a result of various pieces of legislation being proposed by Nigeria's legislative branch of government, the

current ban on Twitter use in Nigeria, and the instructions to regulate all OTT platforms in the nation (Msughter et al., 2023). It is therefore not known how Twitter users in Anambra state perceive the twitter ban by President Buhari and how they responded to it as well as how the ban has affected their freedom of speech in the cyber space (Airaoje et al., 2023). The ban also called for empirical evaluation of the implications of regulating social media in Nigeria in spite of the democratic principles. This gap this study is designed to fill (Vitalis et al., 2025).

Within this context, this study provides an insight on the shifting paradigm and rising debate towards social media regulations and censorship by governments across the globe. it also provides an understanding on influence of social media especially Twitter on governance, politics, economy, commerce and civil engagement (Aliyu et al., 2023). The study is also justified having been designed to evaluate how TwitteBan affects the freedom of speech of its users in the recent times and how this suspension has affected civil engagement, Hashtag activism and the gratifications derived from Twitter usage which has now been taken away by the #TwitterBan. The justification of the study also lies on its benefits to policymakers, educators, academia, researchers and students who find the study useful as a blueprint to improve empirical enquiries on social media regulations and censorship as well as its implications to freedom of speech among Nigerians (Ahmed & Msughter, 2022; Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

1.1 Research Objectives

The following objectives were adopted for the study:

1. To find out whether the respondents use Twitter before it was banned by President Buhari.
2. To determine the respondents' perception of the #TwitterBan by President Buhari.
3. To determine how the #TwitterBan by President Buhari affected the respondent's freedom of expression.
4. To determine how the TwitterBan influences the respondents' usage of other social media platforms.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted Public Sphere Theory (PST). Public Sphere Theory (PST) is one of the critical ideas that resulted from Frankfurt School social research conducted between the 18th and 19th centuries under the direction of German sociologist, Jurgen Habermas (Aondover, 2024). This theory states that the old and new media are elements of many routes where individuals can participate freely and also communicate while sharing political ideas and information in democratic forums, as summarized in Habermas' book "The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere."

The emphasis on political involvement as the foundation of a democratic society and as a crucial component in personal growth was linked to Habermas' focus on democratization. His 1962 study, "The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere," contrasted various manifestations of an active, participatory bourgeois public sphere in the heroic era of liberal democracy with more privatized manifestations of spectator politics in a bureaucratic industrial society where the public sphere was governed by the media and elites (Aondover & Akin-Odukoya, 2024). The Facebook political campaign enables liberal democracy, where everyone is free to express their opinions. The principles of the public sphere call for free discussion of all matters of public interest in which discursive argumentation is used to determine the interests of the broad public and the greater good. The public sphere thus

presupposes freedom of speech, press and the right to freely participate in political activities and decision-making (Aondover et al., 2024).

According to Habermas, this has changed the role of the media from one of promoting reasoned discussion and debate in the public sphere to one of building, shaping, and limiting public discourse to those issues certified and accepted by media corporations. Thus, the relationship between public discourse and individual engagement has been broken down and transformed into a world of political spectacle and information, where citizen-consumers consume and passively view entertainment and information (Aondover et al., 2024). However, Facebook campaigns display the most recent messages where people may get them. Social movements, media that track and critique the government, and organizations that engage in political activity are all examples of political public spheres (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). The effectiveness of large-scale protests has thus been the focus of discussion on the political impact of social media (Aondover & Aondover, 2023).

The bourgeois public sphere, in Habermas' words, "may be conceived above all as the realm of private people coming together as a public" (Habermas, 1989, p. 27). Consequently, the public sphere is made up of private persons whose societal connection goes beyond the confines of their private lives. The public and private spheres might be seen as inclusive rather than exclusive social domains if the public sphere is "conceived as the public of private individuals who partake in debate of matters bearing on governmental power" (Calhoun 1992b, p. 7). Since every private person is represented by the performativity of a public persona in the foreground, every public persona is ingrained in the background subjectivity of a private person, the public and the private appear to represent two essential conditions of the social. According to Susen (2010), even the purest kind of privacy cannot make people completely independent from society since human actors are unable to avoid the numerous socialization processes that are imposed upon them by their surroundings. Only in connection to, not in isolation from, the existence of other people can individuals assert their right to privacy. Individuals are independent not in isolation from one another but rather in relation to one another, that is, in relation to a public of autonomous beings. In this sense, the public sphere is nothing more than the socialized expression of individuals' reciprocally created autonomy (Aondover et al., 2022).

