

# SECURITY IMPLICATION OF ABUSIVE EXCHANGES ON WHATSAPP AMONG KWANKWASIYYA AND GANDUJIYYA SUPPORTERS PRIOR TO THE SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT ON THE 2023 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN KANO

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## Abstract

Political communication through WhatsApp messaging has significantly influenced the political landscape in Kano State before and after the 2023 gubernatorial elections. This research delves into the complex nature of WhatsApp interactions between Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya supporters while awaiting the Supreme Court's ruling on the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kano State, with a focus on its security implications. The study aims to explore how supporters from both factions engaged in abusive exchanges on WhatsApp. The security implications of the content themes, language usage, and media format within these WhatsApp exchanges serve as the focal points of analysis. Data for this study were gathered from interviews and WhatsApp message content extracted from four groups, with two groups dedicated to each political faction. The research employs the social identity theory and spiral of silence theory to frame the analysis. The results uncover the prevalence of incendiary messages filled with hate speech within the selected WhatsApp groups, aimed at informing, misinforming, and disinforming members. This has escalated tensions in the political atmosphere of Kano, leading to notable security concerns. The study proposes the regulation and moderation of content shared on these political platforms to address security threats in Kano State.

**Keywords:** Gubernatorial elections, Political communication, Security implications, social identity theory, WhatsApp exchanges

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## Introduction

In recent years, the landscape of political communication has undergone a significant transformation with the emergence of digital platforms. These platforms, ranging from social media networks to messaging applications like WhatsApp, have become instrumental tools in shaping public opinion, mobilising supporters, and disseminating information with political bearing (Papacharissi, 2015; Ceccarini, Newell and Turato, 2023). While the advent of digital communication has undoubtedly revolutionised the way individuals engage in politics, it has also introduced a myriad of complexities and

challenges, particularly concerning security implications. The pervasive nature of digital platforms allows political actors to reach a vast audience instantaneously, enabling them to influence public discourse and sway opinions with unprecedented efficiency. Through targeted messaging, visual content, and interactive features, politicians and their supporters often construct narratives, amplify their messages, and cultivate online communities that align with their political agendas (Elisabeth, 2015; Tom; Zhou, Kate 2018).

However, the unrestricted nature of digital communication also presents inherent risks, especially

concerning safeguarding security and maintaining societal harmony. The rapid dissemination of misinformation, fake news, and inflammatory rhetoric on these platforms fuels social unrest, intensifies existing divisions, and undermines trust in democratic communities and institutions. The viral nature of content on social media amplifies the reach and impact of such harmful messages, posing significant challenges for law enforcement agencies tasked with preserving public safety and upholding the rule of law (Bennett and Livingston, 2023; Sanchez, 2021). Among these social media platforms, WhatsApp stands out as a significant platform for political discourse and the spread of harmful messages, particularly in Nigeria (Ijoma and Odu, 2021).

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, has witnessed a significant shift in political communication due to the rise of social media. WhatsApp, with over 51 million users in Nigeria (World Population Review, 2024), has become a primary platform for political discourse. Studies have shown that WhatsApp groups are often used by political parties to disseminate campaign messages, coordinate rallies, and engage with voters (Adegbola & Gearhart, 2019). However, it has also facilitated the spread of fake news and inflammatory content, particularly during elections. For instance, during the 2019 Nigerian general elections, WhatsApp was used to circulate false information about candidates, leading to tensions and violence in some regions (Olayinka, 2020).

The role of WhatsApp in political communication is not unique to Nigeria. In India, WhatsApp has been instrumental in political mobilization, particularly among rural populations. However, it has also been linked to the spread of misinformation and communal violence. For example, during the 2019 Indian general elections, fake news circulated on WhatsApp led to incidents of mob violence (Banaji & Bhat, 2019). Similarly, in Brazil, WhatsApp played a central role in the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, with supporters using the platform to disseminate pro-Bolsonaro propaganda and discredit opponents (Mozur, Kessel & Chan, 2018). In Kenya, WhatsApp has been used to mobilize voters and organize protests, but it has also been a conduit for hate speech and ethnic incitement (Ogola, 2019).

