

# A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Socio-Cultural and Socio-Political Memes among Nigerian Netizens

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## ABSTRACT

This study presents a critical multimodal analysis of memes of different socio-cultural and socio-political issues in Nigeria purposively collected from three dominant online platforms - X (Former Twitter), Facebook, and Nairaland, (seven memes each from socio-cultural and socio-political issues) within a period of six-month (December 2024 to May 2025), totalling fourteen memes. The analysis, informed by Theo van Leeuwen's socio-semiotic model and Norman Fairclough's socio-cultural approach to critical discourse studies (CDS), examines both linguistic and non-linguistic resources used to create meaning and impact in the selected memes through a qualitative and comparative methods of analysis. The findings reveal that these memes play crucial roles in mobilizing the electorate and influencing public opinion through persuasion and solidarity-building techniques. The study reveals that political and cultural identities are constructed in the discourse. Socio-political memes can mobilize action, raise awareness, or critique governance and may contribute to polarization or reinforce existing views; while socio-cultural memes foster social connection, shared laughter, or cultural pride and can spark conversations about social norms and cultural values. It confirms that both types of memes can increase engagement with social issues and politics and provide a platform for Nigerians to express themselves and be heard. The study highlights the construction of socio-cultural identities in the discourse and underscores the importance of online platforms in mediating socio-cultural and socio-political memes in Nigeria. The study concludes that memes are not meaningless constructs but are imbued with thoughts, anxieties, ideologies, and identities expressed by Nigerian netizens.

**Keywords:** multimodal critical discourse, Nigerian Netizens, socio-cultural memes, socio-political memes,

## INTRODUCTION

The attention paid to the ways Nigerian netizens now react to social and political issues by formulating memes to proclaim their interests or legitimise their positions has been prominent in critical multimodal discourse analysis (Adebomi, 2020). This stands in stark contrast to the widely known television and radio symposiums and the textual battles on the internet's "wall," where users communicate and publish messages on politics, society, and culture. It is the advances in technology, the acclimation of Nigerian internet users to the digital era, and the inventiveness of contemporary internet users that have led to this development. (Adebayo & Adeyemo, 2018; Grundlingh, 2018).

Alfred, (2019) posits that the use of memes to propagate popular beliefs about society, politics, and culture on the internet is one of these digital communication tools, and that it has become a widespread practice in many socio-political contexts throughout the world. The proliferation of social media platforms and internet memes has transformed how Nigerians engage with socio-cultural issues, creating new spaces for online discourse and identity formation. Internet memes, in particular, have become a popular medium for Nigerians to express thoughts, opinions, and anxieties about various socio-cultural issues, including politics, religion, culture, and social justice (Ademilokun, 2018).

Shifman (2013: 41) describes internet memes as "a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, (b) were created with awareness of one another, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users." The definition highlights the three main characteristics of

memes—content, form, and stance—as well as the part that human agency plays in how online memes spread and change (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). Leong (2015) notes that using memes to propagate popular beliefs about society, politics, and culture on the internet has become widespread in many socio-political contexts.

Nigerian netizens use memes to react to social and political issues, proclaiming their interests or legitimizing their positions, a trend prominent in critical multimodal discourse analysis (Adebomi, 2020). Nigeria's vibrant online culture is characterized by creativity, humor, and satire. Nigerian netizens use memes to comment on issues ranging from corruption and governance to social inequality and cultural norms (Shifman, 2013). These memes reflect concerns and anxieties of Nigerian netizens and shape public opinion, influencing social discourse (Shifman, 2013). Despite the growing importance of internet memes, research on multimodal strategies employed in these memes is scarce.

This study addresses this gap by conducting a multimodal critical discourse analysis of selected socio-cultural memes among Nigerian netizens, examining linguistic and non-linguistic resources used to create meaning and impact. By exploring these strategies, this study contributes to understanding the role of memes in shaping online discourse and identity formation in Nigeria, providing insights into the complex and dynamic nature of online culture.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) examines the interplay of semiotic systems, including written and visual elements, to derive meaning (Unuabonah & Oyeboode, 2021). Critical Discourse Analysis delves into implicit ideologies and power dynamics in texts, emphasizing the role of language in constructing and maintaining social identities and inequalities (Widdowson, 2000).

Memes, as multimodal resources, contribute to discourse by elucidating the goals of specific groups. There are many communicative occasions that are entirely visual or non-verbal. discourse today includes written texts, spoken texts, text-based graphics, and visuals. Online discourse, encompassing communication on various platforms, reflects power dynamics from offline settings (Herring, 2001). Social media serves as a space where discourse domains, including racism, gender inequality, and political speech thrive.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of internet memes' role in representing socio-political issues, employing critical multimodal discourse analysis to scrutinize selected memes among Nigerian netizens. The focus is on examining linguistic representations, ideologies, and the dynamics of power within these memes on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter.

### **Memes in Socio-cultural Discourse on the Internet**

Several studies have looked at memes in socio-cultural discourse from the perspectives of meme production motivation and memetic text nature, the function of memes in instantiating political consciousness, setting political agendas, and engaging in socio-political criticism, as well as the discursive appropriation of memes in the representation of political candidates (Kress, & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Shifman et al. 2007; Tay, 2014; Adegboju & Oyeboode, 2015; Hutterington, 2016; Dzanic & Berberovic, 2017).

According to Grundlingh (2018), internet users commonly employ memes to interact with one another on social networking sites and other online venues. He argues that memes successfully deliver the desired message. Memes, he continues, can be created to serve a number of purposes, making them speech acts. Even though the current study does not fall under the pragmatics category, we believe that memes can serve a number of purposes.

According to Wiggins and Bowers (2014), the popularity of Internet memes as a social media activity and genre has made them a subject of scholarly study. Many academics research memes to comprehend digital culture. Shifman (2013: 364) explores the fundamental characteristics of the Internet meme, including how it spreads through competition and selection, how it can be copied through imitation, and how it becomes a shared social phenomenon. Memes can take on several kinds of structural forms. The image macro meme type is identified by Brideau & Berret (2014). Typically, it comprises of a textual passage placed over an image.

