

**TWITTER NETWORK RESTRICTION: A VIOLATION OF NIGERIAN CITIZENS'
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (A CASE STUDY OF TWITTER BAN)**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the project work on “TWITTER NETWORK RESTRICTION: A VIOLATION OF NIGERIAN CITIZENS' FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (A CASE STUDY OF TWITTER BAN)”was carried out and presented by EDO-OVBIEBO OGHOSA of the department of POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty for He is the secret of my existence

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My profound gratitude goes to God for His love, protection, guidance, direction, grace and mercy upon me. I also express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Francis Osayi for his assistance and support throughout this study period.

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I sincerely appreciate my parents and siblings for their love, support and care. I love you all.

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ABSTRACT

Examining Twitter Network Restriction: A Violation of Nigerian Citizens' Fundamental Rights (A Case Study of Twitter Ban) with Edo State as a case study is the study's main objective. The study readily enrolled 90 individuals and used a survey research approach. But from the recruited participants, a total of 85 replies were received and verified.

Chi-Square was used as a statistical method to test the hypothesis (SPSS). The study's conclusions showed that the Twitter network ban severely violated Nigerian individuals' fundamental human rights. It also breaches Section 39 of the Constitution by impairing the social and economic rights that Nigerian people are given by Chapter 11 of the Constitution by breaching their right to freedom of communication, association, and expression. Furthermore, the study's findings showed that the now-repealed Twitter ban was a grave abuse of power since it put the president's personal interests ahead of those of the nation and its citizens and was not implemented democratically. The study consequently suggests that, in the future, the federal government of Nigeria should endeavour to follow constitutional processes and guidelines in ways of dealing with situations like these. The Nigerian federal government should also acknowledge that the Twitter Network ban has an impact on a variety of economic sectors.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Any free, democratic society founded on the rule of law must adhere to the principles of freedom of association, expression, and communication. These principles have been recognized internationally as human rights in the post-Second World War intergovernmental documents known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966). This commitment is made in Article 19 of the UDHR and the ICCPR. The significance of freedom of expression on the Internet is clearly stated in the 2011 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression. (Douwe Korff (2012) cited in UN retrieved) The Rapporteur emphasizes the need for clear rules that permit increasing surveillance and monitoring of communications (2021).

Additionally, the Rapporteur emphasizes that restrictions and regulations must adhere to Council standards, as is the case with Strasbourg Court law about the specific set of restrictions on freedom of expression required in a democratic society. Any restriction on the freedom to communicate, express one's opinions, or assemble must also be supported by clear, understandable rules.

It is no secret that social media and the Internet have become more significant in political activities. In 2011, political events in the Middle East and North Africa were heavily reliant on tweeting, blogging, and video sharing. They are significant to all human rights activists. However, some governments have responded with repression to the use of these new technologies to assert old freedoms. Government officials frequently get in touch with writers and website owners to put pressure on them to remove content. They do this by threatening them with legal action, the termination of contracts or licenses, and even bans in cases where the companies involved are

based in foreign countries. Additionally, governments encourage their constituents to file complaints with hosting companies regarding user-generated content.

Similar to this, the most extreme techniques for stifling Internet communication have included blocking all access to the web, as Egypt did in January 2011, and even setting up a Mini-Net that is entirely under state control, as was occasionally planned by Iran. Governments in Bahrain have also purposefully slowed down connection speeds, particularly at newspaper offices, hotels, and residences, by exerting control over the regional Internet infrastructure. China, Iran, Thailand, Burma, and Burma have all occasionally attempted to sway online debates with coordinated pro-state submissions. Search engine pressure from China has led to distorted and rearranged search results. Several nations have also threatened and physically attacked bloggers and Internet activists.

Examples like the Twitter ban announced by the government of Nigeria on June 4, 2021, are just a few of many times when the government imposed network restrictions on its citizens' access to social networking sites. These demands raise questions about human rights, such as whether businesses should be required to withstand demands from the government to defend the rights of their customers.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Blogging, tweeting, and messaging are all essential to political events in modern democracies. They are crucial to all human rights advocates. However, some governments have responded to the use of these new technologies to assert old freedoms with repression. In an effort by authoritarian states to stifle political dissent, Freedom House cites growing website blocking and filtering, content manipulation, attacks on and imprisonment of bloggers, punishment of regular users, cyberattacks, and coercion of website owners to remove content. It implies that global Internet

censorship is in part a reaction to the massive growth in popularity and pivotal role in the political and social activism of websites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

The Nigerian government declared on June 4, 2021, that it had halted Twitter's operations there. *Nigeria bans Twitter after the firm removes President Buhari's message, according to CNN (2021)*. The announcement came two days after the social media company removed a tweet by President Muhammadu Buhari, in which Buhari threatened the secessionist groups in the southeast "to treat them in the language they understand." Additionally, the government ordered Internet service providers to ban access to Twitter and issued orders to federal prosecutors to prosecute anyone who is still using the social media site. More than 100 million Nigerians, or 40% of the population, have access to the internet and social networking sites, and about 40 million of them have accounts on Twitter, according to the Social-Media-Poll-Report (2020). The government's use of its control over the Internet and other digital technologies to monitor and repress its citizens is exemplified most recently by the Twitter ban.

