

Textual Analysis of Netizens' Reactions to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's Extraordinary Rendition from Kenya by General Muhammadu Buhari's Civilian Government

Desmond Onyemечи OKOCHA, Ph.D & Maureen CHIGBO

Abstract

This study investigated the reactions of Internet users hereafter referred to as netizens to the extraordinary rendition from Kenya of the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) secessionist group, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu by the General Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration and the implications for his administration. The study adopted the Interest Theory of Human Rights to explain the reactions of the netizens, and the government, and used the context theory to explain how they defined the arrest and detention of Kanu as well as the response of the government of Nigeria to social media messages. Data were generated through a qualitative literature review, while a purposive sampling technique was deployed to pick Twitter as the social media to focus on and 10 tweets were selected for the study. Findings show that netizens' reactions portrayed the action of the Nigerian government negatively as an abuser of human rights. However, this did not influence the government to release Kanu despite the deadline of six months given by the United Nations Human Rights Body for his release unconditionally. Further studies is recommended at the end of the UN deadline to ascertain measures taken by the international body to protect the rights of Kanu and how Nigeria fared with the dent on her image.

Keywords: Human Rights, Netizens, Nigeria, Nnamdi Kanu, President Muhammadu Buhari

Introduction

This study is premised on the interest and context theories. The interest theory delineates the functions of rights to protect the well-being of rights' holders while the contextualization of text, according to Dijk (2008), "is not the social situation that influences (or is influenced by) discourse, but the way the participants define such a situation". This statement brings to light the fact that the netizens' reactions are hinged on what they perceived as the rights of both Nnamdi Kanu and the Nigerian government with regard to the extraordinary rendition of the former from Kenya by the latter. Their reactions which are feedback to the actions of the government underscored the democratization of the media space through the internet and technological innovations with the attendant social media apps which have made communication in modern times more participatory which enabled harvesting netizens' reactions to the arrest of Kanu. This is in line with Polat's (2005) observation about "the role of the Internet in influencing levels and styles of political participation even though it is not yet clear why it is perceived as a medium that can, at least potentially, increase participation."

Similarly, Nielsen, Cornia, and Kalogeropoulos (2016) documented that society is moving towards an increasingly digital, mobile, and social media environment with more intense competition for attention. The researchers noted that: "More and more people get news via digital media, they increasingly access news via mobile devices (especially smartphones) and rely on social media and other intermediaries in terms of how they access and find news" and react to them as well. In this environment, a limited number of large technology companies enable billions of users across the world to navigate and use digital media in easy and attractive ways through services like search, social networking, video sharing, and messaging, Nielsen et al (2016).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have made it possible for the voices of many people especially the netizens to be heard loudly on topical issues such as the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu by the Nigerian government led by President Muhammadu Buhari on June 26, 2021. Unlike the traditional media of print and broadcast media, where the government has a measure to control

what is published, social media has provided netizens a means to vent their spleen whenever government acts in a way they perceived as infringing on the right of citizens without any form of stricture. What is not clear, however, is whether chats on social media on topical national issues influence government policy direction. A case in point is the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu, a British-Nigerian citizen of Abia state origin, in the Republic of Kenya. Kanu was previously on trial in Nigeria before he went missing in September 2017, after the Nigerian Army invaded his family house in Afaraukwu in Umuahia, Abia State, South Eastern Nigeria; killing 15 people and destroying his family house (*Realnews*, 2021). Kanu was first arrested in October, 2015 and faced terrorism and treason charges at the Federal High Court, Abuja, (ICIR, 2018). He was granted stringent bail conditions on health grounds, which included depositing both his British and Nigerian passports with the court (ICIR, 2018). But he fled the country when the army struck at his family house after he indulged in open vilification of the government with his members around him insisting that no election will hold in the Eastern region unless there is a referendum on establishing the Republic of Biafra.

Thereafter, Kanu surfaced in Israel from where he was helped to London by the British government, being a citizen. While based in the United Kingdom, Kanu continued his demand for a referendum for a Republic of Biafra, unrelenting rabid vociferous criticism of the corruption in the Nigerian government through his Radio Biafra and seeking a referendum to establish the Republic of Biafra. Matters came to a head during the SARS protest in Nigeria in 2020 when Kanu in a spontaneous feat of anger urged Nigerians to retaliate against police brutality. Amidst his cacophony of biting vibes, the Nigerian government declared Kanu wanted. Also, 75 Northern groups under the Northern Consensus Movement offered a N100 million bounty for persons who can deliver the supreme leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra to the federal government for the continuation of his trial for alleged treason (Ewepu and Jannamike, 2021). Nine days after the bounty was announced, on June 27, 2021, news of Kanu's arrest hit the airwaves. This sparked off a series of tweets from Netizens on the rightness and wrongness of the arrest.

In view of the above, the study adopted the interest theory on human rights and the context theory to situate and explain the netizens' reactions to the extraordinary rendition of Kanu; the influence on the Nigerian government, and how it was affected by the infringement on Kanu's fundamental human right which is guaranteed by the Article 19 of the UN charter on Human rights which Nigeria is a signatory to.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the influence of netizens' tweets about the extraordinary rendition of Nnamdi Kanu on the Nigerian government actions on the subject-matter.
2. Evaluate the global community's online reactions to the extraordinary rendition of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.
3. Ascertain how Nigeria's image was affected by the online messages on the extraordinary rendition of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.

