Discourse on the Social Media in Nigeria

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Abstract

Violence is a universal phenomenon and a serious social problem investigated from different disciplinary dimensions. Scholars have identified several types of violence in the literature, including verbal violence. This study investigates resources of violence in political campaign discourse on the social media in Nigeria. It uses data collected from social media sources on the Internet such as group WhatsApp, Online newspapers and YouTube; WhatsApp posts without sources are confirmed via downloads from the Opera Mini browser. A pragmatics analysis from the cognitive, social and cultural perspective examines the resources for constructing and interpreting violence in the interactional contexts of the discourse. The cognitive reveals the participants, processes, circumstances and logical features; the social reveals the personal identities, relationships and attitudes; and the cultural reveals the norms and values. The principles of salience and adaptability guide the relation of language to context. The conclusion states that violence discourse on the social media is an unhealthy phenomenon for political campaigns in Nigeria because of the damage it causes on the personality of the contestants, social relationships and multi-ethnic integration. A pragmatics analysis has revealed the resources for the expression of violence for social consideration and positive remedial action.

Keywords: verbal violence, political campaign discourse, pragmatic analysis, social media

1. Introduction

Violence is a universal phenomenon and a serious social problem investigated from different disciplinary dimensions. "We all have an interest in understanding violence" (Insight Exchange, p. 1). Types of violence mentioned in the literature include physical, socio-cultural political, psychological and verbal violence. Al-Tamini (2022) defines violence as a set of behaviours aimed at harming oneself or the other in multiple forms such as hitting, quarrelling, destroying or damaging and verbal forms such as threats, instigating sedition, innuendo, stinging joke and everything that leads directly or indirectly to inflicting harm. Violence exists in language because we are compelled to use the form, content and concepts of language prevailing in our culture; and we have neither the capacity nor the choice to escape the power of language. Thus, apart from the existence of language violence in dialogue with the other or with oneself, there is also hidden violence in language. Muji and Wahyu (2017) advocate the need to reduce

symbolic violence, which continues into physical violence, in order to preserve the integrity and harmony of nationhood and maintain self-respect and moral ethics.

Insight Exchange (2021) characterises violence as an interaction and a social exchange. Violence is social and unilateral. It is social in that it occurs in specific interactions comprised of at least two people and unilateral in that it entails actions by one individual against the will and wellbeing of another. Violence is deliberate because the perpetrators of violence anticipate resistance from their victims and take specific steps to suppress and conceal it. Virtually all forms of violence and systems of oppression entail strategies designed specifically for the suppression of overt and covert resistance. Lastly, resistance to violence is ubiquitous, though open defiance is the least form of resistance. Language can be used to conceal violence, obscure and mitigate offenders' responsibility, conceal victims' resistance, and blame and pathologise victims. Alternatively, language can be used to expose violence, clarify offenders' responsibility, elucidate and honour victims' resistance, and contest the blaming and pathologising of victims.

Violence is a serious problem and a topical issue of discussion. A number of works abound on violence of language and language /discourse of violence. The phenomenon of violence apparently characterises political discourse, including election campaign discourse, but fewer works have investigated the occurrences in details.

This study is inter-discursive as it discusses violence discourse in the contexts of social media and political discourses. Without doubt, both contexts enable and foster violence and would, therefore, play significant roles in understanding the resources that characterise violence and the means to control it. Social networks constitute an open digital space for complete freedom of expression that users may abuse in their daily conversations and such an unfettered freedom portends danger in using language as a tool to inflict harm on the other, thus creating social tension. A typical case of sanction of such abuse is the indefinte suspension of Twitter operations in Nigeria in 2021 by the Federal Government "for activities that are capable of undermining Nigeria's corporate existence" (Princewill, 2021).

2. Theoretical Preliminaries
Scholars have investigated political campaign discourse with different interests and from different perspectives (Opeibi, 2006; Omozuwa and Ezejideaku, 2009; Abdulahi-Idiagbon, 2010; Ademilokun and Taiwo, 2013; Oyeleye and Osisanwo, 2013; Akinola 2019; Adegoju and Oyebode, 2015), cited by Oyebode and Adegoju (2017). Some of these studies also utilise the social media as data base, as we intend to do in this work,

but none of them has discussed the topic of violence nor utilised the pragmatics approach. Studies have also been carried out to describe violence discourse. Gorrell, Bakir, Roberts, Greenwood and Bontcheva (2020) present a four-factor framework in understanding which politicians receive abuse in the UK general election of 2019 and why. Neshkovska and Trajkova (2020) analyse rhetorical violence in political discourse and Al-Tamini (2022) attempts a linguistic cognitive study of the language of violence in social media. All of these studies provide a useful literature base for this study by providing relevant contextual information on violence, especially from outside Africa, this study is different from them because it utilises pragmatics tools for analysis and also focuses on the Nigerian political social media context.

The study aims to examine the resources of violence in political campaign discourse on the social media in Nigeria. The objectives are to (a) analyse the cognitive, social and cultural meanings; (b) interpret the meanings expressed and (c) examine the implications of the meanings for political communication. First, the study elucidates language as a tool for constructing violence and the perpetuation of violence in political campaign discourse. Second, it explicates and demonstrates the tools of pragmatic analysis of discourse to, especially, the ever increasing population of graduate students, young researchers and scholars of the Pragmatics Association of Nigeria (PrAN) in the fields of discourse analysis and pragmatics.

