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Political discourse and public sentiment in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election: An aspect-based analysis of campaign speeches and social media reactions

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Abstract

The study examines political discourse and public sentiments during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election with particular attention to how campaign rhetoric and citizen reactions are linguistically constructed and evaluated. Language is a powerful tool in political discourse, shaping public opinion and reinforcing authority. This study analyzes sentiment in six presidential campaign speeches from the All Progressives Congress (APC), People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP), alongside sixty social media comments sourced from Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) predominantly considered to have amplified this influence, serves as key spaces for campaign messaging and citizen response also analysis on public reactions using aspect-level sentiment analysis based on Bing Liu's model. The findings reveal linguistic strategies, opinion types, and emotional polarities embedded in both political rhetoric and public responses in Nigeria's electoral context. By focusing sentiment analysis within Nigerian electoral discourse and political communication, the study contributes to discourse-oriented sentiment research, political sentiment analysis in emerging democratic settings and offers insights for linguists, communication scholars, and political analysts.

Keywords: aspect-based sentiment analysis, Nigerian presidential election, political discourse, public sentiment, social media



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Introduction

Language is a fundamental human tool, deeply embedded in social interaction across age, gender, race, and status (Yulia, 2017). It enables people to express thoughts, opinions, and messages, functioning as both a communicative and persuasive instrument. Because of this dual role, language not only facilitates everyday interaction but also extends into more specialized domains where influence is central. One of the most prominent of these domains is politics.

In politics, language becomes a strategic weapon, used to shape ideology, influence public opinion, and secure political power. Without effective language use, political actors risk losing both influence and legitimacy. This political use of language has been further reshaped by the rise of social media, which has revolutionized political discourse in Nigeria and beyond. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube now serve as arenas for public debate, campaign messaging, and political engagement (Yaqub et al., 2017). The affordability of smartphones and data access has further popularized these platforms, encouraging active participation and self-expression among citizens. Politicians globally, including in Nigeria, increasingly leverage these platforms to amplify their messages and gauge public response.

The 2023 Nigerian presidential campaign provides a clear example of this shift. It was among the most digitally driven in the country's history, featuring strong online engagement and public reactions. Candidates: Bola Ahmed Tinubu (APC), Atiku Abubakar (PDP), and Peter Obi (LP) actively used social media to share campaign speeches and reach the electorate. These speeches generated varied and emotionally charged responses, highlighting the potential of sentiment analysis as a valuable research tool for studying political communication.

Sentiment analysis, as defined by Liu (2012), studies opinions, attitudes, and emotions toward entities or events. It operates at document, sentence, or aspect levels, and is particularly effective on short, informal texts such as tweets and comments. By relying on linguistic patterns and sentiment lexicons, it identifies polarity, positive, negative, or neutral, even when challenged by features like slang, code-mixing, or irony.

Building on this, Martin and White (2005) argue that emotions in language are often expressed through judgment and appreciation, which form core targets for sentiment analysis. When applied to political discourse, this approach helps campaigns evaluate public sentiment, track shifting opinions, and tailor strategies. Beyond its use in campaigns, it also provides researchers and policymakers with insights into how digital narratives shape democratic processes, as demonstrated in movements like Nigeria's 2020 #EndSARS protest.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing scholarly interest in social media discourse, sentiment analysis in the context of political campaign speeches remains underexplored. Existing studies have largely focused on product reviews (Dave et al., 2003; Hu & Liu, 2004; Turney, 2002) and social media sentiment around general issues (Tumasjan et al., 2010). However, there is a noticeable gap in the analysis of sentiment in political campaign speeches and the reactions of Nigerian citizens, particularly during the 2022/2023 presidential elections. This study addresses this gap by analyzing sentiment in political campaign speeches and online public responses.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

This study aims to explore sentiment in political campaign speeches and assess public reactions on social media. Specifically, the research seeks to:

- i. Identify aspect-level sentiment in speeches delivered by presidential candidates across the selected political parties.
- ii. Classify (polarity) the types of opinions expressed by netizens in response to these speeches.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing field of sentiment analysis in political discourse by focusing on both speech content and public reaction. It highlights the use of polarity and aspect-level analysis to uncover sentiment, offering insights for linguists, discourse analysts, and scholars interested in computational and political linguistics. The findings may serve as a reference for future research into sentiment in political communication.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on sentiment analysis of campaign speeches and online reactions during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. Data are drawn from Facebook and Twitter, comprising selected speeches by presidential candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC), People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP), along with netizen comments reacting to them.

From each candidate, two campaign speeches are sampled, alongside ten representative online comments per speech. The analysis is limited to linguistic features such as intensifiers, negation, and discourse strategies in the speeches, and polarity in the online responses. The study adopts Bing Liu's sentiment analysis model to evaluate public opinion objectively and systematically.

