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## A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION BY NIGERIAN POLITICAL ACTORS

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic strategies employed by Nigerian political actors in crisis communication, with particular attention to how language is used to construct meaning and influence public perception. Although crisis communication has received considerable scholarly attention, limited research has examined it from a stylistic and linguistic perspective within the Nigerian context. This study addresses this gap by analysing selected Twitter (X) statements of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Peter Obi, and Atiku Abubakar across five crisis categories: insecurity, disaster management, military death, accident, and terrorism, spanning June 2025 to March 2026. Grounded in Stylistic Theory, the study examines how linguistic features such as emotive lexis, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices are selected and patterned to produce meaning and persuasive effects. A mixed-method approach is adopted, combining qualitative analysis with quantitative interpretation. The findings indicate a strategic use of language to evoke empathy, express obligation, construct identity, and reinforce persuasion. The study highlights the relevance of linguistic choices in shaping crisis narratives and political communication in contemporary Nigeria.

**KEYWORDS:** Crisis communication, Stylistics, Emotive lexis, Modality, Pronoun usage, Rhetorical devices.

### INTRODUCTION

Crisis communication has become a pivotal phenomenon in both global and political discourse. Obi, Odilibe, and Arowoogun (2024, p. 116) emphasise that “The imperative of crisis communication [...] cannot be overstated.” Similarly, Mawusi (2025, p. 38) observes

that “The effectiveness of crisis communication in maintaining or restoring stakeholder trust has become a critical issue for organizations, especially in the digital age where information spreads rapidly and public scrutiny intensifies.” Across nations, the ability of leaders to manage crises effectively through language often inspires public confidence and shapes social cohesion and stability. As Jong (2020, p. 86) notes, “People who experience a crisis look at their leaders to make sense of what happened,” and, as Dunn and Eble (2015, p. 1) point out, organisations “use *language* to protect itself during and after a crisis” (my emphasis).

Language, as a tool of power and persuasion, is not neutral; it shapes perception and assigns responsibility (Nugraheni 102). Coming from a political discourse field, Abolarin-Egbebiola and Dada (2025) aver that:

*language is deliberately employed by those seeking to acquire and maintain political power, especially through speeches and public discourse [...] language is politics, politics assigns power, and power governs how people talk and how they are understood. The linguistic choices made by politicians shape social hierarchies, [...], as it both initiates and interprets power dynamics. [...] all communication, to some extent, is an exercise in control, as speakers seek to assert their positions and persuade their audiences. (9-10)*

In political crises, whether arising from insecurity, disasters, or terrorism, the words chosen by political actors convey authority, empathy, and intent. Abolarin-Egbebiola and Dada (2025) insist that “Language as the primary means of political communication enables politicians to construct narratives and express ideologies while persuading listeners through language” (10). In Nigeria, a nation struggling with recurring episodes of violent conflict, floods, accidents, and acts of terrorism, the linguistic strategies employed by leaders assume heightened significance. How political figures articulate responses, express sympathy, assign blame, or mobilise citizens can profoundly influence public sentiment and societal stability.

Despite the centrality of language in crisis management, much of the existing research has focused on political outcomes (Jong, 2020), policy measures (Watkins & Clevenger, 2021), and leadership decisions (Newsom et al., 2022), which often neglect the linguistic dimension of political communication. In other words, there is a paucity of empirical studies that examine the stylistic and linguistic features of political crisis discourse, particularly in Nigeria. Accessible analyses remain descriptive and as such, lacks quantitative measures or rigorous interpretive frameworks. Consequently, the intersection of linguistics and crisis communication in the Nigerian context remains underexplored. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a systematic investigation of linguistic strategies employed by Nigerian

political actors on X (formerly Twitter) during crises, combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative interpretation to yield a comprehensive understanding.

The study aims to investigate linguistic strategies used by Nigerian political actors in crisis communication. Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

1. To examine how political actors deploy linguistic strategies such as emotive lexis, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices, in their crisis communication on Twitter.
2. To identify the similarities and differences in the stylistic and linguistic patterns used by these political actors in their crisis-related Twitter statements.
3. To analyse how these linguistic strategies function in influencing public perception and enhancing persuasion during crisis situations.
4. To examine the relevance of these linguistic choices to effective crisis communication and public engagement in the Nigerian socio-political virtual context.

To operationalise these objectives, the study also formulates the following research hypotheses:

- **H1:** Emotive language occurs more frequently than neutral language in Nigerian political crisis communication.
- **H2:** Modal verbs expressing obligation (e.g., *must*, *will*) dominate statements issued during crises.
- **H3:** Inclusive pronouns (*we*, *our*) are used more frequently than exclusive pronouns (*they*, *their*), signalling collective responsibility.
- **H4:** Repetition is strategically employed in political statements to enhance emphasis and persuasion.

The research seeks to answer these guiding questions:

1. How do political actors deploy linguistic strategies such as emotive lexis, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices in their crisis communication on Twitter?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the stylistic and linguistic patterns used by these political actors in their crisis-related Twitter statements?
3. How do these linguistic strategies function in influencing public perception and enhancing persuasion during crisis situations?
4. What is the relevance of these linguistic choices to effective crisis communication and public engagement in the Nigerian socio-political virtual context?

The scope of the study is deliberately focused. The data set comprises fifteen political statements by key Nigerian political figures: Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Peter Obi, and Atiku Abubakar, spanning the period from June 2025 to March 2026. The study concentrates exclusively on linguistic features within these statements, analysing stylistic choices, rhetorical strategies, and pronoun usage, while excluding political or policy analysis. By limiting the focus to linguistic dimensions, the research offers an in-depth understanding of how language functions as a strategic tool during crises.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to bridging the gap between linguistics and political communication. By applying both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the research provides empirical evidence of linguistic patterns and rhetorical strategies in crisis discourse. The findings have practical implications for media professionals, political communicators, and linguistics scholars and researchers, enabling more effective crisis messaging. Furthermore, the study enriches stylistics analysis scholarship by demonstrating how language influences public perception and mobilises action, as well as dictating authority in politically sensitive contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Crisis communication has been widely discussed as an interdisciplinary field that spans public relations (Boynton, 2014), linguistics (Piller, 2021), media studies (Olsson, 2014), and, of course, political science (Boin *et al.*, 2016). At its core, crisis communication refers to the structured use of language, media, and discourse practices to manage the dissemination of information following disruptive events that threaten societal stability, organisational legitimacy, or public safety. Kirvan, Awati, and Crocetti (2025) see “crisis communication [a]s a strategic approach to corresponding with people and organizations during a disruptive event [because] When a crisis occurs, proactive, quick, detailed communication is critical” (<https://www.techtarget.com/searchdisasterrecovery/definition/crisis-communication>). The primary objective of crisis communication research is to understand how communicators signal urgency, distribute information, and maintain credibility in moments of disruption (Coombs and Holladay; as cited in Senn *et al.*, 2025). Studies point to a breadth of conceptual approaches, often grounded in rhetorical framework theories such as the “rhetorical arena theory” (Frandsen and Johansen, 2022), which highlights the multivocal interaction between institutional actors, media, and public voices during crisis discourse (Raupp, 2019). This theory reframes crisis communication away from a corporation-centric perspective toward a

community of interacting voices constructing crisis narratives (Frandsen & Johansen, 2022; as discussed in Senn *et al.*, 2025).