Research Questions

This research questions of the study were:

1. What is the influence of netizens' tweets to the extraordinary rendition of Nnamdi Kanu on the Nigerian government?
2. How did the global community react to the extraordinary rendition of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu on the net?
3. How Nigeria's image was was affected by the online messages on the extraordinary rendition of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu?

Historical Background to Nnamdi Kanu's Agitation

The history of Biafra agitation could be said to have begun seven years after Nigeria's independence on October 1, 1960, from Britain, when the country was thrown into a political crisis. Morton (2017) notes that the remote causes of the crisis and the subsequent three-year Nigerian-Biafran War that ensued were because of the amalgamation of southern and northern Nigeria for the administrative convenience of Britain in 1914. The indifference to the cultural and economic differences of the people later resulted in tensions and the rigging of the Western Regional elections in 1965. This resulted in the breakdown of law and order which led to the first coup d'état in Nigeria in 1966. Following the fear of tribal domination after the coup d'état on January 15, 1966, which was alleged to have been sponsored by the Igbo because no army officer of Igbo extraction was killed, another coup d'état was executed on July 29, 1966 by Northern soldiers who massacred mostly Igbo officers. According to Morton, there was an alleged failure on the part of General Aguiyi Ironsi to punish the five majors who led the 1966 first coup.

Morton (2017) also listed the immediate causes of the 1967 – 1970 war to include the politicization of the army resulting in promotion not based on merit but on political and tribal leanings of officers and army officers who were just plainly politically over-ambitious. "In the case of this crop of Nigerian soldiers, they were in too much of a hurry to taste political power and this drove them to take over power which eventually slid into the Civil War" (Morton 2017). Morton cited the personality clash between Colonel Gowon and Lt. Colonel Ojukwu as another cause of the war. He explained that then Colonel Gowon as the Head of State was not the most senior military officer before he assumed his position. The most senior then was Brigadier Ogundipe, whom Lt. Colonel Ojukwu felt should have been made the Head of State. "Apart from that Lt. Colonel Ojukwu was higher in rank than Colonel Gowon and therefore he was reluctant to take orders from him." Morton linked this to Ojukwu's decision to take the Eastern region out of Nigeria, especially after the killing of the Igbos in the North while the central government did not stop the pogrom and the failure of the Aburi Accord, the last-minute agreement signed between Gowon (who was advised to jettison the agreement majorly for a confederacy) and Ojukwu in Ghana to avert the war.

In 1967, the eastern part of Nigeria seceded from the Nigerian federation and formed their own country called Biafra. In a federal system of government, secession was considered a taboo, so the federal government of Nigeria tried to stop the easterners from seceding. This attempt to stop them from breaking away and the resolve of the easterners to secede culminated in the Civil War from 6th of July, 1967 to the 15th of January, 1970 (Morton, 2017).

Unfortunately, more than 50 years after the civil war ended, Nigeria is still riddled with the same challenges that led to the war as innate corruption still marks the political space and the growing marginalization of the Igbo in all spheres of the country's national life. This reawakened the agitation for Biafra prompting the likes of Kanu to establish the Indigenous People of Biafra in 2012 and Radio Biafra through which he propagated his gospel for non-violent agitation and a referendum to establish Biafra. He was arrested and tried in 2015 when he returned to Nigeria. He was later released on bail but he reneged on the bail conditions and continued his agitation as his membership swelled, giving both the federal and state governments nightmares. The army finally invaded his family house in his hometown, Afaraukwu, Umuahia, and killed some of his members, but he miraculously escaped and later surfaced in Israel after one year then returned to London where he continued his fight for the establishment of Biafra. Matters came to head when he was abducted from Kenya by Kenyan officials and handed over to the Nigerian government led by President Muhammadu Buhari, who brought him back to the country on June 26, 2021, to continue his trial on treasonable felony. The trial of Kanu resumed in Nigeria while he is being currently held in the custody of the Department of State Services, Nigeria's secret police about 13 months.

However, solace came his way when in August 2022, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which has a subsisting legal mandate of the United Nations to consider and adjudicate human rights petitions against member nations of the UN, ordered the Nigerian government to release Kanu unconditionally and gave it six months to comply. The federal government has yet to accede

when two months later precisely October 13, 2022, three judges in the Appellate Court in Abuja ruled, and discharged cases against him and freed Kanu.

The unanimous judgment by the lead Justice Hanatu Sankey, which was read by Justice Adedotun Adefope-Okojie, held the government conceded to allegations that Kanu was forcefully renditioned from Kenya to Nigeria because it did not respond to the appellant's submissions and failed to prove the legality of Kanu's arrival to Nigeria and as such flouted the Terrorism Act and violated all known international conventions and treaties guiding extradition process thus, breaching the rights of the defendant. The court also stripped the Nigerian government of the jurisdiction to continue to try Kanu having illegally and forcefully renditioned him. According to the court, the federal government's action "tainted the entire proceedings" against Kanu and amounted to "an abuse of criminal prosecution in general, adding: "The court will never shy away from calling the Executive to order when it tilts towards executive recklessness" and that the appeal has merit (*Realnews*, 2021).

