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“WE WILL TAKE BACK OUR COUNTRY FROM BAD GOVERNANCE”: A CORPUS-ASSISTED CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDY OF CAMPAIGN TWEETS IN THE 2023 NIGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Abstract: Nigeria has faced challenges in governance, economic development, and social development, making life difficult for many of the citizens. Many politicians use this situation to campaign during elections. This paper investigates the campaign tweets of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar, and Peter Obi, who were the three leading presidential candidates in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, to uncover the discourse strategies in the representation of societal issues plaguing the Nigerian state. Previous studies on the campaign discourse of the 2023 Nigerian election have focused mostly on mobilisation strategies, dissemination of ideologies and persuasion without directly investigating the political actors' position on societal issues. Adopting a corpus-assisted approach to critical discourse analysis and van Dijk's ideological square, this paper focuses on word frequency lists and concordance analysis to reveal lexical patterns in the tweets. The discourse issues framed around development, leadership and economy are identified through the study of the lexical items. The presidential candidates strategically highlight these issues to position themselves as adept leaders through polarisation, by emphasizing their strengths in addressing these issues, and also emphasizing their opponents' inability to improve the nation's situation. The findings show that, while Atiku and Obi had more negative tweets disparaging government's

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ineffectiveness in improving the living standard of Nigerians, Tinubu focused more on positioning himself as a reliable leader. The study concludes that the “us” versus “them” approach was utilised by the presidential candidates to meet the expectations of the public and present themselves as concerned leaders.

Keywords: *campaign tweets, 2023 Nigerian presidential election, corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, discourse strategies.*

Introduction

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election witnessed a very competitive campaign, especially among the top three presidential candidates: Bola Ahmed Tinubu of All Progressives Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of Labour Party (LP). This presidential election was striking in some ways. First, it was the first time a third party, which was LP, would be a strong competitor in what was always a battle between two parties. Second, the three competitors also had very strong track records: Bola Ahmed Tinubu was a former Governor of Lagos State and a former senator; Atiku Abubakar was a former Vice President of Nigeria; and Peter Obi was a former Governor of Anambra State. Third, Bola Tinubu also had the reputation of being a kingmaker, having successfully contributed to the political aspirations of many people; hence, his decision to contest as president drew significant public attention (Akinboyo, 2023).

Social media was amply used during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election to mobilise and update the citizens on campaign activities. Twitter (now X) was deployed by the presidential candidates to update their followers on campaign activities. Its hashtag and retweet features enhanced the virality of the posts. With posts combining captions and images, tweets were structured to improve the public image of the candidates and to disseminate propaganda. Each of the candidates had official Twitter accounts different from those of their political parties. These accounts showcased the candidates, their opinions, references to others and campaign activities, all in a bid to curry favour with the electorate. The use of Twitter as a platform for political communication is a popular practice in many parts of the world. A candidate's following on social media and his/her level of engagement can most times indicate his/her level of popularity. Adekunle & Iredia (2023) note that Twitter significantly influenced public perceptions and engagement during the 2023 Nigerian elections with positively framed tweets outweighing the negative-framed ones.

The government of Nigeria struggles with achieving stability for its citizens economically, exacerbating widespread disillusionment with governmental efficacy.

The recent decade has witnessed poor socio-economic development. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria hit its highest inflation rate (33.2%) in 2024. Inefficiency in governance has increased the deterioration of the Nigerian economy; successive governments and leaders have implemented socio-economic and development policies whose effects are only slightly felt amongst the citizens (Ejimabo, 2013). The problem of Nigeria is glaring to its citizens; each election is another opportunity of hope for the citizens that their chosen candidates would be the leader to propel the nation into better growth and development. The leaders, aware of this, constantly seek to position themselves as saviours of the country, and disparage the capacity of their opponents to handle the nation's problems (Sunday, 2021). This forms part of their ethos to boost their credibility in the eyes of the electorate. The political candidate at the time of the election identifies with the electorate as one who shares in their suffering.

Therefore, the present paper investigates how the three leading candidates in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election discursively construct societal issues during their campaign communications on Twitter using Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis with insights from van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. It specifically identifies the salient lexical features that reflect the political candidates' positions on the nation's issues. The paper analyses the ideological construction of the positive self and negative other by the presidential candidates regarding the issues plaguing Nigeria.

Literature Review

Some studies on political discourse in Nigeria have examined ideologies found in political speeches (Sunday, 2009; Okpeh & Duro Bello, 2017; Chukwu & Olorunsogo, 2024). Previous studies have also analysed persuasive and manipulative strategies of politicians, especially during electoral discourse (Ojekwe, 2016; Owolabi & Adeyemo, 2021; Oparinde, Rapeane-Mathonsi & Mheta, 2021; Joe, 2023). These studies have primarily focused on either ideology and persuasion, but did not consider on the strategic use of discourse issues to drive ideological polarizations. Studies that explored hate speech (Kadiri, Kehinde & Haroon-Sulyman, 2020; Sunday, 2021; Godswill, 2023; Alugbin & Adepoju, 2025; Aondover, Ademosu & Achemel, 2026) are mainly concerned with the negative "hate" expression and not the positive identity construction in the context of the negative-other expressions. The current study addresses this gap by examining how positive-self and negative-other representations purposefully exist within the same discourse to garner electoral support.

Studies have shown the rapid use of Twitter during the presidential election since 2015. For instance, Opeibi (2019) studied the effective use of Twitter’s hashtags by APC and PDP during the 2015 Nigerian general elections. During the 2015 presidential election, Muhammadu Buhari, the APC candidate who later emerged winner, optimised the “change” slogan into a movement, turning it into a popular hashtag -#change; while PDP championed the #continuity to promote the continuation of their candidate and incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan (Ezeh and Mboso, 2018). Kadiri, Kehinde & Haroon-Sulyman (2020) examine the use of sarcasm and hate speech; they argue that the disillusionment experienced by Nigerians with Buhari’s first term facilitated the move to the hashtag #Nextlevel and #PMB2ndTerm during the 2019 presidential elections. According to Bello, Inuwa-Dutse, & Heckel (2020), the less popular parties devoted more attention to image positioning tactics and promoting their candidates, while Atiku’s and Buhari’s campaign teams deployed creative ways of deprecating each other. These studies, unlike this present study, do not demonstrate the capacity of Nigeria’s Twitter campaign discourse to discursively construct societal issues and negotiate the in-group’s identity.

Moreover, some linguistic studies have been conducted on the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Alugbin & Adepoju (2025) and Aondover et al. (2026) explore the use of hate speech during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. While Alugbin & Adepoju (2025) concentrate on identifying the persuasive elements in the hate speech from the political candidates, Aondover, Ademosu & Acheme (2026) deploys a mixed-methods approach to identifying the impact of hate speech rhetoric on voters turn out. Patrick & Ndimele (2024) consider the pragmatic functions and appeal of neologisms, such as *BAT*, *BATtified*, *Atikulated*, *OBIdeints*, during the 2023 presidential election. Ige (2023) examines the ideologies in Tinubu’s popular campaign speech, where his declaration of *E mi lokan* (it is my turn) signalled his entitlement claim to the presidential seat. Adekunle & Iredia (2023) are concerned with sentiment analysis of positive and negative tweets during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. These studies on the 2023 Nigerian general elections do not significantly analyse the societal issues highlighted by the presidential candidates through ideological resources. They also do not explore the campaign communications on Twitter which offered clear articulations of the politicians’ personal views and attacks on one another. This is why the current study investigates the tweets of selected presidential candidates during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election to analyse their strategic utilization of discourse issues to position themselves as better than their opponents.