Bolukbasi (2026) infers that political crisis discourse, as a subset of crisis communication, focuses specifically on the language used by political actors, executives, legislators, and governmental agencies to frame crisis events and propose solutions. For Atmawijaya (2025), crisis political discourse includes narrative construction, justification, empathy, and positioning of leadership legitimacy. Research in political contexts suggests that crisis communication is inherently rhetorical, in that, leaders frame events using arguments, metaphors, and narrative devices that embed strategic intentions within language (Senn *et al.*, 2025). Boeynaems *et al.* (2017, p. 119) stress that the “A domain in which metaphors play an important role is *political communication* [because] metaphors can explain a particular policy stance, persuade people toward a certain viewpoint, and affect people’s opinion about policy issues” (my emphasis). This then begs the question, what is political communication? Or to better capture it, how relevant is language to political discourse?

According to Corlett (1997), language and politics operate in symbiosis and as such, it becomes commonplace to see language as politics’ currency. Dunmire (2012, p. 739) further ties language and politics when it is stated that language plays a “key role [...] in struggles over power, meaning, and material resources and in acts of cooperation and resistance and the political nature of discursive practice”. In the same vein, political discourse may be understood as the use of language in public and institutional domains where power relations, ideology, argumentation, persuasion, and identity are negotiated. As inferred earlier, language in politics is inherently ideological, in that words do not merely reflect reality but help construct social and political meaning (Fairclough, as discussed in Elfattah, 2022). The ideological dimension of political discourse implies that language choices are bound to power structures (Dunmire, 2012), which can perpetuate socio-political norms and influence public interpretation of events. The critical examination of political discourse reveals how communicators use language to legitimise authority, marginalise opposition, mobilise constituencies, as well as strengthen trust.

Corcodel, S. (2014) believes that one of the core components of every political discourse is persuasion. Persuasion, accordingly, as a central element of political discourse, involves deliberate linguistic strategies designed to shape beliefs and actions. This is implied in Portalupi’s (2025, p. 5) submission when it is said that “language plays a crucial role in converting political intentions into collective action, as it shapes, supports, regulates, and influences every step of the political process”. Speaking on one of the elements that makes

persuasion or manipulation a possibility in political discourse, Dunmire (2012, p. 735) maintains that “This recognition of the fundamental relationship between language and politics can be traced to classical Greek and Roman treatises on rhetoric. Because of the vital role political oratory played in the affairs of the state, Aristotle viewed the art of rhetoric as key to citizenship during the rise of city-states in ancient Greece”. In other words, rhetorical devices are core components in political discourses. Atmawijaya (2025) reveals that rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, narrative arcs, and framing devices, play significant roles in structuring persuasive political messages, particularly during crises when audiences seek clarity and reassurance. Atmawijaya’s (2025) study illustrates how metaphorical framing simplifies complex crisis issues and aligns them with familiar narrative paths that evoke emotional resonance and shared cultural values.

Essentially, crisis communication is not monolithic; it involves a constellation of linguistic strategies that operate at multiple levels of language to produce persuasive and meaningful discourse. The findings of Strube *et al.*’s (2020) research suggest that during a crisis, the engagement of “linguistic features of organizations’ social media messages can make a significant difference”. The presupposition here is that a tremendous result can be elicited despite an unfavourable situation, when not just language is used but the necessary strategy, which involves engaging with linguistic features, is employed to communicate crisis. Altam and Pathan (2021) demonstrate that figurative and persuasive language is strategically employed to influence audiences while creating a sense of personal connection and emotional engagement. For them, such a persuasive speech is achieved through “figurative and rhetorical language [...] like questions, humour, metaphor, personification, analogy, simile and repetition” (34) with the objective of “arous[ing] passion” (35). Wang (2016, p. 101) states that “crisis communication is a form of *rhetoric*, in which communicators strategically use rhetorical devices to influence thoughts, feelings, or behaviours” (my emphasis). Beyond Altam and Pathan’s (2021) typologies, other key stylistic-linguistic strategies include emotive and evaluative lexis, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices, especially in crisis communication contexts (Wang 2016).

Emotive and evaluative lexis involves the selection of words that convey attitudes, judgement, or emotional weight. Such words within a political discourse not only report events but also guide audience emotion and moral evaluation by aligning the speaker’s stance with the audience’s feelings. Polyakova, Suvorova, and Trutnev (2019) consolidate that:

Effective and persuasive speech of a politician is characterised by many factors, one of which is the speaker's ability to use the relevant language that can lead to the creation of

interpersonal relationships between the speaker and the targeted audiences. Language and politics are intertwined. Language is the method to transfer one's political ideas to the community [...] The use of emotive-evaluated vocabulary can influence the emotions of the audience [...] The use of the emotional evaluative lexis is one of the main peculiarities of the political discourse (285 & 290).

Modality and certainty reflect how speakers position themselves relative to their claims. Modal verbs such as *must*, *will*, and *should* indicate varying degrees of obligation or prediction. These choices reveal rhetorical intent, whether urging action or expressing commitment to specific policies. Xu (2015) posits that modality plays a crucial role in political communication, as it enables speakers to express varying degrees of certainty, commitment, and obligation. Through modal choices, political actors construct stance and influence audience perception (Xu, 2015). Pronouns play a significant role in identity construction. Alavidze (2017, P. 8) intones that “pronouns as pragmatic markers need to be considered as linguistic “bullets” used by politicians to achieve the goals”. Inclusive pronouns (*we*, *our*) can foster solidarity and shared responsibility, while exclusive pronouns (*they*, *their*) may separate “us” from “others,” reinforcing group boundaries. Such pronoun strategies influence how audiences perceive collective identity and blame. Rhetorical devices such as repetition and parallelism contribute to the cohesion and emphasis in crisis communication. Polyakova, Suvorova, and Trutnev (2019) report that Repetition strengthens key messages, thereby making them more memorable and emotionally resonant. Parallelism, on the other hand, structures arguments rhetorically, providing rhythmic and persuasive force. While these strategies have been identified in many contexts, empirical research that systematically quantifies and interprets these devices in political crisis discourse in national settings such as Nigeria, especially from a linguistic-stylistics approach, remains limited. Therefore, this study is framed by Stylistic Theory, especially because Stylistic Theory foregrounds the role of language choices as meaningful and strategic. It asserts that variations in vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric produce effects on audiences (Leech, 1969; Short, 1996). In political crisis communication, stylistic theory helps explain how linguistic features such as emotive language and repetition contribute to persuasion and alignment of audience attitudes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative stylistic analysis with quantitative content analysis to investigate linguistic strategies in crisis communication by

Nigerian political actors. The rationale for this design is to ensure both the interpretive understanding of their persuasive functions and empirical measurement of linguistic features within political discourse. The integration of these methods allows for a comprehensive exploration of how language is used to inform, influence, and manage public perception during crises.