But as of October 15, 2022, the DSS has yet to release Kanu. *Realnews* quoted Abubakar Malami, Nigeria's attorney general as saying that the government would consider appropriate legal options concerning the court judgment on the trial of Kanu. Similarly, Mohammed Dingyadi, Minister of Police Affairs, stated that the National Security Council presided over by Buhari did not discuss a political solution at the council but centralized discussion on the court's outcome. The Federal Executive Council, according to him, will pursue the determination of pre-rendition issues while considering an appropriate action and would notify Nigerians of its final position on the matter in due course.

Supporting Nigeria's position, Adesulu (2022) quoted Saleh Alhassan, the national secretary of Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, a pan-Fulani socio-cultural association as urging the Nigerian government to approach the Supreme Court on the ruling of the appellate court on Kanu. Alhassan decried the court's judgment acquitting Kanu as "a miscarriage of justice." He described Kanu as a threat to national security, adding that releasing him would jeopardize the conduct of the 2023 general elections. "We are really disappointed by this decision; how can the Appeal Court discharge a terrorist like Nnamdi Kanu, who has organised the death of innocent pastoralists, women, children, security personnel, and insurgency against the country," Alhassan said. He added that releasing Kanu "will send a very hazardous signal and set a poor precedent for other criminal gangs to continue operating with impunity. We suspect a compromise in the legal process, and we believe the AGF will act appropriately by filing an appeal."

Contrarily, Nnaem (2022) in *The Whistler* (2022) quoted Mike Ozekhome, counsel to Kanu, as urging the Nigerian government to see the appellate court's decision as being good for the country. Ozekhome stated that any further court action on the part of the government "will amount to persecution and no longer prosecution" while affirming his readiness for any legal confrontation from the government's lawyer.

A way out of the Kanu quagmire was provided by Femi Falana, a human rights lawyer, who Unini (2022) in *Nigerianlawyer* quoted as stating that the government cannot try Kanu because it is not competent. Falana posited that the government's claim of some pending charges against Kanu "in the Federal High Court was a contemptuous mockery of the Court of Appeal whose judgment is binding on all authorities and persons in Nigeria by virtue of section 287 of the 1999 Constitution of the Republic." He advised government "to sit down with all aggrieved people in the country and negotiate. If you are negotiating with terrorists, why can you not sit down with Nnamdi Kanu and others? If Nigerians want to build a country, it must be on a platform of justice and fair play. Everyone must be treated equally."

International dimensions of Nnamdi Kanu's extraordinary rendition

The abduction of Nnamdi Kanu, a British-Nigerian citizen, who is Jewish by religion, from Kenya triggered a lot of interest from the international community. But it did not lead to any open diplomatic faceoff among all the countries involved – Nigeria, Britain, and Kenya. Ikeh (2021) wrote that the fact of Kanu's re-arrest and re-arraignment "remains that the episode is least in the priority list of a country daily hounded by daily killings by bandits, armed herdsmen, poor governance issues, poverty, a weak economy, high debt profile, unemployment, high inflation, and food prices among other poor and

overwhelming development indices”. Also, Ikeh recorded IPOB’s disappointment with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and government over their role in the extraordinary rendition of Kanu and “his subsequent smuggling into Nigeria by the Nigerian security agents. IPOB was baffled that a President like Uhuru Kenyatta would stoop so low to collude with such illegal activity to abduct and dehumanize Kanu for demanding the freedom of Biafrans from Nigeria’s bondage” (Ikeh, 2021).

Ikeh quoted a statement signed by Emma Powerful, IPOB national publicity secretary, on Thursday, July 1, 2021, stating that their preliminary findings implicated President Uhuru Kenyatta in the abduction of Kanu. Powerful lamented: “By this wickedness and grievous sin, Kenyatta has demonstrated his affection for the murderous Fulani terrorists ravaging the entire Nigeria; killing and maiming indigenous people in their ancestral lands.” He said Kenyatta and his partners in crime should get ready to meet them at the International Criminal Court, ICC. “This act of terror against our Leader, Nnamdi Kanu, a NATO citizen, a British citizen with a British International Passport, and a member of other international organizations will not go unpunished, he said, urging all Biafrans both home and in the diaspora to boycott travels with Kenya Airlines; to immediately stop patronising any product made in Kenya; and to boycott any business dealings with Kenyans,” as they cannot relate friendly with anyone collaborating with our oppressors to keep them in perpetual slavery. Also, he denounced “all the concocted rubbish the wicked Nigeria government and their agents peddled about how and where Kanu was arrested was to twist facts and blackmail him because the Nigerian government sees him as the major obstacle against their agenda to completely Islamise and Fulanise Nigeria.” “Nobody should believe these lies. They are only intended to demarket our Leader and puncture his global reputation and teeming followership,” Powerful said.

Reacting, Wilfred Machage, the Kenyan High Commissioner to Nigeria, while denying his home government involvement, told journalists in Abuja, on July 2, 2021, that the allegations were fictional, imaginary, and deliberately concocted to fuel antagonistic feelings among a certain section of the Nigerian people (Ikeh, 2021). He challenged anyone with facts of the arrest in Kenya to present when, where, how, and who was particularly involved. Machage posited that the Kenyan government was particularly appalled by the spurious, derogatory and libelous mention of its President on this matter. Noting the cordial diplomatic relations between Kenya and Nigeria, Machage emphasised that his country should not be dragged into the issue as it had no question to answer but rather citizens of Nigeria should approach their government for an explanation of where Kanu was arrested from.