Data, Methodology and Theory

The study utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods; a corpus analysis using Lancsbox and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), incorporating concepts from van Dijk (2006) socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis. Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA) integrates the quantitative strengths of corpus linguistics and the qualitative aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis to enable an empirical examination of discourse patterns and strategies. Baker (2006) asserts that keywords and frequency lists reflect the ideas of the text, and give the main topics in the text. When corpus methods such as frequency analysis, keyword analysis, collocation and concordance lines are employed to critical discourse analysis, recurring linguistic patterns that might otherwise remain unnoticed are identified. This allows for movement between macro-level tendencies and micro-level discourse features. This does not replace critical interpretation but instead enhances transparency and replicability (Baker, 2006).

By deploying van Dijk's framework, the study explores how language use reflects and shapes social knowledge and beliefs. This approach views discourse production as mental models which are informed by socially shared ideologies, which influence how social groups perceive themselves (van Dijk, 2006). According to van Dijk (2006), discourse is not a simple medium of communication but a social practice which shapes power structures, whereby dominant groups seek to control and influence the minds, actions and social representation of others. Power is realised when groups aim to control discourse and legitimise their interest by marginalising perspectives that shape cognitive schemas and public perception. The presidential candidates in this discourse represent their political parties as social groups and propagate their ideals. Within this framework, van Dijk captures the ideological square which operates through emphasizing the positive information of the in-group and emphasizing the negative information of the outgroup. This is popularly termed as the positive-self representation and negative-other representation (the "us" versus "them" dynamic). This mechanism is particularly germane to electoral discourse, where candidates strategically manage self-representation and opponent deprecation to secure voter's support.

This study employs the word frequency lists methodology and concordance patterns to identify the salient lexical items across the campaign tweets of the presidential candidates. A corpus of 1,077 tweets (57,792 tokens) were retrieved from the official handles of the selected presidential candidates between May 30, 2022 and February 25, 2023 (the timeline of rigorous campaigning): 236 tweets (12,168

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tokens) from Bola Tinubu; 431 tweets (21,353 tokens) from Atiku Abubakar, and 410 tweets (24,271 tokens) from Peter Obi. Each presidential candidate tweets were copied and pasted into separate Microsoft Word files. These documents were converted to .txt files to eliminate materials such as images which were not required for the analysis. Each file was uploaded on Lancsbox and passed through the Words tool to yield a word frequency list.

Eighteen excerpts, six excerpts from both Atiku and Obi’s post and five excerpts from Tinubu’s, which best highlighted the discourse strategies, were selected during the concordance analysis. A frequency list was used to identify the discourse issues present in the corpus of the selected presidential candidates. The extracted words, based on the frequency of usage, revealed the specific topics and language choices of the candidates. This allowed identifying patterns and making conclusions. The first one hundred most frequently used words were identified in the corpus of the presidential candidates (see the table below) and were restricted to content words, nouns, verbs, adjective and adverbs, as they carry meanings that can signal thematic focus. The words were ranked according to their relative frequency score, which was retrieved after uploading the data on #lancsbox’s Word tool.

Top 100 keywords list in the corpus of the selected presidential candidates’ posts

SN	Tinubu keywords List (12168 tokens)	Frequency (9.67 per 10k tokens)	Atiku’s keywords list (21353 tokens)	Frequency (7.72 per 10k tokens)	Obi’s Keyword List (24271 tokens)	Frequency (0.79 per 10k)
1	Nigeria	67	#AA	376	#peterobi	391
2	thank	60	Nigeria	161	Nigeria	183
3	people	60	state	119	State	105
4	state	53	PDP	102	Nigerians	95
5	more	48	today	84	National	79
6	#bat23	48	recover	74	Nation	70
7	today	47	people	74	Country	62
8	good	42	thank	67	Leadership	48
9	#renewedhope23	42	family	64	God	46
10	God	38	country	63	Family	45
11	family	36	great	56	People	45
12	birthday	36	team	53	Dear	42

13	country	35	party	51	Arrive	40
14	nation	31	rally	48	Support	39
15	almighty	30	good	40	governance	38
16	Governor	29	#recovernigeria	40	government	35
17	Nigerian	26	peace	40	development	35
18	Lagos	26	done	38	Party	34
19	President	26	meeting	32	Bless	32
20	Together	25	campaign	32	Youths	32
21	Nigerians	25	years	32	Great	31
22	congratulate	24	visit	30	Labour	31
23	Wish	23	Pray	27	Women	30
24	Health	23	New	27	Grateful	30
25	government	22	yesterday	27	Remain	29
26	development	21	united	14	Love	28
27	Senator	19	Allah	25	future	29
28	Continue	19	stakeholders	25	Datti	27
29	Leadership	19	Nigerians	25	President	27
30	Campaign	19	behalf	25	Call	27
31	Love	19	support	24	Visit	25
32	Great	19	wish	24	Campaign	25
33	Peace	19	unity	24	Warm	24
34	National	19	happy	24	Baba-Ahmed	24
35	Service	18	opportunity	24	commitment	24
36	Pray	18	Join	24	Obedient	23
37	Allah	18	birthday	23	Power	23
38	Friends	18	courtesy	22	Meeting	23
39	Life	18	security	22	Interest	22
40	APC	17	earlier	22	Africa	22
41	leader	17	national	22	Continue	22
42	party	17	sector	22	United	21
43	Shettima	16	leaders	22	Security	21
44	chief	15	government	21	Rally	21
45	grant	15	Met	21	Salute	21
46	presidential	15	work	21	Team	20
47	build	14	Love	21	Obidients	20
48	work	14	governor	21	Need	20
49	new	14	continue	21	Lives	20
50	friend	14	nation	20	Peace	20
51	support	14	Nigerian	20	Brother	20
52	women	13	Congratulations	19	Abuja	20