The study utilises purposive data collected from social media sources on the Internet such as group WhatsApp, Online newspapers and YouTube. Spoken and written discourse that attack the persons of political opponents are listened to or read, downloaded and transcribed from the media from June 2022 to February 2023, at the heat of political campaigns of parties for the Presidential election scheduled for February 25, 2023.

Fifty posts are collected for this study but three online newspapers posts would suffice for analysis, given the constraints of space, convenience and the need to avoid monotony. One each on Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Mr Peter Obi. The number is representative of the weight of vilification of the contestants. According to Gorell, et al. (2020), the most prominent individuals receive, not only more abuse by volume, but, also, as a percentage of replies. For Tinubu, issues are raised about his health (*Sahara Reporters*, 2022), wealth (Tinubu, 2022) and identity (Iniobong, 2022). Further criticism also trails the "Muslim-Muslim ticket" (Murtala, 2023); that is, his choice of a Muslim as Vice-Presidential Candidate, apart from being a Muslim himself. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar is being tainted of fraud and corruption (*The Guardian*, 2007; *Vanguard* 2020). Mr Peter Obi is accused of breeding terrorists (Opejobi, 2022), financial impropriety (Adebayo, 2021) and lacking integrity and competence.

Of the 18 political parties contesting the Presidential elections in February 2023 (Egobiambu, 2022), the names of four candidates recur in the news as contestants in the election: Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP), Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). We can add a fifth contestant, Mr Omoyele Sowore of the African Action Congress (AAC), whom, apart from contesting, is a social activist and publisher of *Sahara Reporters*, an Online news agency that has heavily criticised his co-contestants.

A pragmatics analysis from the cognitive, social and cultural perspective examines the resources for constructing and interpreting violence in the interactional context of the discourse. In Section 5 below, the model analysis of a text is first presented illustrating the categories of pragmatics analysis. Next, the resources for constructing violence are identified across three texs and presented. In the analysis, the focus is on the utterance produced and received, while the interpretation is done from my viewpoint as analyst.

3. Literature Review
Chilton (2004) discusses three strategies of political discourse as coercion, legitimation and delegitimation and representation and misrepresentation. According to him, coercion is dependent on the utterer′s resources and power. Examples are speech acts backed by legal and physical sanctions such as commands, laws and edicts. Less obvious forms consist of speech roles difficult to evade such as giving answers to questions and responding to requests, among others. Legitimation establishes the the right to be obeyed wheteher by overt statement or by implication The techniques used include arguments about voters wants′, general ideological principles, charismatic leadership projection, boasting about perfoemance and positive self-presentation. In delegitimisation, others, who are foreigners, enemies within, institutional opposition or unofficial opposition, have to be presented negatively through the techniques of ideas of difference and boundaries and speech acts of blaming, accusing and insulting. Representation and misrepresentaion involves the control of information. It may be quatitative or qualitative. Secrecy is a strategy of preventing people from receiving information, while censorship prevents people from giving information. In misrepresentation, information may be given but quantitatively inadequate. Qualitative misrepresentation is simply lying, omissions, verbal evasion and denial. Euphemism can blur or defocus unwanted referents, whether objects or actions.

Narrowing political discourse down to election campaign discourse in Nigeria, Oyebode and Adegoju (2017) present a review of some works on its principles, practices and strategies. Opeibi (2006) observes the emerging trend of direct attacks of

political actors during election campaigns to malign their opponents. According to him, political office seekers have neglected positive and issue-oriented discourse for negative advertisement. Taiwo (2007) identifies political lampooning as one of the major campaign strategies of Nigerian politicians during the 2007 elections. Using morphological and lexico-semantic tools, he identifies short forms, blending, acronyms, metaphor, pun, conversionand allusion that politicians utilise to satirise oppositions parties′ contestants. Omozuwa and Ezejideaku (2009) observe that election campaigns in Nigeria are characterised with propaganda, through attack on party, exaggeration, vagueness and diatribes. They also identify rhetorics in form of promises, religious allusions, repetitions, figurative expressions, coinages and Pidgin English.

Further on discursive strategies in newspaper campaign adverts, Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013) reveals how the creators utilise metaphorisation of party symbols, deployment of rhetorical questions, historical allusions, use of deictic pronouns for inclusion and exclusion. Oyebode and Adegoju (2017) probe into the affective use of language by the Nigerian electorate during election campaigns by interrogating different expressions of subjective opinions made by them on WhatsApp. He avers that the social media have provided the electorate a non-threatening atmosphere for them to intrude into the context of politics, express their attitude, place their judgements and attempt to influence the attitude and behaviour of others. The appraisal resources utilised in the texts provide instances of inscribed and invoked judgements that prompt some value positions. Negative instantiations of effectual meanings and judgement are largely used against one politician/party to expose their failure, condemn, discredit and dislodge them in the election, while positive instantiations of affect, judgement and appreciation to legitimise another politician/party and some of his actions during his earlier tenure of governance.