According to sociology, "the relevance of the public sphere resides in its potential as a means of societal integration" (Calhoun 1992b, p. 6). Completely self-sufficient and self-referential people who live in hermetically enclosed and auto-poetically supported private domains cannot coordinate communal activity. By definition, social coordination is carried out by interconnected and interdependent people who are located in publicly negotiated and physically created spaces. The deliberate arrangement that occurs in public might be seen as a manifestation of the inherent sociability of the human situation (Onyejelem et al., 2025). In fact, there is no societal integration without the existence of a public sphere. Just as the existence of each individual cannot be dissociated from the existence of society, the existence of the private sphere is inconceivable without the existence of the public sphere (Vitalis et al., 2024; Vitalis et al., 2025).

According to Susen (2010), the structural changes in the public realm can be seen as a sign of how social order is historically contingent. The emergence of the public sphere and its probable collapse show that these spaces of intersubjectivity's transformational power are inextricably linked to society's capacity for growth. To put it another way, it is important to

consider the public sphere's alteration in the context of macrostructural transition processes (Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024). As a result, the history of the public sphere should not be viewed as an independent development apart from larger social processes but rather as an essential component of these processes. Questions remain, however, as to what the main features of the structural transformation of the public sphere are and why they are sociologically significant (Oreoluwa et al., 2024).

Habermas claims that the structural changes to the public sphere in the late 20th century represent a process of social disintegration: "For approximately a century the social foundations of this realm have been trapped in a process of breakdown. Unmistakable trends lead to the public sphere's impending collapse since, despite an astounding scope expansion, its significance has decreased over time (Habermas in Aondover et al., 2025). Following the Habermasian analysis, it will be claimed here that the three main, interconnected tensions that form the basis of the public sphere's disintegration are: (a) the tension between universal and particular interests, (b) the tension between communicative and instrumental reason, and (c) the tension between empowering and disempowering potentials.

Susen (2010) questioned Habermas' study of the public sphere for focusing nearly entirely on the characteristics of bourgeois public life. According to Susen, to reduce the complexity of the contemporary public sphere to the singularity of the bourgeois public sphere is to undervalue the sociological significance of other collective realms—that is, realms that are not bourgeois—that support a rational-critical engagement with the outside world. While acknowledging the bourgeois public sphere's class-specific nature, Habermas "neglects the relevance of the concurrent emergence of a plebeian public sphere alongside and in contrast to the bourgeois public sphere, a sphere constructed upon alternative institutional structures" (Garnham 1992, p. 359; Msughter et al., 2023). An analysis that is limited to the study of the bourgeois public sphere runs the risk of excluding other, equally important, public spheres from the picture. The consolidation of the bourgeois public sphere is paradoxical in that it promotes a discourse of universal interests of human beings, while in practice serving the particular interests of the dominant groups in society (Hile et al., 2023).

Furthermore, according to Susen (2010), Habermas paints an overly utopian view of the public sphere. He tends to overstate the importance of the emancipatory aspects of modern public life and understate the impact of its repressive components due to his one-sided reliance on the idea that the bourgeois public sphere has a "rational-critical" nature. Susen (2010) further charged that Habermas' analysis of the public realm was gender-blind. However, Habermas acknowledges that it is difficult to overlook the patriarchal aspect of contemporary European public spaces in his answer to feminist critics' concerns (Msughter et al., 2022).

Apuke and Apolos in Idris and Msughter (2022) assertion that Twitter's potential rests in fostering civil society and the public sphere makes this theory appropriate for the investigation. A new venue for the pro-democracy, national liberation, and class fight, Twitter has become contested ground (Msughter & Pate, 2021). The national critical discourse is what gives rise to the idea of the public sphere and the model of deliberative democracy, both of which are unique (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). The prospect of a contemporary public sphere has come to pass, whereby electronic and print media, the internet (Twitter), and other developments have been used to herald a new public sphere that has opened up new avenues for political communication and public conversation (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). Twitter,

therefore, has been a basis for more democratic and participatory public sphere and a #TwitterBan contradicts these basic tenets.