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53	bless	13	election	19	Forward	19
54	best	13	almighty	19	Nigeria’s	19
55	Buhari	13	ensure	19	Time	19
56	Muhammadu	13	development	19	Happy	19
57	occasion	12	youth	19	Anambra	19
58	home	12	future	19	World	19
59	#renewedhope	12	mission	19	Journey	18
60	bishop	12	education	18	Economy	18
61	commitment	12	share	18	Students	18
62	public	12	economic	18	Yusuf	18
63	progressive	12	education	18	Wish	18
64	governance	12	presidential	17	Lagos	18
65	passing	12	future	17	Honour	18
66	condolences	11	health	17	Celebrate	18
67	Rejoice	10	Alhaji	17	Thanks	18
68	Policies	10	general	17	Mission	18
69	Unity	10	youth	17	Political	17
70	Associates	10	emir	17	Elections	17
71	Democracy	10	council	17	School	17
72	Celebrate	10	candidate	17	Hope	17
73	ambassador	10	election	17	Public	17
74	Ekiti	10	commitment	16	productive	17
75	Future	10	honour	16	Awesome	17
76	Grace	10	condolences	16	Federal	16
77	#renewedhope2023	10	economy	16	Congratulations	16
78	Greater	10	pleasure	15	Education	16
79	Important	10	together	15	Insecurity	16
80	Leaders	10	members	15	Reception	16
81	Roll	9	elections	15	Event	16
82	Members	9	success	14	production	16
83	Time	9	young	14	Prayers	16
84	Business	9	service	14	Pleasure	16
85	Take	9	palace	14	Leaders	16
86	Alhaji	9	dear	14	Policy	15
87	Benefit	9	industry	13	congratulate	15
88	Across	9	private	13	conference	15
89	United	9	excited	13	Children	15
90	Tinubu	9	amazing	13	presidential	15
91	rest	9	Life	13	Hall	15
92	brother	9	arrived	13	Interactive	14

93	comfort	9	God	13	Remains	14
95	justice	9	reception	13	Council	14
96	security	9	Lagos	13	Session	14
97	young	8	friends	13	Global	14
98	wisdom	8	@officialpdpnig	13	movement	14
99	hard	8	house	12	Protect	14
100	welcome	8	rebuild	12	Views	14

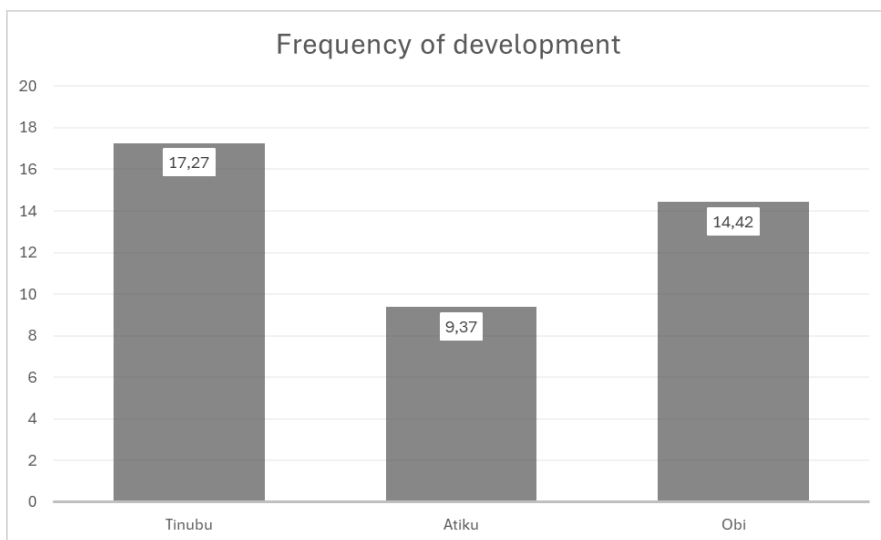
The qualitative aspect involved identifying words and patterns of words usage to reveal the strategies utilised by the political actors to construct social realities and public opinion around the issues identified. The identified words embody discourse issues; they are salient words which reflect broader societal concerns. Therefore, they were selected as reference of discourse issues, which inevitably shape their political narratives and societal attitudes. From Tinubu’s corpus, government (22), development (21), and leadership (19) are the tokens which reference discourse issues. From Atiku’s corpus, the tokens embodying discourse issues are leaders (22), government (21), development (20) mission (19), education (18), and economic (18). In Obi’s corpus, leadership (48), government/governance (38), development (35), economy (25), issues (23) and security (21) relate to discourse issues. The words identified can be grouped into three broad categories of development, leadership and economy. This led to the identification of the discourse issues: developmental stagnation, ineffective leadership, and poor socio-economic situation.

Developmental stagnation

Nigeria has been faced with developmental issues over the years: unemployment, high poverty rates, low health care are just some challenges faced by the country (Schimmelpfennig & Ebeke, 2025). There are infrastructural problems such as poor electricity, insecurity and slow market integration. The northern part of the country, and some other areas, are faced with insecurity and extreme weather situations which cause turbulence in the supply of food to the rest of the nation. In February 2025, the International Monetary Fund documented a drop in the average income per capita in Nigeria to \$835 from \$877 in 2024 (Alli, 2025). Thus, accelerated development and improved infrastructure is a concern for Nigeria and its leaders.

A concordance analysis of “development” revealed each presidential candidate’s disposition and stance on development. It appeared 21 times in Tinubu’s corpus, 20 times in Atiku’s corpus and 35 times in Obi’s corpus. Since, each corpus had a

different size, it was necessary to normalise the frequency ranking per ten thousand words, excluding the adjective “developmental”, which is a lemmatised form of development. This gave the values of 17.27 per 10 000 words in Tinubu’s corpus, 9.37 per 10 000 words in Atiku’s, and 14.42 per 10 000 words in Obi’s corpus



Distribution of development across the three corpora (normalised per 10 000 words)

The frequent occurrence of development suggests that it is a pertinent theme in Nigeria’s socio-political landscape. The figure above shows that Tinubu used “development” more than Obi and Atiku. However, his use of development is either as attribute to others accomplishment or to convey his future plans.

Excerpt 1 (Tinubu)

Sep 4, 2022

Today, I join family, friends and associates of Mr. Boss Mustapha, a distinguished lawyer, politician and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, in congratulating him on turning 66...Boss Mustapha is a democrat and patriot who is irrevocably committed to not only the growth and **development** of Nigeria but also the good of the country.... He has impressive work ethics. His leadership qualities and capacity to work relentlessly for worthy causes is very high indeed.

In Excerpt 1 above, development as a lexical item is used as an already existing situation in Nigeria, closely collocating with growth. It is a birthday congratulatory message which is also strategically used to emphasize the fluidity of growth and development in the country. The addition of the correlative conjunction “but also” presupposes his belief that the pair, “growth and development” is just one pair for achieving the “good” of the country. He adds that Mustapha has “impressive work ethics” and “leadership” qualities, which are equally vital to the good of the country. The implication is that these are also qualities which he admires, and he embodies as well, especially since he has the ability to recognise it in another person. All instances of “development” have positive connotations, except one which he uses for negative-other representation.

Excerpt 2 (Tinubu)

Sep 13, 2022

Leadership and National development are twin engines. You need good leadership to conceive dynamic policies that will drive development at all levels. It is not rocket science, yet we pretend that our path to national development will be different from that of other countries who paid the price for good leadership, dynamic and result-oriented policies.

In the excerpt above, Tinubu links leadership with development as being essential. However, the metaphor “it is not rocket science” implies that the concept of combining leadership and national development is not common to his opponents. This negatively presents his opponents as unintelligent, unlike he who is skilled in combining both. The exclusive pronoun, “we”, further emphasises that he is talking about a group which he is not a member of. The verb “pretend” is a euphemism which makes his tone more diplomatic, presenting his opponents’ disposition as an intentional denial rather than ignorance. In this, Tinubu implies that good leadership and policies are prerequisites to national development. Since, his opponents “pretend” to not acknowledge this, they are incapable of leading Nigeria to development. The noun phrase “our path to national development” indicates that he sees development as a spectrum, similar to the fluidity mentioned in Excerpt 1, and Nigeria is on that spectrum. Additionally, the metaphor “paid the price” presupposes that he is adept in the sacrificial pathway of “good leadership, dynamic and result-oriented policies” which other countries have used to achieve development.