Studies have shown that memes are used to create humor and satire in online discourse, allowing netizens to critique societal issues in a humorous and engaging way (Adebayo, 2020; Ope-Davies et al., 2021). Memes also

reflect the concerns and anxieties of Nigerian netizens, providing insights into the social and cultural context of the country (Ajayi et al., 2022).

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) has been employed to examine the linguistic and non-linguistic resources used in memes to create meaning and impact (Unuabonah & Oyeboade, 2021; Adebomi, 2020). Olateju et al. (2014) revised the concept of discourse to read "any communicative text, whether written, spoken, visual, or multimodal, which produces specific meanings in a particular context and whose meanings can be appropriated from the context." According to Olateju et al. (2014), Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is a developing field in the study of multimodal texts that looks at the relationship between the meaning potentials that a text utilises when employing various modes.

These studies have revealed that memes convey complex political messages using semiotic resources, including color, gesture, and text (Rezeki et al., 2024). The use of memes in Nigerian online culture has also been linked to the country's socio-political and historical context, with memes often reflecting the tension between different regions and groups (Elshierif, 2018).

### **The Role of Social Media in Political Communication**

The use of social media in political communication has become increasingly important in recent years, particularly in the context of election campaigns. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Nairaland have become key spaces for political communication, with political actors using these platforms to reach audiences, mobilise support, and shape public opinion (Adegoju & Oyeboade, (2015). Research has shown that social media platforms have played a significant role in election campaigns around the world, including Nigeria. For instance, during the 2015 Nigerian presidential election, social media was extensively used by political parties and candidates to disseminate campaign messages, engage with voters, and mobilise support.

In discourse, ideology emerged in the final decade of the eighteenth century. It is a system of prevailing theories and beliefs that have an impact on every aspect of human social interaction and organisation, including political, economic, scientific, educational, and cultural affairs (Fairclough, 1992). Ideologies can be contested and transformed through discourse, as language is not a passive tool for the dissemination of power relations (Fairclough, 1992).

One way power operates in discourse is through what Fairclough (1989) calls the "power behind the discourse." This refers to the social and institutional structures and relations that shape and influence the production and dissemination of discourse. For instance, in the context of political discourse, those in power may use language to construct and reinforce their own authority and legitimacy while marginalising and discrediting the voices and perspectives of those who challenge their power (Chilton, 2004). This can involve the use of rhetorical strategies such as framing, metaphors, and euphemisms to shape public perception and opinion (Van Dijk, 1998).

### **Multimodal Discourse Analysis**

Multimodal discourse analysis is an approach to discourse that focuses on how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication (images, film, video, pictures, and sound) as opposed to just language (Adebomi, 2020). In addition, multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) focuses on social interaction and how meaning is achieved through the use of multiple modes of communication rather than just language (Oyeboade 2015; Ademilokun & Olateju 2016).

Critical Discourse Analysis primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. It refers to a diverse collection of socio-theoretical perspectives on discourse in society, encompassing a wide range of applications and approaches in discourse analysis (Widdowson, 2000).

Power in discourse analysis is a central concept that is used to examine how language is used to shape and maintain social hierarchies (Fairclough, 1989; Foucault, 1972). According to Fairclough (1989), power is not solely located in individuals or institutions but is also present in discourse itself. In other words, power relations are produced and reproduced through language use. Some discourses are given authority and privilege, while

others are relegated to the margins. For instance, in the context of political discourse, those in power may use language to construct and reinforce their own authority and legitimacy while marginalising and discrediting the voices and perspectives of those who challenge their power (Chilton, 2004). This can involve the use of rhetorical strategies such as framing, metaphors, and euphemisms to shape public perception and opinion (Van Dijk, 1998).

In discourse, ideology emerged in the final decade of the eighteenth century. It is a system of prevailing theories and beliefs that have an impact on every aspect of human social interaction and organisation, including political, economic, scientific, educational, and cultural affairs (Fairclough, 1992). Van Dijk (1998) posits that ideology is a system of beliefs and values that guides people's actions and influences the way they interpret and respond to events. The study also views it as a means by which ideologies are communicated and disseminated, as well as a site where they can be challenged and transformed.

Moreover, in political discourse, ideology is used to shape public opinion and legitimise the actions of those in power. In this context, language is used to construct a narrative that reinforces the dominant ideology and marginalises alternative perspectives (van Dijk, 1998). This can be seen in the use of slogans, such as "Make America Great Again," in the 2016 US Presidential election, which serve to reinforce a particular vision of America and its values.

Thus, van Dijk (1998) argues that through critical analysis of discourse, it is possible to challenge dominant ideologies and construct alternative narratives that challenge the status quo. For example, feminist discourse has challenged dominant ideologies around gender and power, highlighting the ways in which language reinforces gender inequalities and constructing alternative narratives that challenge the status quo. By challenging dominant ideologies through discourse, feminist discourse has helped to transform social norms and values around gender and power.

Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays an important role in discourse analysis. In discourse analysis, identity is seen as a social construct that is shaped and negotiated through language use. For instance, in political discourse, identities are constructed and performed through language use, with politicians and their supporters using language to reinforce their own identities and marginalise alternative perspectives (Van Dijk, 2006). This can be seen in the use of labels such as "liberal" or "conservative", which serve to construct and reinforce political identities and power relations.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The study employed a qualitative approach design and focus on selected socio-political and socio-cultural memes among Nigerian netizens.

**Data and Data Collection:** Data are the memes collected through purposive sampling from X (Former Twitter), Facebook, and Nairaland. Criteria for selection was relevance to socio-political and socio-cultural issues in Nigeria. Popularity and engagement (e.g., likes, shares, comments). Diversity in terms of topic, tone, and format. The data for the research were the internet memes used by netizens to make known their positions on public socio-cultural issues. The memes were fourteen purposively collected from three dominant online platforms - X (Former Twitter), Facebook, and Nairaland, which capture different aspects of socio-cultural and socio-political issues in Nigeria. They were collected within a period of six-month (December 2024 to May 2025).

**Data Sampling Method:** Data were subjected to both linguistic and non-linguistic analysis. By their nature, social media memes often bear very scanty linguistic descriptions. In fact, some of them do not bear verbal codes at all. They are mere pictures. More so, some of these memes have clear messages while others express cryptic messages. These are some of the features of the memes selected for this study. The pictorial and linguistic characteristics are examined in order to explain their various socio-cultural implications in contemporary Nigeria.