2. Review of Related Literature

Research on sentiment analysis has expanded rapidly across linguistics, computational linguistics, and political communication, reflecting the growing relevance of digital discourse in shaping public opinion. At its core, sentiment analysis seeks to detect and interpret subjective information: opinions, attitudes, and emotions embedded in text (Priiban, 2020). This aligns with Bing Liu's (2012) foundational definition of sentiment analysis as the computational study of evaluations and affective expressions, a framework that continues to underpin contemporary opinion-mining research.

2.1 Foundations of Sentiment Analysis

Priiban (2020), building on Liu's sentiment mining model, emphasizes that sentiment analysis involves core tasks: polarity classification, aspect extraction, and subjectivity detection, supported by machine learning and deep learning architectures. His study highlights persistent challenges in domain adaptation and low-resource languages, a concern relevant to Nigerian political discourse, where code-mixing, informal expressions, and culturally embedded language use complicate sentiment classification.

Similarly, Jose et al. (2015) demonstrate that classification accuracy improves when ensemble methods are used instead of single classifiers. Their findings underscore an essential methodological insight: sentiment analysis benefits from hybrid analytical approaches, an observation that supports the use of both linguistic and polarity-based procedures in the present study.

2.2 Sentiment Analysis in Social and Political Contexts

Sentiment analysis has been widely applied in public health (Wajid et al., 2021), civic communication (Miranda & Bringula, 2021), and large-scale political conversations (Yaqub et al., 2017). Each of these studies illustrates the power of digital platforms in capturing public mood and revealing underlying ideological tensions.

Wajid et al. (2021) demonstrate how sentiment analysis can assess public trust by comparing vaccine-related tweets, revealing patterns of positive and negative emotionality. Their work underscores the value of lexicon-based and machine-learning models in analyzing large datasets, a methodological approach that informs the design of the current study.

Miranda and Bringula (2021), analyzing 77 presidential speeches across several decades, show that political addresses frequently project positive sentiment, particularly when discussing development and governance. Their use of sentiment scoring and topic modeling reveals how sentiment functions

rhetorically to build legitimacy, an idea directly relevant to campaign messaging in Nigeria.

Yaqub et al. (2017), in their analysis of over 3 million tweets from the 2016 U.S. elections, reveal that political discourse on social media is often emotionally charged and predominantly negative. Their findings demonstrate the dynamic relationship between real-time political events and online sentiment, highlighting the potential of social media as a proxy for public reaction, an insight that directly aligns with the aims of this research.

2.3 Sentiment Analysis and Electoral Politics

Studies that examine sentiment in explicitly political contexts illustrate how digital discourse reflects partisan alignment and ideological polarization. Mishra et al. (2020) show that political rallies and policy announcements trigger fluctuations in public sentiment, while also highlighting the complexities of interpreting short texts due to linguistic ambiguity.

Singh et al. (2017) extend this work by demonstrating how sentiment analysis can predict election outcomes, as seen in their study of the 2016 U.S. presidential election using SVM classifiers. Their findings confirm that online sentiment often correlates with political momentum, especially in highly digitalized electorates.

Although these studies highlight the usefulness of sentiment analysis in political contexts, they are largely based on Western elections and global North datasets. A significant gap remains in understanding how sentiment functions in African political discourse, particularly in multilingual and socio-culturally complex environments such as Nigeria.

2.4 Gap in Existing Scholarship

While existing literature demonstrates substantial progress in sentiment analysis, methodologically and contextually, there remains limited scholarship on:

1. Sentiment in Nigerian political campaign speeches,
2. Aspect-level analysis of rhetorical strategies, and
3. Comparative analysis of political rhetoric and public online reactions during election periods.

Most studies have focused on product reviews (Dave et al., 2003; Hu & Liu, 2004; Turney, 2002), general political conversations (Tumasjan et al., 2010), or non-African elections. Only a few have integrated both candidate messaging and citizen responses in a single analytical framework.

2.5 The Contribution of the Present Study

The present study extends existing scholarship by applying Liu's aspect-level sentiment model to:

1. Analyze the emotional and rhetorical content of Nigerian presidential campaign speeches, and
2. Evaluate public reactions expressed through Facebook and Twitter comments.

By focusing on Nigeria's 2023 election, one of the country's most digitally mediated electoral cycles, this study contributes to African political linguistics, computational discourse analysis, and political communication. It provides empirical evidence on how sentiment shapes electoral discourse in emerging democracies and how digital platforms mediate the relationship between political actors and citizens.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Bing Liu's sentiment analysis model, a foundational framework in opinion mining and natural language processing. In his influential work, *Sentiment Analysis and Opinion Mining* (Liu, 2012), Liu defines sentiment analysis as the computational study of opinions, sentiments, evaluations, attitudes, and emotions expressed in text. While such text is inherently unstructured, Liu proposes structured methods for extracting and classifying sentiment to enable both qualitative and

quantitative interpretation.