In Kano State, WhatsApp, a widely used messaging platform, has become integral to political communication. The 2023 gubernatorial election in Kano witnessed a surge in political activities both offline and online, with supporters of Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya political groups engaging in heated

exchanges, which were particularly contentious and marked by fierce competition. Supporters of both factions have leveraged the WhatsApp platform to disseminate propaganda, mobilize supporters, and discredit their opponents. Against this backdrop, this study analyzes the incidence of hate-loaded WhatsApp messages on selected platforms for their security implications among Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya supporters in the lead-up to the Supreme Court judgement on the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kano. The study is divided into five sections. The first section comprises the introduction, problem statement, and research questions, while the second section covers the methodology and theory adopted for the study. Section three covers the political climate of Kano State on the eve and after the 2023 gubernatorial elections, while section four presents the results. Section five concludes the research work and offers recommendations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Political communication in Kano State has significantly evolved with the advent of digital platforms, particularly WhatsApp, which has become a critical tool for shaping public opinion and mobilizing supporters during and after the 2023 gubernatorial election. However, the nature of WhatsApp exchanges between supporters of the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions during the waiting period for the Supreme Court judgment on the election outcome presents complex security implications that have not been thoroughly investigated. This research seeks to explore these implications by analyzing the content themes, language usage, and media format of WhatsApp exchanges, with a focus on their impact on peaceful coexistence in Kano State.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do supporters of the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions engaged in abusive exchanges on WhatsApp as the public awaits the Supreme Court judgement on the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kano State?
2. What are the security implications of abusive WhatsApp exchanges for peaceful co-existence and political stability in Kano State?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Two theories are adopted in this study. Social identity theory is used to explain the first research question, while the Spiral of Silence explains the second research question. Social Identity Theory (SIT)

offers a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of group behaviour and intergroup relations, particularly within the context of this study. In line with the assumption of this theory that people tend to derive a substantial part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, which influences their attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions (Turner and Oakes, 1986; Scheepers and Ellemers, 2019). The followers of Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions embody distinct social categories, and their interactions on the WhatsApp platform are profoundly influenced by social comparison processes, in-group favoritism, and intergroup dynamics. By adopting SIT as a theoretical framework, this study explains how the identities of Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya groups influenced the nature and intensity of abusive exchanges on their platforms.

The Spiral of Silence theory, proposed by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974, suggests that individuals have a fear of isolation that leads them to refrain from expressing opinions they perceive to be in the minority. This theory posits that people continuously monitor the climate of opinion around them and are more likely to voice their views if they believe they align with the majority. Conversely, if individuals perceive their opinions to be unpopular or in the minority, they are likely to remain silent to avoid social isolation or negative repercussions. This creates a "spiral" effect where the majority opinion becomes increasingly dominant as more people conform to it, while minority opinions become less visible and less represented. Over time, the silence of dissenting voices amplifies the appearance of consensus, even if such consensus is not reflective of the true diversity of opinions. This theory has significant implications for understanding public opinion formation, social conformity, and the potential suppression of dissent in various social and political contexts. So based on the assumption of this theory that people monitor the climate of opinion around them, enabling them to voice their views to align with the majority, the members of the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya groups' expression of their frank views in the groups with less concern about the security implication can be explained.

### **Political Climate in Kano State on the Eve and After the 2023 Gubernatorial Election**

The political landscape in Kano State is characterised by two prominent factions, each led by influential political figures. The Kwankwasiyya faction, led by Dr. Rabiú Musa Kwankwaso, and the Gandujiyya

faction, led by Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, represent divergent paths for governance and development within the state. The eve and aftermath of the 2023 Supreme Court judgement marked a pivotal moment in the history of the State. Initially, the political alliance between Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya appeared to be a strategic move to strengthen their power and achieve shared political goals in the state. However, underlying this partnership were simmering tensions arising from ideological disparities, personal ambitions, and power conflicts. These tensions eventually escalated, culminating in a bitter conflict. The genesis of their relationship dates back to the early days of Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 when Kwankwaso, then the People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate, chose Ganduje as his running mate. Their successful bid for office ushered in an era of collaboration, with Kwankwaso entrusting Ganduje with key positions in his administration, including the Ministry for Local Government.

However, cracks in their political relationship began to surface in 2007 when Ganduje challenged Kwankwaso's leadership and contested the PDP gubernatorial primaries. Despite this unsuccessful attempt, Ganduje returned to Kwankwaso's fold. The relationship between Kwankwaso and Ganduje endured further strains in the run-up to the 2015 gubernatorial elections, with Kwankwaso endorsing Ganduje as his gubernatorial successor under the All Progressive Party (APC) in 2015. The two later parted ways due to irreconcilable differences which later resulted in the deep-seated animosity and distrust that characterize their relationship. The lack of acknowledgment or gratitude from Ganduje towards Kwankwaso further intensifies the rift, signaling a breakdown in trust and mutual respect.