**Procedure for Data Analysis:** The qualitative method of analysis is employed for the study so as to identify and analyse both linguistic and non-linguistic resources in the socio-cultural internet memes; discuss the use of the linguistic and non-linguistic resources in the expression of power, identity, and ideology; and their relevance to

the social-cultural contexts of the Nigeria's condition with a view to establishing people's reactions to them. Also, data collected were listed and classified for easy and systematic analysis under the following headings and sub-headings:

- i. Analysis of the Socio-cultural memes of study
- ii. Analysis of the Socio-political memes of study
- iii. Comparative analysis of socio-cultural memes and socio-political memes of study.

**Data Analysis:** Analysis of their linguistic and non-linguistic resources of the memes' in terms of text: language, tone, style; image: visual elements, composition, symbolism; Context: social, cultural, historical background. Comparative Analysis was conducted through identified patterns and themes across selected memes. Socio-political vs. socio-cultural memes purposively selected from different time periods or contexts: socio-political memes collected were those memes creators posted during the 2023 presidential campaigns in Nigeria while socio-cultural memes were collected within 2024-2025.

The study compared patterns and themes between socio-political and socio-cultural memes Analysis: Interpret findings, considering the context and implications of the memes by answering the following comparative Questions: How do socio-political campaign memes differ from socio-cultural memes in terms of tone and language?

What visual elements are commonly used in each type of meme?

How do the memes reflect or shape Nigerian socio-cultural identities?

What are the implications of these memes for public discourse and engagement?

The study is based on triangulation method of analysis to ensure its validity and reliability using multiple data sources and methods to validate findings and increase its credibility and trustworthiness. Hence, the memes collected from X social media platform were analyzed using different theoretical frameworks (MCDA, socio-semiotics).

As a researcher, one acknowledges that one's outsider perspective on Nigerian culture and politics may influence one's interpretation of the memes. To mitigate this, one engages in ongoing reflection and sought feedback from Nigerian experts and participants. By incorporating these strategies, one could increase the validity and reliability of the study and ensure a more nuanced understanding of Nigerian socio-cultural and socio-political memes.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was based Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) theoretical framework of Theo van Leeuwen (2015)'s socio-semiotic model and Norman Fairclough's socio-cultural approach to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). MCDA recognises that meaning is created through the interplay of multiple modes of communication, including language, image, and other semiotic resources. This is consistent with early Hallidayan theory, which asserts that non-linguistic techniques and linguistic methods are both used in discourse construction (Machin & Mayr, 2012). It is important to note that MCDA is a development of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and offers an organised method for examining not only language but also various semiotic modes, such as pictures, photographs, and diagrams, and how they convey meaning that is frequently more subliminal and indirect than language. MCDA examines how ideology, identity, and power are portrayed through expressions.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) created a set of tools based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) that enable us to examine lexical and grammatical decisions made in language as well as visual feature selection. Based on the crucial discourse aspects of discourses, visual resources like colour, stance, gaze, salience, modality, and

transitivity are investigated. Multimodal critical discourse analysis's primary concern is whether or not it is being critically analysed. Texts that appear normal or neutral on the surface but may actually be ideological and seek to alter the portrayal of events and people for specific objectives use linguistic and visual methods (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 9). This theoretical framework is deemed appropriate for this study since it gives one the chance to produce an exhaustive and in-depth examination of the linguistic and non-linguistic components of a multi-semiotic conversation.

## Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

### Data Analysis and Discussion of socio-Cultural Memes

Figure 1:



The figure features a group of ladies holding a placard with the linguistic inscription "Her today could be me tomorrow." At the bottom of the placard are the hashtags "#AbujaRaidOnWomen #SayHerNameNigeria" All of the ladies are seen in black clothes with two leading ones on black glasses, create a visual meme of solidarity and mourning. The visual component is the black wears they all put on. This presupposes that something evil has happened and further highlights grief; the uniformity in their dress showcases their togetherness, and their demand for justice. The linguistic inscription, "Her today could be me tomorrow," points at collective anxiety and concern that any woman in the future may also face the injustices experienced by one woman. The hashtags "#AbujaRaidOnWomen" and "#SayHerNameNigeria" at the bottom of the placard establishes the fact the location of the protest is Abuja in Nigeria. It further links the particular problem of the Abuja raids to the story of injustice and violence against women in Nigeria.

This is a reflection of related global movements that seek to bring attention to the names and experiences of women who have experienced injustice or abuse, making sure their voices are heard and pushing for structural change. The linguistic inscriptions on the placard serve as a clarion call and a revolt against women, being used to express a desire for societal reform, justice, and accountability in order to safeguard women from abuse and violence. This would, in turn, curb the further spread of the immoral act.