Leadership” and “development”, in the subject categories, represent Tinubu himself. He is an epitome of the leadership and development that the people want to see. His reference of “you” is directly to the electorate and his followers. The metaphor

“twin engines” is used to structurally present development without leadership as impossible; therefore, claiming that his leadership is important for development. Power is wielded by Tinubu over his opponents in this excerpt; he uses this to frame the negative other, “we”, as irresponsible. Tinubu positions himself as an “elitist powerhouse” and a rational reformer, thereby shaping public cognition of developmental failure as a leadership problem rather than a systemic complexity.

Excerpt 3 (Atiku)

Sept 28, 2022

I'm honoured to have been a part of the launch of the #AtikuBooks that captures the story of my life, my landmark judgements that have deepened democracy and constitutionalism in Nigeria and my thoughts on restructuring as a pathway to unity and development.

Atiku also deploys a similar pattern in the use of development; first in congratulating others on their efforts for the nation, and in speaking about his plans for the country. In Excerpt 3, Atiku speaks about the launch of his autobiography. The noun phrase “my landmark judgements” implies that he single-handedly played a crucial role in achieving “democracy and constitutionalism”. This authority is backed by his known background as former Vice President of Nigeria (1999 to 2007). The noun “judgements” adds credibility to his thoughts, stressing that there are not just mental processes but active plans, which would achieve development and unity. The collocation of unity and development shows that he sees unity as pertinent for development.

However, unlike Tinubu, his corpus also highlights the government failures in achieving development. This is a way of deriding the ruling administration led by President Muhammadu Buhari, a member of APC. Thus, while talking about his plans to lead Nigeria to development, he highlights the present administration's inability to do so.

Excerpt 4 (Atiku)

Jan 16, 2023

Our government will tackle the deficit in infrastructure financing and fast-track infrastructure development in the country. #AtikuAtNESG

In Excerpt 4, Atiku utilises the pronominal *our*, in “our government”, inclusively to refer to a government with him and his supporters. This serves two functions: the first function incorporates Atiku and his supporters; the second function in-

corporates Atiku and PDP. The second function points closely to his intention, as he adds that his government will tackle “the deficit”. So, “our government” implies Atiku’s administration. The noun “deficit” is a euphemism for the failure of the government and the present administration, especially in their slow approach to “infrastructure development”. Atiku implies that the present administration has not addressed development in the country, leading to developmental stagnation, which the administration is incapable of solving, and which his presidency has the machinery to solve. The implication is that his presidency will succeed where Buhari’s administration has failed in achieving development.

Excerpt 5 (Obi)

Aug 14, 2022

To the millions of young people in our country who have continued to advance the cause of our #OBIdient Movement, I say Thank you....United together, we will take back our country from bad governance, and institute true and diligent leadership and sustainable development. It is our journey, and we will never labour in vain. Nigeria’s Democracy must survive.

#PeterObi

Obi also follows the pattern of Atiku; the keyword, “development” is used in three instances: first, as an attribute to others, highlighting their contributions to the nation’s growth; second, highlighting his future plans for the country’s development; and, third criticising the present administration’s failures. In excerpt 5, Obi achieves consensus by presenting his support from young people, through his reference to “millions of young people” who support the movement to crowning him as president. He further achieves this by using the inclusive “we”, which captures him and his youth supporters. The statement shows that he asserts that the current administration has bad governance, and that he is a formidable replacement with a track record of “diligent leadership and sustainable development”. In other tweets he shares, he strategically aligns his goals with the Sustainable Development Goals, for them to have a global appeal. Thus, “sustainable development” is strategic, meant to improve the outlook of his plans, and to place the development as one that has been adopted globally. His critique of the government with the expression “bad governance” indicates that his government will be better.

Additionally, the verb “institute” suggests establishing what is not available. Thus, Obi implies that diligent leadership and sustainable development are missing in the nation. He employs the metaphor “our journey” to make his candidacy

seem like a divine movement. Using the inclusive pronoun “we”, he stresses that his supporters are solidly behind him and that their efforts will not be in vain. This can also be interpreted as a reference to his campaign team and party members, since he uses labour as a pun to also refer to his party. Therefore, his party’s efforts will not be in vain. In the tweets, he asserts that he is a beacon of diligent leadership, sustainable development and democracy.

Obi wields discursive power by presenting “governance” as bad. The ruling elite which supposedly should hold power have been discursively delegitimised. Peter Obi’s statement is directed to the Nigerian youth. Nigeria is known for its strong workforce and its populous youth. However, many of the youth are still living in poverty and unemployment. This tweet contributes to the broader discussion of the socio-political context of Nigeria. Obi draws on a shared mental model, acknowledging that the Nigerian youth recognise the systemic governance failure. Obi’s symbolic power is strategically redistributed by transferring the symbolic authority to the dominated group, the Nigerian youth. Furthermore, his use of the inclusive “our” dissolves the hierarchical distance between him and dominated group.

The primary aim of the tweet is political mobilisation. The imperative and declarative structures in the tweet, “we will take back our country” and “Nigeria’s Democracy must survive”, are call to action. They do not only describe a political situation but also define his mission. The modal verb “must” encodes moral obligations by moving the focus from a political preference to an urgent need. This is what van Dijk refers to as self-evidentiality, the political actor’s practice of presenting political goals as self-evidently correct and morally non-negotiable.

Excerpt 6 (Obi)

Nov 25, 2022

The rural part of Nigeria is trapped in abject poverty; we are leaving our children, miserable and uneducated. 27 percent of school-age children are out of school and poor, 29 percent of all school-aged children are not attending school, and 94 percent out of school children are very poor.

The multidimensional Poverty Index is the best mirror of failure of governance in the country, In spite of earning trillions in oil revenue, in spite of borrowing trillion naira for infrastructure development, almost half of Nigerians are poor and close to two-third of Nigerians do not have access to basic sanitation, access to basic education, lack basic nutrition and do not visit hospitals. It is terrible disgrace and disservice to a country with our tremendous natural and human

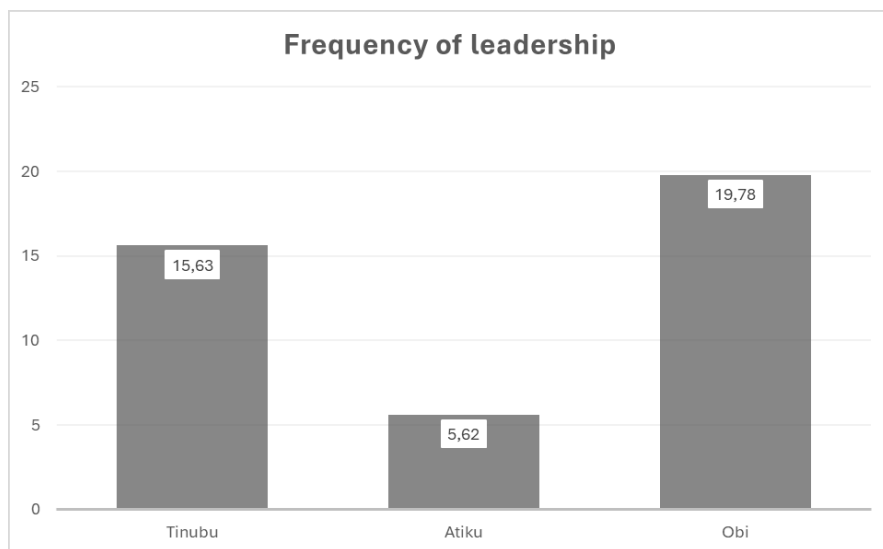
resource. The political economy of this report should be made clear to every Nigerian voter because what it simply means is that government is not working.