As a result, Nigeria's citizens were concerned that their fundamental human rights to free expression, communication, and media association were being violated by the country's Twitter ban. Thus, this study uses Twitter as a case study to examine network restrictions on the platform as a violation of fundamental rights of Nigerian citizens.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's goal is to carefully examine network restrictions on the Twitter platform as a violation of Nigerian citizens' fundamental rights. The research specifically seeks to:

1. To carefully consider whether Nigerians' freedom of communication and association is promoted by social networking sites like Twitter.

2. To determine whether governmental network restrictions on the Twitter platform restricted the right of the public to free speech and association.
3. To determine whether the Nigerian government's ban on Twitter violates her citizens' basic human rights.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- I. Do you think Nigeria Government ban on Twitter ban is a violation of the fundamental human rights of her citizens?
- II. Do you think Federal government banning twitter without considering Citizen's interest is constitutional in Nigeria?
- III. Was twitter ban executed democratically?
- IV. Do you think social networking such as Twitter promotes Nigerians' freedom of communication and association?
- V. Did government ban on twitter platform affected citizen's freedom of communication and association.

1.5 HYPOTHESES PROPOSITION

The following theories serve as a guide for the research

Hypothesis O1: The Nigerian government ordering network restrictions on Twitter will have no impact on citizens' freedom of association or communication.

Hypothesis 1: The Nigerian government's directive to restrict network access to the Twitter platform will have an impact on citizens' freedom of communication and association.

Hypothesis O2: The Nigerian government's Twitter ban is not a violation of its citizens' fundamental human rights.

Hypothesis I:

The Nigerian government's ban on the Twitter network violates its citizens' fundamental human rights.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope focuses on network restrictions to the Twitter platform: a violation of Nigerian citizens' fundamental human rights. The study, however, is confined to Edo State Twitter users.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The conclusions of this study will be important to various government agencies as well as Nigerian citizens. The study will demonstrate to the arms of government, particularly the judiciary, the necessity to reconsider the current restrictions/ban on the Twitter platform, keeping in mind the importance of internet freedom. Furthermore, all prohibitions must be properly defined and easily available through statutory legislation. The regulatory agencies enforcing the rules limiting free speech on social media must be totally impartial, answerable, and have sufficient protections in place to prevent arbitrariness. Those enforcing laws regulating freedom of expression on social media must be completely independent, responsible, and have proper protections in place to minimize arbitrariness. The study will also add to the body of knowledge, serve as a reference source, and be incredibly useful to students and scholars who are interested in gathering or doing research on the issue under study.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

TWITTER

Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service that allows users to send and receive messages known as "tweets." Unregistered users can only view tweets, while registered users can post, like, and retweet them.

BAN ON TWITTER

This marks the official suspension of Twitter operations on June 4th, 2021, as ordered by the Federal Government of Nigeria, until the proprietors of the social network meet the newly set condition imposed by the government of Nigeria.

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

Human rights are moral principles or norms for certain standards of human behavior that are routinely protected under local and international law.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Five chapters will make up the research process. Chapters one through three will essentially clarify the research problem and the resulting question by detailing the study's logic and defending its theoretical underpinnings while highlighting its original concepts and important conclusions. In this example, the methodology presented in Chapter 3 makes it easier to replicate the study. However, the study question and assumptions will determine the methodology. The results obtained after carrying out the analysis mentioned in the previous section are specifically provided in Chapter 4. Chapter five, which wraps up the dissertation, explains the limitations and implications of the interpretations and places them in the perspective of previous research. In order to provide definitive answers to the research questions, it also frequently integrates the findings of the current study with those of previous studies.

1.10 REFERENCES

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

To provide a clear description of the research challenge, this Chapter will critically and thoroughly review the pertinent literature. It will also acknowledge the contributions of academics who have made significant prior contributions to the research of a similar nature. Thus, the chapter aims to bridge the perceived gap and poignantly increase knowledge of the subject.

SOCIAL MEDIA

As they exist now, social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others) are computer-mediated tools that facilitate the creation and dissemination of ideas, information, and a variety of forms of expression through online communities and networks. Users frequently use desktop computers and laptops with web-based technologies to access social media services, or they download apps for mobile devices (smartphones and tablet computers). Utilizing these captivating services, users can develop extremely engaging platforms that enable sharing, co-creation, discussion, and modification of user-generated material or previously created information that has been placed online by people, communities, and organizations. Social media also helps people and big businesses communicate when it comes to concentrating on the newly growing topic of techno-self-studies.

The quality, reach, frequency, interaction, usability, immediacy, and permanence of social media are all different from those of traditional/old electronic media, such as transmission on TV or paper-based media (such as newspapers and magazines), as well as new/traditional electronic media. Using a dialogic transmission system, social media operates (i.e many sources to many receivers). This is in contrast to traditional electronic media, which employs a mono-logic

transmission system (i.e., one source to many receivers), such as paper newspapers that are sent to a large number of subscribers or radio stations that transmit the same shows to a city's population. The most well-known social media platforms include YouTube, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Viber, and WeChat.

HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Web 2.0, a term widely used to describe a new wave of Internet innovation that allows users to publish and exchange content online, is the origin of social media as we know it today, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (cited in Eun 2011:6). The term "social media" refers to a broad category of online networks, including blogs, microblogs (like Twitter), social networking sites (like Facebook), sites for sharing creative works (like YouTube), professional networking sites (like LinkedIn), and collaborative websites (e.g., Wikipedia). Social networks and microblogs are the most well-liked of these social media, accounting for about 22% of all online time in the United States, according to ACNielsen (cited in Eun 2011: 6). Web 2.0 is a result of a second-generation Internet that is very all-encompassing and allows users to enhance it as they use it, claims Dominick (2009:283). The majority of the time, users of social media sites rather than the sites' owners, write and publish the majority of their content. For instance, users of Facebook and Twitter upload the majority of their advertisements, videos, and images.

Jenkins, et al Al (cited in Stagno: 2), on the other hand, asserts that Web 2.0 has expanded significantly because it facilitates the creation and dissemination of information, allows for the participation in wall participatory culture to share personal expressions or creations, and connects individuals with like interests and objectives on blogs, social networking sites, and other platforms. Websites were largely passive and stagnant a few years ago. Since most of them were business websites, there was little engagement. An individual could only engage online by sending an email or form to the website's proprietors or webmaster and hoping for a response. Known as "first

generation Web where users usually ingested material, the audience went to web sites and looked at content given by the website owner," Dominick termed this sort of organization Web 1.0. (2009:283). But today's users are also producers, so they are simultaneously producing and consuming information (Bruns, cited in Stagno 2010:1). Igbiduru (2011:26) says that the 2008 presidential campaign of then-Senator Barack Obama, who later became American president, was the first to make use of social media's potential, particularly to broadcast a candidate's message, garner support, and get the people involved. Five million people were contacted by the Obama campaign through 15 distinct social media channels. As of November 2008, Obama possessed around 2.3 million Facebook fans, 115,000 Twitter followers, and 50 million YouTube subscribers. Facebook is a social network that links users to persons in their immediate vicinity, including friends, family, coworkers, and those who simply share their interests. Together with Eduardo Saverin, Austin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook in 2004 while studying computer science at Harvard University in the United States (Locke cited in Nnaane 2011:15. Membership in Facebook was initially only available to Harvard students, but it was later opened up to Stanford University and other Boston-area colleges as well. Since 2006, Facebook has grown to include all users worldwide as well as 24 other schools, businesses, and corporations (Dunay & Krueger 2010:27). According to Zuckerberg, cited (Nweze, 2009), Facebook advertising gives businesses the chance to connect with their target market and actual customers. Facebook gives users a variety of ways to connect and share information. Facebook gives users a multitude of options to connect and exchange information. Facebook users can edit the content of their profiles and submit photographs and videos. Over the past few years, Facebook has added several services, such as apps and instant messaging/chat (and their developer platform). Users can interact with one another in a variety of ways, such as by writing on one another's walls or sending private messages. Friends of that user can view wall posts, but typically not the wider public. Additionally, individuals can modify their privacy settings to let certain users view various portions of their profiles depending on any current relationships (the basic privacy settings are

"only friends", "friends of friends", and "everyone"). Users have the option to publish notes for all of their friends to see. Users can also "like" or remark on their friends' posts, and group dialogues frequently take place in the comment areas (Dunay & Krueger2010:27). Businesses, organizations, public personalities, celebrities, professionals of all stripes, and people can advertise themselves to the Facebook community by creating pages on the social media platform. A robust set of web capabilities are available through Facebook Pages for connecting with customers (or, as they are called on Facebook, fans). A Facebook Page gains 3.5 million new admirers each day. According to eMetric's February 2009 Facebook Usage Metrics Worldwide Study, smaller brands, business-to-business (B2B) companies, consultants, and personalities can also develop a devoted following by using Facebook Pages. This is true even though well-known consumer brands have sizable installed fan bases (Dunay & Krueger2010:27). He adds that Facebook would be the sixth most populous country in the world if it were a country. This is because the site has become one of the most well-known in the entire globe, with over 660 million users (Amaefule 2011:20). The number of users keeps gradually increasing. 25 According to Tyler (2010: para 3), there are currently 1.7 billion users of the Internet worldwide, and 66% of them browse social networking sites. Nigeria accounts for about 39.6% of all Internet traffic from Africa, and 29.8% of the population has access to the Internet, according to Idaresit (cited in Ofose, 2010). 30 million Nigerians used Facebook as of 2009. 67% of those in this number were men, while 33% were women. Since then, these numbers have changed. There are currently about two million Facebook subscribers in Lagos alone (Ogunbayo, 2011: 44). The aforementioned is used by Solaja and Odiaka (2010:32) to bolster their assertion that "such a huge population naturally creates a suitable basis for the adoption of the platforms for marketing objectives." Facebook allows businesses to engage with customers and non-customers on platforms that they are comfortable using and gather real-time feedback on what they have to say about their brand, products, and services (Wmworia). Facebook also offers targeted communication initiatives to selected customer groups for product development and service enhancement (2010, February 11). With 97,000 Nigerian Facebook