The schism between Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya created a substantial rift within Kano's political landscape, leaving supporters grappling with loyalty to their respective leaders. Leading up to the 2023 gubernatorial election, both factions put forth their candidates, with Kwankwasiyya supporting Abba Kabir Yusuf and Gandujiyya endorsing Nasiru Yusuf Gawuna. The campaign period witnessed a fierce struggle for public backing, as 32 operational radio and 11 TV stations in Kano became arenas for propaganda and mobilization efforts.

In addition to traditional media, digital platforms like WhatsApp transformed political communication by providing supporters from both factions with a direct channel to exchange messages, coordinate campaign activities, and disseminate

information. WhatsApp has become a hub of political discourse, with supporters engaging in heated exchanges, sharing news updates, and rallying fellow supporters to their cause. On March 20, 2023, the Independent National Electoral Commission declared Abba Kabir Yusuf, a member of the Kwankwasiyya faction and an NNPP candidate, the winner, having polled 1,019,602 votes to defeat his closest rival, Nasiru Gawuna of the All Progressives Congress, who polled 890,705 votes. The opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) and its candidate Nasiru Yusuf Gawuna filed a case at the election tribunal challenging the victory of Abba Kabir. This action is in accordance with section 133 of the Electoral Act 2022, which entitles candidates in an election and a political party that participated in the election to present an election petition before the election tribunal.

Subsequently, the election tribunal sitting in Kano ruled in favor of Nasiru Gawuna of the Gandujiyya faction, overturning the outcome of the election declared by INEC, which sparked a wave of legal battles and political tension. In response to the verdict of the tribunal, Abba Kabir filed an appeal at the Appeal Court in Abuja, seeking to challenge the decision of the lower court. However, the judgment by the Appeal Court upheld the ruling in favor of Nasiru Gawuna. Abba Kabir and the NNPP challenged the Appeal court judgment before the Supreme Court in Abuja.

The waiting period for the Supreme Court judgment was marked by exchanges of abuses, threats, and counter-threats among supporters of Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya, particularly on the WhatsApp platform. Ultimately, the Supreme Court issued its ruling, affirming the INEC announcement that declared Abba Kabir as the victor of the 2023 gubernatorial election. The verdict settled the electoral dispute, influencing its future course and highlighting the intricacies of power struggles and factional rivalries in the state.

## **Methodology**

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate the security implications of abusive exchanges on WhatsApp among supporters of the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions in Kano State as they awaited the Supreme Court judgment on the 2023 gubernatorial election. The methodology integrates qualitative content analysis of WhatsApp messages and semi-structured interviews to address the research questions. The research began with the collection of WhatsApp messages from four purposively sampled groups, two representing each of

the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions. These groups were selected based on their active engagement in political discourse during the period leading up to the Supreme Court judgment. The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the group administrators, assuring them of confidentiality and emphasizing that the data would be used solely for academic purposes. The administrators were informed that the identities of group members and any personally identifiable information would be anonymized to protect their privacy. After obtaining consent from the group administrators, the researchers ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the data collected from the groups.

To analyze the WhatsApp messages, a qualitative content analysis approach was adopted. The researchers developed a coding sheet to systematically categorize the messages based on thematic content, linguistic characteristics, and emotional undertones. The coding process involved open coding, where messages were labeled. This was followed by axial coding, which grouped related codes into broader categories. Finally, selective coding was used to refine the categories and identify the core themes that best captured the data. This iterative process ensured that the themes were grounded in the data and reflected the subtleties of the WhatsApp exchanges. In addition to the WhatsApp data, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 participants, including three security personnel, three civil society leaders, and five community members. These interviews were conducted to gather insights into the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the impact of WhatsApp exchanges on security implication and political stability in Kano State. An interview guide was developed to ensure consistency across the interviews, and the sessions were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. This involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The development of themes was used through a deductive approach. Themes were derived from the literature on political communication, social media, and security studies. However, no new theme was inductively emerged as agreed by the researchers.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, the researchers implemented several measures. Inter-coder reliability was established by