2.2 Empirical Review

Chinedu-Okeke and Obi (2016) conducted a study investigating social media as a political platform in Nigeria while focusing on electorates in South-Eastern Nigeria. In order to determine the Nigerian electorate's perception of political campaign messages posted on social media and how these campaign messages via social media influence their choice of votes, the study used a survey research method to evaluate the electorate's exposure to and understanding of political campaign messages on social media. A questionnaire was utilized to collect the study's 400 respondents from South-Eastern Nigeria, which consists of 5 states (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, with 80 respondents from each state). The study's findings imply that a higher proportion of respondents are familiar with social media and have access to it. It also showed a significant degree of participation by respondents in political conversations on social media, particularly among young people, but it also indicated that despite this widespread usage of social media, respondents prefer interpersonal/face-to-face contact over traditional mass media.

Shinkafi (2016) conducted an exploratory study of social media usage and developmental outcomes by government and emerging political leaders in Nigeria. The study investigated how government institutions and agencies in Nigeria conceptualize ICTs and the extent usage of the new ICT apparatuses for political re-engineering of the society and also involved citizen to participate in democratic processes as guides to the use of ICT for sustainable development by assessing the views of those in Government Ministries, Democratic Institutions, National IT agencies, and emerging citizen leaders in the form of Nigerian graduate and postgraduate students. It develops the use of media theories and technological hypotheses in political communications as theoretical benchmarks to contextualize the dominant media organizations in Nigeria and to bargain for accountability and transparency within governmental institutions and agencies alongside a new participatory social media use culture.

Surveys, observations, and interviews were used as part of the mixed-method approach. The study's sampling technique was purposeful sampling. The results show that the majority of people saw social media as a way to challenge elites and political power and express thoughts against poor governance. The other cross-cultural uses of digital media for maintaining ties are similar to this one. Social media was viewed as a venue for contact and communication by GC15; GC16; GC17; and GC18. The usage of ICTs and social media, as stated clearly by GC P19.

Larson (2017) conducted a study on the impact of political social media accounts on press coverage with a special analysis of Donald Trump's Twitter handle and his influence on the mainstream media. Utilizing content analysis, the researcher looked at 98 stories from the top 100 newspapers in the United States of America. The researcher focused on reading each article's theme to see if there were any specific ways the Access Hollywood scandal and Trump's Twitter account had been covered by the press. Media coverage, horse race coverage, women, Hillary Clinton, and the Republican Party emerged as the study's prominent topics. According to the study, there are 55 articles with the theme of horserace coverage, 19 articles about women, 15 articles about Hillary Clinton, 43 articles about the Republican Party, and 9 articles about the media as a whole. Results indicated that Twitter's use of the political sphere around the world is a significant aspect of its influence on American society. The popularity of

Twitter as a social media platform has led to a rise in the number of important and well-known political figures using social media platforms.

Jimada (2019) conducted research titled social media in the Public Sphere of Accountability in Nigeria. This article examines the issue of Internet Freedom, and the role of the social media in the public sphere of accountability in governance, in Nigeria. By relying on secondary sources for data collection, the researchers conducted the study using the library research methodology. The researchers come to the conclusion that the opportunities made possible by the new public sphere channels for people to come together to fight corruption, wasteful spending, or abuse by the government through sharing sensitive information, advocacy campaigns, organizing protests, discussing, analyzing, and deliberating on issues beyond geographical boundaries as is now possible through Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Tumblr, etc. face new challenges and constraints. While Nigeria has a reasonably open Internet environment, they claim that bloggers, journalists, and social media activists who are not in jail experience intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, and even torture. The researchers recommended , different organizations, NGOs, civil societies and communities must work together to protect these digital platforms and human rights to circumvent these restrictions, and make the internet an open and secure platform for all. The gap between the study of Jimada (2019) and the current study can be found in the methodology and scope.

Ayim (2021) conducted a study titled Twitter Ban in Nigeria: Implications on Economy, Freedom of Speech and Information Sharing. The study explored the implications of Twitter ban in Nigeria on economy, freedom of speech and information sharing. By relying on secondary sources for data collection, the researchers conducted the study using the library research methodology. In order to find out what government officials, religious leaders, business experts, legal experts, international organizations, and IT-based business specialists thought about the ban, the study used legal documents and media reports. The right to free speech, access, and information sharing is violated by Twitter's restriction, it has been found. It was found that the ban had such a negative impact on the economy that it had bridged the lines of communication between business partners, caused job losses, sparked hostilities in the investment market, and caused business failures.