On his part, Dean Hurlock, spokesperson of the British High Commission, opined that the commission was “in the process of seeking clarification” from the federal government over Kanu’s re-arrest. Ikeh (2022) quoted Hurlock as saying that the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office “stands ready to provide consular assistance regarding the matter” to Kanu, who also holds a British passport and “would expect any trial or legal proceedings to follow due process as Kanu’s prosecution resumes”.

Kiriakou (2022) recorded how he travelled with Fein to meet with journalists from the BBC, ITV, ITN, and elsewhere, as well as with two members of the House of Lords who focus on human rights issues over Nnamdi Kanu’s case. Registering his disappointment with their non-interest in it, he lamented: “This is a British citizen we’re talking about, after all. The response from the journalists was good, but these things take time. And everybody warned us that racism might be a hindrance. Convincing the politicians would be more difficult, they told us.”

However, the position of the UN Working Group, an integral arm of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which has the broader UN mandate to determine human rights issues emanating from member nations of the UN was unequivocal in its order to the Nigerian government to release Kanu unconditionally with a six-months deadline for compliance.

Realnews (2021) reported that the cross-border abduction of the IPOB leader was part of the criminal justice administration and law enforcement applicable globally covering crimes with universal application or enforcement and those that are recognized, defined, and enforced by a particular country or jurisdiction. *Realnews* quoted Emeka Umeagbalasi, Obianuju Igboeli, and Chidimma Udegbunam of the

Intersociety explaining that “In the application or enforcement of the two crimes anywhere in the world if a national or international citizen is standing trial under a presumption of innocence until found judicially guilty and he or she is reported to have fled the jurisdiction under which he or she was standing trial, it is allowed under the international law and through legitimate diplomatic means to use non-lethal measures to bring him or her back to face and complete his or her trial. The exception to this rule is where he or she is running away from legitimate state persecution including attempts on his or her life and a grave infringement on his or her other fundamental liberties. Under this, he or she is expected to be protected by the country that offers him or her temporary and protective shelter; otherwise, he or she can be arrested and sent back to his or her country for the continuation of the trial. Therefore, it is on record that the IPOB leader did not flee Nigeria out of his own free will in September 2017, but he escaped from being assassinated by the security forces of the Federal Government of Nigeria, they said.

They argued that “The Government’s ‘defense’ of Kanu breaching his court bail conditions or inciting his followers against the Nigerian Government as reasons for wanting to kill him extra-judicially did not hold water. This is more so when the same Government could have made a legitimate case before the trial Court for the revocation of his bail conditions, if truly found to have been breached.”

Theoretical Framework

The study was predicated on interest theory to examine netizens reaction to the extraordinary rendition of Nnamdi Kanu by the Nigerian government which bothers of human rights issues. The interest theory of rights was first initiated by Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832) was propounded by Rudolf von Ihering (1818 – 1892), a German Jurist, and further developed by John Salmond (More, 2021). Bentham argued that a person has a distinctive human right when others have duties that protect one of that person’s interests (UK Essays, 2003).

The interest theory of rights seeks to protect a citizen’s rights against wrongdoing from another citizen within the same social, political and judicial framework, Meckled-Garcia and Cali (2005). The interest theory implies that it is in one’s interests to not to be physically assaulted as well as the responsibility of both the individual and the state to ensure that this does not happen lest the basic interests of another individual be impinged upon, Meckled-Garcia (2005). The interest theory of rights underscores vital values of liberty, community and mutuality, addresses the moral aspect of human rights without interpreting the rights and responsibilities of the individual citizen and the responsibilities of the sovereign state (UK Essays, 2003).

Meckled-Garcia and Cali (2005) noted that the interest theory is in direct contrast to international human rights law (IHRL) where only the state can impinge upon the basic human rights of individuals or groups of individuals living within that sovereign state. Meckled-Garcia and Cali stated that political theorists write about human rights as a moral claim, unlike lawyers who refer to human rights and or international human rights as various provisions of international rights law. The assumption, the researchers said, is that both traditions aim at the same thing – one group elaborating the normative foundations of rights principles, while the other works in the positive, or practical enforcement of those principles.

The interest theory was applied to the study of netizen’s reaction to Kanu’s arrest because they believe his human rights were being infringed on by the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari who is in a position as the head of the Nigerian State to do it. Rather he breached international conventions on universal human rights to extraordinary rendition of Kanu from Kenya to Nigeria. Nigerian is a signatory to Article 19 of the UN Human Rights Charter and the African Charter on Human Rights both of which preach against abduction and torture of citizens. Hence, the decision of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Appellate Court in Nigeria that the Nigerian government should free Kanu unconditionally.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a literature review and critical case purposive sampling technique as research method. Snyder (2019) underscored the importance of literature review as a research methodology when she stated that knowledge production within the field of business is accelerating at a tremendous speed while remaining fragmented and interdisciplinary. This being so, literature review becomes relevant to keep up with state-of-the-art and be at the forefront of research which otherwise will be hard. In this study, data on the history of the crisis in Nigeria that produced Kanu-like agitations that led to his arrested, initial trial, and bail; bombardment of his family house by the Nigerian Army, and the attendant escape to save his life were chronicled from relevant information generated through literature review. Also, the study adopted a critical case purposive sampling technique to focus on Twitter of all the social media and to select 10 tweets by netizens' on the extraordinary rendition of Kanu to analyze over a period of one from June 27, 2021 – July 17, 2022. This is in line with Crossman's (2020) postulation that "Critical case sampling is a type of purposive sampling in which just one case is chosen for study because the researcher expects that studying it will reveal insights that can be applied to other like cases." This view is supported by Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters, and Walker (2020). The researchers reckoned that purposive sampling with a long developmental history of being simple and straightforward justifies its use in this study despite its limitations of complexity as it provided a better match of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research which improves the rigour of the study and the trustworthiness of the data and results.