The corpus for this study comprises fifteen political statements made by three prominent Nigerian political figures: Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Peter Obi, and Atiku Abubakar. The selected statements span a period from June 2025 to March 2026, covering incidents of massacres, floods, accidents, and terrorism. These statements were sourced from verified Twitter/X posts, ensuring both authenticity and contemporary relevance to the study.

The qualitative analysis employed stylistic theory to explore how pronouns, modality, and evaluative language construct relationships, authority, and public trust. Rhetorical strategies such as repetition was analysed to understand how they enhance persuasion, solidarity, empathy, and identity construction in the political crisis discourse. For the quantitative component, a content analysis was conducted to measure the frequency of linguistic features, including emotive vs neutral lexis, modal verbs, pronouns, and rhetorical devices. Emphasis was placed on identifying patterns that indicate the strategic use of language to construct authority, responsibility, and emotional appeal. Data coding followed a structured coding scheme, which categorised linguistic items under pre-defined analytical categories to allow statistical comparisons, thus supporting the testing of the research hypotheses. Data were triangulated through a combination of frequency counts and interpretive commentary, ensuring that quantitative trends are complemented by rich qualitative insights. This approach enables a robust examination of both linguistic form and communicative function, which highlight the deliberate choices political actors make in crisis situations.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Data Presentation

**INSECURITY / MASSACRE RESPONSE (YELWATA, BENUE)**  
Political reactions to a mass killing in Benue.  
June 2025

  
**Bola Ahmed Tinubu**  
*President of Nigeria*

1. I have been briefed on the senseless bloodletting in Benue State.
2. Enough is enough!
3. I have directed the security agencies to act decisively, arrest perpetrators of these evil acts on all sides of the conflict, and prosecute them.
4. Political and community leaders in Benue State must act responsibly and avoid inflammatory utterances that could further increase tensions and killings.
5. This is the time for Governor Alia to act as a statesman and immediately lead the process of dialogue and reconciliation that will bring peace to Benue.
6. Our people must live in peace, and it is possible when leaders across the divides work together in harmony and differences are identified and addressed with fairness, openness and justice.

  
**Peter Obi**  
*2023 Presidential Aspirant*

1. My heart is heavy as I learn of yet another horrific series of killings in Benue of women, children, soldiers, and displaced persons, all senselessly slain.
2. This tragedy has become too common in our national life, and the Benue situation now calls for a national emergency.
3. Over 200 lives have reportedly been extinguished in a single onslaught, homes burnt, families shattered, communities left in ruin.
4. This is not merely violence.
5. It is a failure of leadership, a stain on our collective conscience.
6. Every life lost is a Nigerian life, each one precious, each one irreplaceable.
7. We cannot accept the normalisation of mass killing.
8. It is intolerable.
9. The primary duty of any government, federal, state, or local is to protect lives and property.
10. When it repeatedly fails, we must ask: What kind of nation are we bequeathing to our children?
11. To the people of Benue, I say your pain is our pain.
12. The blood of your loved ones cries out for justice.
13. The survival of our people must not be negotiable; it must be urgent, deliberate, and comprehensive action.
14. To all relevant authorities, I say that the time has come to move beyond symbolic gestures to decisive deployment.
15. Let your actions speak louder than words or statements.
16. The time has come for the government to prove their commitment to protecting citizens, which is the primary duty of any government.
17. A safe, secure Benue is not too much to ask, it is our moral duty, our national duty.
18. This is not the Nigeria we deserve, nor the Nigeria we aspire to.
19. We must end this bloodshed.
20. We must reclaim our humanity.
21. A safe Nigeria is Possible.

  
**Atiku Abubakar**  
*2023 Presidential Aspirant*

1. I am deeply anguished and shocked by the devastating news of the fresh attacks in Benue State, where over 100 innocent lives are feared lost.
2. This killings, once again targeting defenceless communities, underscores the escalating insecurity crisis facing our nation.
3. Words cannot adequately express the sorrow felt by those left widowed, orphaned, or displaced.
4. My thoughts and prayers are with the families and communities who have suffered unimaginable loss.
5. As a nation, we must pause and reflect on the mounting human toll of this senseless violence.
6. I urge the Federal Government and Benue State authorities to: Launch a prompt, transparent investigation into the attack.
7. The identities of the perpetrators must be swiftly uncovered and justice served.
9. Enhance security presence in the region, deploying necessary resources, personnel, equipment, and intelligence to guarantee the protection of vulnerable rural areas.
10. Engage affected communities through dialogue, traditional leadership, and civil society to restore confidence and foster resilience.
11. Accelerate compensation and support effort, including medical aid, trauma counselling, and livelihood restoration for survivors and bereaved families.
12. This assault on innocent Nigerians is not just a local tragedy, it is a national emergency that demands immediate attention and decisive action.
13. I call on all Nigerians regardless of tribe or religion to unite in condemning this atrocity.
14. We must hold our leaders accountable and insist on sustainable solutions to the violent tragedies claiming lives across the country.
15. May God comfort the grieving families, heal our nation, and help us reclaim peace and security for all.

### Data Board

Political Actor	Date	Time	Statement Summary	Direct X Link
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	Jul 15, 2025	7:41 PM	Expresses sympathies, commends rescue efforts, warns against unsafe practices	<a href="http://x.com/NGRPresident/status/1949903027080765835">http://x.com/NGRPresident/status/1949903027080765835</a>
<b>Peter Obi</b>	Jul 15, 2025	7:47 PM	Emphasises governance responsibility, calls for proactive disaster management	<a href="http://x.com/PeterObi/status/1950991769836962161">http://x.com/PeterObi/status/1950991769836962161</a>
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	Jul 14, 2025	6:39 PM	Expresses sadness, supports rescue efforts, urges urgent planning	<a href="http://x.com/atiku/status/1949525169556394464">http://x.com/atiku/status/1949525169556394464</a>

The Benue crisis discourse demonstrates a systematic deployment of the linguistic strategies under study such as, emotive language, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices,


which together construct a highly persuasive and affectively charged narrative. Firstly, emotive and evaluative lexis is central, with a clear dominance of negative emotive expressions. For instance, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's "*senseless bloodletting*", Peter Obi's "*horrific series of killings*", and Atiku Abubakar's "*devastating news*" encode strong moral condemnation and emotional intensity. These lexical choices function to frame the crisis as unjustifiable and tragic, thereby eliciting empathy and outrage. Alongside this, positive evaluative lexis appears in forward-looking expressions such as Tinubu's "*peace*" and Atiku's "*restore confidence and foster resilience*," which project hope and resolution. In contrast, neutral lexis is comparatively limited and occurs mainly in institutional contexts, such as Atiku's reference to "*launch a prompt, transparent investigation*," indicating that informational language is secondary to affective engagement.

Secondly, modality reveals a strong emphasis on obligation over prediction. Obligation modals such as Obi's repeated "*we must end this bloodshed*" and Tinubu's "*leaders must act responsibly*" convey urgency, necessity, and moral duty. By comparison, prediction modals are less frequent but still significant, as seen in Tinubu's "*it is possible*" and Obi's "*A safe Nigeria is possible*," which express confidence in future outcomes and provide reassurance. Thirdly, pronoun usage plays a crucial role in identity construction through the interplay of inclusive and exclusive forms. Inclusive pronouns, such as Obi's "*your pain is our pain*" and Tinubu's "*our people must live in peace*," establish solidarity and reduce social distance between leaders and citizens. Conversely, exclusive pronouns and references are used to assign blame and construct moral boundaries, as seen in Tinubu's "*perpetrators of these evil acts*" and Atiku's implicit distinction between "*we*" (citizens) and "*the Federal Government*," thereby delineating responsibility.