followers, President Goodluck Jonathan has the largest fan base in Nigeria. The president's Facebook fan page receives a staggering amount of traffic, therefore both national and international firms might think about running an advertisement there Adebija (cited in Ofose 2010:4). Twitter is a free micro-blogging social network that allows users to publish brief messages known as tweets that may be seen by other subscribers, also known as followers. Twitter was started in 2006 by Dorsey Jack, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams. Almost any electronic device, including desktop computers, laptops, Blackberries, phones, and other mobile devices, may send and receive tweets, which have a character limit of 140. (Farhi 2009). As stated by D'Monte (cited in Nnaane 2011), With an estimated 200 million users, 65 million tweets per day, and more than 800,000 search inquiries per day, Twitter has become increasingly popular on a global scale. Microblogs have been praised for their advantage of short messages compared to long e-mail marketing communications, which 26 allows users to quickly scan a lot of updates (Zhao and Rosson, 2009). Twitter has positioned for even greater growth thanks to rising smartphone sales and the ongoing expansion of Internet and mobile network infrastructure (Wauters, 2010). Users can broadcast messages to a large audience without first viewing that person's profile. People who follow other users instantly receive tweets from other persons on their personal Twitter home pages. Messages sent and received on this microblog are public by default, thus anybody can read and comment on a Twitter message, even if some Twitter accounts are kept private and some individuals need approval before following them (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In February 2009, there were 7 million visitors, up from 475,000 in February 2008, according to Chiang (2011), "making it the fastest-growing social networking site for that month" (McGiboney, 2009)

TWITTER

Twitter is a social networking and micro blogging platform owned by Americans where users can post and interact with messages called "tweets." Unregistered users can only read tweets while registered users can post, like, and retweet them. Twitter can be accessed by users through its

website or its mobile device applications. Twitter, Inc., a company with its corporate headquarters in San Francisco, California, and more than 25 offices worldwide offers the service.

In March 2006, Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams created Twitter; it was formally introduced in July of that same year. It was reported in May 2012 that more than 95 million users tweeted more than 300 million times daily. One of the top ten most visited websites in March 2013 was Twitter, which was frequently referred to as "the SMS of the Internet." Twitter had more than 300 million monthly active users as of the first quarter of 2019, according to a report from the Twitter search team from 2011. But statistics show that a tiny minority of users compose the vast majority of tweets. Twitter reorganized the looks of its website and mobile application in 2014, which gave it a Facebook-like appearance. The business assisted broadcasters and rights holders in distributing video content both naturally on social media and through Twitter's Amplify program. It was July 2014.

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

A group of rights known as fundamental rights has received extensive protection from infringement. These rights have been established through due process of law or are expressly stated in a constitution.

According to Susan (2009), the term "right" refers to the entitlements that all people possess, regardless of their circumstances, status, or location. According to Jewa (2006), without rights, a person cannot function as a human being. In addition, he argued that fundamental liberties and human rights are the same, enabling people to fully develop their morality, intellect, and conscience to meet both their spiritual and material needs.

According to Hoffman & Rowe (2006), rights are claims to something that someone is required to do or provide, freedom to do something, authority to do something that has an impact on other

people, and immunity from legal challenges when doing something. Right is a hugely important and pervasive social, political, societal, and international value. As mentioned by Sriram, Herman, J., & Martin-Ortega (2009) and Turner & Morgan (2009), rights are becoming more globally oriented although they are universal. According to Ajayi and George (2002), rights are not absolute and can only be exercised within the restrictions and/or parameters set forth by the law.

According to Ajayi & George (2002), the Nigerian state's development and incorporation of modern human rights was, at its core, consistent with the British perspective on human rights. Hamid (2007) divided the rights into three categories: group or people's rights; economic, social, and cultural rights; and civil and political (natural rights). He added that while these three are distinct, they are typically expressed confusingly. Hillier (1998) also referred to economic, social, and cultural rights as Second Generation rights and civil and political rights as First Generation rights. He added that third-generation rights are collective and belong to people rather than individuals. He also identified and labeled rights to self-determination and development as Third Generation rights. Human rights are divinely granted to every person and are naturally inherent in every bone in the body. This is true because all people have inherent rights, including the right to life, dignity, personal liberty, the right to live a private life, the right to association, the right to freedom of speech, the right to freedom of movement, and the right to practice their religion, among other basic human rights (Malemi, 2010). However, there are times when the distinction between violations and rights raises issues of debate. One such example is the definition of torture, for which a precise definition has only been provided by the Convention against Torture, a treatise of the United Nations on the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

TWITTER NETWORK RESTRICTION: A VIOLATION OF NIGERIAN CITIZENS' FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (A CASE STUDY OF TWITTER BAN)

The Nigerian government officially banned Twitter from operating in Nigeria on June 4, 2021 (BBC2021) after the social media platform deleted tweets by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari warning the southeast Nigerian population, primarily the Igbo people, of the possibility of a recurrence of the 1967 Biafran Civil War due to the ongoing insurgency in Southeastern Nigeria. However, it was ultimately based on "a litany of problems with the social media platform in Nigeria, where misinformation and fake news spread through it have had real-world violent consequences," according to the Nigerian government, which claimed that the removal of the President's tweets was a factor in their decision. This restriction was implemented without taking into account the nearly 39 million Twitter users in Nigeria who use the social media site as a forum to express their thoughts, including unhappiness with the administration, as well as to stay informed and up to date.