The researcher recommended that the government should reverse its decision and allow people access to Twitter as this is one of the platforms people can make a living, and also an avenue to improve the economy of the country. The gap between the study of Ayim (2021) and the current study can be found in the methodology and scope. While Ayim adopted library research method in carrying out the study by depending on secondary sources like mass media and legal documents, the current study adopted the survey research method to evaluate Twitter users' perception and responses to the #TwitterBan in Nigeria by President Buhari. Consequently, the findings of the study conducted by Ayim (2021) differ from the findings of the current study.

Olanye-Onkonofua (2021) carried a study on Twitter Ban in Nigeria: A Metaphor for Impediment on Uses and Gratification Theory. The purpose of the study was to determine why Nigerians use Twitter, how Twitter makes them feel satisfied, and whether the Twitter ban prevents Nigerians from getting the gratification they crave. For this study, a cross-sectional survey research design method was used, and data were gathered via an online structured questionnaire. There are 120 active social media users in the research population. It was done using stratified random sampling. The sample size was determined by Krejcie

Morgan to be 92 Twitter users. Using Simple Percentages as a statistical tool, the data was examined. The results showed that the uses and gratification hypothesis is actually hampered by the Twitter prohibition in Nigeria.

Also, Nigerians depend largely on Twitter to gratify their everyday needs; but with this new law, there is a gap in the need gratification of Nigerians. The study recommended that the Nigerian government should consider uplifting the Twitter ban in Nigeria as it is perceived to be an infringement on the fundamental human rights of Nigerians. The gap between the study of Olannye-Okonofua (2021) and the current study can be found in the scope. While Olannye-Okonofua (2021) studied members of the social media community who reside in Nigeria using online survey, the current study evaluated Twitter users' perception and responses to the #TwitterBan in Nigeria by President Buhari. Consequently, the findings of the study conducted by Olannye-Okonofua (2021) differ from the findings of the current study.

III. Research Methods

For this study, the survey research method was adopted to evaluate users' perception of President Buhari's #TwitterBan and its implication to freedom of expression among users in Anambra State. This was chosen because of the effectiveness of the survey research method in studying the attitudes and opinion of people with a large population (Msughter, 2019). Also, the survey research method enabled the study to be conducted in the field where the phenomenon being investigated exists (Msughter & Idris, 2023). It also afforded the researcher opportunity to rate the perceived evaluation of the user's opinion towards Buhari's #TwitterBan and how the action affects freedom of speech and expression of users in Anambra State.

According to National Population Census (2006), the population of Awka metropolis is 301,657, Nnewi, 391,227 and Onitsha, 511,000 making a total of 1,203,884. Since this population is not a recent one, the researcher adopted the Projected Population Index of 2.28% to get the estimated population of Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha. Thus, the formula as presented in Owuamalam (2012:107) was applied as stated below.

$$P_p = G_p \times P_i \times I$$

Where;

P_p = Projected population

G_p = Given population

P_i = Population Increase Index

T = Period between the given population and year of study

For Awka, given that the population of Awka is 301,657 as at the given 2006 national census, the present projected population in 2021 is calculated as follows;

$$G_p = 301,657$$

$$P_i = 2.28\% = 0.0228 = 0.023$$

$$T = 2021 - 2006 = 15$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Therefore } P_p &= 301,657 \times 0.023 \times 15 \\ &= 104,072 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the current estimated population of Awka Metropolis is $301,657 + 104,072 = 405,729$. This is the population that the researcher adopted for Awka metropolis in this work. For Nnewi, given that the population of Nnewi is 391,227 as at the given 2006 national census, the present projected population in 2021 is calculated as follows;

$$\begin{aligned} G_p &= 391,227 \\ P_i &= 2.28\% = 0.0228 = 0.023 \\ T &= 2021 - 2006 = 15 \\ \text{Therefore } P_p &= 391,227 \times 0.023 \times 15 \\ &= 134,973 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the current estimated population of Nnewi Metropolis is $391,227 + 134,973 = 526,200$. This is the population that the researcher adopted for Nnewi Metropolis in this work. For Onitsha metropolis, given that the population of Onitsha is 511,000 as at the given 2006 national census, the present projected population in 2021 is calculated as follows;

$$\begin{aligned} G_p &= 511,000 \\ P_i &= 2.28\% = 0.0228 = 0.023 \\ T &= 2021 - 2006 = 15 \\ \text{Therefore } P_p &= 511,000 \times 0.023 \times 15 \\ &= 176,295 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the current estimated population of Onitsha Metropolis is $511,000 + 176,295 = 687,295$. This is the population that the researcher adopted in this work. Thus, the current estimated population of Awka metropolis which is 405,729 plus the current estimated population of Nnewi metropolis which is 526,200 plus the current estimated population of Onitsha Metropolis which is 687,295 = **1,619,224**. This is the population that was adopted for this study and the sample size was drawn from this population.