Describing rhetorical violence in political discourse, using data generated from contemporary high-profile politicians worldwide and their targets, Neshkovska and Trajkova (2020) underscore that violence in form of hate speech has become an integral part of poltical discourse nowadays despite the legislative implemented and the general condemnation it receives. They recognise that the right to free speech encourages many people not just to speak their mind freely but also to direct expressions of hatred towrads an individual or group of individuals on the basis of certain characteristics such as race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin. "Their ultimate goal is to injure, dehumanise, harass, intimidate, debase, degrade and victimise the targetted groups and to forment insensitivity and brutality against them" (p. 99). The authors conclude that almost all politicians in their corpus assume the roles of analysts and judges. Since all of the subjects presented are powerful politicians, their negative comments might instigate actions against the target, either by the politicians themselves or their supporters who are influenced by such negative language. Thus the hate speech gives legitimacy to the actions that follow.

Gorrell, et al. (2020) use a four factor framework – prominence, events, online engagement and personal characteristics – to investigate online hostility levels towards politicians and concerns about the impact of this on democracy. The findings show that abuse is 'spiky'', triggered by external events such as debates or certain tweets. Some tweets may become viral targets for personal abuse. On average, men received more general and political abuse; while women received more sexist abuse. Conservative candidates received more political and general abuse. The authors find out that individuals who had received more abuse across the preceding year have chosen not to stand for re-election.

Lastly, Al-Tamini (2022) does a cognitive linguistic study of language of violence on the social media. He observes that what gives words their power is the belief in their legitimacy, and the authority of those who speak them and produce new words, or reproduce old words in new contexts. According to him (p.348), the roots of violence in the Arabic language lie in the grammatical and literary heritage and the danger of violence in the heritage lies in its sanctification without considerations of the context in which violence appeared and in its reproduction in a modern context as a weapon with which to confront opponents. The violent metaphors that appear in the Arabic language are a direct reflection of the system of cultural perceptions in Arab mindset. He classifies the cognitive dimensions of linguistic violence into three dimensions as follows: language is a material entity made up of weapons (the words); language is a field of conflict, violence and self-defense, and a place where a person punishes himself to relieve his feelings of guilt; and language is an army that uses its tools to besiege opponents. At the end of the research, he recommends proposals for future studies aimed to address the seed of violence in language before it grows and bears its toxic fruit on the ground, by criminalising linguistic violence of all kinds, the most dangerous of which is implicit violence that uses language in constructing mental images that terrify and frighten people; and aimed to replace violent words with peaceful ones.

4. Theoretical Framework

Pragmatics is a discipline of applied linguistics that analyses and interprets meaning in context. For convenience, we shall distinguish three approaches of interpreting meaning in the discipline. The first approach arrives at pragmatic or contextual meaning of language from diverse analytical perspectives such as stylistic analysis, critical stylistics, pragma-stylistics, rhetorical analysis, (critical, multimodal, visual) discourse analysis, critical linguistics, conversation analysis, semiotic analysis, interactional analysis, sociolinguistic analysis, pragma-sociolinguistics and so on as the case may be. Other topics that fall into this category include 'genre(al)', 'visual', 'functional' analysis and many others that have been mentioned earlier in this paper.

The second approach proposes a distinct theory of pragmatics with an internal mechanism for interpreting pragmatic meaning. A very popular example of this is Jacob Mey's Pragmatics Acts theory, where an attempt would be made to interpret the 'pract' of violence from the interactive and textual categories (Mey, 2001). A third approach is the conception of pragmatics as 'a cogntive, social and cultural perspective' of interpreting language in context (Verschueren, 1999). We may distinguish between the approaches here by calling the first approach 'pragmatic meaning' or 'pragmatic analysis' of meaning and the latter two approaches as 'pragmatics analysis'. Teun van Dijk's works straddle the first and last approaches because Critical Discourse Analysis interpret 'pragmatic meaning' or does a 'pragmatic analysis' of meaning, while the socio-cognitive-contextual tools utilised for analysis reflect 'pragmatics analysis' (cf. Van Dijk, 2001).
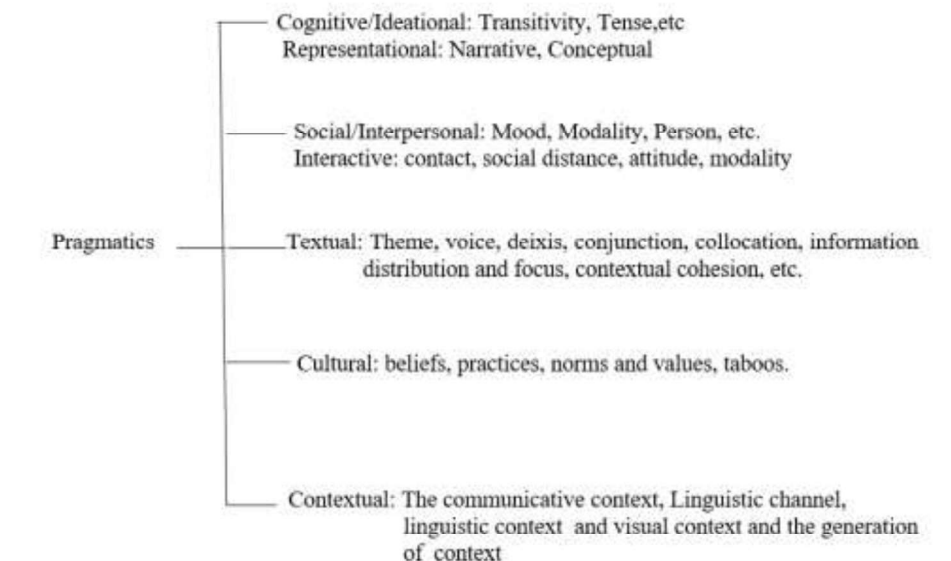
We wish to point out also that pragmatics analysis has to be 'wholistic' to be so called. In other words, all the categories (cognitive, social, cultural, linguistic and contextual) must be accounted for in the discourse. Fragmentation of the analysis is possible, but that would require changes of the title of such analyses. For example, the atomisation of categories of the pragmatic perspective into 'cognitive' 'social', 'cultural', 'linguistic' warrants their different titles other than 'pragmatics' analysis, notwithstanding several other topics in pragmatics such as speech acts, cooperative principle, politeness and impoliteness and intercultural and cross-cultural pragmatics that are covered using different appropriate theories.