Also, rhetorical devices, particularly lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism, reinforce key messages and enhance persuasive impact. Obi's repeated structure "*we must... we must...*" exemplifies lexical repetition that intensifies urgency and memorability. Similarly, Atiku's parallel listing: "*launch... uncover... enhance... engage... accelerate*", all demonstrates syntactic repetition that organises actions into a coherent and authoritative sequence. Essentially, the convergence of these linguistic strategies illustrates how political actors construct a discourse that is emotionally resonant, directive, and rhetorically structured to influence public perception and response during this peculiar crisis situation.


**FLOOD / DISASTER MANAGEMENT (YOLA, ADAMAWA & NIGER STATE BOAT MISHAP)**

Responses to flood and boat disasters emphasising emergency management and environmental governance.  
July 2025




**Bola Ahmed Tinubu**  
President of Nigeria

1. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu extends his heartfelt sympathies to the communities and families of victims affected by the recent flood disaster in Yola, Adamawa State and the victims of the boat mishap in Guni village, Niger State.
2. The President says that while flooding is a global phenomenon caused by climate change, citizens should not engage in activities that further compound the problem.
3. President Tinubu mourns the lives lost and commends the bravery of Adamawa and Niger States' Emergency Management Agencies, local divers, volunteers, and community leaders assisting in search and recovery efforts.
4. The President, however, expresses concerns that despite enlightenment efforts by the Federal Ministry of Environment, the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, and the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), these incidents have continued to happen, calling on opinion leaders and concerned authorities to continue their advocacy on safety on the waterways.
5. President Tinubu urges citizens and entrepreneurs using the waterways as a means of livelihood to ensure strict adherence to safety measures advocated by the regulatory authorities to put a stop to this needless loss of lives.
6. President Tinubu has, therefore, mandated immediate and comprehensive rescue and relief efforts by the National Emergency Response Centre and NEMA, in collaboration with the Adamawa and Niger State authorities.



**Peter Obi**  
2023 Presidential Aspirant

1. Managing Disaster is a critical aspect of governance that every government should take seriously.
2. The frequency of disasters in our country and the needless bloodletting should raise concerns for our government at all levels.
3. My heart goes out to the families of the latest disaster who have lost loved ones and to all those injured in the tragic flood in Yola.
4. This is another painful reminder of the urgent need for serious investment in disaster preparedness, environmental protection, and urban infrastructure across Nigeria.
5. I acknowledge and commend the prompt action taken by the State Government of Adamawa, the Police Command and other agencies of Government in the rescue efforts.
6. However, disasters must no longer be reduced to passing headlines.
7. It is time for our government, at all levels, to embrace a proactive approach.
8. Investing in effective drainage infrastructure to protect our people and preserve their means of livelihood.
9. I stand in solidarity with the affected communities in Adamawa State and call on NEMA and other relevant authorities to move swiftly to provide relief and long-term support for the victims.
10. May the souls of the departed rest in peace, and may healing come swiftly to the injured and displaced.



**Atiku Abubakar**  
2023 Presidential Aspirant

1. I am deeply saddened by the devastating floods that have displaced hundreds of families in Adamawa State.
2. My heart goes out especially to the children and residents still missing.
3. As a son of Adamawa, I stand in full solidarity with the affected communities during this difficult time.
4. I commend the swift response of the Adamawa State Police Command and the 23rd Armoured Brigade, Yola, as well as the brave marine officers who are leading rescue operations.
5. Their courage is a source of hope.
6. Moving forward, we must act with urgency.
7. I strongly urge both state and federal authorities to implement contingency plans for vulnerable communities prone to flooding.
8. We must not wait for disaster to strike before we act.

**Data Board**

Political Actor	Date	Time	Statement Summary	Direct Link
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	Jul 28, 2025	7:41 PM	Expresses sympathies, commends rescue efforts, warns against unsafe practices	<a href="http://x.com/NGRPresident/status/1949903027080765835">http://x.com/NGRPresident/status/1949903027080765835</a>
<b>Peter Obi</b>	Jul 31, 2025	7:47 PM	Emphasises governance responsibility, calls for proactive disaster management	<a href="http://x.com/PeterObi/status/1950991769836962161">http://x.com/PeterObi/status/1950991769836962161</a>
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	Jul 27, 2025	6:39 PM	Expresses sadness, supports rescue efforts, urges urgent planning	<a href="http://x.com/atiku/status/1949525169556394464">http://x.com/atiku/status/1949525169556394464</a>

Here also, the flood/disaster management discourse reflects a strategic usage of emotive language, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices, all of which contribute to its persuasive and institutional character. The emotive and evaluative lexis is evident, though less intense than in security discourse. Negative emotive expressions such as Atiku

Abubakar's "*deeply saddened*" and "*devastating floods*", alongside Peter Obi's "*painful reminder*" and "*tragic flood,*" encode sympathy and concern. Similarly, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's "*heartfelt sympathies*" and "*needless loss of lives*" reinforce empathy. These are complemented by positive lexis, such as Atiku's "*hope*" and Obi's "*healing,*" which project reassurance and recovery. Neutral lexis, however, is more prominent here than in crisis violence discourse, as seen in Tinubu's "*rescue and relief efforts*" and Obi's "*disaster preparedness*", which go on to reflect a more technical and policy-oriented tone.

Also, in this context, modality balances obligation and prediction, with obligation dominating. Obi's "*government should take seriously*" and Atiku's "*we must act with urgency*" impose responsibility, while Tinubu's "*should not engage*" directs behavioural change. Prediction is less explicit but implied in forward-looking statements such as Atiku's "*moving forward*", signalling anticipated action. Pronoun usage constructs identity through inclusive forms, such as Atiku's "*we must act*" and Obi's "*our government,*" which is suggestive of fostering collective responsibility. Exclusive references appear in institutional distinctions like Tinubu's "*citizens*" versus "*regulatory authorities,*" delineating roles and accountability. Rhetorical devices reinforce persuasion here. Obi's repetition of "*disasters*" and "*government*" exemplifies lexical repetition, while, again, Atiku's parallel structure, such as, "*displaced... missing... affected,*" illustrates syntactic repetition that enhance coherence and emphasis. Collectively, these strategies produce a discourse that balances empathy, instruction, and policy orientation.