A core contribution is the Opinion Lexicon (Liu, 2005), a widely used dictionary of words annotated with sentiment polarities, positive, negative, or neutral, serving as a key resource for polarity classification. Liu also highlights challenges like sarcasm, irony, and contextual ambiguity in sentiment detection and advocates for more advanced algorithms to address these complexities.

Further, Liu's work on aspect-level sentiment analysis refines polarity detection by linking sentiments to specific features or topics (Liu, 2012). This includes methods such as part-of-speech tagging, syntactic parsing, and machine learning.

This research will apply Liu's polarity and aspect-level sentiment models to the 2022/2023 Nigerian presidential campaign speeches and the associated online public responses to uncover emotional tones, persuasive strategies, and public perception.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative design, allowing for a detailed description and interpretation of the transcribed data. The dataset comprised six speeches, two each from APC, PDP, and LP, and 60 social media comments (10 per speech), randomly selected from Twitter and Facebook.

All speeches were transcribed, and local expressions were translated into English using DeepL Translator, a software recognized for its high accuracy in handling contextual and idiomatic meanings. The authors carefully reviewed the outputs to ensure semantic fidelity and cultural appropriateness. Analysis followed Bing Liu's Sentiment Analysis model, using Sentiment Classification and Aspect-level Analysis.

Data were presented in two sections:

1. **Lexical Word Analysis** – A table displaying excerpts from party speeches, indicating sentiment-laden words and associated rhetorical strategies.
2. **Polarity Analysis** – A table of selected netizen comments linked to each speech, showing the excerpt, comment, and perceived sentiment.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1.1 Table 1. Presentation of the Aspect Level of Sentiment in Campaign Speeches.

Party	Speech	Positive Sentiment	Negative Sentiment
APC	I will bring hope and employment back to Nigeria. They don't know the way, they don't have the vision, nor the competence or mission to prosper. How can they think of governance when all they built were stores in marketplaces and called it a job opportunity? I know the way. Go to Lagos and see development, go to Lagos and see prosperity, and record of beauty. Development and progress are here. These people year after year, election after election, they lie to you, give you excuses. I will commit to your progress. I will fulfill all the promises made to you. You are the heart and soul of this nation.	+6	-4

	I took on Lagos, cleaned it up, and developed it. I faced and conquered the Atlantic for Lagos state. It is time we sweep the oil companies like Mobil out . They cannot even do drainage. They blame everything on the federal government. Are they not the ones collecting and polluting your soil and water? Get them out of the way and sweep these oil companies out. It is a born revolution . Follow me. I know the way to prosper. Your joy is here. Vote for me. I will make your life better.	+3	-2
	Go to Lagos and see what I made of Lagos. Bayelsa is your own Miami. Let us make Nigeria a united and prosperous nation . A renewed hope of thinking and doing .”	+2	-0
PDP	We won't disappoint you Nigeria if you give us your vote. A united country, a peaceful country, a buoyant economy for our country and that we have education to our children and also give power to our state and local government with corresponding resources . I am one who understands Nigeria. I am a candidate who can refine and govern Nigeria. And I am ready to reclaim the future of Nigeria .	+6	-0
PDP	When it comes to development, PDP is the answer. Since PDP had taken over, the country has witnessed development in various heights. The roads and market squares were all built by PDP. APC has done nothing. Do not be deceived by them. APC represents poverty, unemployment, insecurity, lack of development and every negative indices in this country.	+1	-4
	I pledge that the petroleum resources that have been discovered between Bauchi and Gombe would be exploited and their benefits brought back to the people. I pledge to make sure that our young men and women will receive loans to set up their own small and medium enterprises for self-employment.	+4	-0
Labour party	We want to build a Nigeria where there is security of lives and property . Where your children will be secured and be in school and have a job. Your children and you will get back the peaceful Katsina if you vote for me. We appeal to you to vote for Labour Party. Together we will join hands to fight poverty and the constant killings. We are the ones that know how to handle this situation .	+4	-0
	We will create employment and business opportunity. Datti and I are committed to a new Nigeria . A Nigeria where there will be security of lives and property . We're we won't have to work too hard to unite Nigerians. We don't want a Nigeria where people are chased out of their house and they live in disaster camps .	+2	-1