Obi deploys evidentiality by highlighting the failure of the government despite borrowing huge sums of money. The Multidimensional Poverty Index is a measure specifically used by World Bank with inputs from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford University. It aims to capture the picture of poverty by identifying the struggle of households in a country using the dimensions of financial poverty, poor education and lack of basic infrastructure. The first paragraph of these tweets were culled from the reports from UNDP with the support of National Bureau of Statistics. He uses the superlative form “best” to qualify the report of the Multidimensional Poverty Index; this is also a legitimisation strategy to validate his assertions. He strategically begins with the plights of the children of the nation. This contradicts the popular quote, “children are the future”; however, with these “future” mostly out school, he presents a picture of a bleak future for Nigeria. His moves on to directly blame the governance of the country on the present situation of the country. He juxtaposes “earning trillions” and “borrowing trillions” to emphasize the paradox of this situation, implying that the government is inept in handling its earnings from oil revenue, borrowing money that does not meet the need of two-thirds of Nigerians. He highlights the failed development by placing “infrastructure development” beside “not have access to basic sanitation and basic education, lack basic nutrition, and do not visit hospital”. This further presents the infrastructural development of the government as inefficient. The final statement in the excerpt claims that the government is a “terrible disgrace” and is not working as it should.

Each of the presidential candidate mentions “development” but for different purposes. Both Obi and Atiku constantly accentuate developmental stagnation as a political strategy to highlight the inability of the administration in power to drive growth and development. While Atiku handles his attack subtly, focusing more on elevating his ability to counter the ineptitude of the government, Obi relies on verbosity and directly derides the government. Tinubu subtly points out the need for development, threading carefully to not deride the administration in power. Rather, his counterattacks are to portray his opponents as not being as experienced as he is to fulfil their promises of accelerating development.

4.1.2 Ineffective leadership

Nigeria faces a crucial challenge in improving its leadership system. The government has been blamed for being unable to provide accountability and capacity in moving the country towards economic progress and development (Anekwe, 2020). The issues of poverty, corruption, insecurity, and poor governance are mostly linked to the shortcomings of the leadership system in the country. The electorate bear the effects of this, and every election is an opportunity to anticipate a better leader. A concordance analysis on the keyword “leadership” reveals each presidential candidate’s opinion. “Leadership” has the lemma of “leader” and “leaders”. “Leadership” was chosen because the candidates frequently expressed the capacity and quality of leading, unlike the lemma leader, which was mostly used as direct quality of person, mostly other than they. Leadership occurs 19 times in the Tinubu’s tweets, 12 times in Atiku’s tweets, and 48 times in Obi’s tweets. The normalised frequency per ten thousand words gave 15.63 per 10 000 tokens in Tinubu’s corpus, 5.62 per 10 000 tokens in Tinubu’s corpus, and 19.78 per 10 000 tokens in Obi’s corpus.



Distribution of leadership across the three corpora (normalised per 10 000 words)

The frequency of occurrence of the noun “leadership” proves that it is a discourse issue worthy of investigation. Fig 4.5 shows that Obi has the highest use

of the token, while Atiku has the least. While Atiku and Obi highlight the failed leadership of Buhari's administration, Tinubu capitalizes on defining himself as a true leader and challenges his opponents to reach his level of experience. In Excerpt 2, he declares that the country needs "good leadership"; the implication is that he is the good leader that will drive development. His reference to his opponents is indirectly weaved into the statement, "yet we pretend that ...result-oriented policies" (Excerpt 2). This presupposes that his opponents claim to be oblivious of what he considers the obvious pathway to progress.

Excerpt 7 (Tinubu)

Jul 20, 2022

"This is where politics must end and leadership must begin. True Leadership is not grounded in religious pandering, populism or sentiment. To forge ahead as a nation toward development and prosperity, we must, instead, break the shackles of old thinking."

#BAT23

The linking of national development and leadership continues in Excerpt 7. He uses the technique of apparent denial, that he is not only concerned about politics but also about true leadership. It is also a disclaimer that he is not centred on populism and sentiments, and he accommodates every group of people as a leader should. Like in Excerpt 2, development is described as a pathway, with the infinitive phrase, "to forge ahead" and the preposition phrase "toward development". The expression "instead" is counterfactual, presenting his leadership style as distinct from that being proposed by his opponents. The addition of the noun phrase "shackles of old thinking" positions him as progressive and forward-thinking.

Atiku maintains the pattern of positioning himself as bearing the required leadership qualities; he subtly expresses his ability to succeed in leadership better than the previous administration. The n-grams (multiword expressions) in Atiku's corpus related to leadership include "business leadership" and "people-oriented leadership". This use shows that these are the kinds of leadership he wishes to be recognised with, because they have positive attributes. Other references to leadership are negatively used.

Excerpt 8 (Atiku)

Aug 12, 2022

I just arrived at the PDP Youth Wing event commemorating International Youth Day 2022.

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One thing is critical, our nation's youth have never, at any point, lacked innovative ideas and unique energy for breakthroughs. What's been missing is the necessary governmental leadership that will throw up opportunities to allow for full expression.

There's no telling that our current situation has drastically diminished the possibilities that should be available to young people to harness their potential. But hope beckons...

ATIKU

As Atiku commemorates International Youth Day in Excerpt 8, he applauds the youth for their innovative ideas and unique energy. By qualifying the “lack of support” with critical, he presents it as a serious situation worthy of urgent attention and solution. He emphasizes the absence of the necessary governmental leadership which can critically handle the situation and allow the youth to meet their full potential. He intentionally utilises the expression “throw up” to indicate that these opportunities are available but have been withheld. He blames the government for not having the capacity to harness the youth’s “innovative ideas” and “unique energy”. The absence of effective governmental leadership is referred to as “current situation”, which he further presents as “drastically diminishing the possibilities of young people”. Atiku strategically uses the “negative-other representation” by presenting the government leadership approach as a limiting factor to the youth’s development. He then engages the positive-self representation by stating that “hope beckons”, referring to himself and his prospective presidential leadership as the hope that can counter the “situation” presented by the ruling administration.

Excerpt 9 (Atiku)

Aug 13, 2022

Our exponential ability has repeatedly proved itself, and it is my responsibility to ensure that the skills and talents of our youth are not left or forced into latency due to leadership oversight at the top.