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), a government agency, gave telecom companies guidelines on how to suspend Twitter's services. Acting on behalf of the Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), the carriers claimed that because they evaluated the request following international best practices, a democratic process was not followed. In a brief press release, Segun Adeyemi, Special Assistant To The President (Media) in the office of the Minister of Information and Culture, Abuja, claimed that the Minister, Lai Mohammed, had justified the ban by saying that the platform had been used repeatedly for actions that could threaten Nigeria's corporate existence. The Federal Government has also instructed the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to start the licensing procedure for all OTT and social media businesses in Nigeria right away, Mr. Adeyemi continued. The Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, followed the lead of the Minister of

Information and Culture by threatening legal action against Nigerians who disobeyed the Twitter ban.

Despite the argument put forth in Adeyemi's press release, Nigerians are aware of the true motivation behind the hasty decision, which was the removal of President Muhammadu Buhari's Twitter account for tweeting what some perceived as a threat of genocide or bloody suppression against a segment of the country's population. Tweeted by the president: "A large portion of individuals acting inappropriately today are too young to be aware of the devastation and casualties that resulted from the Nigerian Civil War. We who spent 30 months in the fields and experienced the battle will speak to them in a language they can understand." It is commonly known that social media service providers, including Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, among others, have clear, widely accepted industry rules that forbid the use of language that promotes hatred. President Buhari now has company in former US President Donald Trump, who suffered a similar blow after repeatedly tweeting hateful messages about Americans who disagreed with his uncivilized approach to handling political and governance issues. As a result, one of President Buhari's tweets was removed. It is ironic in a poetic way that the Buhari administration has waxed poetic about hate speech so much that his All Progressives Congress (APC)-controlled National Assembly has filed legislation to create a National Hate Speech Commission and another to regulate social media. Nigerians have rightfully opposed both measures out of concern that they might be used as witch-hunting tools against people who exercise their right to dissent. The Twitter ban has been condemned based on fundamental principles since events surrounding it have reinforced the fear of civil society, media outlets, groups, professional bodies, etc. in this regard. Inibehe Effiong (premium times 2021), a lawyer and human rights activist, calls Twitter and other social media sites "trustable tools for civic involvement." The activist notes that many citizens have received redress for injustice done to them "on account of the polarization of such cases on Twitter," saying that it "gives the ordinary people a voice to air their grievances, bring to public

attention, crisis, and injustice that has been done to them and seek both institutional and public support." The restriction on microblogging sites, according to Mr. Effiong, who has filed a lawsuit against the federal government over it, restricts "access to (justice)" and, in a sense, "shrinks the civic space." He claimed that people could no longer effectively organize as they should (premium times 2021).

The fundamental rights of citizens are clearly outlined in the numerous Nigerian constitutions. For instance, Chapter IV of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution outlined the numerous rights and provided for their protection, guarantee, and enforcement. Additionally, it listed the sole justifications for denying such rights. But in Nigeria, there are clear violations of human rights in every facet of daily life (both public and private). The government (the judiciary, other law enforcement agencies, and civil-public agencies) and the general public, through a variety of actions, inactions, and reactions, as well as socio-societal, cultural, religious, and economic factors, are all to blame for violations of the rights. These factors also contribute to the issues with Nigeria's fundamental rights.

The reported Twitter prohibition in Nigeria poses serious harm to our democracy on five grounds, according to an editorial in PREMIUM TIMES (2021), as follows:

First off, the prohibition represents a flagrant abuse of power because it puts the president's interests ahead of those of the nation and its people. Indeed, the President is not the state, and the public's and the country's interests should not be threatened by arguments over the personal terms he willingly agreed to with Twitter. Furthermore, we are not aware of any federation law that would permit a minister or the president to arbitrarily bar Nigerians from using the social media platforms of their choosing.

Second, the President, the Minister of Information, and the Minister of Justice all promised to respect the Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution, which is gravely violated by the

prohibition. It breaches Section 39 of the Constitution by interfering with citizens' fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association, weakening the social and economic rights secured for Nigerian citizens by Chapter 11 of the Constitution.

Thirdly, the embargo violates several international, continental, and regional agreements that Nigeria voluntarily signs. The prohibition falls short of what they believe citizens should be able to freely enjoy in terms of rights and freedoms. These include the Universal Declaration of Peoples' and Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights expressed concern about the practice of State Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights "interrupting or limiting access to telecommunication services such as the Internet, social media, and messaging services" in Resolution 362 of 2016 under the provisions of the African Charter. The African Commission adopted the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, which, specifically, states in Principles 38 (1) and (2) that "States shall not interfere with the right of individuals to seek, receive, and impart information through any means of communication and digital technologies, through measures such as the removal, blocking, or filtering of content, unless such interference is justifiable and compatible with the goals of the individual, and that States shall not discriminate against any person based on their place of residence. Additionally, "States shall not engage in or condone any disruption of access by any segment of the public or by the entire population to the internet or other digital technologies."