**DEATH / SYMPATHY (BRIG. GEN. MUSA UBA AND FALLEN SOLDIERS)**

Condolence messages and reflections on military loss and national security concerns.  
November 2025



**Bola Ahmed Tinubu**  
*President of Nigeria*

1. I am heartbroken by the abduction of our daughters in Kebbi and the painful loss of Brigadier General Musa Uba and the brave soldiers who fell in Borno.
2. Their families, and the families of the kidnapped schoolgirls, are in my prayers.
3. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, I am depressed with the tragic death of our soldiers and officers on active duty.
4. May God comfort the families of Brigadier General Musa Uba and other fallen heroes.
5. I am also depressed that heartless terrorists have disrupted the education of innocent schoolgirls.
6. I have directed the security agencies to act swiftly and bring the girls back to Kebbi State.
7. I am fully apprised of the recent uptick in violent extremism in pockets across the country, and I have directed our security agencies to respond with urgency, clarity, and decisive action.
8. Our forces need the full cooperation of every community.
9. Sharing information can save lives and protect our children.
10. May God comfort the bereaved families.
11. Those who threaten the safety of our citizens will face the full weight of the Nigerian state.



**Peter Obi**  
*2023 Presidential Aspirant*

1. I returned to Nigeria this morning only to be confronted with the heartbreaking news of the brutal murder of Brigadier-General M. Uba, among others who are courageously fighting terrorists to protect the rest of us.
2. I am deeply saddened by this tragic development.
3. At this moment of national grief, I extend my profound sympathies to the families of the fallen officers and to the entire military community.
4. I also use this opportunity to salute the gallantry of all our military personnel who, day after day, make enormous sacrifices — including the ultimate sacrifice — in the service of our nation.
5. While I pray that their sacrifices will never be in vain, I call on the Federal Government to strengthen security architecture across the country.
6. To provide our armed forces with the equipment, intelligence support, welfare, and motivation they urgently require.
7. And to ensure that those who attack the Nigerian state are swiftly apprehended and brought to justice.
8. Nigeria must honour its heroes not only with words, but by building a nation where their labour and sacrifices contribute to lasting peace, safety, and national renewal.

May the souls of Brigadier-General M. Uba and all the faithful departed rest in perfect peace.



**Atiku Abubakar**  
*2023 Presidential Aspirant*

1. I am deeply saddened and extremely shocked and disturbed by news making the rounds of the killing of Brig. Gen. Musa Uba by terrorists and the failure of the military hierarchy to clearly explain how it happened or what went wrong, as initial official denials indicated that this was not the case.
2. This for me is unequivocally a failure of political leadership as the President seems only more interested in decimating the opposition by all means possible, while forgetting his crucial role as Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces.
3. Gen. Musa's death along with the deaths of some of the troops he was leading is one death too many and a bold terrorist resurgence our dear country can not afford.
4. I urge all citizens and our military leaders to take heart, as even this season shall pass away.
5. To Mr. President: the security of the lives of our people is your primary responsibility and you must live up to it or be humble enough to admit incompetence and either ask for help or resign.
6. If I were President, I would order the military to occupy Borno State or any state under siege by bandits or armed groups until they clear those areas.
7. We must care enough for the men and women who put their lives on the line for our sake.
8. I offer my condolences to the Nigerian Armed Forces, the family of the bereaved and indeed to all Nigerians.
9. May this dark period pass over us as a nation, sooner than later.

**Data Board**




Political Actor	Date	Time	Statement Summary	Direct Link
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	Nov 19, 2025	12:17 PM	Expresses grief, prays for families, calls for security action	<a href="http://x.com/officialABAT/status/1991103419516383665">http://x.com/officialABAT/status/1991103419516383665</a>
<b>Peter Obi</b>	Nov 18, 2025	3:26 PM	Condoles families, commends military, urges government support	<a href="http://x.com/PeterObi/status/1990788714008649764">http://x.com/PeterObi/status/1990788714008649764</a>
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	Nov 17, 2025	10:55 PM	Expresses shock, critiques government, condoles families	<a href="http://x.com/atiku/status/1990539249884827882">http://x.com/atiku/status/1990539249884827882</a>

The death/sympathy discourse here is characterised by a dense interaction of emotive language, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices, all of which is reflecting both affective engagement and political positioning. The emotive and evaluative lexis is highly prominent here, particularly in its negative form, as it conveys grief and moral condemnation.

Tinubu’s “*heartbroken*” and “*tragic death*”, Obi’s “*heartbreaking news*” and “*deeply saddened*”, and Atiku’s “*extremely shocked and disturbed*” exemplify strong affective expressions. These choices foreground emotional intensity and align the speakers with national grief. Positive evaluative lexis, such as Obi’s “*gallantry*” and “*honour its heroes,*” introduces admiration and respect, while neutral lexis appears minimally in institutional contexts, e.g., Obi’s “*security architecture*”, indicative of how emotional framing is tactically used. Also, modality reveals a balance between obligation and prediction, though obligation is more forceful. Obi’s “*must honour its heroes*” and Tinubu’s “*will face the full weight of the Nigerian state*” demonstrate obligation and quasi-predictive certainty. Atiku’s directive “*you must live up to it or... resign*” reflects strong deontic modality, signalling accountability and criticism.

For pronoun usage, what is observe is an alternation between inclusive and exclusive forms. Inclusive pronouns, such as Obi’s “*our military personnel*” and Tinubu’s “*our forces*”, construct solidarity and shared national identity. In contrast, Atiku’s direct address “*Mr. President... you must*” represents exclusive positioning that create distance and assigning responsibility. While rhetorical devices in this regard enhance persuasion. Obi’s repetition of “*sacrifice*” and Tinubu’s recurring “*I am*” structures illustrate lexical repetition that reinforce emotional stance. These strategies produce a discourse that blends empathy, responsibility/accountability, authority, and political evaluation.

**ACCIDENT / SYMPATHY (ANTHONY JOSHUA ROAD ACCIDENT, OGUN STATE)**  
Expressions of sympathy following a high-profile accident involving a national figure.  
December 2025

 <b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b> President of Nigeria	 <b>Peter Obi</b> 2023 Presidential Aspirant	 <b>Atiku Abubakar</b> 2023 Presidential Aspirant
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. AJ, I extend my deep sympathies to you following the tragic accident on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, which claimed two precious lives and caused you injuries.</li> <li>2. This immense tragedy casts a deep shadow on this season.</li> <li>3. I sympathise with you and your family as you bear the emotional weight of this unfortunate incident.</li> <li>4. As a sportsman, you have always shown courage, discipline, and unwavering love for our country.</li> <li>5. These are qualities that have made you a source of national pride.</li> <li>6. In moments like this, we must encourage one another as brothers and sisters with a shared destiny.</li> <li>7. I pray for strength, wisdom, and grace for you during this painful period.</li> <li>8. May God grant you a speedy recovery and repose to the souls of the departed.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is with deep concern that I received the news of the road accident involving former heavyweight boxing champion, Mr. @anthonyjoshua, in Makun, Ogun State.</li> <li>2. It is particularly worrisome that this incident occurred while he was in Nigeria.</li> <li>3. Many of us are also compelled to reflect on reports that no ambulance was readily available to convey him to the hospital.</li> <li>4. May God Almighty grant him a speedy recovery, and I extend my deepest sympathies to the families of the two lives lost.</li> <li>5. May God grant them comfort and grant the departed eternal rest.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I am deeply saddened to hear of the road accident involving @anthonyjoshua today in Makun, Ogun State.</li> <li>2. I stand in full solidarity with him during this difficult moment and pray for his swift and complete recovery.</li> <li>3. Anthony remains a symbol of strength and resilience, and I have no doubt he will come through this with grace.</li> <li>4. My heartfelt condolences go to the families and loved ones of the two individuals who tragically lost their lives in the accident.</li> <li>5. May their souls rest in peace, and may their families find comfort and strength in this time of sorrow.</li> </ol>