A sample of 400 was selected using Taro Yamane's formula. This is shown below.

$$S = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

- Where S = Sample size
 N = Given Population
 e = Margin of error = 5%.
 1 = Constant

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Therefore } S &= \frac{1,619,224}{1 + 1,619,224 (0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{1,619,224}{1 + 1,619,224 \times 0.0025} \\ &= \frac{1,619,224}{1 + 4048.06} \\ &= \frac{1,619,224}{4049.06} = 399.90121163924 \\ &\approx \underline{\underline{400}} \end{aligned}$$

The researcher adopted the multistage sampling approach for the study:

Stage 1: The researcher used the Purposive Sampling technique to select one major city from the three senatorial zones in Anambra State where the study will be carried out. This is because it was easy for the researcher to find literate people who use Twitter in these areas because of the demographic data of the residents of the select urban cities. These cities are; Awka representing Anambra Central Senatorial Zone, Nnewi representing Anambra South Senatorial Zone and Onitsha representing Anambra North Senatorial Zone.

Stage 2: The researcher used cluster sampling technique to group the respondents according to their senatorial zones and urban cities. This to avoid mix up among the respondents and to ensure that three zones are well represented without prejudice.

Stage 3: The researcher used Purposive sampling technique to select the 400 respondents provided answers to the research questions contained in the copies of the questionnaire. This was done judgmentally to ensure that those sampled are Twitter users who are exposed to Buhari's #TwitterBan.

Stage 4: The researcher used Accidental sampling technique to administer the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. This mean that the researcher selected those met at the research area who are willing to give information on the subject matter. It allowed the researcher the opportunity to approach anyone anywhere within the study area who the researcher judgmentally feels is a Twitter user. This will also save time.

Stage 5: The researcher used the Proportionate Allocation Formula to distribute the copies of the question to a total of 400 respondents in Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha according to their population. This is to ensure that each city receives copies of the questions in line with their level of representation in the sample. This is shown below:

Awka	$\frac{405,729 \times 400}{1,619,224}$	= 100
Nnewi	$\frac{526,200 \times 400}{1,619,224}$	= 130
Onitsha	$\frac{687,295 \times 400}{1,619,224}$	= 170
Total	= 400	

The data collected for this study was presented in frequency tables. That is, descriptive statistical methods will be used in presenting the data. In that case, the frequency of occurrence, as well as the percentages of each finding, will be presented using a table. Obtained data was presented in frequency tables, with classifications, based on mutually exclusive categories. The tables will be numbered and properly identified to reflect their content. 400 copies of the questionnaire will be distributed. The inferential analyses will be done to determine if there is a significant relationship between variables and to provide the statistical premise for generalization.

IV. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Return rate of Questionnaire

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Returned and found usable	382	95.5
Not usable	11	2.75
Not Returned	7	1.75
Total	400	100.00

Table 1 shows that the return rate of questionnaire is 95.5% (n = 382) while the mortality rate is 4.5% (n = 8). This shows that the return rate is higher than the mortality rate. The mortality rate of 4.5% (n = 8) does not have any significant affect the study because it is minute when compared to the return rate of 95.5%. Thus, the copies were considered good enough to represent the population. The presentation and analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire were therefore based on 382 copies that were returned and found usable.

Table 2. Respondents Sex Variation

Variables (Sex)	Frequency	Percentage
Male	184	48.00
Female	198	52.00
Total	382	100.00

From the data in Table 2, it was discovered that 184 persons representing 48% were males, while 198 people representing 52% were females, as elicited via the questionnaire. It means that there were more females than males in the sample.

Table 3. Respondents Marital Status

Variables (Marital Status)	Frequency	Percentage
Single	269	70.00
Married	102	27.00
Widowed	11	3.00
Total	382	100.00

Data on the variable of marital status on table 3 shows that 269 persons representing 70% were single and 102 persons representing 27% were married while 11 persons representing 3% were widowed.