A current resolution from the UN Human Rights Council from July 2018 calls for the promotion, defense, and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet.

Fourthly, the restriction is an unjustified assault on the corporate, business, and professional interests of groups and people who properly manage their affairs on Twitter, including but not limited to the media, businesspeople, researchers, academic institutions, NGOs, and CCSOs.

According to "Statista," as of the third quarter of 2020, Twitter accounts for 61.4 percent of Internet users in Nigeria, following WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. "Quora" places the figure at roughly seven million. Even though there are significantly fewer users, a restriction that puts citizens' means of social and business communication in danger cannot be justified.

Fifth, the restriction highlights the growing worry among investors about the unpredictability of the domestic policy climate. It is easier to anticipate the effects of a subsequent reduction in investment for an economy whose recovery from the pandemic's early phases has been labeled "fragile."

According to Chioma Agwuegbo, the Executive Director of Twitter Nigeria, Twitter has been crucial in assisting in providing justice to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and gender-based violence (SGBV). Indeed, it was a potent tool for online activism and advocacy for issues of sexual and gender-based violence, she claims. "Twitter was instrumental in sensitizing the public on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) issues, calling the civic societies, NGOs, government, and relevant stakeholders to action, seeking justice and social support for survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable" (premium times 2021).

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Principles of Natural Law

The Hellenistic and Roman eras are linked to the doctrine of Natural Law (the independent person). The natural law doctrine is based on natural, unalterable, and eternal principles of fairness and proper reasons. With the significant work of John Lock, who founded the philosophy of humanism and political engagement; that people are human beings who are all equal and worthy of basic respect; the natural theory is the most widely accepted theory of and linked with rights (Hoffman & Rowe,2006; Davis, 2012). The theory only postulates that humanity formerly existed

in a state of equality and freedom to choose one's activities, without being subject to the whims of others. However, as certain weaknesses and difficulties began to appear, which later came to characterize the state of nature, people came to an understanding (contract) to establish a political authority to control their behavior as well as to guarantee the protection of their natural rights, such as life, property, and liberty (Dixon & McCorquodale, 2003; Shaw, 2003; Hamid, 2007).

Theory of agenda setting

Agenda-setting is defined as "the power (of the news media) to shape the weight given to the issues on the public agenda." The study of agenda-setting outlines the methods used by the media to try to sway viewers and create a hierarchy of news importance. Media coverage is more prevalent in countries with greater political clout. The media's prejudice regarding issues like politics, the economy, culture, etc. is what drives the agenda-setting of the media. These ideas grew and expanded quickly due to the agenda-setting and laissez-faire elements of communication research that emerged. Setting an agenda has steps that must be completed in a particular order to be successful. The history of agenda-setting research can be found in the first chapter of Walter Lippmann's book *Public Opinion* from 1922. In that chapter, "The World outside and the Pictures in Our Heads," Lippmann makes the case that the media serves as the primary conduit between happenings in the outside world and popular perceptions. Walter Lippmann discussed what we now refer to as "agenda-setting" without using the phrase. The press "may not be successful most of the time in telling people what to think, but it is astoundingly successful in telling its readers what to think about," Bernard Cohen wrote in 1963 in response to Lippmann's 1922 book. According to the map that the authors, editors, and publishers of the newspaper they read draw for them, the world will appear differently to various people, Cohen says. The notion that later gave rise to the formalization of agenda-setting theory by McCombs and Shaw was first put forth by Cohen in the 1960s. Stories involving public discontent, violence, terrorism, crime, and drug problems within the Nation States typically have the most effect on shaping agendas.

The application of the two theories to the discussion explains why it is unconstitutional for the public to be excluded from the decision-making process and for decisions to be made without taking into account how those decisions will affect them. Social media information about actions taken by a democratically elected government thus garners the strongest attention of the public audience, including the government of nation-states and civic societies.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research process for this study will be thoroughly described in this chapter. When used in this context, the term "methodology" refers to a set of guidelines or techniques for conducting research that has been adopted or used to present study findings to research audiences systematically and scientifically.

The overarching strategy you use to logically and cogently combine the different study components into your research design will help you successfully address the research problem. It consists of the accepted practices for data collection, measurement, and analysis. Thus, the full range of research methodologies and techniques that an investigator chooses are included in research designs. It is the overall strategy used by the researcher in which various study components are successfully combined to tackle a research problem. To examine peoples' opinions and viewpoints, the researcher will use a survey research design in this study. The process of collecting data from a sample of people by questioning them is known as survey research (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160). According to Singleton and Straits (2009), survey research can use quantitative research methods (like using numerically rated items on questionnaires), qualitative research methods (like using open-ended questions), or a combination of both (i.e., mixed methods). Because surveys are frequently used to explore and describe human behavior, they are frequently used in social and psychological research.