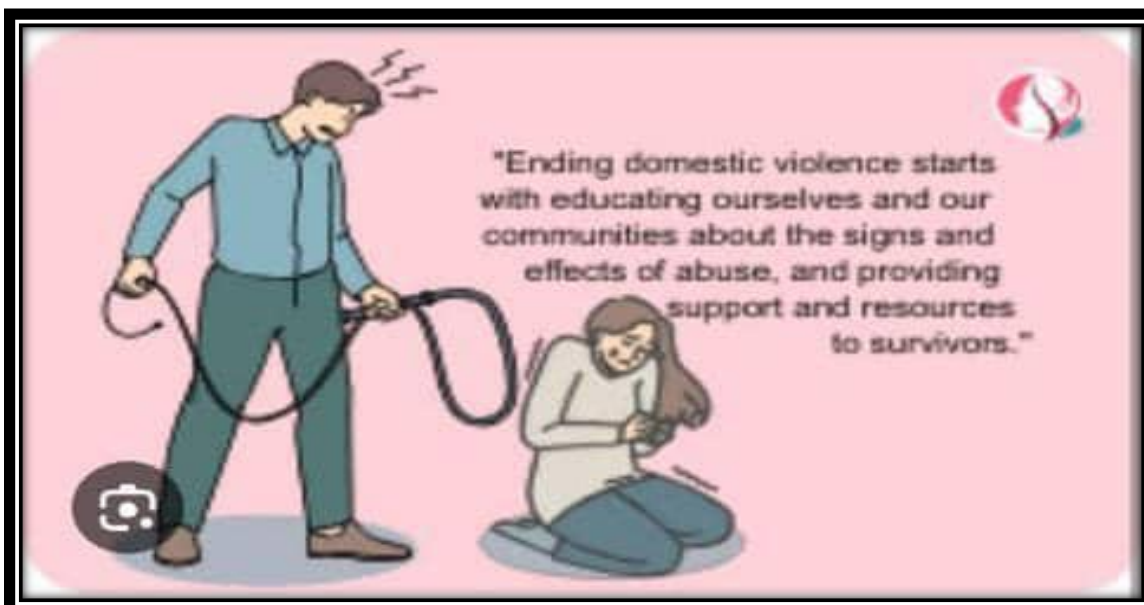
**Figure 2:**



In this figure, a group of three women are seen demonstrating with placards and megaphone. While one is vividly seen with the inscription "Stop violence against women and girls with disabilities," the other is not clearly seen; the only clear words on the other placard are "RAPE AND MOLESTATION" in capital letters. The third woman is seen speaking with megaphones.

The women's placards are effective language and visual aids for spreading their message. With the words "Stop violence against women and girls with disabilities," the first poster targets a population that is marginalised and frequently disregarded. The meme addresses the more general problems of sexual assault and violence against women and girls who have impairments. Girls and women with disabilities frequently experience violence and prejudice in combination. This poster, which echoes the views of disability rights activists like Judith Heumann, who has long fought for the rights and protection of handicapped people, draws attention to the need for focused interventions and policies to protect and empower this population. The meme emphasises how important it is for the general public to advocate for social change and hold institutions responsible for upholding the rights of marginalised groups.

**Figure 3:**



The meme in figure 3 portrays a horrifying and potent picture of domestic abuse, utilising both language and visual cues to make a clear point about how urgently this widespread problem needs to be addressed. The meme depicts a man with a rope in his hands, ready to put it around the neck of a woman who is kneeling and sobbing. The dynamics of power, control, and helplessness that are frequently evident in domestic abuse situations are symbolised by this striking meme.

The visual components have a lot of symbolism. The masculine figure with the rope symbolises authority, power, and the possibility of deadly violence, and it poses a direct threat to the life and safety of the female figure. The meme of the knelt female figure, crying, represents the emotional and psychological damage that survivors have endured, conveying a deep sense of terror and despair.

The linguistic inscription in the meme reads, "Ending domestic violence starts with educating ourselves and our communities about the signs and effects of abuse, and providing support and resources to survivors." This statement serves as both a call to action and a guide to combating domestic violence. It emphasizes the importance of awareness, education, and support systems, reflecting the findings of scholars and advocates who stress the need for comprehensive public education on the signs of abuse and the importance of community-based interventions.

The meme also emphasises how crucial it is to give survivors resources and assistance. In-depth support services are essential for assisting survivors in getting well and taking back control of their lives. This include having access to financial help, legal aid, counselling services, and shelters. In order to successfully traverse the challenges of leaving and healing from abusive relationships, survivors require a diverse support network, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV). The inscription's emphasis on resources and assistance is indicative of a knowledge of the systemic work that must be done over time in order to meet survivors' needs and facilitate their empowerment and recovery.

**Figure 4:**



This meme in figure 4 features the Nigerian national flag and an eagle. The composition of this meme, combined with the textual element "NEVER DOUBT THE EAGLE," creates a rich narrative that speaks to both the symbolic and literal interpretations of national identity and spirit. The Nigerian flag, shown in vivid green and

white, is the focal point of the meme. It provides background to the primary visual element, which is an eagle seated atop an elephant. The Super Eagles, the national football team of Nigeria, are represented by the eagle, a symbol often linked to strength, vision, and independence. This portrayal goes beyond just the squad and touches on larger themes of patriotism and perseverance in the face of hardship.

The elephant emphasises the concept of a strong foundation. In African memory, the elephant frequently represents power, endurance, and wisdom. Les Éléphants, the national football team of Ivory Coast, is notably represented by the elephant in African football. This meme of the eagle dominating the elephant may be seen as a metaphor for the competitive character of African football, with the eagle standing in for Nigeria's might and the elephant for Ivory Coast.

From the standpoint of multimodal discourse analysis, the fusion of textual and visual components results in a coherent and persuasive message. The audience's strong emotional response is elicited by the text's authoritative tone and the eagle and flag's visual dominance. The common cultural and national identity, where football acts as a unifying factor, is the basis of this reaction. The significance of visual grammar in meaning construction has been highlighted by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). The location, scale, and meaning of the flag and eagle in this meme are deliberate choices intended to evoke feelings of pride and authority. The eagle's upward and outwardly extended wings symbolise activity and readiness, reiterating the message of dauntless confidence and success potentials. Furthermore, the visual depiction is in line with Nigeria's socio-political reality, where football in particular plays a big part in preserving the country's identity.

**Figure 5**



The first meme features Finidi George, the coach of the Super Eagles, who is portrayed with a stern expression, wearing his team gear. The caption accompanying this meme reads, "I CAN'T BEG OSIMHEN TO PLAY FOR THE SUPER EAGLES!" This statement underscores a stance of authority and perhaps frustration, indicating Finidi's refusal to persuade Osimhen to join the national team. This stance can be seen as an assertion of his authority and a bid to maintain discipline and respect within the team hierarchy. It reflects the broader themes of power dynamics in sports management, where the balance between encouraging player participation and maintaining authority is crucial. Scholars like Sage and Eitzen (2016) have discussed the importance of hierarchical respect and professionalism in sports teams, and this scene exemplifies the challenges coaches face in navigating these dynamics.

In contrast, the second meme shows a close-up of Victor Osimhen, who appears visibly upset. The caption, "I HAVE LOST EVERY RESPECT I HAVE FOR HIM," suggests a deep personal conflict and a breakdown in the professional relationship between Osimhen and Finidi. This public declaration of lost respect points to significant underlying issues, possibly related to disagreements over team management, player treatment, or other professional grievances. The emotional intensity of Osimhen's statement highlights the critical role of mutual respect between athletes and coaches, a theme explored by Feltes and Dorsch (2020), who emphasize that respect is fundamental to team success and individual performance. Osimhen's discontent reflects a severe breach in this respect, shedding light on the broader issues of trust and authority within the team dynamics.