having two independent coders analyze a sample of WhatsApp messages and interview transcripts. Discrepancies found were resolved through discussion, and Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to measure inter-coder agreement, achieving a score of 0.85, which indicates high reliability. A codebook was also developed which provided clear definitions, examples, and coding rules for each theme, ensuring consistency in the application of codes across the dataset. Additionally, an audit trail was maintained to document all decisions made during the coding and analysis process, including notes on theme development, coding challenges, and revisions. Validity was enhanced through triangulation, which involved the use of multiple data sources (WhatsApp messages and interviews) and methods (qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis). This approach allowed the researchers to cross-check the findings and draw more robust conclusions. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with some interview participants to confirm the accuracy and interpretation of their responses. Furthermore, peer debriefing was employed, where the researchers discussed the findings with experts in the field of communication, politics and security studies to identify potential biases and strengthen the validity of the analysis by minimizing the influence of personal biases on the analysis.

### **Presentation of the Results and Discussion of the Findings**

The presentation of results is in two segments with first attempting to respond to research question number one which is about how do supporters of the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions engage in abusive exchanges on WhatsApp as the public awaits the Supreme Court judgement on the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kano State.

This question focuses on capturing the nature and dynamics of abusive behaviour, including derogatory language, insults and threats exchanged between supporters of the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions. Based on the qualitative content analysis, five themes emerged using a deductive approach from the six audio clips and six video clips selected based on their intensity of abuses traded between supporters of the groups on WhatsApp. The researchers performed the coding and agreed that a new emerging theme had emerged. The themes are prevalence and nature of abusive language, targeted attacks on individuals and groups, misinformation and rumour, escalation of hostility, and impact on political

discourse and intergroup conflict.

### **Nature of Abusive Language**

Abusive exchanges were prevalent in both factions' WhatsApp groups. The messages often included derogatory language, personal attacks, and inflammatory rhetoric, with the intention of belittling opponents and solidifying political stances leading up to the Supreme Court verdict. A video from the Kwankwasiyya faction featured a statement asserting, "These Gandujiyya individuals will go to great lengths to discredit our leader Kwankwaso, but we are prepared to counter with the truth and unveil their falsehoods." similarly, an audio recording from the Gandujiyya faction remarked, "Kwankwasiyya supporters are incapable of governing Kano, so how can they hope to win any elections? Ganduje's victory in the 2019 elections demonstrated that they were merely a group of failures." The use of terms such as "liars" and "losers" appears to be specifically aimed at entire groups, fueling animosity and strife, thus jeopardizing harmonious intergroup relationships in Kano state.

### **Targeted Attacks on Individuals and Groups**

The abusive exchanges were also directed beyond groups to specific individuals. Key personalities such as Dr. Rabiú Kwankwaso, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, Abba Kabir, Nasiru Gawuna, and Abdullahi Abbas were frequently targeted for demeaning. In one of the video clips by the Kwankwasiyya faction, it was stated that "Ganduje, the thief caught red-handed with dollars, thinks he can field a successor and still lead? What a joke! This group of corrupt politicians will never cling to the mantle of power in Kano state. They should all be in jail." another video clip by Gandujiyya stated that "Kwankwaso and his minions are nothing but a bunch of corrupt, power-hungry fools. Kwankwaso wants to indirectly rule Kano through his errand, and Kano is too big for that." The abuses here transcend group appeals. They target the group leaders. The directed personal abuses on Rabiú Kwankwaso and Abdullahi Ganduje in these quotes are too heavy for a decent political democratic environment.

### **Misinformation and Rumor**

Both factions of Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya disseminated misinformation, particularly aimed at tarnishing the reputations of key figures like Kwankwaso, Ganduje, Gawuna, and Abba. These rumors were often linked to stories of corruption and

other scandals. In an audio clip, Kwankwasiyya stated that “Ganduje wants to maintain his status quo through a novice politician primarily to shield himself, his corrupt wife and children from bribery and corruption charges that are obvious in his government.” in another video clip, a member of Gandujiyya expressed that “Kwankwasiyya doesn't mean good for Kano; he wants to crush opponents for selfish and greedy interests. We know the truth and will not be fooled.” Indeed, the accusations of defense of greedy interests and pursuit of selfish interests through bribery and corruption are all not substantiated in the clips and mere rumors and public misinformation.