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

A research population is typically a sizable group of people or things that form the core of a scientific investigation. Research is carried out to benefit the general populace. However, because

population sizes are so large, it is frequently impractical and expensive for researchers to test every member of the population. Researchers use sampling techniques because of this. A study population, according to Udoyen (2019), is a collection of components or individuals, depending on the situation, who share a common trait. These comparable characteristics may include place, gender, age, sex, or a particular interest. The focus of the study population is that it consists of people or things that are uniform in their descriptions. However, this study used Benin City as a case study to examine the Government Ban on Twitter Network: A Violation of Nigerian Citizens' Fundamental Rights (A Case Study of Twitter Ban). Thus, Benin Twitter users make up the study's sample.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A study sample is merely a methodically chosen portion of a population that extrapolates its findings to the population, according to Udoyen (2019). In essence, it is the component of a whole that exemplifies the whole and has traits in common with it. As a result, to determine the sample size for this study, the researcher used a convenient sampling technique.

On the other hand, sampling techniques are methods used to systematically choose the chosen sample in a specific manner while maintaining control. This study used a practical sampling technique to pick respondents from the entire population (Nwana 2005),

Data would be gathered from 90 participants, or out of the total population of Twitter users in Edo State, as the sample size for this study. A sample of convenience is one in which components have been chosen from the target population based on their accessibility or convenience to the researcher, according to Torty (2021).

Questionnaires will be used to administer the research. A questionnaire is a type of survey that includes a list of questions to be asked of the chosen respondents. The questionnaire was split into

two sections; the first asked about respondents' demographic or personal information, and the second was in line with the study's objectives and sought to answer the questions it posed. To respond, participants had to check the relevant box in the column. The researcher himself administered the questionnaire.

3.4 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The most popular data collection techniques in survey research are questionnaires and interviews. Data were gathered using primary source and secondary source methods, respectively. Utilizing questionnaires served as the primary source, while textbooks, the internet, journals, published and unpublished articles and government publications served as secondary sources.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA INSTRUMENTS

A measurement's validity refers to its ability to accurately reflect the underlying construct, or whether it measures the thing it claims to. The degree or extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure is the validity being discussed here. An instrument is reliable to the extent that it is developed to meet the goals of the study. The project manager used his intellectual abilities to critically, analytically, and logically examine the instrument's relevance to the contents and statements, making the instrument valid for the study. The researcher created the questionnaire for the study and submitted it to him.

It was decided whether the research tool was reliable. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The research instrument's co-efficient value of 0.68 showed that it was reasonably reliable. The range of reasonable reliability, according to (Taber, 2017), is 0.67 to 0.87.

The Department's Project Committee gave the study their blessing. Before they were included in the study, all participants gave their informed consent. The necessary authorities were contacted to

request permission to conduct the study. The time and date to visit the study site for the distribution of the questionnaire were scheduled in advance.

3.6 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The SPSS v.23 Chi-Square statistical tools were used to conduct the method of data interpretation and hypothesis testing.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

This chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained from the key informant interviews and the questionnaire given to respondents in the study area. The study's findings served as the basis for the analysis and interpretation. The data analysis shows the respondents' simple frequency and response rate as well as an interpretation of the data collected. Only 85 out of a total of 90 questionnaires that were distributed to respondents were returned and validated. This was a result of some questionnaires receiving irregular, incomplete, and inappropriate responses. A total of 85 were validated for the analysis in this study.

Table 4.1: Profile of the respondents' demographics

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	Frequency	Percent
GENDER		
Male	44	51.8%
Female	41	48.2%
AGE		
16-35	38	44.7%
36-60	25	29.4%

61+	22	25.9%
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	52	61.2%
Married	33	38.8%
Widowed	0	0%
EDUCATION LEVEL		
WAEC	21	24.7%
BS.c	48	56.5%
MS.c	16	18.8%

Field Survey, 2022

4.2 TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

HO1: The Nigerian government ordering network restrictions on Twitter will have no impact on citizens' freedom of association or communication

H1: The Nigerian government's directive to restrict network access to the Twitter platform will have an impact on citizens' freedom of communication and association.

HO2: The Nigerian government's Twitter ban is not a violation of its citizens' fundamental human rights.

H1: The Nigerian government's ban on Twitter network violates its citizens' fundamental human rights.

Hypothesis One

Table 1: **The Nigerian government ordering network restrictions on Twitter will have no impact on citizens' freedom of association or communication**

Options	Fo	Fe	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)²	(Fo--Fe)²/Fe
Yes	48	28.3	19.7	388.1	13.7
No	8	28.3	-20.3	412.1	14.6
Undecided	29	28.3	0.7	0.5	0.02
Total	85	85			28.3

Adapted from contingency table

$$\text{Degree of freedom} = (r-1) (c-1)$$

$$(3-1) (2-1)$$

$$(2) (1)$$

$$= 2$$

The critical table value is 5.991 at a calculated degree of freedom and 0.05 significant level.

Findings

The calculated $X^2 = 16.0$ and is greater than the table value of X^2 at 0.05 significant level which is 5.991.