My priority is to ensure that no one is left behind. United as one, we will get it done. -AA #IYD2022

Excerpt 9 also shows Atiku utilising the positive-self and negative-other representation techniques. He asserts that it is his responsibility to harness the skills of the youth, confidently positioning himself as a better president and positioning the current president as having “leadership oversight” – a euphemistic rendition

of “leadership failure”. He emphasizes that his “priority” is to ensure that even the youth are included, which heightens the distinction between him and the leaders at the top who have treated youth progress as an “oversight”.

Obi, like Atiku, frequently points out the leadership failure of the government and ruling administration while positioning himself as a better leader who can correct ineffective leadership. The n-gram “bad leadership” appears five times in his corpus: this reveals that he directly criticizes the government for the inability to lead the nation to greatness. Other n-grams include “leadership failure” (3), “transformative leadership” (2), “exemplary leadership (2), people-oriented leadership (2). The n-grams reveal that he balances issues, pointing out areas of ineffective leadership by the existing administration as well as positioning himself as a better leader. However, more effort goes into criticising the leadership of the ruling administration.

Excerpt 10 (Obi)

Nov 13, 2022

Nigeria is badly in need of a reformative leadership. Bad leadership has hurt us deeply, damaged our psyche and diminished our potentials and dreams

#PeterObi NG

The macrostructure of the tweet in Excerpt 10 is a call for political reform in leadership. Obi criticises bad leadership using negative-other representation and positions himself as a good and “reformative leader” through positive-self representation. The lexical item, “badly in need” presupposes a sense of urgency. This is complemented by the verbs, “hurt”, “damaged” and “diminished”. These emotionally charged words give Nigeria a victim status, while he positions himself as the rescuer who bears the “reformative leadership” that can save the country. He directly criticizes the ruling administration, labelling it as “bad” and “damaging”. The inclusive pronoun “us” positions him as part of the victimization, thus, emphasizing his in-group identity with the citizens. `

Excerpt 11 (Obi)

Oct 1, 2022

Fellow Nigerians, as our dear country marks her 62nd Independence anniversary, I bring you fraternal greetings.

Even as we remain thankful, prayerful and hopeful for a brighter future; we are mindful that many Nigerians are resigned, frustrated and tired of the many

years of leadership failure. Many of our compatriots remain in captivity held by bandits; millions are living in IDP camps as their homes are now part of ungoverned spaces. Many Nigerian children go to bed hungry.

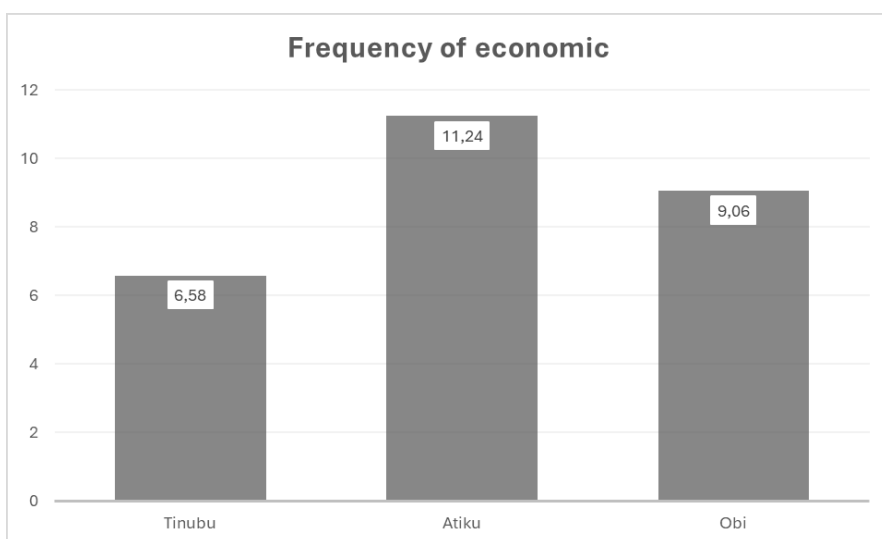
In his commemoration of Nigeria’s independence in Excerpt 11, Obi takes the opportunity to criticise the leaders and places the pains of the country under “leadership failure”. The triadic structure consisting of the adjectives “thankful, prayerful and hopeful” directly contrasts with the triadic structure of “resigned, frustrated and tired” to heighten the exhaustion and despondency of the people – all caused by ineffective leadership. The inclusive pronoun “our” in the expression “our compatriot” implies that, although those held in captivity may be from different tribes, they form part of “one Nigeria”. Therefore, everyone is equally affected. He further heightens this by foregrounding the state’s failure through presenting the “IDP camps” and “ungoverned spaces”. The adjective “ungoverned” highlights the absence of any form of leadership. He evokes emotion through the imagery of “many Nigerian children go to bed hungry”. Like in Excerpt 6, he employs the number game of “millions” and “many” to validate his depiction of the critical state of Nigeria. He presupposes that this situation is a shared knowledge, and the post serves as a reminder to keep the voters “mindful” of the poor leadership of the country.

The issue of ineffective leadership is prevalent in the corpus of the selected presidential candidates. Each candidate aims to position himself as a better leader than the opponent, and also acknowledges the leadership of others in their congratulatory posts. Tinubu does not criticize the ruling administration, as that could affect his credibility as well. He does, however, make statements which questions the leadership capacity of his opponents. Atiku and Obi centre their attacks on the ruling administration. This is because they are aware that Tinubu belongs to the ruling party, and an attack on the credibility of the ruling administration is an attack on him as well. However, when Obi points out “leadership failure”, it is possible that Atiku is not excluded from his criticism, since he was a former Vice President of Nigeria. Both Atiku and Obi tie the struggles of the country to poor leadership and position themselves as leaders and saviours of the people.

Poor socio-economic situation

Nigeria has been faced with high poverty and inflation. According to World Bank (2023), the inflation rate of 30% has been the highest figure in thirty years. A significant portion of the population lack necessities like food and healthcare. The National Bureau of Statistics (2024) recorded a 282 per cent rise in the price

of food in 2023. Mismanagement of funds, corruption and overreliance on crude oil are part of the reasons for the complex economic challenges. To analyse the presidential candidate’s linguistic disposition of the poor socio-economic situation, the token “economic” was chosen over the lemma “economy” for a concordance analysis. This was because “economic” had more instances of socio-economic crisis than the keyword “economy”. The token “economic” appeared 8 times in Tinubu’s corpus, 24 times in Atiku’s corpus, and 22 times in Obi’s corpus, with normalised frequencies per 10 000 words yielding 6.58, 11.24 and 9.06, respectively.



Distribution of “economic” across the three corpora (normalised per 10 000 words)

In the figure above, it can be seen that Atiku has the highest reference of economic, since a good part of his propaganda revolved around restructuring the socio-economic policies of the country. Each president references the need for economic improvement.

Excerpt 12 (Tinubu)

Nov 24, 2022

Today in Ebonyi, “the Salt of our Nation”, I reiterated my belief in the entrepreneurial spirit that is the hallmark of the South East. I have a record of

encouraging Igbo businesses and investments in Lagos and will even do more if I become president.