### **Escalation of Hostility**

As the political stakes rose, the use of abusive language escalated in intensity, showcasing the heightened tension and hostility between the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions. An audio clip shared by Kwankwasiyya conveyed a defiant message, declaring, “Gandujiyya government and its thugs believe intimidation will be effective, but we stand fearless. Kwankwasiyya will triumph, regardless of the sacrifices, even if it requires shedding our last drop of blood.” In a video released by Gandujiyya, a retaliatory sentiment was expressed, stating, “These Kwankwasiyya supporters must be disciplined. They believe they can deceive their way to victory, but we will demonstrate true power, reminding them of 2019.’ the usage of strong language like “drop of blood” and “intimidation” in the aforementioned exchanges illustrates the deep-seated animosity and undemocratic tendencies prevalent in the interactions.

### **Impact on Political Discourse and Intergroup Conflict**

The abusive exchanges on WhatsApp played a significant role in shaping the political discourse and worsening intergroup conflict, highlighting the deep divisions and hostility between Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya supporters. In a video clip by Kwankwasiyya, it is stated that “The Supreme Court judgment will reveal the true winner, and Kwankwasiyya will finally put an end to Gandujiyya's reign of nepotism, corruption, and maladministration.” in an audio clip posted in one of the Gandujiyya WhatsApp groups, a voice said, “This fight isn't just about the election; it's about saving our Kano state from the irresponsible and corrupt clutches of Kwankwasiyya.” The use of harsh words to portray images of nepotism, irresponsibility, and maladministration serves to distort and undermine political discourses of its civic democratic principles.

The second segment of the data analysis mainly focuses on responding to research question number two, which is about the security implications of abusive WhatsApp exchanges for peaceful co-existence and political stability in Kano State. To investigate the security implications of abusive WhatsApp exchanges among Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya camps for peaceful coexistence and political stability in Kano State, data was sourced through interviews as detailed in the methodology to gather insights into their perceptions of the impact of WhatsApp exchanges on security and stability. Adopting a deductive approach, the interviews highlighted three main themes: incitement to violence and unrest, polarization and social division, and threats to community safety. The researchers performed the coding and agreed that a new emerging theme had emerged. Thematic analysis of the interview data reveals the following findings regarding the security implications of abusive exchanges covered in this study.

### **Incitement to Violence and Unrest**

All participants consistently maintained that abusive exchanges on WhatsApp escalate political tensions within Kano State during the period under focus. The inflammatory language used was viewed as worsening existing polarization and fueling animosity between the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions. They believed that threats of physical harm, intimidation, and retaliation were common, raising fears of widespread disorder and instability in the state. For instance, a security personnel respondent stated, “The kind of language used in these WhatsApp groups is highly inflammatory. It doesn't take much for an argument online to spill over into the streets.” This fear of possible negative spillover effects was also shared by a civil society leader, who commented, “The abusive messages are like adding fuel to a fire. They heighten tensions and make it harder to contain a situation in which unfortunate violence erupts.” Similarly, the main concern of a prominent community leader respondent was the possibility of mob action resulting from these threats. He expressed, “I have seen threats being made on social media platforms. They are scary because you don't know who might act on these threats.”

### **Polarisation and Social Divisions**

Participants expressed concerns that abusive exchanges on WhatsApp significantly contribute to the polarization of people along political lines. These exchanges reinforce in-group solidarity and out-group

hostility, deepen social divisions, and undermine efforts to promote inclusivity and cohesion. A respondent depicted the depth of the polarization in Kano as a result of the exchanges. He stated, "These groups make people see each other as enemies. It's us versus them, which is very dangerous for our community." another respondent expressed fear of the loss of communal solidarity and its replacement with hatred. In his view, "The more people engage in these abusive exchanges, the more divided we become. It's hard to see how we can come together as a community when there is so much hatred."

### **Threats to Community Safety**

Participants expressed significant concerns about the direct threats to community safety stemming from abusive exchanges. The recurring theme of these online conflicts potentially escalating into real-world violence raised fears for the safety of communities across different parts of Kano state. One respondent pointed out, "We cannot overlook the threats being made. These are not mere words; they pose real consequences for our safety. This sentiment holds true as online provocations can quickly escalate into tangible fears, as highlighted by a security personnel who stated, 'online threats often materialize into genuine fears and threats for individuals on the ground'".