Decision

The alternative hypothesis, according to which Government network restrictions to the Twitter platform will impair citizens' freedom of speech and association, is approved since the χ^2 computed value is more than the critical table value, which is 16.0 is greater than 5.991.

Hypothesis Two

Table 2: Nigeria Government Twitter ban is not a violation to the fundamental human rights of her citizens.

Options	Fo	Fe	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe) ²	(Fo--Fe) ² /Fe
SA	30	21.25	8.75	76.56	3.6
A	20	21.25	-1.5	2.25	0.1
SD	19	21.25	-2.5	6.25	0.3
D	16	21.25	-5.5	30.25	1.4
Total	85	85			8.6

Source: Extract from Contingency Table

$$\text{Degree of freedom} = (r-1) (c-1)$$

$$(4-1) (3-1)$$

$$(3) (1)$$

$$= 3$$

The critical table value is 7.815 at a computed degree of freedom and a 0.05 significant level.

Findings

The calculated $X^2 = 8.6$ and is greater than the table value of X^2 at 0.05 significant level which is 7.815.

Decision

Since the X^2 calculated value is greater than the critical table value that is 8.6 is greater than 7.815, the Null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states that Nigeria Government Twitter ban is a violation to the fundamental human rights of her citizens is accepted.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Twitter was formally banned by the Nigerian government from 5 June 2021 to 13 January 2022, which limited its ability to operate there. The ban came about after Twitter removed tweets from Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, who had also been temporarily suspended. In the deleted tweets, Buhari warned the Igbo majority in southeastern Nigeria that the ongoing insurgency there could lead to a recurrence of the 1967 Biafran Civil War. However, the decision was ultimately based on "a litany of problems with the social media platform in Nigeria, where misinformation and fake news spread through it have had real-world violent consequences," citing the platform's persistent use for activities that are capable of undermining Nigeria's corporate existence. The Nigerian government claimed that the removal of the president's tweets was a factor in their decision.

The main objective of the investigation looked into whether network restrictions on the Twitter platform violated the fundamental rights of Nigerian citizens. The study investigated whether social networking services like Twitter helped Nigerians exercise their right to free speech and association. It investigated the potential effects of governmental network restrictions on the Twitter platform on peoples' right to free speech and association. It assessed whether the Twitter ban imposed by the Nigerian government violated the fundamental human rights of its people.

The study readily enrolled 90 individuals and used a survey research approach. A total of 85 responded from the signed-up participants—all of whom were Edo State Twitter users—were obtained and verified. The statistical technique Chi-Square was used to test the hypothesis (SPSS).

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's outcomes showed that citizens' fundamental human rights were gravely violated when their access to the Twitter platform was restricted by the network. It breaches Section 39 of the Constitution and undermines the social and economic rights that Nigerian citizens are guaranteed by Chapter 11 of the Constitution by restricting their freedom of expression, communication, and association. Furthermore, the study's findings showed that the current Twitter ban is a grave abuse of power because it puts the President's interests ahead of those of the nation and its citizens and were not implemented democratically.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The social media boom over the last ten years has had a significant impact on many aspects of daily life. The study's necessary conclusion showed that the defunct Twitter ban is a grave abuse of power since it puts the President's interests ahead of those of the nation and its citizens and was not implemented democratically. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution, which the President, Minister of Information, and Minister of Justice all agreed to uphold, is gravely violated by the ban. The study's conclusions showed that the ban severely violates the residents' basic human rights. It violates Section 39 of the Constitution by restricting citizens' freedom of expression and association, and it undermines the social and economic rights that Nigerian citizens are guaranteed under Chapter 11 of the Constitution. Finally, the freedom of communication for users of the Twitter platform will be impacted by network restrictions. Because the ban is a flagrant violation of several international, continental, and regional agreements to which Nigeria voluntarily subscribes. The restriction falls short of what they believe citizens should be able to freely enjoy in terms of rights and freedoms.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION

The researchers' recommendations are consequently based on the study's findings:

- ✓ Despite the ban being lifted, it is important to remember how the Twitter platform restrictions affected many sectors of the economy. Nigerians should, therefore (within the bounds of the law) be opposed to any type of rights violation, whether committed by private parties or public agencies. To properly defend, enforce, and ensure compliance with rights provisions as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution and other associated charters, there should be widespread political will and commitment from the many players in the area of rights.
- ✓ Nigerians ought to cultivate the practice of patience and persistence in pursuing their rights and entitlements, particularly concerning other law enforcement authorities and the justice system, and not just leave everything to the All-Powerful God and depend on the Day of Judgment.
- ✓ To educate and inform Nigerians from various categories about the importance of rights and related constitutional provisions for safeguarding and enforcement, there should also be comprehensive and extensive civic education from the grassroots level.
- ✓ The provision of legal aid services ought to be restored and promoted nationwide.
- ✓ More importantly, non-governmental organizations should create open, accessible centers for documenting human rights to prevent excessive violations of people's rights and to track down the locations of such violations for legal and other purposes.

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No	
Undecided	

QUESTION 5: Do you think Nigeria Government ban on Twitter ban is a violation of the fundamental human rights of her citizens?

OPTIONS	PLEASE TICK
Yes	
No	
Undecided	