In the categories presented below, concepts are derived from Verschueren (1999), Halliday (1973, 2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and integrated into a framework of pragmatics analysis. The categories suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) are included to account for visual features that may be relevant for description a pragmatics analysis.

  a. Context: The communicative context (language users, the mental world, the social world and the physical world); Linguistic channel, linguistic context and (we may add) the visual context; and the generation of context (lines of vision, the manipulation of contexts, contextualisation);

  b. Cognitive/ Ideational: Experiential (Transitivity, tense, modification, minor processes, lexical content; logical (polarity, hypotactic and paractactic complexes); Representational (narrative, conceptual);

  c. Social/ Interpersonal: mood, person, attitude, comment, lexical register, tone and intonation systems);   Interactive: contact, social distance, attitude, modality; Cultural: beliefs, practices, norms and values, taboos.

d. Textual: Theme, voice, deixis, conjunction, collocation, information distribution and focus,   contextual cohesion, intertextuality, sequencing of is renowned for sensational reportage. Sowore has been arrested for fake news peddling Mr Sowore is a publisher of *Sahara Reporters*, an Online news agency that is renowned for sensational reportage. Sowore has been arrested for fake news peddling (*Sahara Reporters*, 2022) and also charged for treasonable felony (*Sahara Reporters,* 2021).

Fig. 1: An Adapted Framework for Pragmatics Analysis

Cognitive/Ideational: Transitivity, Tense,etc
Representational: Narrative, Conceptual

Social/Interpersonal: Mood, Modality, Person, etc.
Interactive: contact, social distance, attitude, modality

Pragmatics ———— Textual: Theme, voice, deixis, conjunction, collocation, information distribution and focus, contextual cohesion, etc.

Cultural: beliefs, practices, norms and values, taboos.

Contextual: The communicative context, Linguistic channel, linguistic context and visual context and the generation of context

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Model Analysis

Context

There are four ingredients of the communicative context thus: language users (utterer and interpreter), the mental world, the social world and the physical world. The utterer of this text is concealed in the publication here under the cover of *Sahara Reporters*, New York. First, the risk of backlash from opposition is thus reduced for the individual and placed on the publishing channel. Second, the location of the media in New York instead of Nigeria is a manipulation of context in terms of distance, a possible calculation to shield the channel from immediate personal, social or institutional 'attack'. The voice of the utterer is clearly that of the online news agency, represented

by the publisher, Mr Omoyele Sowore of the African Action Congress (AAC). The agency of Mr Sowore′s is presented in three capacities, as co-presidential candidate (an opposition of Interpreter 1, the target of the text); a social critic and activist; and a powerful voice of the press, the fourth estate of the realm in Nigeria.

Text 1

Ailing Tinubu Reportedly Suffering From 'Chronic Urinary Incontinence', Urinates On His Body In Public During A Visit To Ijebu Monarch

February 13, 2022 <u>Sahara Reporters, New York</u>

Source: <u>https://saharareporters.com/2022/02/13/ailing-tinubu-reportedly-suffering-chronic-urinary-incontinence-urinates-his-body-public</u>

The politician's security aide was seen constantly holding his nose while looking at the wet area

A video, which has now gone viral on social media shows the National Leader of the All Progressives Congress and former Lagos State governor, Bola Tinubu with suspected pee stains on his cloth during a visit to the Awujale of Ijebuland.

Tinubu, who was seated on a black leather couch alongside some other party stalwarts had risen to give a speech but his attire had soaked from behind, particularly at the butt area.

The politician's security aide was seen constantly holding his nose while looking at the wet area as another woman immediately wore her face mask as the Asiwaju rose up to speak.

This has piqued the interest of many Nigerians who insisted the wetness of the attire at the spot was urine. Others, however, argued that it might be sweat resulting from the long period of sitting on a leather couch.