**FIGURE 6.**



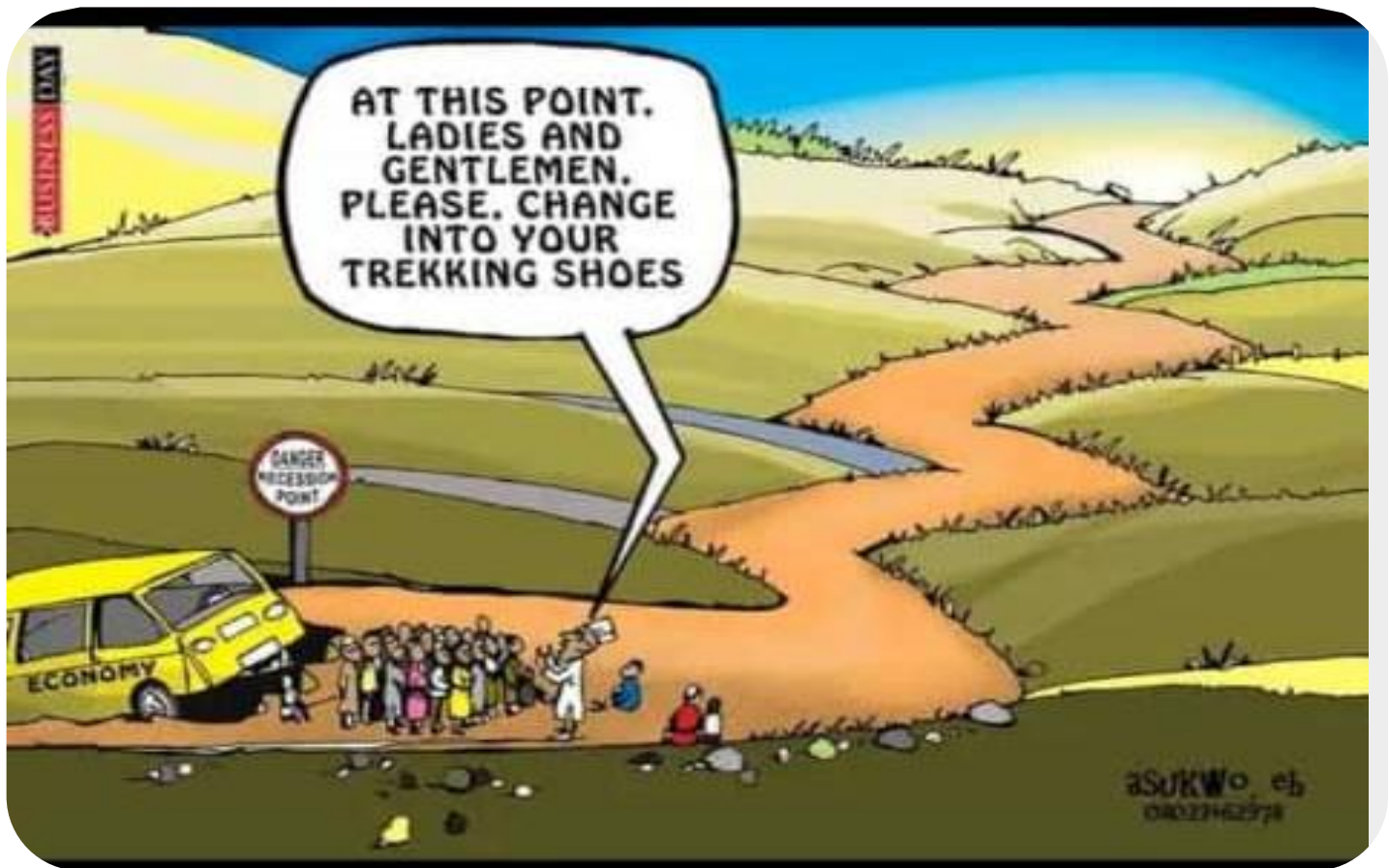
The meme depicts a scene involving three social actors who are closely associated with the Marlians Music Group, a prominent entity within the Nigerian music industry. These actors are visually represented as Naira Marley, the leader of the Marlians Music Group, Samlary, the deputy leader, and Mohbad, also known as Imole, their ex-signee.

The linguistic element of the meme, "RIP IMOLE," serves as a poignant reminder of Mohbad's tragic demise, indicating that the character representing Mohbad has passed away. This linguistic component adds a layer of

authenticity to the narrative portrayed in the meme, reinforcing the seriousness of the allegations and the gravity of the situation depicted.

The meme's context within the Nigerian music industry suggests a troubling narrative of maltreatment and alleged wrongdoing within the Marlians Music Group. The presence of Naira Marley and Samlary as the leaders of the Marlians Music Group in the meme implies their involvement or complicity in the alleged mistreatment of Mohbad. The visual representation of Mohbad's suffering alongside the leadership of the music group suggests a narrative of abuse or exploitation perpetrated by those in positions of power.