Textual analysis

The study analysed 10 tweets depicting each netizen's reaction to the extraordinary rendition of Kanu by the Nigerian government. The tweets were harvested from June 27, 2021, to July 31, 2022, covering a period of one year after the abduction. The tweets studied had names from different regions of Nigeria although there is no way to precisely pin down which state in the six zones – North East, North Central, North West, South South, South West and South East. There were tweets with foreign names and pictures which showed international interest in the case. Three media organisations also tweeted. Some of the tweets were accompanied by pictures or posters of Nnamdi Kanu; pictures of repentant bandits and other illustrations such as cartoons netizens used to amplify their messages. One of the tweets had a free Nnamdi Kanu poster announcing the dates and venue of the protest rally in the US.

One of the pictures showed empty streets as a result of the sit-at-home protest in the South East region which began in August 2021 and has continued till this day. The sit-at-home protest has taken its toll on the economic activities of the South East but there is no end in sight as the political leaders in the region have tried all they can to end it without success. Even IPOB, which started the sit-at-home has called it off without success. Many people in the East are afraid to come out and vehicles from other parts of the country are equally afraid to ply the region because of ugly incidents that happened to those who dared to disobey the sit-at-home order.

The tweets pandered to the interest and context theories as different netizens tweeted based on what they perceived as the rights of Kanu and that of the Nigerian government. Some of the tweets had grammar issues while some were well-written. One of the well written tweets is from Punchline Africa Tv @Punchline_Afric which tweeted that "IPOB leader has sued the Kenyan for arresting him and handing him over to Nigerian authorities without following due process." "In his petition, Kanu argued that his arrest {and} subsequent extradition in June were unconstitutional." Also, Steve Hanke @steve_hanke tweeted about the deserted streets.

Other tweets focused on what the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu portends for Nigeria. This in particular reflects the research question of how the extraordinary rendition affected the image of the country. Another tweet from JuwonSanyaolu @AyowoleSanyaolu dwelt on the double standard of the government in handling the affairs of the country. The tweet reads: "To think the government that begged terrorists and bandits with CBN loans in March 2021 is the same that went out of its way, oversea to arrest IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu. Calling for crime is not crime. #Freekanunow.

One of the badly written tweets by Murtala Umar @bin_umar00 reads:

"All those slay mamas and slay niggis on social media hiding behind there
Botton an typing rubbish against govt. I pity una.
If Buhari go arrest and transfer Umar dikko in 1984
And mazi Nnamdi Kanu in 2021 from UK to NG alaye who yoube.
Warnedooo
I'm communicating."

Contrarily, Elochukwu Ohazi @Elochukwuohagi in his tweet argued that the arrest of Kanu was a fatal mistake by the Nigerian government while Kingsley Okoubi @KingsleyOkoubi tweeted that the government did not arrest Kanu but actually kidnapped him. He added that “If the UK gov. allow this impunity. That means British citizens can be intercept anywhere in the world, it shall be a reference point in any law court, that 2021 Nigeria government kidnap/intercepted uk citizen”.

Excerpts 1



Punchline Tv, an international Pan African Television station, with a zeal for Africa development in all aspects have offices in London and Nairobi @Punchline_Afric tweeted that Kanu sued both the Kenya and Nigeria over his unconstitutional arrest and abduction without due process in June 2021. This tweet depicted the interest of foreign media in the Kanu case which involved three national governments of Nigeria, Kenya and Britain.

Excerpts 2



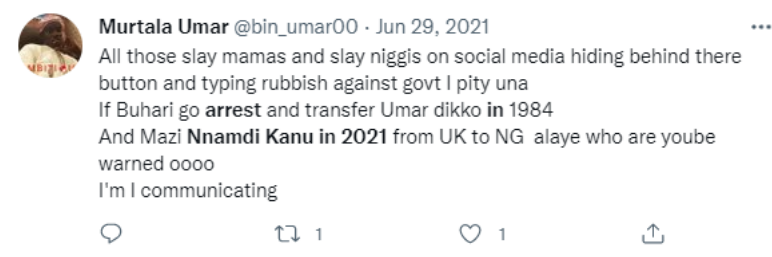
Delta in Diaspora @Carlos00771743 pondered at the arrest of Kanu when Interpol could not do it in 2021. This tweets inferred that there is more to the arrest of Kanu in 2021 when the same Interpol could not arrest him previously.