4.1.3 Data Presentation of Aspect-Level of Sentiment in the Extracts Above using Python

```
# Import necessary libraries

import pandas as pd

from sklearn.model_selection import train_test_split

from sklearn.feature_extraction.text import TfidfVectorizer

from sklearn.svm import SVC

from sklearn.metrics import accuracy_score, classification_report


# Create a DataFrame from the provided data

data = {

    'party': ['APC', 'PDP', 'LP'],

    'positive_frequency': [11, 11, 10],

    'negative_frequency': [6, 4, 1]

}


df = pd.DataFrame(data)


# Calculate percentage frequencies

total_positive = df['positive_frequency'].sum()

total_negative = df['negative_frequency'].sum()

df['positive_percentage'] = (df['positive_frequency'] / total_positive) * 100

df['negative_percentage'] = (df['negative_frequency'] / total_negative) * 100


# Sample comments data (replace with your actual dataset)
```

4.2 Data Analysis of the Aspect-Level of Sentiment

Bing Liu's aspect-level sentiment analysis typically involves determining the sentiment associated with specific aspects or topics within a piece of text. For each sentence that contains one or more aspects, its step marks all sentimental words and phrases in the sentence. Several filters were applied to remove unlikely aspects, e.g., dropping aspects that do not have sufficient mentions alongside known sentiment words. Aspects are also built at the word stem level, in sentiment-bearing sentences and the type of sentiment phrases/patterns, with appearances in phrases carrying a greater weight. Each positive word

or phrase is assigned a sentiment score of +1 and each negative word is assigned -1.

4.2.1 The All Progressive Congress (APC)'s Aspirant's Speech

Excerpt 1:

I will bring hope and employment back to Nigeria. They don't know the way, they don't have the vision nor competence or mission to prosperity. How can they think of governance when all they built was stores in market places and called it job opportunity. I know the way, go to Lagos. And see development, go to Lagos and see prosperity and record of beauty. Development and progress is here. These people year after year, election after election, they lie to you, give you excuses. I will commit to your progress. I will fulfill all the promises made to you. You are the heart and soul of this nation.

In the first sentence of this excerpt, the sentiment associated with this aspect is positive, as Tinubu is promising to bring hope and employment, which are generally seen as positive outcomes. (Hope+1 and Employment+1).

The next sentence portrays a negative sentiment towards vision and competence. Here, the word (Competence -1 and Vision-1) can be positive but in this context, the sentiment associated with this aspect become negative, as Tinubu criticizes the opposition for lacking vision, knowledge, and a mission for prosperity. Development and Progress here can be perceived as a positive Sentiment as Tinubu is highlighting development and progress in Lagos as evidence of his vision and competence.

In the following sentence, Tinubu criticizes his political rivals for what he sees as dishonesty and excuses. *These people year after year, election after election, they lie to you, and give you excuses.* The aspect of lying portrayed here shows a negative sentiment.

"How can they think of governance when all they built was stores in market places and called it job opportunity." The sentiment associated with this aspect is negative, as The speaker is criticizing the opposition for what he perceives as inadequate job creation. Job opportunity here becomes -1. Towards the end of his speech, he resorts back to promises of commitment to the progress (+1) of the nation and emphasizes the importance of the people. Aspect of progress is positive.

Excerpt 2

I took on Lagos, cleaned it up, and developed it. I faced and conquered the Atlantic for Lagos State. It is time we sweep the oil companies like Mobil out. They cannot even do drainage. They blame everything on the Federal Government. Are they not the ones collecting and polluting your soil and water? Get them out of the way and sweep these oil companies out. It is a born revolution. Follow me. I know the way to prosper. Your joy is here. Vote for me. I will make your life better.

In this excerpt, The speaker starts by expressing a positive sentiment regarding his achievements in Lagos, including development and conquering the Atlantic. Gradually, he starts giving off a negative sentiment by his critic of the oil companies. From his speech, it is deduced that he disapproves of the oil companies for blaming the Federal Government on their impact on the environment. He talks of a Revolution and Prosperity which despite the earlier negative tone, this aspect is positive, as he calls for a "born revolution" and promising prosperity under his leadership. Aspect-level analysis here, helps break down the sentiment associated with specific aspects or topics within the speech, providing a more detailed understanding of how different aspects are perceived in terms of sentiment.

Excerpt 3

Go to Lagos and see what I made of Lagos. Bayelsa is your own Miami. Let us make Nigeria a united and prosperous nation. A renewed hope of thinking and doing.

In this statement, the first aspect that discusses the transformation of Lagos is positive as it emphasizes what the speaker has achieved there. Also, the promise of Bayelsa's prosperity is an aspect that bears positive sentiment, too, as he compares Bayelsa to Miami. Another positive aspect that is portrayed here is the expression of a vision for a united and prosperous Nigeria and a renewed hope for innovative thinking and action.

Overall, the statement is filled with positive sentiments, emphasizing achievements, prosperity, unity, and a positive vision for Nigeria.