**FIGURE 7**



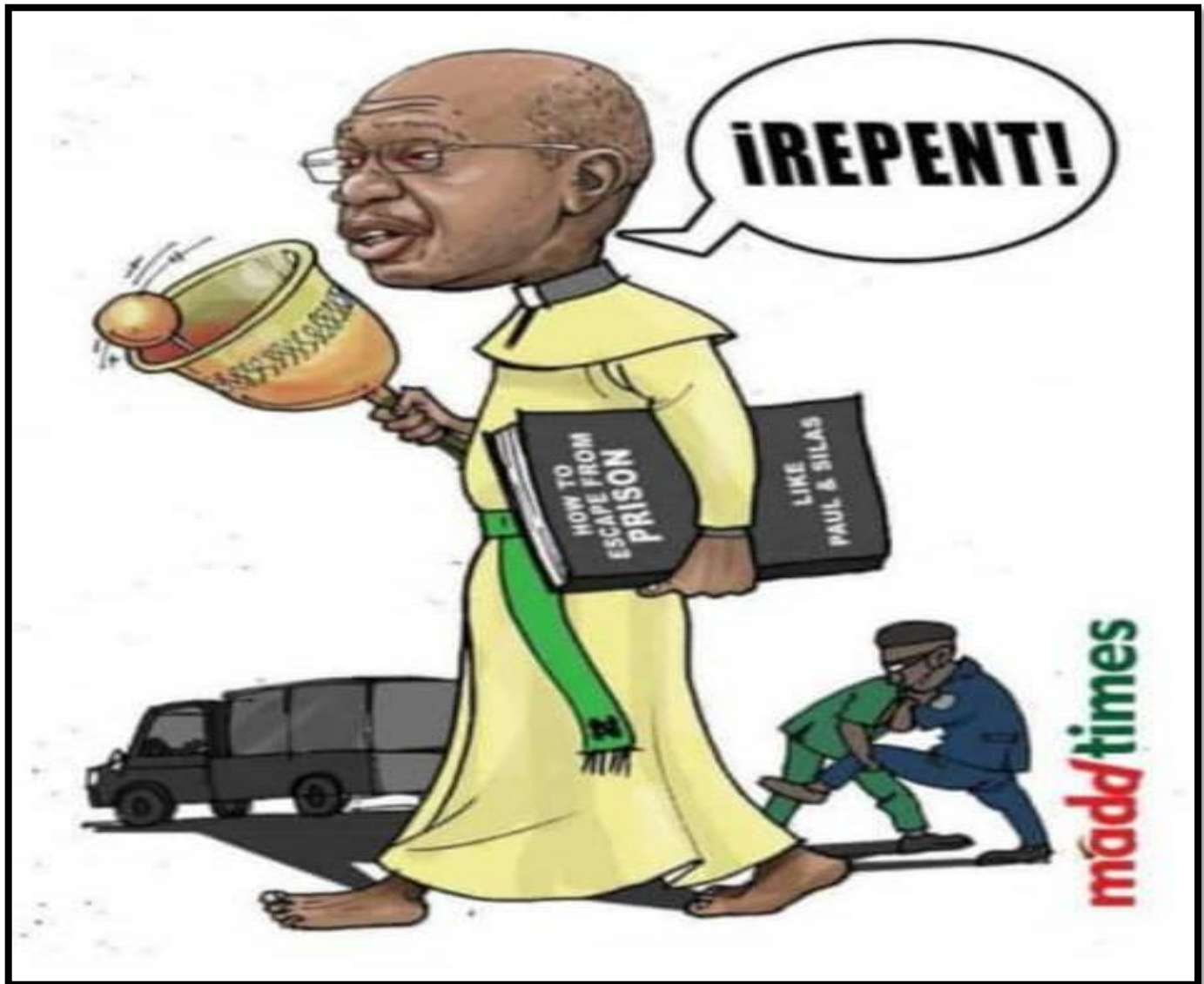
The meme presents a scene where a group of people, some standing and others sitting, are being addressed by a social actor dressed in white clothing. This social actor appears to be positioned in front of a yellow bus labeled "ECONOMY." The social actor addressing the group can be interpreted as the driver of the bus, which is depicted as seemingly faulty. The driver is instructing the passengers to change into their trekking shoes, as indicated by the linguistic content, "AT THIS POINT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE, CHANGE INTO YOUR TREKKING SHOES."

This imagery and linguistic content convey a metaphorical representation of the economic situation in Nigeria. The yellow bus symbolizes the economy, while the driver represents the government or those in authority responsible for managing the economy. The instruction for passengers to change into trekking shoes suggests an impending journey or transition, possibly indicating a shift from reliance on traditional modes of transportation (symbolized by the faulty bus) to alternative means, such as walking or trekking.

The meme reflects the socio-economic realities in Nigeria, where issues such as inflation, unemployment, and economic instability have prompted calls for adaptive responses and resilience from citizens. The depiction of the faulty bus and the instruction to change into trekking shoes may symbolize the need for individuals and communities to brace themselves for difficult times and to adapt to changing circumstances.

### Data Analysis and Discussion of socio-political Memes

FIGURE 8



The meme presents a visually striking scene with three social actors, among which one stands out as the most significant. This central figure is depicted wearing a clergyman's regalia, holding a bell and a book reminiscent of the Christian Bible, albeit titled "How to Escape from Prison Like Paul and Silas." The modification of the book's title suggests a thematic connection to biblical narratives of liberation. Additionally, the actor's binoculars and glasses resemble those of Godwin Emefiele, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and a presidential aspirant of the All Progressives Congress (APC). This visual portrayal blends religious and political imagery, potentially symbolizing a figure of authority or influence in Nigerian politics.

The inclusion of Godwin Emefiele's likeness as the clergyman figure suggests a nuanced commentary on the intersection of religion, politics, and corruption in Nigeria, which are significant socio-political realities in the country. By portraying a political figure embroiled in legal controversies in the guise of a religious authority, the meme may be critiquing the perceived hypocrisy and moral ambiguity of those in power. Additionally, the thematic connection to biblical narratives of liberation and redemption may reflect broader discourses of political change and societal transformation within Nigeria's socio-political context, especially in light of Emefiele's

imprisonment after being alleged of corruption, highlighting the challenges of governance and accountability in the country.

The reception of the meme among audiences may vary based on individual interpretations and perspectives, reflecting the diverse socio-political setting in Nigeria. Some viewers may perceive it as a critical commentary on the ethical lapses and accountability challenges within Nigerian politics, prompting reflection on issues of governance, corruption, and justice. Others may view it as a satirical or allegorical representation of the complexities and contradictions of power, highlighting the tensions between political authority and moral responsibility amidst Nigeria's socio-political realities.

**Figure 9:**



The meme featuring Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the President of Nigeria under the All Progressives Congress (APC) platform presents a striking visual representation of political leadership and vulnerability. Tinubu, adorned in traditional Yoruba attire, including the Agbada and a cap with the Emilokan logo, signifies his cultural identity and political stature as the nation's leader. By presenting Tinubu as emotionally vulnerable despite his position of power, the meme subverts traditional narratives of authority and invites viewers to question the authenticity and effectiveness of political leadership. This meme serves as a multifaceted commentary on political leadership, power dynamics, and socio-political realities in Nigeria. Through its visual and linguistic elements, as well as its socio-political context and symbolism, the meme invites critical reflection and discourse on the promises, challenges, and responsibilities of leadership in a diverse and complex society.