 Meanwhile, there have been concerns over Tinubu's presidential ambition considering his health challenges.

Recall that last month, Tinubu had informed President Muhammadu Buhari of his ambition to contest the position of president in 2023.

Tinubu also paid visits to some Northern states including Niger and Katsina to sell his ambition.

He had also met with the former dictator, who annulled June 12, 1993, presidential election, General Ibrahim Babangida, over his plans to be President of Nigeria. Unconfirmed reports said Tinubu took a long time to get off the aircraft when he visited Niger State, and that he had to be assisted to get down.

There were also allegations that he had to visit the toilet many times on the flight back to Abuja, which is about 20 minutes.

SaharaReporters had reported that Tinubu, amidst his ambition for the 2023 presidential race to succeed Muhammadu Buhari, spent over four months patronising hospitals in France, the United States and the United Kingdom where he underwent several surgeries.

He was flown out of the country some days to Christmas in 2020 to Paris, France.

The APC leader returned to Nigeria on January 24, 2021, after a month absence from Nigeria.

He also went for a medical check-up on Thursday, June 10 to France and was conspicuously absent from the one-day working visit of President Muhammadu Buhari to Lagos State.

The interpreters of the text are in three categories. The target of the text is Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT), the Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), henceforth referred to as Interpreter

1. The second category is the media audience, particularly, the electorate in Nigeria, henceforth referred to as Interpreter

2. The third is the analyst, who is referred to here as Interpreter

3. The analyst has the opportunity to report and comment on both the utterer's speech and interpreters' 1 and 2 responses from his or her lines of vision.

The Mental World
The purpose of the utterer is to detract the political value of Interpreter 1 by presenting him in a negative light, in terms of ill health that would prevent the latter from contesting for the post of president. The argument is that Interpreter 1 is incapable of performing his duties as President of Nigeria on account of his ill health. However, the responses of Interpreter 1 in Examples 1 and 2 below are by denial and counter accusation, while those of Interpreter 2 in Examples 3 and 4 are diverse, depending on their slant as supporters or opponents of the target.

Example 1
I′m neither running for 100-yard or 500-yard race nor am I competing in WWE wrestling. I′m running for the presidency which is a knowledge-driven job.

I am very healthy (Odogwu, 2022)

Example 2
...We are not in any way surprised by the antics of the sinking opposition parties. What we found shocking was how quickly some compromised media organisations gulped the sfalsehood hook, line and sinker, without attempting to verify.. (Ndujihe, Akoni, Ajayi, Alechenu, Hassan-Wuyo and Jannamike, 2023)

Example 3
The presidential candidate of Labour Party, LP, Mr Peter Obi, has cautioned Nigerians not to hand over a ′sick country to a sick person′.

He advised that Nigerians should vote wisely, noting that it would be destructive if a sick person is elected to rule in the next four years. (Gsong, 2023)

Example 4
I was with him two days ago and I spent practically hours with him with a number of other leaders who visited him in Abuja. And I was really pleasantly impressed by his energy, his vigour. Eem Asiwaju is very very fit. He is fitter than me. When you look at him, he might look like, you know, somebody who is frail, or anything like that. But he′s very energetic, he′s very fit. He′s well. He′s not sick. And you can see that on TV. He′s been everywhere.

(Femi Pedro, 2023)

The adverse comment in Example 3 is from Peter Obi, a co-Presidential contestant of the Labour Party, while the favourable comment in Example 4 is from an ally of BAT.

The Social and Cultural World
Two issues are salient about the social world surrounding the text. First is the violence that often characterises political campaigns during elections in Nigeria. Second is the hullabaloo about 'ill health' of a presidential candidate. Violence occurs in both physical and verbal forms and, most often, violence is solely verbal or accompanied by physical attacks among members of opposing political parties. Verbal attacks occur prominently in forms of hate speech, fake news and other injurious sentiments. When asked why election campaigns in Nigeria are based on sentiments and not issues, Dele Momodu, a political party leader says, surprisingly, on Channels Television on

Fenruary 7, 2023 that the focus of politicians is on power first before projects. Politicians wield so much power and influence in Nigeria and the culture of 'winner takes all' make them desperate to win at all costs.

The culture of violence in politics has become endemic to the extent that political party leaders have to be invited to sign a peace accord before presidential elections are held in the nation. An accord of non-violence, an undertaking to avoid actions that could promote violence during and after the polls, was signed by political party presidential candidates on January 14, 2015, spearheaded by the National Peace Committee. The content of the pact specifically emphasised the avoidance of hate speech and fake news. However, the APC and PDP, the two leading parties have repeatedly accused each other of violating that agreement (Premium Times, 2015). The peace accord for the current elections was signed on September 29, 2022 by presidential candidates and the national chairmen of the 18 parties in the contest (Majeed, 2022).

Ill-health became an issue of concern in Nigerian presidential elections because of the experience the nation had with late former President Umaru Musa Yaradua, who later died in office, and the current President Muhammadu Buhari. The scare is that politicians prefer to go abroad for treatment because of the precarious heath facilities in Nigeria. The presidents spent a lot of time abroad when they were sick at great costs to governance and economy of the nation.