Table 4. Respondents Age Distribution

Variables (Marital Status)	Frequency	Percentage
21 – 25	28	7.00
26 – 30	39	10.00
31 – 35	221	58.00
36 – 40	59	15.00
41 and above	359.00	
Total	382	100.00

Data on the variable of age distribution on Table 4 shows that 28 persons representing 7% were between the age range of 21 – 25, 39 (10%) respondents were from 26 – 30, 221 (58%) were from 31 – 35, 59 (15%) were age ranged 36 – 40 while 35 (9%) were age range 41 and above.

4.1 Answers to Research Questions

a. Research Question One

Do the respondents use Twitter before it was banned by President Buhari

Table 5. Respondents' Usage of Twitter before its ban

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	382	100.00
No	0	0
Can't Say	0	0
Total	382	100.00

Table 5 shows respondents' responses to research question one. Data reveals that all the respondents (100%, n=382) indicated yes meaning that they were all using Twitter users before it was banned by President Buhari. The implication of data on Table 5 is that those samples were using Twitter before it was banned by President Buhari.

b. Research Question Two

What is the respondents' perception of the #TwitterBan by President Buhari?

Table 6. Respondents' Perception of the #TwitterBan by President Buhari

Response	Frequency	Percentage
It was wrong to ban Twitter Usage (negative)	272	71.00
It was right to ban TwitterUsage (positive)	68	18.00
Can't Say	42	11.00
Total	382	100.00

Table 6 shows respondents' responses to research question two. Data reveals that majority of the respondents (71%, n=271) indicated that it was wrong to ban Twitter Usage. Also, 18% (n=68) said It was right to ban TwitterUsage by the Nigerian government while 12% (n=42) decided not to hold an opinion. The implication of data on Table 6 is that majority of the respondents have a negative perception about the #TwitterBan by President Buhari as they stated that it was wrong to ban Twitter Usage in Nigeria.

c. Research Question Three

How did the #TwitterBan by President Buhari affected the respondents' freedom of expression?

Table 7. Respondents' view on the effect of #TwitterBan on freedom of expression

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I couldn't access Twitter to air my views	45	12.00
I couldn't connect with friends to share opinion	68	18.00
I find it hard to use other social media platforms	42	11.00
All of the above	227	59.00
Total	382	100.00

Table 7 shows respondents' responses to research question three. Data reveals that majority of the respondents (59%, n=227) indicated all of the above meaning that the #TwitterBan by President Buhari affected their freedom of expression in various ways

including the inability access Twitter to air their views, connect with friends to share opinion and to use other social media platforms. The implication of data on Table 7 is the freedom of speech of the respondents were affected by the #TwitterBan by President Buhari as they could not access Twitter to air their views, connect with friends to share opinion and to use other social media platforms.

d. Research Question Four

How did the TwitterBan by President Buhari influence the respondents' usage of other social media platforms?

Table 8. Influence of TwitterBan on the usage of other social media platforms

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I became afraid to criticize the government	299	78.00
I still criticize the government	67	18.00
I don't use other social media platforms	16	4.00
Total	382	100.00

Table 8 shows respondents' responses to research question four. Data reveals that majority of the respondents (78%, n=299) indicated that they became afraid to criticize the government of President Buhari on other social media platforms 18% (n=67) said they still criticize the government of President Buhari on other social media platform while 4% (n=16) said they do not use other social media platforms except Twitter. The implication of data on Table 8 is that TwitterBan by President Buhari influence the respondents' usage of other social media platforms by instilling fear on them to stop to criticizing the government of President Buhari on social media platforms.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study from research question one show that the respondents were using Twitter often before it was banned by President Buhari for different reasons ranging from using Twitter to keeping up with friends, reading news and for business purposes. This may be as the controversial lifestyles attributed to the musician. This is in line with the submissions of Soedarsono, Mohamad, Akanmu, Putri and Khoirunnisa (2020) who contend that Twitter has become a popular medium for channelling information and it is being used widely by individuals, organizations and politicians due to its widespread adoption. However, managing and maintaining social networks effectively can be used as a political communication tool to gain a supports from the peoples in the case of politician.