4.2.2 Analysis of People Democratic Party (PDP) Aspirant (Atiku Abubakar)'s speech

Excerpt 1

We won't disappoint you Nigeria if you give us your vote. A united country, a peaceful country, a buoyant economy for our country and that we have education to our children and also give power to our state and local government with corresponding resources. I am one who understands Nigeria. I am a candidate who can refine and govern Nigeria. And I am ready to reclaim the future of Nigeria.

Here, Atiku uses positive speeches to articulate his goals without comparing or blaming anyone. He starts off by promising not to disappoint Nigeria if elected, he diffuses the skepticism of the people by bringing in the promise of not disappointing Nigeria. He also reveals a positive sentiment by expressing his desire for a united, peaceful and buoyant economic country.

His expression of education for Children (+1) carries a positive sentiment, emphasizing the importance of education for children. He concludes by emphasizing his understanding of Nigeria. This excerpt also shows an aspect that is positive as it highlights Atiku's perceived capability to govern and refine Nigeria by his readiness to reclaim Nigeria's future.

Excerpt 2

When it comes to development, PDP is the answer. Since PDP had taken over, the country has witnessed development in various heights. The roads and market squares were all built by PDP. APC has done nothing. Do not be deceived by them. APC represents poverty, unemployment, insecurity, lack of development and every negative indices in this country.

Atiku expresses a positive sentiment regarding the PDP's role in development, presenting them as the solution. The building of roads and market squares carries a positive sentiment, as Atiku credits the PDP for infrastructure development. The quantifier was not used in computation but was employed to identify candidate verbs and resource terms.

By saying that APC has done nothing Atiku's sentiment is negative here as he criticizing the APC for a perceived lack of accomplishments, subsequently listing out their failures as a ruling body.

Excerpt 3

I pledge that the petroleum resources that have been discovered between Bauchi and Gombe would be exploited and their benefits brought back to the people. I pledge to make sure that our young men and women will receive loans to set up their own small and medium enterprises for self-employment.

Both aspects of exploiting Petroleum Resources (+1) in Bauchi and Gombe and providing Loans for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)(+1) in the statement express positive intentions and commitments to benefit the people and promote economic development. Many aspect expressions are multi-word phrases, which cannot be easily handled with dictionaries. Furthermore, it is also important to note that

many aspect expressions describing the same aspect are not general or domain specific synonyms. The word exploited can be inferred as negative, but in this context, it reveals a positive sentiment and so can be categorized as +1.

4.2.3 Analysis of Labour Party (LP) Aspirant (Peter Obi)'s speech

Excerpt 1

We want to build a Nigeria where there is security of lives and property. Where your children will be secured and be in school and have a job. Your children and you will get back the peaceful Katsina if you vote for me. We appeal to you to vote for Labour Party. Together we will join hands to fight poverty and the constant killings. We are the ones that know how to handle this situation.

Peter raises the issue of insecurity by expressing a positive sentiment towards the goal of security for the citizens of Nigeria. The issue of education and employment also carries a positive sentiment as it promises secure education and job opportunities for children. He keeps up the positive demeanor in his speech as he promises peace in Katsina if he is elected.

Without laying blame or emphasis, he neutralizes his stance by appealing for the people's vote and positively promises to fight poverty and insecurity together. He also emphasized on the Leadership and Commitment of his goal by embellishing it with a positive sentiment.

Excerpt 2

We will create employment and business opportunity. Datti and I are committed to a new Nigeria. A Nigeria where there will be security of lives and property. Where we won't have to work too hard to unite Nigerians. We don't want a Nigeria where people are chased out of their house and they live in disaster camps.

The first statement is positive as it shows commitment to a new and improved Nigeria (+1). The phrase Security and Unity (+1) is positive as it lay emphasis on the importance of security and unity. The words Displacement and Disaster Camps (-1) already connotes a negative sentiment.

Excerpt 3

I intend to create an enabling environment for business to grow and prosper. It is our choice to take back this country.

In the statement "I intend to create an enabling environment for business to grow and prosper. It is our choice to take back this country," there are two aspects with associated sentiments: Creating an enabling environment for business and taking back the country. Both aspects carry positive sentiments, emphasizing the intention to create a favorable environment for businesses to thrive and prosper and a determination to take back the country, likely constructively and positively.