**FIGURE 10:**



The meme portrays a scene where one social actor is depicted squeezing another to the extent that blood is drawn into a bowl labeled "TAXES." While the identity of the victim being squeezed isn't explicitly described, the aggressor is detailed extensively. This figure is depicted wearing binoculars, glasses, and an Emilokan cap, signaling their significant role in Nigerian politics. The presence of a chair adorned with the coat of arms of Nigeria further emphasizes the authority and power of this social actor, unmistakably identifying them as President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Symbolically, the act of squeezing one social actor to the point of blood being drawn into a bowl labeled "TAXES" serves as a potent metaphor for the perceived burden of taxation faced by citizens under President Tinubu's leadership. It suggests a narrative of citizens being financially squeezed or exploited by the government through excessive taxation or mismanagement of funds. The inclusion of blood as a visual element intensifies the portrayal, highlighting the severe impact of taxation on individuals' livelihoods and well-being.

The meme offers a critical commentary on the issue of taxation and governance within the context of President Tinubu's administration. By depicting him as the aggressor in the squeezing action, the meme implies a narrative of citizens being oppressed or exploited by those in power. The conspicuous labeling of the bowl as "TAXES" draws immediate attention to the financial aspect of governance, implying discontent or resentment among citizens regarding taxation policies or practices enforced by the government. In a nutshell, the meme serves as a form of political commentary on the issue of taxation and governance under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's leadership in Nigeria. Through its visual and symbolic elements, it offers a critical perspective on power dynamics, accountability, and citizens' experiences within the socio-political setting.

FIGURE 11.



The meme depicts a social actor lying down and tightly holding onto a box locked with two padlocks, one red and one yellow. The box is labeled "Tinubu's Records," indicating that it contains important documents or information related to President Bola Tinubu of Nigeria. Notably, the setting of the meme includes a wall with the inscription "CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY," suggesting the location of the social actor.

By portraying the social actor as tightly holding onto the box labeled "Tinubu's Records" and defiantly declaring "We Die Here," the meme may be commenting on the perceived efforts to safeguard Tinubu's reputation and credentials amid legal and political challenges. The image of the actor sleeping on the box suggests a steadfast commitment to protecting Tinubu's purported records, even in the face of adversity or controversy. The meme serves as a satirical commentary on the intersection of politics, education, and accountability in Nigeria. Through its visual and linguistic elements, it invites viewers to reflect on the complexities and controversies surrounding political figures and the measures taken to defend their reputations and positions of authority.

FIGURE 12.



The meme above features a donkey that carries a lot of national chinchin and is directed by a social actor. In this case, the social actor symbolises the outgoing President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who is a farmer with a lot of animals heading for a town depicted in the meme, Daura, which is the assumed hometown of Mr. President. According to the linguistic evidence, he has fulfilled all the promises he made to himself. Therefore, he is leaving on May 29, 2023.

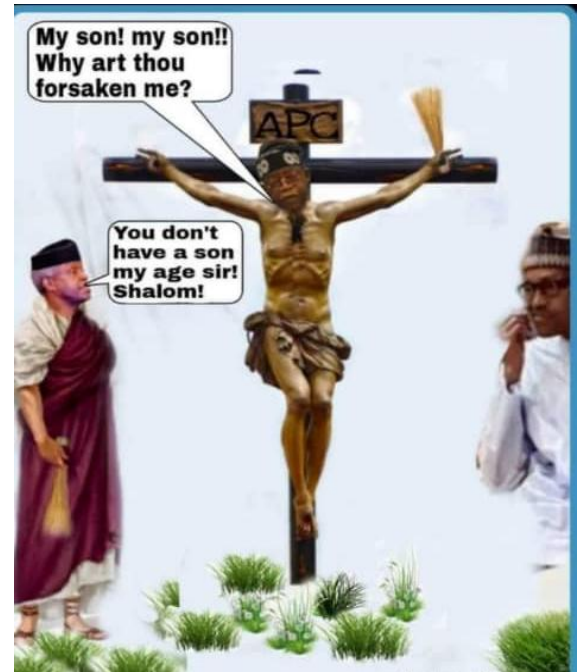
The Cakes on the camel are symbolic representations of the national treasures the social actor greedily diverted to his hometown. His gaze and pose seem to be lighthearted, with his mouth agape and his binoculars intact while he engages in this act. This shows that the social actor who resembles Buhari has come to the end of his regime as President of the Republic. This is a portrayal of a selfish, corrupt, and inconsiderate government in which the president rules only for the interests of his town, neglecting the general development of other parts of the country.

The written text, "I HAVE FULFILLED ALL THE PROMISES I MADE TO MYSELF", reinforces the intended greediness of the president right from the time of his political campaign. He identifies with his culture through his mode of dressing, and this has a way of conferring prestige on the Northern ethnic group as the wielders of authority and the reapers of national labour.

Figure 13.



Figure 14.



In the figure 13, there are six social actors: two are in the bus (which is going to the ASO-ROCK, Nigeria Presidential Villa), whose binoculars resemble those of Buhari holding the steering and about to get down with the driver's side door open, and Osinbajo sitting at the Owner's side, seemingly preparing to take over the steering. In the scene is another actor whose binoculars and cap resemble those of Bola Tinubu, dragging the steering wheel with his left hand and holding a bottle with his right hand, with linguistic evidence from him. "ALAYE! DIS THING NA TURN BY TURN. NA MY TURN BE DIS.. I NO MIND TO FIGHT DIRTY...NO TRY ME-O!" Pidginized form of "THIS IS TURN BY TURN. THIS IS MY TURN... I DO NOT MIND TO FIGHT DIRTY... DO NOT TRY ME!" In the same scene, the three other actors are seen queuing in front of the bus. Their binoculars resemble those of Peter Obi of the Labour Party, Rabiu Kwankwaso of the NNPP, and Atiku Abubakar of the PDP.