The findings from research question two also revealed that majority of the respondents have a negative perception about the #TwitterBan by President Buhari as they stated that it was wrong to ban Twitter Usage in Nigeria. This finding is in line with the submission of Anyim, (2020) who notes that social media platform like Twitter, is one of the best technological innovations that have made information sharing, marketing information and collaboration easier. It was acknowledged that Millions of people across Nigeria, especially youth, rely on social media to engage in discourse and to share and access information. Also, Awe (2021) asserts that many world leaders use social media to communicate with their citizens and the world. The global response to posts and tweets is a sign of the power of social media platforms. However, they own their private platforms. On their own, Awe stressed that these platforms determine when a user flouts the rules and the actions to take when there is a

violation. Anyim (2020) posits that Twitter is an important tool of evidence since information generated from it could be considered admissible in Nigerian Court of Law.

Also, findings from research question three revealed that the freedom of speech of the respondents were affected by the #TwitterBan by President Buhari as they could not access Twitter to air their views, connect with friends to share opinion and to use other social media platforms. This finding supports those submissions of Vareba, et.al. (2017), Internet censorship is, in principle designed to tackle challenges on the Net and enable issues such as Internet security, data privacy and greater cyber-activities in countries. However, its implementation in most African countries has been characterized by many paradoxes. In effect, though the paradigm has, on one hand, appeared to be a panacea for a number of cybercrimes, it has on the other hand contributed to more issues, some of which include mismanagement of private information, abuse of digital rights and wanton disrespect of internet freedoms. It has generally been very difficult for African countries to find a balance between freedom of expression and the imperative to fight many serious online vices (such as cyber terrorism and extremism). Hudley, Bishi and Grossman (2021), therefore, conclude that Twitter ban in Nigeria will have a serious damage on the economy as many Nigerians rely on Twitter to support their work. Employers, for instance, use the platform to circulate job openings. Freelancers use it to advertise and promote their services. And the country's vibrant start-up community — Nigeria has the most start-ups in Africa — uses Twitter to attract investment.

Finally, the findings from research question four shows that TwitterBan by President Buhari influenced the respondents' usage of other social media platforms by instilling fear on them to stop to criticizing the government of President Buhari on social media platforms. This supports the conclusions of Tsegyu and Inobemhe (2021) who note that the calls for social media regulation are reverberating despite the fact that there is a growing use of social media among Nigerians who found in the platforms, avenues to communicate with one another without little cost when compared to the amount paid to make voice calls which Kemp(2021) revealed that Data Reportal 2021 report puts social media users in Nigeria at 33 million as of January 2021. Chakrabarti (2018) also contend that social media is giving the people the platform to have a voice in government by providing the space for citizens to discuss issues, organize themselves for a common purpose and hold leaders accountable.

From the discussion, the use of AST in this study has been justified by the research findings because of the fact that Twitter fits into the central assumption of the AST which suggests that advanced information technologies, like social media platforms, allow cooperative involvement and interchange in the activities of an organization through a refined information management system. The TwitterBan stands against everything this theory proposes. Also, the Public Sphere Theory was justified as the possibility of a modern public sphere has been realized where both electronic and print media, as well as the internet (Twitter), have been heralded a new public sphere which opened new channels for political communication and public discourse. Twitter, therefore, has been a basis for more democratic and participatory public sphere and #TwitterBan contradicts these basic tenets.

V. Conclusion

The study set out to understand the perception of Nigerians towards social media regulation, particularly their conception and notion of it, their projected consequences of it, and their ideas about alternatives to it using the #TwitterBan by President Buhari as a case in

point. To prevent one-dimensional responses, the researcher set questions that required respondents to comment on the interestingly polarized (positive and negative) aspects of social media regulation, yet, majority of the respondents do not support the move for government regulation of social media in Nigeria. This study also proves that users are not unaware of the risks or dangers associated with the use of an unregulated social media, but it is a gamble that most are prepared to take for a free voice online. This study also reveals that the worst that could happen if social media were to be regulated is the stifling of the exchange of opposing ideas online, other than that, most respondents will not be discouraged from accessing these platforms for other equally important interpersonal businesses and conversations that happens every-day when the ban on Twitter.

To bridge this gap in trust between people and government, there is dire need for government officials to provide unrestricted access to information by abiding to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. When the public or the press is denied facts by government, it becomes only natural that they turn towards potentially false sources for information. Apart from access to information, findings from this study points towards good governance, proper sensitization of users towards self-regulation, sanctioning of irresponsible social media companies operating in Nigeria and implementation of existing media laws online, rather than regulation by way of direct government involvement in the affairs of social media users.

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