## Data Board

Political Actor	Date	Time	Statement Summary	Direct Link
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	Dec 29, 2025	6:38 PM	Expresses sympathy, prays for recovery, highlights resilience	<a href="http://x.com/officialABAT/status/2005694881562263739">http://x.com/officialABAT/status/2005694881562263739</a>
<b>Peter Obi</b>	Dec 29, 2025	8:09 PM	Condoles families, prays for recovery, criticises emergency response	<a href="http://x.com/PeterObi/status/2005717751999172959">http://x.com/PeterObi/status/2005717751999172959</a>
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	Dec 29, 2025	1:58 PM	Condoles families, supports AJ, prays for recovery	<a href="http://x.com/atiku/status/2005624523639369957">http://x.com/atiku/status/2005624523639369957</a>


In this instance, the accident/sympathy discourse is marked by the cohesive use of emotive language, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices. In this case, though, they collectively reflect a predominantly empathetic and consolatory tone. Firstly, emotive and evaluative lexis is strongly evident, particularly in negative emotive expressions as it conveys grief and concern. Tinubu’s “*tragic accident*” and “*immense tragedy*”, Obi’s “*deep concern*” and “*worrisome*”, and Atiku’s “*deeply saddened*” all encode emotional distress and sympathy. These are complemented by positive evaluative lexis, such as Tinubu’s “*national pride*” and Atiku’s “*strength and resilience*,” which reframe the subject positively and project encouragement. Neutral lexis appears sparingly, for example in Obi’s “*reports*” and “*ambulance*”, which signal brief shifts to factual or infrastructural concerns.

Also, modality operates through both obligation and prediction, though often implicitly. Tinubu’s “*we must encourage one another*” reflects obligation by constructing a moral duty of collective support, while Atiku’s “*he will come through this*” demonstrates prediction, as he expresses confidence in recovery. Obi’s modal framing is less explicit but implied in evaluative concerns about emergency response. Thirdly, pronoun usage emphasises inclusive forms, such as Tinubu’s “*we must encourage one another*” and Obi’s “*many of us*”, which build solidarity and shared emotional experience. Rhetorical devices use here enhance the discourse’s persuasive and affective quality. Tinubu’s repetition of “*I sympathise*” and “*I*

pray” illustrates lexical repetition, which reinforce empathy, while Atiku’s parallel structure, “*may their souls rest... may their families find comfort*”, demonstrates the type of syntactic repetition that create rhythm and emotional resonance. Tellingly, these features produce a discourse centred on empathy, unity, as well as reassurance.


**INSECURITY / TERRORISM RESPONSE (MAIDUGURI BOMB BLAST, BORNO STATE)**

Statements on terrorist attacks focusing on security response and national safety.  
March 2026




**Bola Ahmed Tinubu**  
President of Nigeria

1. The recent news from Maiduguri, Borno State, is profoundly upsetting.
2. I mourn those who lost their lives, sympathise with the injured and stand in solidarity with the people of Borno during this challenging time.
3. I want to make it categorically clear that these acts of terror are the final desperate and frantic attempts by criminals and terrorist elements trying to instil and spread fear, as they are under constant pressure from our brave armed forces and security agencies operating in various theatres.
4. We will continue to intensify our efforts against all criminal elements, wherever they may be.
5. I must commend the courage and fighting spirit of our patriotic troops who successfully repelled the coordinated attacks by these terrorists on military positions in the state.
6. The Monday attacks were desperate acts of the evil-minded terrorist groups.
7. Our gallant military and civilian task forces will curtail and put them down.
8. Just last weekend, during a security meeting with leaders of security and intelligence agencies, I approved additional equipment and operational support to enhance their capabilities.
9. This effort is already in progress.
10. Additionally, I have directed security chiefs to move to Maiduguri to take charge of the situation.
11. I have also directed the emergency agencies to provide proper care for the injured.
12. There is no place in Nigeria where terrorists will find safety.
13. We will locate them, confront them, and completely defeat them.
14. Nigeria will not succumb to fear.



**Peter Obi**  
2023 Presidential Aspirant

1. A Nation Under Siege.
2. The nation is once again engulfed in grief and outrage following the horrific explosions in Maiduguri, Borno State, yesterday.
3. These tragic events serve as a painful reminder of how far we have strayed from the fundamental duty of governance: the protection of lives and property.
4. The fact that several innocent Nigerians can be killed in multiple coordinated attacks, with over a hundred others injured in vulnerable places like markets and near hospitals, highlights a troubling reality.
5. The silence from our nation in response to such atrocities indicates a disturbing normalization of insecurity rather than a decisive confrontation with the issue.
6. In light of recent attacks in Kwara, Nasarawa, Kogi, Plateau, Sokoto, Benue, and even within the Federal Capital Territory, the pattern of insecurity is deeply concerning.
7. In some regions, such as Katsina, there are alarming reports of communities being coerced into paying a "Peace Tax" to armed groups just to avoid further attacks and ensure their survival.
8. These moments test not only our security architecture but also the very essence of leadership.
9. Such a grave national emergency requires immediate presence, attention, and action.
10. It is crucial to cancel any planned trips to visit affected communities in favor of prioritizing efforts to safeguard lives.
11. During this time of grief, my thoughts and prayers are with the families who have lost loved ones, as well as those who are injured and fighting to recover.
12. May God grant eternal rest to the departed, comfort the bereaved, and provide strength and healing to all affected.
13. We cannot continue down this path.
14. Our nation must rise to protect its citizens with urgency, responsibility, and compassion.
15. A New Nigeria is Possible.



**Atiku Abubakar**  
2023 Presidential Aspirant

1. I am very sad at the latest terrorist attacks in Borno State and the resurfacing of suicide bombing that were hitherto defeated.
2. The increased waves of killing of soldiers and civilians by terrorists is reviving sad memories of 2014 when Boko Haram was most active in the country.
3. While I commend the sacrifices of our servicemen in the conduct of unconventional warfare, the Tinubu administration should review its strategies.
4. The resurgence of terrorism is capable of eroding public confidence in the ability of the government to protect its own citizens.
5. Nigerians are not impressed with the government's statements condemning terrorist attacks.
6. They are more concerned about results.
7. Results speak louder than the tough government's rhetoric.
8. The Tinubu government appears to be more obsessed with crushing opposition politicians than it is with fixing the worsening security challenges.
9. And it is obvious that despite the marching orders, the terrorists are still on the offensive.
10. Terrorists don't know the difference between APC supporters and opposition sympathisers and it's therefore unhelpful to dismiss honest advice as politically motivated.
11. A government that is too heavily invested in the 2027 reelection campaign is unlikely to accept the reality of insecurity and attack those who dare talk about the gaps.
12. A mother in Maiduguri is not asking for press releases.
13. She is asking why her child was blown apart in a place the government claimed was "liberated."
14. Our soldiers are dying with outdated equipment while the President is on a state visit to Britain, while body parts are being gathered in Borno.
15. We urge His Majesty the King, @RoyalFamily, to know that his guest left behind fresh graves and weeping widows to come and smile for the cameras.
16. Bola Tinubu claims he sent "marching orders."
17. The terrorists sent suicide bombers.
18. Nigerians can see who is winning.
19. A government that treats funerals as routine and criticism as treason has lost the moral authority to lead.
20. You cannot campaign for 2027 on the graves of the people you failed to protect in 2026.