4.3 Opinions on the Comments of Netizens.

4.3.1 The Comments of Netizens on Campaign Speeches of Tinubu and Polarity Table

Party	Netizens Comment	Polarity
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Excerpt 1 <i>I will bring hope and employment back to Nigeria. They don't know the way, they don't have the vision nor competence or mission to prosperity. How can they think of governance when all they built was stores in market places and called it job opportunity? I know the way, go to Lagos. And see development, go to lagos and see prosperity and record of beauty. Development and progress is here. These people year after year, election after election, they lie to you, give you excuses. I will commit to your progress. I will fulfill all the promises made to you. You are the heart and soul of this nation.</i>	Campaigning for Tinubu and Shettima against Peter and dating is like comparing black and white television against plasma TV. Peter and dating are here. Nigerians I hope you understand what I mean.	Neutral
	Tinubu is the best man to lead Nigeria come 2023. He is blessed by God.	Positive
	Change from APC to LP is what we want. We don't want looters of our resources.	Negative
	Impressive speech today. Kudos Jagaban.	Positive
	Mr Tinubu wouldn't have been disturbing himself contesting for president if APC of 8 years was a success.	Negative
Excerpt 2 <i>I took on Lagos, cleaned it up, and developed it. I faced and conquered the Atlantic for Lagos state. It is time we sweep the oil companies like Mobil out. They cannot even do drainage. They blame everything on the federal government. Are they not the ones collecting and polluting your soil and water? Get them out of the way and sweep these oil companies out. It is a born revolution. Follow me. I know the way to prosper. Your joy is here. Vote for me. I will make your life better.</i>	God bless Tinubu and give him complete and total victory in this election. Amen	Positive
	I am waiting for you to bring good governance to Nigeria. I believe your words aisuwaju. You are capable.	Positive
	This speech is filled with hatred and injustice.	Negative
	Tinubu, which party manifesto is Buhari using, why not advise him from the onset with these your good plans, why not help him from the onset. Tinubu or whatever you call yourself, try and have shame. Apc is a failed party. Look for another party and I will vote for you. But for apc...no. Lp has my votes.	Negative / neutral
	Ask your candidates what they have achieved, tinubu is boasting about eko city. What have other candidates achieved?	Neutral

<i>Excerpt 3</i> <i>Go to Lagos and see what I made of Lagos. Bayelsa is your own Miami. Let us make Nigeria a united and prosperous nation. A renewed hope of thinking and doing.</i>	This is your own miami, I face and conquered the Atlantic for lagos state. Verifiable statement. Asiwaju all the way.	Positive
	Haha... see lies. You will turn Bayelsa to Miami... baba recreator, I salute u.	Neutral
	You came into Lagos and cleaned and built, yet you travel abroad for your treatment... no be juju be that?	Negative

4.3.2 Comments of Netizens on Campaign Speeches of Atiku and Polarity Table

Excerpt	Comment	Polarity
<i>Excerpt 1: We won't disappoint you Nigeria if you give us your vote. A united country, a peaceful country, a buoyant economy for our country and that we have education to our children and also give power to our state and local government with corresponding resources. I am one who understands Nigeria. I am a candidate who can refine and govern Nigeria. And I am ready to reclaim the future of Nigeria</i>	You will do the same thing next 4 years. Serial loser	Negative
	How can someone be so disreputable and shameless? You desperation stinks Atiku	Positive
	I see a new Nigeria full of hope under Atiku Abubakar.	
	A man with vision for Nigeria	Positive
	You will not win, just go and come back and try again in 2027. The year is for Asiwaju.	Negative
	Nigeria is for Peter Obi 2023. Stop wasting your time and our stolen funds	Negative
EXCERPT 2 <i>When it comes to development, PDP is the answer. Since PDP had taken over, the country has witnessed development in various heights. The roads and market squares were all built by PDP. APC has done nothing. Do not be decieved by them. APC represents poverty, unemployment, insecurity, lack of development and every negative indices in this country.</i>	Confused set of people? Peter obi is the one we want to put Nigeria back together.	Negative
	You don't know what you are saying.	Negative
	God will disgrace you.	Negative
	The Lord is your strength my incoming president and his vice.	Positive

<i>Excerpt 3</i> <i>I pledge that the petroleum resources that have been discovered between Bauchi and Gombe would be exploited and their benefits brought back to the people. I pledge to make sure that our young men and women will receive loans to set up their own small and medium enterprises for self-employment.</i>	Oga how much did u spend to get such crowed	Negative
	I don't know why Atiku won't win this election, it is written all over Nigeria that Atiku is the next president of this country.	Positive

4.3.3 Comments of Netizens on Campaign Speeches of LP and Polarity Table

Excerpts	Comments	Polarity
<i>Excerpt 1</i> <i>We want to build a Nigeria where there is security of lives and property. Where your children will be secured and be in school and have a job. Your children and you will get back the peaceful Katsina if you vote for me. We appeal to you to vote for Labour Party. Together we will join hands to fight poverty and the constant killings. We are the ones that know how to handle this situation.</i>	He has already exceeded most of our expectation, I am so proud of him.	Positive
	Peter obi still remains the best man amongst other candidates. With him, Nigeria will be great again.	Positive
	I believe Peter obi is capable of delivering Nigeria out of the present woes. Everyone should make it a point of duty to vote for OBIDATTI.	Positive
	And yet he couldn't end insecurity in Anambra State.	Negative
	The primary function of an elected government is to secure the lives and property of its citizens. With Obi and Datti it may be difficult but it is not impossible.	Positive