Excerpt 3



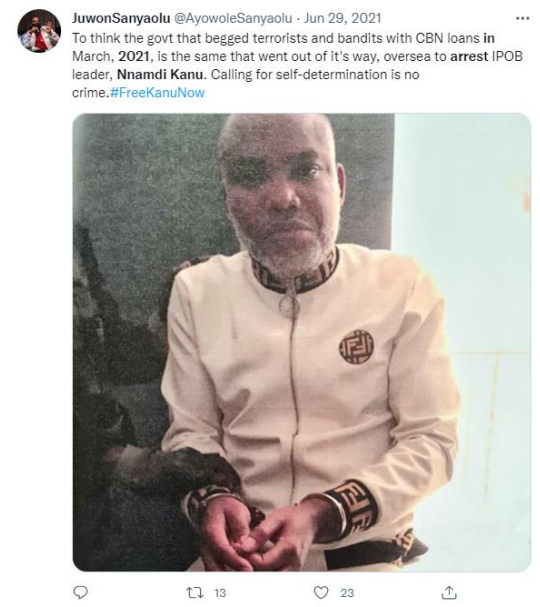
The tweet by Kingsley Ugwuanyi @KingsUgwuanyi answered research question on what the abduction of Kanu portends for Nigeria. This tweet drummed home the fact that the rendition of Kanu rather than boost the image of Nigeria landed it in a quagmire, denting its image going by the UN Human Rights body and the appellate court in Nigeria different rulings at different times denouncing the extraordinary rendition and calling for Kanu's release unconditionally.

Excerpts 4



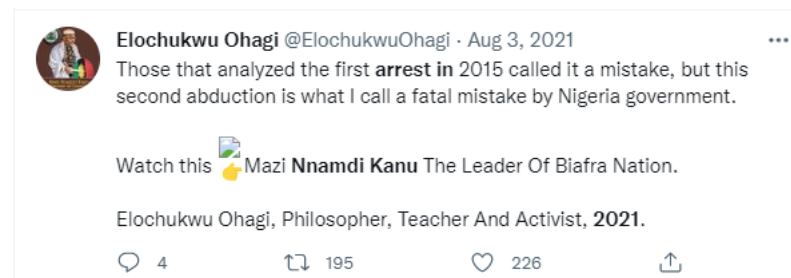
Murtala Umar @bin_umar tweets that supported the action of the government on Kanu as well as warning those typing rubbish about the Nigeria government that the long arm of the administration will catch up with them.

Excerpt 5



This tweet @AyowoleSanyaolu portrayed the bias in the system of governance and rulership which favours some tribes against others ethnic groups. This tweet reminds the public of the double standard in government policy in dealing with crisis in the country based on ethnicism. It purveyed the view that government treated bandits and killer herdsmen with kid gloves while maintaining a hard stance while dealing with agitators from other ethnic groups like the Igbo.

Excerpts 6



Elochukwu Ohagi @ElochukwuOhagi's tweet stating that Nigeria's abduction of Kanu was a fatal mistake. This highlighted early on the quagmire the Nigerian government is in now over the arrest of Kanu which is reflected in the inability of the government to win its case in court or at the UN Human Rights body.

Excerpts 7



Vincent Fadahunsi @bayfadboy in his tweet portrayed government’s bias and double standard in dealing with IPOB and bandits. The fact that pictures tell story better was shown in this tweet accompanied by picture of repentant bandits favoured with forgiveness of the Nigerian government unlike Kanu. It concretely established the double standard of the government in dispensing justice to its citizens.

Excepts 8



Emmanuel John @ emmanueligwebi tweeted that Ifeanyi Ejiofor, Kanu’s lawyer, accused Nigeria government of terrorist act against Kanu. The lawyer accused the Nigerian government of abusing Kanu’s right with the extraordinary renditioned.

Excerpts 9



Eric Bryan Reinholtz's tweet @ericjerseyvill displayed poster with information about Free Nnamdi Kanu rallies in United States. It also established the international aspect of the case when it stated that the rendition violated United Nations agreement and a total embarrassment to all.

Excerpts 10



Oluyole 98.5FM's tweet @oluyolefm highlighted that Nnamdi Kanu got some reprieve when the United Nations indicted Nigeria and Kenya over his extraordinary rendition. According to the tweet, "the United Nations had waded into the matter of the arrest and extraordinary rendition of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu from Kenya in 2021 and indicted both Nigeria and Kenya for Kanu's unlawful arrest and rendition."

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study agree with the interest and context theoretical framework for the study as well as fulfilling the objectives of the study and research questions. For instance, it found that a majority of netizens' reactions portrayed the Nigerian government negatively as an abuser of human rights and maintains double standard and bias in dealing with citizens. This was evident in tweeted messages and cartoons depicting government's soft handling of cases involving killer herdsmen and bandits compared to that of Kanu and his followers. The finding established the impact of netizens' reaction on government

which is negative. This would necessitate a rethink of government's policy to ensure even handedness in affairs of all segments of the society to eschew favoritism in dispensing justice to all in accordance with respect for human rights as explained with the interest theory. The finding syncs with data generated in the literature review with Falana urging the Nigerian government to negotiate other groups as it did with bandits.