Though Nigerians would wish that they do not have a president who is sick at this time around, the text above faces backlash from many Nigerians because of some reasons. First is the perception of the text as hate speech against the victim, in deference of the peace accord signed previously by leaders of the political parties. It is a clear demonstration of fake journalism. An accusation of ill health basically requires a medical certificate as evidence. In this instance, none is provided. Instead, there is prevarication based on unverified sources of information shown in Example 5 below:

Example 5
<u>There were also allegations</u> that he had to visit the toilet many times on the flight back to Abuja, which is about 20 minutes. (Emphasis ours)

The allegation of illness is a distraction and waste of time, an effort in futility. The spite is to hurt the victim emotionally but not strong enough to stop the latter from contesting the election contitutionally. The relevant section of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in this regard says:

137. A person shall not be qualified for election to the office of President if –

... (2) Where in respect of any person who has been
    (a) adjudged to be a lunatic;

(b) declared to be of unsound mind; ...

Second, most societies in Nigeria frown against denigration of dead or sick people in public because no mortal is immune from death or sickness. Third is the perception of the utterer and his news agency as a consistent perpetrator of hate speech in the guise of social activism. Although he has published harsh criticisms against all the major political opponents, he does not fare well in his party and public rating as presidential candidate (cf. Ogunsemore, 2023).

The Physical World
Aside from the utterer and interpreters, the physical context provides two pictures of BAT along with the written piece. The first picture presents BAT sitting comfortably at the centre of a sofa and looking forward with a smile. The second picture reveals some people sitting on couches and BAT standing up on the right side of the picture with his back turned on the reader. The picture reveals the wetness of his attire, an agbada at the butt area. The reader may be surprised at the tone of uncertainty encountered in the report despite the sensational caption of ill-health in the headline: "Ailing Tinubu Reportedly Suffering From 'Chronic Urinary Incontinence".

Example 6:
This has piqued the interest of many Nigerians who insisted the wetness of the attire at the spot was urine. Others, however, argued that it might be sweat resulting from the long period of sitting on a leather couch. (Emphasis ours)

The transition from the blatant sensational face-damaging presentation in the headline of the text to an uncertain conjecture in the body of the text could spark off suspicion of the writer's ulterior motive by the reader.

Linguistic Channel and Linguistic Context

The report has the structure of a monologue but is interactive in nature. Verbal violence is interactive as perpetrators anticipate resistance, covertly or overtly (Insight Exchange, 2021). Also, as an Internet post, the text anticipates comments and responses from interpreters, as provided in Examples 1-4 above. It is interdiscursive, cutting across discourses of violence, political campaign and social media. It is intertextual because the text enables a recall of past discourses on the ill-health of some Nigerian presidents in the past and discourses on the peace pact signed by leaders of various political parties. The linguistic context of the text is activated by verbal and visual content, whereas the content is a mixed bag of narrative reporting, uncertain

claims and unfounded allegations. It expresses violence in form of hate speech and sensational negative reporting. The producer highlights a medical disease in the headlines of the text for which no medical evidence is provided in the body of the text.

The Generation of Context
The text is framed as hate speech that intrudes on the health privacy of the victim in order to detract the political value of the victim in the text. It is obvious that the visual representation of peeing on the body is not well contextualised. Also, the lack of consensus on whether the wetness of the attire is urine or sweat (Ex. 5) and the different responses by interpreters of the allegation are clear indications of different lines of vision.

Textual Features
Sentence Types
There are 16 sentences in the text of three types: complex (8), simple (6) and compound (2). The complex sentences (2,3,4,7, 8, 9,10 and 13) are packed full with relative clauses giving supported information pertaining to the accusation of illness and the circumstances surrounding it. Some simple sentences (5, 12) give added information in qualifiers in nominal groups. For emphasis, each sentence constitutes a paragraph in the text, except one paragraph that (10) that has two sentences.

There are 13 active and 4 passive sentences in the text, sentence 11 being a compound sentence. In the passive sentences, the agents of action as actor or senser are hidden, while the affected persons are revealed.

There are 12 unmarked clauses in the text and 6 marked ones. Apart from Sentences 1 and 4 where marked clauses refer to other human participants, the four remaining ones emphasise 'concerns' and allegations about Tinubu (Sentences 7 and 12) and he being 'assisted to get down' and being 'flown out' for medical treatment.

In terms of coherence, the topic is developed in three parts. Part 1 develops the perception of urine in Sentences 1-6. Part 2 focuses on ill-health, mentioned in Sentence 7 and developed in Sentences 11-16. Lastly, Sentences 8-10 discussion Tinubu's ambition and steps he has taken to achieve it. A noticeable fautline in the topic development is that the sensational topic of the text, viz. 'Chronic Urinary Incontinence', Urinates On His Body' is discussed only in the first part of the text before diverting to other issues.

Cognitive Features
Four tenses occur in the text as follows: past 7, past perfect 6, present perfect 3 and present 2. The tenses indicate that the Tinubu's ill-heath has persisted from the past to the present and still persists in the present time.