<i>Excerpt 2</i> <i>We will create employment and business opportunity. Datti and I are committed to a new Nigeria. A Nigeria where there will be security of lives and property. Where we won't have to work too hard to unite Nigerians. We don't want a Nigeria where people are chased out of their house and they live in disaster camps.</i>	I can see why I have always believed in one Nigeria. Tears flowed out of my eyes as I see the north welcome Obi and Datti. Tribalism and religious bigotry have done a lot of harm than good to the natio. And it's citizens.	Positive
	A pure presidential candidate, always carrying his running mate along. By always saying Datti and I. That is a sign of good teamwork.	Positive
	Do you call this crowd, are you not ashamed of posting this naming ceremony show	Negative
	Peter obi is good, but this time is not for him	Negative
	Obi is an ethnic bigot that went as far as putting the Biafra flag on Hero beer	Negative
<i>Excerpt 3</i> <i>I intend to create an enabling environment for business to grow and prosper. It is our choice to take back this country.</i>	You will not win Sir	Negative
	To think that at no point was the LP campaign made tribal... it is so youth enabled	Positive
	Just like you did in Anambra that you led for 8 years and doubled poverty rate. Tufiakwa. The closest you can get to the presidency is being called a presidential aspirant.	Negative
	Nigeria must get it right this time. Peter Obi is the change we need. I believe he is a perfect navigator.	Positive

4.5 Data Analysis of Polarity

4.5.1 A. Data Analysis of Comments of Netizens on Campaign Speeches of APC

In excerpt 1, responses to Tinubu's speech reflect varied sentiments. The first is neutral, offering a comparison without clear support or critique. The next is positive, showing strong support for Tinubu and presenting him as the best choice for Nigeria.

Negative sentiment appears where netizens criticize Tinubu for lacking continuity in governance. His speech is dismissed as empty rhetoric, with some calling for a shift from APC to LP, labelling APC politicians as "criminals" and urging voters to reject them—especially Tinubu.

Positive sentiment is also expressed by those praising Tinubu's speech as impressive. He is respectfully addressed as "Jagaban," with confidence in his ability to bring renewed hope and progress. In the second excerpt, sentiments lean toward neutrality and positivity. One comment urges assessment of all candidates' records, saying Tinubu boasts about Eko City while asking what others have achieved—neutral in tone. Another criticizes Tinubu's speech as hateful, revealing a negative stance.

Excerpt 3 opens with two positive comments praising Tinubu's achievements and leadership. However, subsequent comments turn negative, criticizing him for not advising Buhari earlier and for his ties to APC.

One sarcastic remark, "*Haha... see lies. You will turn Bayelsa to Miami... baba recreator, I*

salute u,” blends mockery with humor. It ends on a seemingly positive note, but given the context, is classified as neutral due to its ambiguity. This shows that sentiment analysis can't rely solely on explicit opinion words; it must also consider speech patterns and cultural context. Resource terms help decode such nuanced expressions.

Finally, another negative comment criticizes Tinubu for seeking medical care abroad despite claiming development in Lagos.

4.5.2 B. Data Analysis of Comments of Netizens on Campaign Speeches of PDP

Excerpt 1:

Most reactions to this Atiku speech are negative. The first two comments call him a “*serial loser*” and accuse him of desperation and disrepute. One comment, “*Nigeria is for Peter Obi 2023. Stop wasting your time and our stolen funds,*” completely rejects Atiku, instead showing support for Obi while accusing Atiku of misusing public resources. Only one positive comment appears, expressing hope in Atiku's leadership and a vision for a “*new Nigeria.*”

Excerpt 2:

While many reacted with negative emojis, few commented, suggesting disinterest or rejection of Atiku's message. One netizen calls Atiku and the PDP “*confused*” while voicing support for Peter Obi. Another criticizes Atiku's understanding of the issue, questioning his credibility. These negative reactions offer no constructive input but rather reflect outright doubt and disapproval.

Excerpt 3:

A netizen dismisses the crowd turnout in Atiku's rally, doubting that such support could exist. This shows skepticism and negative sentiment. However, another comment is positive, confidently predicting Atiku's election victory.