However, an important finding is that the tweets did not influence the government to release Kanu despite the deadline of six months given by the United Nations Human Rights Body for his release unconditionally. Government has remained stoic in parrying even recent court order freeing and acquitting Kanu. This could also affect the country's relationship with the international community and result in Nigeria becoming a pariah state. It begs for a clear policy direction on the part of the government to staved this off by carrying out the UN and court orders to release Kanu.

Going by the position of UN Working Group, and the ruling of the appellate court, added to the majority of netizens who frowned at the government, the study established the global community negatively received the extraordinary rendition of Kanu. These dented the image of the country and would require some effort to reverse the damage due to impervious acts of the government. This implies the Nigerian government should rejig its strategy for Kanu's case as its present trajectory appears divisive rather than uniting the country, especially as Nigeria's attorney general is bent on prosecuting Kanu after decisions of the appellate court and UN Working group.

The research revealed that reactions of netizens aligned with the interest theory of rights and contextualization of Kanu's abduction which explained its relationship to the prevailing political, socio economic realities in the country worsened by insecurity in the land occasioned by poverty, killer herdsmen, bandits, kidnappers and unknown gunmen. Although insecurity has always been in the country, it attained an unprecedented level during the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari that in the first six months of the year 2022, more than 5000 people have died, according to the report Nigeria Security Tracker by US Foreign Relations Committee report. The reality is that the administration of President Buhari has also excluded the South East from the country's security architecture. This has worsened the feeling of discontent or marginalization among ethnic groups in the country in particular the Igbos – the tribe Kanu comes from.

As Dijk (2008) noted text and talk not only are constituents of (or even produced by their contexts, but also appear to be constitutive of their contexts. By reacting to Buhari administration's abduction of Kanu, netizens were merely asserting their rights of free speech and purveying their views on the arrest to elicit a positive outcome culminating in the release of the captive, albeit influencing government containment policy to reactionary forces or self-rule agitators in the country given the special category that places current events in their political, social or historical context.

The study revealed that netizen's tweets on Kanu's abduction were colloquial, marked by incomplete sentences, abbreviations with no meaning to the uninitiated, misspellings and complete grammatical blunders that cannot be allowed in formal communications or stories published in the newspapers or books. There are no specific rules for writing tweets except that it will not exceed certain characters or words. This makes it imperative that netizens will be constrained in the length of their reactions to the extraordinary rendition. The context theory was used to ensure precise and systematic description of the tweets but also to enhance understanding of the properties of the tweets.

The study found that the tweets were appropriate and conveyed what netizens' considered important. Majority of the tweets analysed portrayed the government negatively while the tweet from the North was positive for the government. Netizens reaction to the extraordinary rendition was seen to be both situational and personal depending on the region or tribe they come from displaying what mattered most to the person. Tweets from netizens from South East, South South and South West favoured Kanu while the one from the North favoured the Buhari administration. This reflects the situation in Nigeria which has been divided along ethnic lines and support given based on primordial ethnic sentiments.

Conclusion

The textual analysis of netizen's reaction to Nnamdi Kanu's arrest and detention by President Buhari's Government has been a discourse content analysis work premised on the theories of interest of rights within the context of the prevailing socio-economic and political issues in a country. While the democratization of media space aided by technological innovation and internet, facilitated harvesting of tweets on Kanu's rendition, such reactions did not influence a government like that of President Muhammadu Buhari administration which has a totalitarian bent unlike the liberal democracies of the West which can be ruined by a negative public opinion wave. But not respecting public opinion and court decisions have its down sides as Nigeria stands the risk of falling into a pariah state which cannot be reckoned with in the comity of nations, especially if it baulks at respecting universal human rights which it is a signatory to.

Recommendations

Going by the above conclusions, the study recommended as follows:

1. That the government should do everything necessary not to fall into a pariah state in the comity of nations and obey international conventions it signed to protect human rights albeit that of Nnamdi Kanu.
2. There is need for the government not to be ambivalent to obeying court orders as it will further dent the image of the government.
3. The study further urges the government to seek political solution towards resolving the quagmire over Kanu in line with government's already stance of negotiating with bandits.
4. Due to limitations of time, it is recommended that further studies be done to ascertain what actions the UN body took to get the Nigerian government to comply with its order for unconditional release of Nnamdi Kanu after the six-month deadline for compliance has elapsed.

References

- Abimbola, A. et al, (2020). Evaluating netizens social media collaborative problem solving efficacy on disaster response phase of disaster management in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications (IJSRP)*. 10. 167-177. 10.29322/IJSRP.10.07.2020.p10322.
- Adesulu, D. (2022, October 15). Miyetti Allah queries appeal court discharge and acquittal of Nnamdi Kanu. *Credible News*. <https://crediblenews.com.ng/miyetti-allah/> Retrieved. October 17, 2022
- Akinsanmi, G. (2022). Nigeria recorded 5,222 violent killings in six months, says US agency. *ThisDay*. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/07/24/nigeria-recorded-5222-violent-killings-in-six-months-says-us-agency/>
- Campbell, et al. (2020, June 18). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*. doi: [10.1177/1744987120927206](https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206)
- Crossman, A. (2020, March 19). Understanding purposive sampling: an overview of the

method and its applications. *ThoughtCo*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-sampling-3026727>. Retrieved. October 16, 2022

Ewepu, G. & Jannamike, L. (2021, June 18). 75 northern groups place 100m bounty on Nnamdi Kanu. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/06/75-northern-groups-place-n100m-bounty-on-nnamdi-kanu/>. Retrieved. October 10, 2022.