Processes, Participants and Circustances

Four processes are selected in the texts viz. material (9), verbalised (4), mental (3) and relational (3). The material process is of two types, action and event. The action process is performed by human beings in clauses where the agent/actor is either hidden (Sentence 14) or performs a non-extended action, such as 'holding his nose' (Sentences 1 and 4). The event process is performed by non-human agent on a human being (Sentence2). In both cases, hidden human agents and non-human agents are presented in the report to hide the identities of actors in case of litigation. The affected person in all actions performed is Tinubu, the target of attack in the text.

The verbalised process represents verbs of saying (Sentences 6, 11 and 13), reporting the ill-health of Tinubu. The relational process either expresses attributes of illness of Tinubu or existence of allegations against him (Sentences 7, 12 and 16). Lastly, the mental process expresses perception of behaviour (Sentence 4) or reaction and cognition of people about tinubu's state of health (Sentences 5 and 8).

The circumstantial options in the text occur as follows: time 12, place 5, frequency 2, reason 1 and purpose 1. The time option indicate the constancy of Tinubu's ill-health and people's reaction to it, while the place expresses the location of the 'wetness' allegation against him. Other options exacerbate the condition of ill-health.

Social/Interpersonal Features

Person, Mood, Modality

The text is reported mainly in the voice of a third person 12 times. The reporter's identity is revealed in Sentence 13. Reference to Tinubu is made 6 times by appelation once (Sentence 1), name 2 times (Sentences 3, 9) and by personal pronouns 4 times (Sentences 10,11,14 and 16). References to others include human beings 3 times (Sentences 1, 2 and 6) non-human being 1 time (Sentence 2) and impersonal 3 times (Sentences 5, 7 and 12). The single instance of second person reference occurs in Sentence 8 as an imperative reminding readers about a past incident.

The dominant mood of the text is the declarative form, typical of the representational intent of the reporter. The single occurrence of the imperative mood is very significant because it indicates the direct involvement of the readers in the content of the text.

The verbs in the text are more of the non-modal than modal type and do not say much about the attitude of the reporter. Attitude is thus expressed by polarity and lexical register in the text. In terms of polarity, 17 of the 19 sentences have negative import while 2 are neutral. Across all the sentences are expressions with negative connotations

such as 'the constant holding of nose', pee, soaked attire, wetness, urine, health challenges, hospital ambition, visit to the toilet, medical check up, absence at meetings, etc. The expressions are intended to demean the personality of Tinubu and hurt him.

Lexical occurrences and collocations are used to indicate impolitic face threats on Tinubu as follows:

i. nauseating words: urine, pee stains on cloth, soaked attire, toilet, hospital,etc.

ii. repetition of words: wet area, wetness, butt area, sweat, soak, etc.

iii. medical terms: hospitals, surgeries, medical check up, health challenges, assisted actions,etc.

Lastly, there is evidence of hesitancy and uncertainty in the text about the accusation of Tinubu based on words like 'suspected' and 'allegations' (Sentence 2), 'insisted' (Sentence 5) and 'argued' (Sentence 6). The words give the reader an impression that the accusation in the text is a mere fabrication, an attempt to stain the reputation of Tinubu.

5.2 Pragmatics Resources of Verbal Violence in Political Campaign Discourse
In this section, we shall present briefly and discuss some of the features of verbal violence observed in the sample texts of this study. Many examples have been presented from Text 1, thus a few more will be presented from Texts 2 and 3 (see the Appendix) to illustrate the findings.

5.2.1 The Multimedia Channel
In the review of literature earlier in this paper, the contexts of social media and political discourses have been identified to provide an open space for complete freedom of expression that users may abuse in their daily conversations and such an unfettered freedom portends danger in using language as a tool to inflict harm on the other, thus creating social tension. On the multimedia channel, individuals and groups with little or no resources or media experience have access to pass messages across to a wide audience.

It is observed that the texts analysed are interdiscursive, cutting across discourses of violence, political campaign and social media. They are intertextual because the texts enable a recall of past discourses such as the annulment of election of June 12, 1993 (Text 1), Senate inquiry (Text 2) and Niger Delta militancy (Text 3). The content of the texts is multimedia. For example, both Texts 1 and 2 have verbal and visual representations. Even Text 3, which overtly appears to be verbal, has a video version (Text 3, line 4). Lastly, the contents of the texts are a mixed bag of narrative reporting, uncertain claims and unfounded allegations. For example, apart from consisting of

injurious sentiments, Text 1 is a typical example of fake news, while Texts 2 and 3 comment on allegations that have not been legally proven.

5.2.2 Sentence Types and Coherence

The texts are dominated by simple and complex sentences. This may not be unconnected with the original spoken sources of the reports. Many of the reports have derived from transcriptions of interviews on online televisions and recorded videos. Nonetheless, the complex sentences contain relative clauses that give information on agents or affected persons in the texts (Text 2, Sentences 6, 10; Text 3, Sentence 3). Even, the simple sentences contain such information in quoted speech (Text 2 sentence 11) or qualifiers expressed in nominal or adverbial groups in texts (Text 1, Sentence 2; text 3 Sentence 1).