There can be no discrimination against any section of our country if we are to be a great nation. Most important, I intend to encourage policies to aid commerce and support South East states to reach their full potential - removing hindrances to trade, improving economic access, and working with our businessmen and women to make the South East the Taiwan of Africa with further investments in people, infrastructure, transportation, agriculture, and mineral resources.

In Excerpt 12, Tinubu’s post very enthusiastically presents his plans for the economy to thrive. He strategically presents a situation of collaboration with the Easterners in Nigeria, who are known for their astuteness in business. Through evidentiality, he reminds his followers of his contributions to Igbo businesses. This strategy presents him as being experienced in moving the economy forward. Lexical items such as “encourage”, “improving” and “further” echo continuity of the existing progress. Hence, he is simply improving what has been ongoing. He utilizes the semantic rhetoric by metaphorically referring to the southeastern part of Nigeria as the “Taiwan of Africa”. Taiwan is popularly known for its global domination of the business of electronics and technological innovation.

The post serves two purposes. The first purpose is promise: Tinubu aims to show commitment to improving ease of business for the Igbo. The apparent empathy technique is utilised when he declares that “there can be no discrimination against any sector of our country”. The inclusive pronoun “our” shows that he is one of them. The lexical items “no discrimination” reinstates his willingness to include them and consider them especially in commerce-related decisions. The second purpose is recognition: Tinubu lists areas “people, infrastructure, transportation, agriculture, and mineral resources”, implying that he is aware of the contributions of the south-eastern states. However, he notes that there is still room for improvement, hence the need to “encourage” and “remove hindrances” in their trade.

Excerpt 13 (Tinubu)

Nov 26, 2022

I am so happy to be home!

Lagos is more than the centre of excellence. It is home to excellent people with excellent aspirations for their individual and our collective well-being....What we did for Lagos, we must now do for our beloved nation. I promise this country an economic rebirth like the one we delivered here.

In excerpt 13, Tinubu achieves legitimisation and positive self-representation with his declaration of “what we did for Lagos”. He relies on his followers’ memory of his track record of a successful economy. He emphasizes this in-group identity in the declarative sentence “I am so happy to be home” and the noun phrase “our beloved nation”, highlighting a shared identity with his followers. His appraisal of Lagos as the centre of excellence gives him the leverage; he promises that Nigeria would be like Lagos soon. The repetition of the word “excellence” helps to reinstate his emotional appeal, thereby transferring his quality of excellence to his plans for Nigeria. The comparative adverbial “more than” is a hyperbolic dramatization to enhance the perception of Lagos. The metaphor “economic rebirth” highlights renewal and transformation. The transitive verb “promise” gives a stronger binding to his words, positioning him as capable of the task.

Excerpt 14 (Atiku)

Feb 13, 2023

I told the people that more than any other candidate in this election, I know better how important the Calabar port will open up the Eastern business corridor. I know because I am an industrialist.

I also mentioned to them the benefits that will come with a major policy thrust of bringing government and governance closer to the people through restructuring. To Recover Nigeria, we must restructure and make the people the centrepiece of socio-economic investments.

I am happy that our message was well taken by Cross Riverians. As ONE, we shall get it done. -AA #RecoverCrossRiverWithPDP

In Excerpt 14, Atiku engages in positive self-representation by positioning himself as more knowledgeable than other candidates. The statement, “I know better... because I am an industrialist” places him in a more knowledgeable position and in a place of political authority. He creates ideological polarisation by presenting his opponents as less informed. That he has to “mention these benefits” as though they were new information is a further indictment on the government and portrays its actions as keeping the people far away from economic prospects. “Benefits”, “major policy thrust” and “restructuring” are presented as absent necessities in the country; to “make the people the centrepiece” implies that his solution of decentralization can fix the poor economic situation.

Excerpt 15 (Atiku)

Jan 16, 2023

I'm sure you still remember the good old days of rapid economic growth with stable interest and exchange rates, low inflation, low unemployment rates and low poverty headcount. We paid off nearly all of our foreign debt which was crippling the country. #AtikuAtNESG

Atiku's post in Excerpt 15 serves double function through polarisation. The first is to positively represent himself and his in-group, PDP, and the time he served as vice president of the country. He activates a positive collective memory by aligning himself with a time of “economic growth”. The emotionally-charged expression “good old days” adds a sense of nostalgia to facilitate the memory of a successful leadership role. The presupposition is that there was a time of good economy (which he assumes that his followers are aware of), pointing to the fact that Atiku participated in making the economy grow. He lexically builds up the narrative with economic indicators which give quantitative legitimisation to his claims: “rapid economic growth”, “stable interest” “low inflation” and “low poverty headcount”. This heightens the credibility of his claim and projects his expertise in economics. The second function is to negatively represent the out-group, the ruling administration and APC. The expression “good old days” presents a contrary ironic situation implying that the country faces the total opposite of the situation presented as “good old days”.

Excerpt 16 (Obi)

Nov 25, 2022

It is terrible disgrace and disservice to a country with our tremendous natural and human resource. The political economy of this report should be made clear to every Nigerian voter because what it simply means is that government is not working.

It means that the state is working for the few, and not for all the citizens of the country. It means that the future is terrible for every Nigerian - young or old, rich or poor.

The trending of multidimensional poverty if not arrested immediately will damage state capacity and effectiveness and therefore disarray economic and social policies that will reverse the trend in the future.

If we combine atrocious fiscal decline with grand and pervasive corruption and the level of incompetence of public leadership to such generalized poverty, we will end up a completely collapsed state, thrown back to state of nature.

Unless the situation is arrested, with our population estimated to reach 400 million in the next 28 years, Nigeria would become a security risk to the entire Sub-Saharan Africa.

This report tells a story of the failure of economic policy of government. The failure of government to invest in basic social and human infrastructure and the lack of commitment to the wellbeing of ordinary Nigerians, especially those in the rural communities is heart-breaking.

How on earth is it that 63 percent of Nigerians do not have access to the most basic sanitation and nutrition?

The tweet in Excerpt 16 is a negative representation and criticism of the government, which he clearly refers to as “not working”. The report allows him to position the government as a sector of shame through the nouns “disgrace” and “disservice”. The excerpt is filled with negative lexical items which directly blame the government for the poor socio-economic situation: “terrible disgrace” “disservice”, “not working”, “failure” and “incompetence”. The lexical items “future” and “failure” are repeated to emphasize how bleak the future economy would be if the ruling party remains in government. This is further heightened by the nominals “multidimensional poverty” and “disarray economic and social policies”, showing that the government is to blame for the decline in the socio-economic situation of the country. The noun, “poverty”, which he classifies as the cause of a future security risk to the entire Africa, is used twice. The report stands as evidence of his projections of an economic downturn, and he utilizes the number game “400 million”, “28 years” and “63 percent” to add credibility to his statement. The use of emotional expressions, “heartbreaking”, “how on earth” is to make the situation more critical. By highlighting that the case is a story of a failed economic policy, he reduces the possibility of a remedial action in the hands of the same government. This adds to his credibility that, as he deftly points out the problem, he can as well solve them.