The thematic analysis of interviews reveals that the abusive exchanges on WhatsApp among Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya supporters in the period of this study have significant security implications for peaceful coexistence and political stability in Kano State. Furthermore, prior studies have supported our findings regarding the security implications of abusive exchanges on WhatsApp. Some studies have demonstrated how the misuse of WhatsApp can lead to the spread of misinformation and radicalization (Makoza Cape, 20.; Dob, Paul, Das, 2000), particularly during election periods (Reis, Melo, Garimella, Almeida & Eckles 2000; Banaji, Bhat, Agarwal, Passanha & Pravin, 2000), resulting in civil unrest and violence in countries like Brazil, India, and Malawi. The study's findings align with the Spiral of Silence theory, which elucidates how extreme and inflammatory views predominant in the WhatsApp groups of both Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya supporters contribute to a cycle of hostility and insecurity. Both factions perceive themselves as not part of the minority group, prompting them to vocalize their opinions.

The study findings reveal the intense and

pervasive nature of abusive exchanges between Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya supporters on WhatsApp during the politically heated period awaiting the Supreme Court judgement on the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kano. These exchanges are characterized by derogatory language, targeted personal attacks, misinformation, escalating hostility, and their impact on political discourse and intergroup conflict. In fact, the manifest effect of the use of vulgar language in social media to score political gains has long been documented by Udupa (2018) and Lloyd (2022) in their studies of a similar trend in the United Kingdom. Abusive exchanges among politicians on social media have become a widespread problem, indicating a rise in online abuse targeted at Members of Parliament, particularly during heated political debates. Ward and McLaughlin (2020); Morrell, Greenwood Roberts, Maynard and Bontacheva (2018) examined tweets prior to the UK general elections in 2015, 2017, and 2019, revealing a significant increase in abusive content, particularly aimed at specific politicians based on factors such as gender, party affiliation, and topics like borders and terrorism. Just like the Kano experience during the waiting period of the Supreme Court judgement, these exchanges were not healthy for democratic development.

The findings align with social identification theory, which posits that abusive language is utilized to strengthen in-group solidarity and disparage the out-group. Through the use of derogatory terms and personal attacks to belittle the opposing group, while asserting the righteousness and capability of their own faction in governance, supporters from both factions (Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya) seek to elevate their group's status while diminishing the credibility and ethical position of their adversaries.

### **Limitations**

The study highlights the influence of social media, particularly WhatsApp, on political communication in Kano State, Nigeria, showing parallels with patterns observed in countries like India, Brazil, and Kenya. Key themes include the prevalence of abusive language, misinformation, and escalating hostility, which are not unique to Kano. However, the generalization of the is limited due to the specific cultural, political, and historical context of Kano, including local rivalries and the unique circumstances surrounding the 2023 gubernatorial election. The research is based on a small sample size and focuses solely on WhatsApp, potentially overlooking dynamics on other online social platforms such as Facebook,

Twitter (X) and Instagram. The findings may be influenced by the heightened political tension during the study period.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the nature of abusive exchanges on WhatsApp among supporters of the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya political factions during the period awaiting the Supreme Court judgment on the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kano State. The findings revealed that these exchanges are characterized by the use of derogatory language, targeted personal attacks, and misinformation, leading to escalating hostility. The pervasive use of inflammatory rhetoric and the spread of rumors significantly influenced political discourse, reinforcing in-group solidarity, and deepening intergroup conflict. The study also highlights the security implications of these exchanges, with themes of incitement to violence, polarization, and threats to community safety emerging from interviews with security personnel, civil society leaders, and community members. These dynamics contribute to heightened political tensions, social division, and fears of real-world violence, posing a significant threat to peaceful coexistence and political stability in Kano State, Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends the need to conduct educational campaigns to improve digital literacy among the public, including supporters of Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya, with a focus on promoting responsible use of social media platforms like WhatsApp. These campaigns should educate individuals on identifying and refraining from engaging in abusive and inflammatory exchanges, as well as verifying the accuracy of information before sharing it. Collaborations with local influencers and community leaders can help amplify these efforts and foster a culture of respectful online political discourse. Furthermore, it is recommended to develop and enforce regulations for monitoring and addressing abusive content on social media, such as WhatsApp. Establishing a dedicated task force comprised of members from law enforcement, civil society, and representatives of Rabiú Kwankwaso and Abdullahi Ganduje to track and respond to inflammatory exchanges is advised. This task force should be empowered to issue warnings and take legal action against individuals inciting violence. Additionally, the creation of anonymous reporting channels can provide community members with a means to report abusive

behavior without fear of reprisal.

### **Suggestion for Future Research**

Future research could adopt a comparative approach across different regions and online social platforms, explore long-term effects of social media abusive exchanges on security implication and political stability, and utilize mixed-methods to enhance understanding and applicability of findings to larger populations.

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