There are more active than passive sentences in the texts. As usual in reports, the passive sentences hide the identity of agents in the sentences in order to focus on the affected persons who are targets of attack. There are also more unmarked than marked clauses in the texts, where the marked clauses focus on the victims, allegations and sources of allegations against them.

Cohesion of the texts is achieved via multiple types of thematic progression. While the Constant Theme is employed in Text 3, which thematises the agent, the accuser of Peter obi, a mixture of types (including the simple linear, splitting and derived hypertheme) characterises Texts 2 and 3 where themes vary from accusers to evidence to the victim or circumstances of the events expressed. In terms of coherence, topical coherence occurs more than coherence between sentences, showing lack of proper planning typical of impromtu speeches. This means that sentences tend to connect more with the topic than with one another. For example, in Text 2 coherence is enhanced as follows:

Senate report: Sentences 1-4, 6, 7, 13, 17-19
Allegation of fraud: 5, 8

Atiku Abubakar's campaign: 9 -12.

Reporter's comment on Atiku Abubakar (14 -16) and Nigeria (20-21).

5.2.3 Multiple Tenses

The use of multiple tenses is observed in the texts. The number ranges from four to six tenses; Texts 1 and 2 have 6 tenses each while Text 3 has 4 tenses. The tenses include past perfect, present perfect, past, present, future past and future perfect tenses the intention is to make the allegations, accusations and abuses relevant for all times. In

other words, the content of the actions, states, inactions and wrongdoings of the targets indicates occurrences in the past time, which have persisted to the present and would be relevant for consideration in future contests of elections.

5.2.4 Processes, Participants and Circumstances

Material and verbalised processes occur significantly in the texts to express various meanings. Material processes occur as action and event types, where the action type has a human being as agent and the event type has a non-human being as agent. Where agents actions are extended, the agents are hidden to hide identities while the affected is overtly presented (Text 1, Sentence 14; Text 2, Sentence 18). Non-extended actions indicate actions performed on oneself (Text 1, Sentences 1 and 4). Material events occur to also cover up human identities, when non-human beings initiate investigations (Text 2, Sentences 2 and 12). Verbalised processes occur in the texts as repotorial verbs, such as 'say, call, argue, accuse', etc. Text 3 is dominated almost entirely by verbs of saying. Occasionally, the cognitive process occurs to indicate perception of objects or facts or invite the audience's attention or participation, e.g. 'recall' (Text 1, Sentence 8; Text 3, Sentence 6). Also, relational process may occur to indicate existence or attributes of individuals, especially when the focus is on ill-health (Text 1). The circumstantial options of time and place occur prominently in the texts to anchor the periods that actions and events take place as well as the locations. Some circumstantial details occur as 'range' to complete the verbal processes.

5.2.5 Person, Mood and Modality

The 3rd person option is predominant in the texts, as is typical of reports. The utterer presents participants in the texts, human and non-human, in the third person. Human and non-human beings serve as sources of evidence of allegations, accusations and abuses of targets. The targets are also referred to by name, pronouns or appelations. Once in a while, the 2nd person pronoun is used to invite interpreters to participate in the accusation, in order to give credence to the utterer's claims. Also, sometimes, the reporter uses the inclusive 1st person pronoun 'we' to involve the people as collaborators of verbal violence.

The texts are dominated by declarative clauses, which serve as assertions against the victim. In Texts 1 and 3, an imperative clause occurs significantly to draw the attention of interpreters to the 'recall' (Text 1, Sentence 8; Text 3, Sentence 6) of an earlier shared knowledge. On modality, the predominant choice of non-modal process options shows that verbs are not utilised to express social relationships and attitudes in the texts. Instead, negative attitudes and impolitic face threats are indicated by lexical items. Verbal items with negative connotations in text have been presented above. In Text 2, words used to disparage Atiku include 'diverting ... in public funds to private interests', 'should be prosecuted ... for siphoning of money' and 'fraudulently diverted ...'. These expressions are repeated several times in the text. In Text 3, derogatory expressions

repeated include ′should be in jail...′′, invested state funds in a family business′ and ′...as a glorified YahooYahoo boy′.

6. Conclusion

This paper has identified and characterised verbal violence as a type of violence and exemplified its occurrence in political election campaign speeches on social media. It has utilised a perspective of pragmatics analysis to characterise and interpret features of violence discourse at the contextual, cultural, cognitive, social, textual levels of linguistic pragmatics.

The analysis and interpretation reveal that verbal violence contains the use of fake speech and hate speech in form of unwarranted and or unproven allegations, accusations and abuses. It is a deliberate attack inteded to hurt the victim personally psychologically and socially retract their political fortunes in the forthcoming elections. One would hope that political campaigns would be based on issues pertaining to improvement in quality of lives of people. Unfortunately, politicians prefer attack on personalities of participants. An earlier remark   that focus of politicians is on power first before projects is sadly impolitic for politics in a developing nation like Nigeria. It, therefore, behoves on Nigerian citizens to discourage this attitude and behaviour among politicians. The coordinators of several peace accords signed during the period are encouraged to do more in terms of monitoring verbal and physical violence during election campaigns. Finally, the study does not foreclose the analysis of violence discourse from other discourse contexts, such as family, sports, religion and school, among others, that may throw up further characteristics.

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