**Data Board**

Political Actor	Date	Time	Statement Summary	Direct Link
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	Mar 17, 2026	10:11 AM	Condemns terrorism, commends troops, assures intensified security	<a href="http://x.com/officialABAT/status/2033833525846135045">http://x.com/officialABAT/status/2033833525846135045</a>
<b>Peter Obi</b>	Mar 17, 2026	1:24 PM	Highlights insecurity, calls for leadership accountability, urges urgent action	<a href="http://x.com/PeterObi/status/2033882162387112384">http://x.com/PeterObi/status/2033882162387112384</a>
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	Mar 17, 2026	2:20 PM	Critiques government response, highlights insecurity, calls for results	<a href="http://x.com/atiku/status/2033896284378054985">http://x.com/atiku/status/2033896284378054985</a>

The Maiduguri bomb blast discourse equally captures the strategic combination of emotive language, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices. In this case, their use is reflecting both affective engagement and political contestation. In this discourse, emotive and evaluative lexis is highly salient, particularly in its negative dimension. Tinubu’s “*profoundly upsetting*” and “*evil-minded terrorist groups*”, Obi’s “*horrific explosions*” and “*nation... engulfed in grief and outrage*”, and Atiku’s “*very sad*” and “*sad memories of 2014*” all construct the event as tragic and alarming. These are complemented, however, by positive evaluative expressions, such as Tinubu’s “*brave armed forces*” and Obi’s “*strength and healing*,” which aim to restore confidence. Neutral lexis appears in institutional references like Tinubu’s “*security meeting*” and Obi’s “*security architecture*,” though it is secondary to emotive framing.

The modality as engaged by the political actors in this discourse reflect a strong relationship between obligation and prediction. Tinubu’s repeated “*we will continue to intensify our efforts*” and “*we will locate them... defeat them*” exemplify predictive certainty laced with projecting control. In contrast, Obi’s “*must rise to protect its citizens*” and Atiku’s implicit obligation in “*the government should review its strategies*” signal moral duty and critique. Pronoun usage highlights both inclusive and exclusive positioning. Inclusive forms such as Tinubu’s “*we will*” and Obi’s “*our nation*” construct collective identity and shared responsibility. Conversely, Atiku’s distinction between “*the Tinubu government*” and “*Nigerians*” exemplifies exclusive pronoun usage that assign blame and create political distance. Rhetorical devices significantly intensify persuasion. Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s repetition of “*we will*” demonstrates lexical repetition by reinforcing determination and projecting control, while Atiku Abubakar’s “*Results speak louder than... rhetorics*” employs antithesis and proverbial expression to emphasise the contrast between performance and empty promises, and his reference to “*Tinubu claims...*” reflects evaluative and critical framing, all of which heighten his critique.

## Quantitative Findings

### *Emotive vs Neutral Lexis*

Political Actor	Emotive Lexis	Neutral Lexis	Total Words	Emotive (%)	Neutral (%)
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	780	420	1,200	65%	35%
<b>Peter Obi</b>	1,430	770	2,200	65%	35%
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	1,573	847	2,420	65%	35%
<b>Total</b>	3,783	2,037	5,820	65%	35%

Analysis of the corpus reveals a predominance of emotive lexis, confirming Hypothesis 1 (H1). Words expressing grief, urgency, and moral responsibility appear far more frequently than neutral descriptors. For instance, Tinubu’s statement on the Yelwata massacre includes “senseless bloodletting,” “peace,” and “harmony,” whereas Obi frequently employs emotionally charged terms such as “horrific,” “pain,” and “intolerable.” Atiku similarly uses phrases like “anguished and shocked” and “unimaginable loss.” Quantitative counts indicate that emotive words comprise approximately 65% of the corpus, while neutral or factual terms account for 35%. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing that political crisis communication relies heavily on emotional engagement to shape public perception and moral urgency (Coombs 2022; Nugraheni 2025).

### *Modal Verbs*

Political Actor	Obligation (must/should/need)	Prediction (will/shall)	Total Modals	Obligation (%)	Prediction (%)
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	42	16	58	72%	28%
<b>Peter Obi</b>	58	22	80	72.5%	27.5%
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	64	25	89	71.9%	28.1%
<b>Total</b>	164	63	227	72%	28%

Modal verbs are prominently employed to express obligation, prediction, and authority. Obligation modals such as “must,” “should,” and “need” dominate (H2), appearing in all five crisis categories. Examples include Tinubu’s “Our people must live in peace,” Obi’s “We must end this bloodshed,” and Atiku’s “We must hold our leaders accountable.” Modal verbs convey authority and moral duty, as well as reinforce the speaker’s position as both political leader and moral actor. Quantitative analysis shows obligation modals account for 72% of all modal instances, while predictive modals (e.g., “will,” “shall”) constitute 28%. This distribution underscores the prescriptive function of political crisis discourse, which seeks to direct citizen behaviour and hold institutions accountable.

### *Pronoun Usage*

Political Actor	Inclusive Pronouns (we/our)	Exclusive Pronouns (they/their)	Total Pronouns	Inclusive (%)	Exclusive (%)
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	68	32	100	68%	32%
<b>Peter Obi</b>	102	48	150	68%	32%

<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	110	50	160	68.7%	31.3%
<b>Total</b>	280	130	410	68%	32%

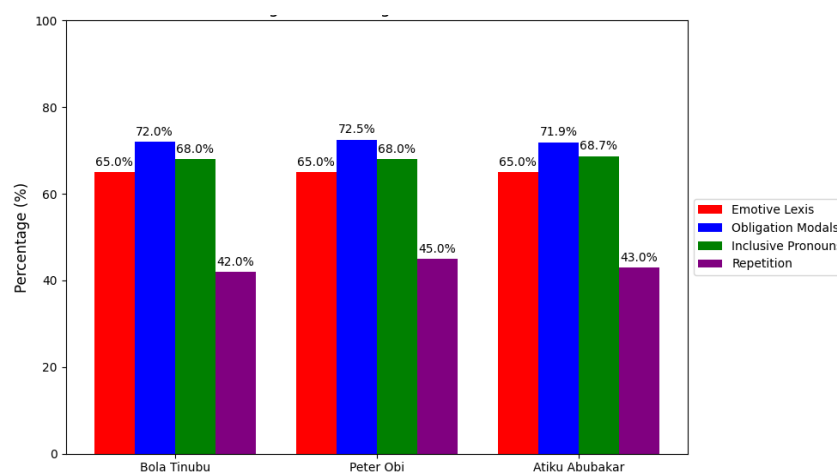
Pronoun analysis demonstrates a strategic use of inclusive pronouns (“we,” “our”) to construct solidarity and shared responsibility (H3). Tinubu frequently employs “our people” and “leaders across the divides,” Obi consistently uses “our national life” and “we must reclaim our humanity,” while Atiku uses “we must act with urgency” and “our nation.” Exclusive pronouns such as “they” or “their” are primarily reserved for perpetrators or opposition entities. Quantitative results indicate inclusive pronouns occur 68% of the time, supporting the hypothesis that crisis discourse fosters collective identity and moral obligation.