4.5.3 Comments on Labour Party (LP) Speeches:

Excerpt 1:

Peter Obi's speech draws mixed reactions. The first three comments are positive, praising him as Nigeria's best hope and a unifier. One dissenting voice questions his record on insecurity in Anambra, casting doubt on his credibility. Another praises his anti-tribal, inclusive tone. One neutral comment welcomes Obi but expresses preference for Kwankwaso, balancing respect with opposition.

Excerpt 2:

Reactions remain polarized. A supporter prays for national healing through “*Obi and Datti,*” expressing deep emotional support. In contrast, one user accuses Obi of ethnic bias and mocks the event turnout. Meanwhile, reactions from Gombe show optimism and support, highlighting the strength of the “*Obidient*” movement.

Excerpt 3:

The first comment bluntly declares, “*Obi will not win,*” with no context. Another harshly references his Anambra record, rejecting his candidacy: “*Just like you did in Anambra... Tufiakwa.*” Yet, a final comment praises Obi's inclusive message, positioning his movement as the positive change Nigeria needs.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The present study examined the sentiment dynamics in the 2023 presidential campaign speeches of

Nigeria's three major political parties: the APC, PDP, and LP, as well as the corresponding public responses on Twitter and Facebook. Drawing on aspect-based sentiment analysis (Liu, 2012), the study highlights important insights into the emotional and evaluative landscape of political discourse and its reception among Nigerian netizens.

A critical finding is that while all three political aspirants projected predominantly positive sentiments in their campaign speeches, particularly around themes like national prosperity, unity, development, and security, there was a significant disparity between these positive portrayals and the sentiments expressed by online audiences. This contrast supports prior observations that political communication is not always received as intended by the public (Wojcik et al., 2015; Papacharissi, 2015).

The APC candidate's speeches, for instance, were mostly marked by affirmations of growth and progress, resulting in 25.5% positive sentiment at the aspect level. However, netizen responses revealed a lower positive reception (13.5%) and a relatively higher expression of negative sentiment (16.2%). This suggests a disjunction between the projected optimism of the speaker and the public's skepticism, possibly due to past political performance or unmet expectations, as theorized in political trust literature (Hetherington, 2005).

Similarly, the PDP aspirant's campaign rhetoric emphasized policy direction and national renewal, reflected in a strong 25.5% positive sentiment at the aspect level. Nevertheless, this was not equally mirrored in public discourse, which revealed only 10.8% positive sentiment and higher levels of criticism and doubt. Interestingly, the analysis showed that while the PDP's speech received a comparatively lower rate of negative reception (9.3%), the speech itself contained the highest proportion of negative lexical sentiment (21.6%). This contradiction may reflect a rhetorical strategy that blends hope with critical attacks on opponents, typical in competitive political contexts (van Dijk, 1997).

Contrastingly, the Labour Party (LP) aspirant, while having the lowest aspect-level positive sentiment (23.2%), received the most favorable reception from netizens, with 24.3% positive responses and the least negative reception (2.32%). This pattern suggests a resonance between the aspirant's messaging and public sentiment, possibly reflecting public alignment with the LP's reformist and youth-driven appeal during the 2023 campaign period. These findings echo the conclusions of Tumasjan et al. (2010), who noted that online sentiment can often act as a pulse of public political support, particularly in emerging digital democracies.

The distribution of neutral sentiments, especially evident in reactions to APC and LP speeches, highlights a substantial segment of the electorate that remains cautious or non-committal. Neutrality in political discourse can reflect uncertainty, disengagement, or critical evaluation without emotional investment (Thelwall et al., 2010).

The study also demonstrates that sentiment analysis, especially when focused on aspect-level features and public commentary, offers a powerful tool for understanding the nuances of political language and public opinion. Beyond mere polarity classification, it allows researchers to gauge the congruence or divergence between political rhetoric and public emotional response.

In sum, the findings affirm that while political aspirants attempt to control their messaging and appeal through emotionally-laden discourse, public responses often reflect deeper socio-political undercurrents and historical sentiment. This underscores the importance of studying political communication not just from the sender's perspective, but through the interpretive and affective lens of the audience (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2009).

5.2 Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, it is recommended that future research explore sentiment analysis across a broader range of political events and geographic contexts to validate the generalizability of the results. Scholars should also consider integrating multimodal data, such as images and videos, to capture the

full complexity of digital political discourse. Policymakers and political campaigners are encouraged to monitor netizen sentiment to inform more responsive and inclusive political communication strategies.

5.3 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that sentiment and opinion mining can effectively reveal public reactions to political discourse through compiled social media data. The findings show a strong negative sentiment toward the APC candidate, indicating widespread disapproval, while responses to the Labour Party candidate were more positive.

Though limited in scope, this research contributes to the growing body of work on digital political engagement and netizen sentiment. Future studies may extend the analysis to other regions, political contexts, and institutions, as social media continues to shape public discourse globally.

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