Excerpt 17 (Obi)

Jul 21, 2022

Reports that the national power grid has collapsed for the 6th time in 7 months is alarming. Once again, many Nigerians have been left grope around in darkness without electricity.

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Such negative parameters are not only benchmarks for governance failure but a compelling catalyst for leadership change.

Moreover, in a nation where many go to bed hungry, and national bakers going on strike is indicative of the high-stress level in both the productive realm of our economy and quality of life.

Also, for bread, one of the basic and affordable daily sustenance of the average Nigerian to become unavailable translates to a national crisis.

Government must live up to its statutory responsibilities to avert socio-economic incidents that induce extreme shock and stress on the national population.

#PeterObi NG

Excerpt 17 begins with “reports” to authenticate his statements, and uses the number game of “6th time” and in “7 months”. The expression “Nigerians have been left to grope in darkness” is structured to elevate the desolate situation. In the same way as in Excerpt 17, he blames the government for the poor socio-economic situation, and clearly states that there is a need for change in leadership which is where he comes in, as the “leadership change” needed. He presents a counterfactual situation of “bread” becoming unavailable to indicate that the simplest meal has become expensive to the average Nigeria. This is a shared knowledge between him and Nigerians living in Nigeria. However, by stating it, he not only reopens the present wounds of Nigerians but also makes the situation critical for those in diaspora. He concludes with a call to action, requesting the government to rise up to its responsibilities. The nominals “extreme shock” and “stress” are aimed to heightening the impact of the government’s failure.

Discussion and Conclusion

As seen in the posts of the selected political candidates, there were clear efforts to make themselves distinct yet measure to the competitiveness in getting the public’s attention. The 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election witnessed a new wave of political branding: one more attuned to recognising the struggles of the people. Nigeria, as at 2023, hit its lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and still faced issues with high poverty and insecurity rates (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Development, leadership and economy of the country were key issues which the presidential candidates highlighted. They were patterns identified in the usage of the lexical items “development”, “leadership” and “economics”. The patterns point-

edly identified the candidates' different dispositions to the issues identified. Atiku and Obi highlighted government's failure. These acts of negative campaigning and attack political advertising are popular attributes of campaign discourse (Sunday, 2021; Makulilo, 2024). Politicians refer to their opponents in a way that seeks to discredit them in the public, invariably implying that they are better than them.

This attack discourse appears in the framework of van Dijk's ideological square; the polarisation strategies of positive representations of "us" (in-group) and negative representations of them (out-group). These negative representations legitimize the candidate's own position and qualifications. The constant exploitation of this strategy by Atiku and Obi implies that Tinubu was a strong contender to both of them. While Atiku verbally calls out APC, Obi constantly highlights the failure of the government. Notably, Kadiri, Kehinde & Haroon-Sulyman (2020) highlights the presence of direct and indirect verbal attacks on Twitter by the presidential candidates during the 2019 Nigerian Presidential Election. Atiku and Obi presuppose that the public can infer and pass on the negative qualities of Buhari's administration to Tinubu.

The us/them dynamic is also used as a mobilisation tool to affirm their followers' in-group membership. The hashtag's feature serves as a signature in each post. Hence, even if a tweet is mostly negative, the hashtag's signature mark serves as a reminder of the in-group's membership, and balances out the negative description with a positive representation of their identity. This is in line with Adekunle and Iredia (2023), who claim that there were more positive tweets than negative tweets in the campaign tweets of the selected presidential candidates.

Atiku and Obi emphasise the failure of the government in improving the growth and development of the country. They both position themselves as capable of repairing the instability of the country. Their tweets present ineffective leadership as the reason for the country's setback. While they point out the poor infrastructure in Nigeria, they are quick to label the government as inept. They are aware of the disillusionment faced by the people especially since the poverty level of the country became worse under the ruling administration. This is to discredit Tinubu's capacity, and to prove to the electorate that, if Buhari could not help the economy, Tinubu would not do any better.

Tinubu hardly engages in subtle or conspicuous verbal attacks of his opponents. His goal is to show that he is a better leader. Although he does not totally ignore the existence of these problems. All the presidential candidates highlight the need to improve the economy; however, Tinubu carefully does not deprecate Buhari's administration, but focuses on improving the existing strengths of the nation.

The presidential candidates are also aware that ignoring the existential problems of Nigeria can be misinterpreted as being insensitive to the plight of the people. Showing an intricate understanding of the situation establishes an inclusion tactic which helps them identify with the public, that they are one of them.

This study gives insights on the unique styles and idiolect of the selected presidential candidates: Tinubu's pride and insistence on track records; Atiku's doggedness and wit, and Obi's emotional appeal. This study contributes to existing studies on these political actors and can serve as a reference for further studies on them. It also shows how opponents are discursively deprecated through labelling and strategic linguistic abilities.

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**„VRATIĆEMO SVOJU ZEMLJU IZ LOŠEG UPRAVLJANJA”:
KORPUSNO POTPOMOGNUTA KRITIČKA
ANALIZA DISKURSA PREDIZBORNIH TVITOVA NA
PRESEDNIČKIM IZBORIMA U NIGERIJU 2023. GODINE**

Rezime

Nigerija se suočava sa izazovima u upravljanju državom, ekonomskom razvoju i društvenom napretku, što otežava život mnogim građanima. Mnogi političari koriste ovu situaciju tokom izbornih kampanja. Ovaj rad istražuje predizborne tvitove Bole Ahmeda Tinubua, Atikua Abubakara i Pitera Obija, tri vodeća predsednička kandidata na predsedničkim izborima u Nigeriji 2023. godine, kako bi se otkrile diskurzivne strategije u predstavljanju društ-

venih problema koji opterećuju nigerijsku državu. Prethodna istraživanja političkog diskursa tokom izbora u Nigeriji 2023. godine uglavnom su bila usmerena na strategije mobilizacije, širenje ideologija i ubeđivanje, bez direktnog ispitivanja stavova političkih aktera o društvenim pitanjima. Primenom korpusno potpomognutog pristupa kritičkoj analizi diskursa i van Dajkove ideološke kvadratne sheme, ovaj rad fokusira se na liste učestalosti reči i konkordancijsku analizu kako bi otkrio leksičke obrasce u tvitovima. Diskurzivna pitanja oblikovana oko razvoja, liderstva i ekonomije identifikovana su putem proučavanja leksičkih jedinica. Predsednički kandidati strateški ističu ova pitanja kako bi se predstavili kao sposobni lideri putem polarizacije, naglašavajući svoje prednosti u rešavanju tih problema, ali i nesposobnost svojih protivnika da poboljšaju situaciju. Nalazi pokazuju da su Atiku i Obi imali više negativnih tvitova kojima su kritikovali neefikasnost vlasti u poboljšanju životnog standarda Nigerijaca, dok se Tinubu više fokusirao na predstavljanje sebe kao pouzdanog lidera. Studija zaključuje da su predsednički kandidati koristili pristup „mi” nasuprot „njima” kako bi ispunili očekivanja javnosti i predstavili se kao zabrinuti i odgovorni lideri.

► *Ključne reči:* predizborni tvitovi, predsednički izbori u Nigeriji 2023. godine, korpusno potpomognuta kritička analiza diskursa, diskurzivne strategije.