Ikeh, G. (2021, July 5). Mixed reactions trail IPOB leader's re-arrest, re-arraignment. *Realnews*.

<https://realnewsmagazine.net/untold-story-of-how-nnamdi-kanu-was-arrested/>

Karekwaivanane, G. & Msonza, N. (2021). "Zimbabwe digital rights landscape report" in digital rights in closing civic space: lessons from ten African countries. Institute of Development Studies. P.43- 60. DOI: 10.19088/IDS.2021.006

Kiriakou, J. (2022, October 4). A 'depressing journey': Ex-CIA Officer turned whistleblower recalls trips to UK, Israel for release of Nnamdi Kanu. *Nigeria Abroad*. Retrieved. October 10, 2022. <https://nigeriabroad.com/-a-depressing-journey---ex-cia-officer-turned-whistleblower-recalls-trips-to-uk--israel-for-release-of-nnamdi-kanu->

Meckled-Garcia, S. (2006, January 1). The human rights ideal and international human rights law. On Human Rights and Human Rights. Jan. 1, 2006. Psychology Press. https://www.academia.edu/808591/The_human_rights_ideal_and_international_human_rights_law

More, H. (2021). Jurisprudence: theory of legal rights. The Fact Factor. August 4, 2021. Retrieved. https://thefactfactor.com/facts/law/legal_concepts/jurisprudence/theories-of-legal-rights/17474/

Nnaem, W. (2022, October 14). Nnamdi Kanu: Ozekhome disagrees with Malami on appeal court judgement. <https://thewhistler.ng/nnamdi-kanu-ozekhome-disagrees-with-malami-on-appeal-court-judgement/>

Nickel, J. (2019). Human rights. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>

Obiejesi, K. (2018, October 24). Question: With which passport did Nnamdi Kanu travel out of Nigeria. International Center for Investigative Reporting. <https://www.icirnigeria.org/question-with-which-passport-did-nnamdi-kanu-travel-out-of-nigeria/>

Ogundare, A. & Fawunmi, M. (2020). Stylolinguistic analysis of Nnamdi Kanu's open letter "I am Nnamdi Kanu". *Kalangu Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 1(1), 152-170. January 2020. Retrieved. August 20, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358587734_Stylolinguistic_Analysis_of_Nnamdi_Kanu%27s_Open_Letter_I_am_Nnamdi_Kanu

Polat, R. (2005). The internet and political participation. *European Journal of Communication - EUR J COMMUN*. 20. 435-459. 10.1177/0267323105058251.

Powers, M.. (2019, September 19). 'Well-being and human rights', structural injustice:

power, advantage, and human rights. New York, 2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190053987.003.0005>. Accessed October 9, 2022.

Realnews. (2022, October 14). FG to explore appropriate legal options concerning Nnamdi Kanu – Malami. <https://realnewsmagazine.net/fg-to-explore-appropriate-legal-options-concerning-nnamdi-kanu-malami/>

Sam M.S. (2013, April 7). *Context theory of meaning*. *PsychologyDictionary.org*. <https://psychologydictionary.org/context-theory-of-meaning/>. Accessed October 14, 2022.

SaharaReporters, (2021, July 20). Breaking: protest in Israel over Nigerian government's detention of Nnamdi Kanu. <https://saharareporters.com/2021/07/20/breaking-protest-israel-over-nigerian-government%E2%80%99s-detention-nnamdi-kanu>. Retrieved. October 11, 2022

Snowball, T. (2019) *The founding fathers of our limited government: Thomas Jefferson and the freedom of speech*. Pacific Legal Foundation. July 24, 2019. Retrieved. August 20, 2022. <https://pacificlegal.org/the-founding-fathers-of-our-limited-government-thomas-jefferson-and-the-freedom-of-speech/>

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 104, 2019, Pg. 333-339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

SunNewsOnline. (2021, January 9). Alleged treasonable felony: UK, Israel petitioned to repatriate IPOB leader, Kanu. <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/alleged-treasonable-felony-uk-israel-petitioned-to-repatriate-ipob-leader-kanu/>

Udejah, G. (2022, August 2). “UN decision on Nnamdi Kanu’s unconditional release binding on Nigeria, says Ejimakor. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/features/un-decision-on-nnamdi-kanus-unconditional-release-binding-on-nigeria-says-ejimakor/>

UKEssays. (2018). Interest theory of rights, a summary and evaluation. Retrieved. August 18, 2022. <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/human-rights/interest-theory-of-rights.php?vref=1>

Uko, S. (2022, July 23). UN working group tells Nigeria to unconditionally release, compensate Nnamdi Kanu. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/07/un-working-group-tells-nigeria-to-unconditionally-release-compensate-nnamdi-kanu/>

Unini, C. (2022, October 14). Don't twist the judgment of court of appeal on Nnamdi Kanu's Case — Falana SAN tells FG. *NigerianLawyer*. <https://thenigerianlawyer.com/dont-twist-the-judgment-of-court-of-appeal-on-nnamdi-kanus-case-falana-san-tells-fg/>