This meme appears to comment on the Nigerian political landscape and power struggles surrounding the presidency and leadership positions. The representation of Buhari and Osinbajo on the bus heading to Aso Rock indicates their current hold on power as President and Vice President, respectively. Tinubu's portrayal of trying to take control of the steering wheel suggests his ambition to ascend to a position of authority, possibly aspiring to become president. The use of the phrase "turn by turn" implies a sense of entitlement or expectation of rotational power-sharing among political elites. The presence of Peter Obi, Rabiu Kwankwaso, and Atiku Abubakar in the queue signifies their desire to contest for the presidency or play influential roles in the government.

Multimodal discourse analysis takes into account not only the words used but also the accompanying visual cues to understand the overall meaning and potential power dynamics at play.

In this case of figure 14, visually, a social actor, painted as Bola Ahmed Tinubu, is nailed on the cross with the "APC appellation and broom in his hand." This visual imagery references the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, positioning Tinubu as a martyr or crucified figure, emphasising his perceived sacrifice for the APC and his potential victimhood. This portrayal aims to evoke sympathy and align Tinubu with the figure of Jesus Christ, invoking religious connotations of martyrdom. Moreover, Osinbajo is seen standing with a broom in his hand, facing Tinubu. The broom is a symbol associated with the All Progressives Congress (APC), indicating Osinbajo's allegiance to the party.

Another social actor is then seen on the right side of the meme, whose binoculars and facial appearance resemble those of the Nigerian outgoing President, Mohammad Buhari, tooth-picking, thereby projecting his nonchalance and disengagement. It suggests that Buhari, as the outgoing president, may not be actively involved in or

concerned with the power struggle between Tinubu and Osinbajo. This portrayal can signify a lack of interest or detachment from the internal dynamics of the party. Similarly, Buhari's tooth-picking act can also be seen as a display of power and authority. By casually engaging in a mundane activity while the others are engaged in a heated exchange, Buhari may be asserting his seniority and control over the situation. It can symbolize a sense of superiority and confidence, implying that he is not swayed or bothered by the internal disputes within the APC.

Linguistically, Tinubu's utterance further reinforces the martyrdom narrative. By appropriating Jesus' words, he positions himself as a betrayed leader who has suffered for a greater cause. This strategy attempts to appeal to emotions and garner support. However, Osinbajo's response dismisses Tinubu's claim and challenges his authority by stating, "You don't have a son of my age, Sir Shalom!" This linguistic move reinforces the power dynamic between the two figures, positioning Osinbajo as a younger and potentially more influential figure within the APC.

### Comparative Analysis Discussion

#### Similarities Between Socio-political and Socio-cultural Memes of study:

- i. Use of humor and satire: Both types of memes often use humor and satire to convey messages and engage audiences.
- ii. Multimodal communication: Both socio-political and socio-cultural memes combine text, images, and sometimes videos to convey meaning.
- iii. Social commentary: Both types of memes comment on aspects of Nigerian society, politics, and culture.
- iv. Viral nature: Both types of memes can spread quickly on social media platforms.

#### Differences Between Socio-cultural and Socio-political Memes of study

**Table of Differences Between Socio-cultural and Socio-political Memes of study**

Peculiarities	Socio-cultural Memes	Socio-political Memes
Focus	cultural norms, traditions, social, behaviors and everyday life in Nigeria	politics, governance, elections, and social justice issues
Tone	Can be humorous, relatable, or thought-provoking	Often critical, satirical, or provocative
Purpose	may aim to entertain, showcase cultural identity, or spark conversations about social norms	often aim to critique, raise awareness, or mobilize action on political issues.
Content	often reference local customs, language, food, music, or social behaviours.	frequently reference politicians, policies, or current events.

#### Characteristics of Both Memes of study

- i. Tone and Language: Socio-political campaign memes' tone is often critical, satirical, or provocative while their language may be pidgin, slang, or direct criticism to convey messages, whereas, socio-cultural memes' tone generally is humorous, relatable, or light-hearted and their language often involve local languages, colloquialisms, or cultural references.
- ii. Visual Elements: Socio-political memes have common visual elements involving images of politicians, protest symbols, and manipulated photos. They often use bold text, bright colors, or striking images to grab attention; whereas, socio-cultural memes have common visual elements involving images of local food, music, fashion, or cultural icons and often use playful graphics, emojis, or relatable situations.
- iii. Reflection and Shaping of Socio-cultural Identities: Both types of memes reflect Nigerian cultural values, social norms, and current issues. They shape identities by showcasing Nigerian perspectives, humor, and creativity. They also influence how Nigerians perceive themselves and their place in society.

- iv. Implications for Public Discourse and Engagement: Socio-political memes can mobilize action, raise awareness, or critique governance and may contribute to polarization or reinforce existing views; while socio-cultural memes foster social connection, shared laughter, or cultural pride and can spark conversations about social norms and cultural values. Both types of memes can increase engagement with social issues and politics and provide a platform for Nigerians to express themselves and be heard.

## CONCLUSION

This study focuses on conducting a critical multimodal comparative analysis of selected internet socio-cultural and socio-political memes. The research utilised a combination of Theo van Leeuwen's socio-semiotic model and Norman Fairclough (1992)'s socio-cultural approach to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) as its theoretical framework, effectively explaining the pictorial and textual elements within the memes. The findings reveal that the internet socio-cultural memes are likely created by some anonymous individuals, possibly associated with the individuals in the memes or media influencers. Socio-political memes can mobilize action, raise awareness, or critique governance and may contribute to polarization or reinforce existing views; while socio-cultural memes foster social connection, shared laughter, or cultural pride and can spark conversations about social norms and cultural values. Both types of memes can increase engagement with social issues and politics and provide a platform for Nigerians to express themselves and be heard.

These memes demonstrate prevalent characteristics of different socio-cultural issues of both involving popular or famous individuals and those of National interests such as social, cultural, sport and politics. Cultural and political identities, counter-discourse, credibility, and persuasion emerged as crucial elements in the visual components socio-cultural contexts in Nigerian socio-cultural discourse.

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant role of language in constructing socio-cultural and socio-political realities and reveals how visual texts are instrumental in projecting identities, ideologies, and power during Nigerian election campaigns and other social situations around the period. The critical multimodal analysis of internet socio-cultural and socio-political memes provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of communication and highlights the importance of contextualising texts within their socio-cultural and political contexts.

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