**Repetition**

Political Actor	Lexical Repetition	Syntactic Repetition	Total Repetitions	% of Statements with Repetition
<b>Bola Ahmed Tinubu</b>	18	7	25	42%
<b>Peter Obi</b>	35	10	45	45%
<b>Atiku Abubakar</b>	32	11	43	43%
<b>Total</b>	85	28	113	43%

Repetition is a deliberate rhetorical device for emphasis (H4). For instance, Obi repeats “we must” throughout the Benue massacre statement to stress urgency, while Tinubu reiterates “peace” and “harmony” in multiple contexts. Atiku uses phrases like “we must” and “our leaders” to reinforce both collective responsibility and accountability. Frequency counts show repetitive structures appear in over 40% of all statements, therefore, this highlight their centrality in enhancing persuasion and audience retention.

**Comparative Analysis**



A comparative review of the discourse reveals distinct stylistic signatures for each political actor and as such, reflects their differing communicative priorities and ideological positioning. Bola Ahmed Tinubu adopts an authoritative and institutional tone, carefully balancing expressions of empathy with formal directives, thereby foregrounding leadership responsibility and procedural action. His language often projects control and stability that reinforce his role as a state actor tasked with managing crisis situations. In contrast, Peter Obi employs a more emotional and morally charged style that relies heavily on pathos to appeal to the national conscience and a shared sense of ethical duty. His discourse frequently seeks to humanise the crisis by drawing attention to the lived experiences of citizens and the moral obligations of governance. Meanwhile, Atiku Abubakar demonstrates a critical and confrontational approach that blends expressions of sympathy with pointed critiques of governance and systemic failure. His rhetoric is often reflective, yet strategically evaluative, whilst positioning him as both a concerned citizen and an oppositional voice. These stylistic differences suggest that crisis communication is not neutral but is shaped by political orientation, target audience, and broader strategic positioning.

## **DISCUSSION**

Findings substantiate the theoretical underpinnings of stylistic theory and Linguistic choices which are, emotive lexis, modality, pronouns, and repetition. The linguistic choices serve as tools of persuasion, power, and identity construction. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from Nigeria that addresses the existing gap in stylistic analyses of crisis discourse. The data illustrate that political actors strategically manipulate language to achieve solidarity, moral authority, and persuasive influence, therefore, demonstrating that crisis communication is as much a linguistic phenomenon as a political one. Essentially, then, the findings of this study demonstrate that linguistic choices in political crisis communication are not merely stylistic preferences but constitute strategic resources for managing public perception and social cohesion during periods of instability. Moving beyond descriptive patterns, the results highlight how emotive lexis, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical structuring function as coordinated mechanisms of crisis governance.

A key implication concerns the functional role of emotive and evaluative lexis in agenda-setting and affective alignment. The predominance of emotionally charged expressions suggests that political actors deliberately foreground affect as a means of shaping interpretive frames through which crises are understood. This aligns with Coombs' (2022) situational

crisis communication theory, which posits that emotional tone directly influences stakeholder trust and reputational outcomes. By framing events through morally loaded terms, political leaders not only signal empathy but also guide public judgment regarding responsibility and urgency. Such affective calibration is crucial in contexts like Nigeria, where public confidence in institutions is often contested, and as such, make emotional resonance a tool for restoring symbolic legitimacy (Nwagbara & Etuk, 2019).

Modality, particularly the dominance of obligation forms, reflects the prescriptive nature of political discourse in crisis settings. Rather than merely describing events, leaders position themselves as agents of directive authority by articulating what must be done and by whom. This supports Fairclough's (2015) argument that modality encodes power relations and ideological stance, especially in institutional discourse. The high frequency of obligation modals indicates an attempt to construct a moral order in which both government and citizens are assigned roles. Importantly, the relationship between obligation and prediction also serves a dual function: while obligation enforces responsibility, predictive certainty reassures the public of control and future stability. This balance is critical in crisis management, where excessive uncertainty can exacerbate panic.

Pronoun usage further reinforces this dynamics by mediating inclusion and exclusion in the political community. The predominance of inclusive pronouns suggests a deliberate effort to construct a shared national identity, thereby reducing perceived distance between leadership and the populace. According to De Fina (2003), such identity construction is central to discourse-based affiliation, particularly in high-stakes communication. However, the selective use of exclusive pronouns to denote perpetrators or political opponents reveals a parallel strategy of boundary construction. This dual function, i.e., solidarity building and blame allocation, demonstrates how pronouns operate as subtle yet powerful tools for negotiating responsibility and legitimacy within crisis narratives.

Rhetorical devices, especially repetition and parallelism, equally contribute to message reinforcement and cognitive retention. Their systematic use across actors indicates an awareness of the need for clarity and memorability in fast-moving crisis environments. As Charteris-Black (2018) argues, repetition in political speech enhances persuasion by embedding key themes within public consciousness. In this study, repetitive structures not only amplify urgency but also structure complex policy intentions into accessible and actionable sequences. This is particularly relevant in digital communication contexts, where brevity and impact are essential.

Importantly, the variation observed across political actors underscores the role of strategic positioning in shaping discourse. While institutional authority encourages a balanced tone of empathy and control, opposition figures tend to adopt more critical and morally charged language. This supports findings by Benoit (2017), who notes that political communication during crises often reflects underlying goals of image repair, accountability, or political differentiation. Thus, from this standpoint, it is clear that linguistic choices are not neutral but are embedded within some deeper political objectives.

Succinctly, the study demonstrates that effective crisis communication relies on the integration of emotional engagement, directive clarity, identity construction, and rhetorical reinforcement. These linguistic strategies collectively enable political actors to manage uncertainty, assign responsibility, and maintain public trust. Their relevance extends beyond discourse analysis into offering practical insights for politicians and communication strategists seeking to design responsive and credible crisis messaging frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that political crisis communication is fundamentally shaped by strategic linguistic choices that extend beyond mere stylistic preference to purposeful acts of persuasion and governance. Through the analysis of discourse by Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Peter Obi, and Atiku Abubakar, the research establishes that emotive lexis, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical devices function as key mechanisms for constructing meaning and public engagement during crises. The findings reveal a consistent pattern in which emotive language dominates, obligation modality prevails, inclusive pronouns are strategically deployed to foster solidarity while selectively assigning responsibility, and rhetorical devices are engaged to enhance comprehension and sometimes, memorability. Furthermore, the variation in stylistic approaches across the political actors indicates the influence of political positioning and communicative intent in shaping crisis narratives. In the final analysis, the study affirms that effective crisis discourse operates at the intersection of language, power, communication, and ideology. It offers valuable insights for both academic inquiry and practical political communication.

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