AWKA JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STUDIES (AJELLS)

Volume 13 Number 3
September, 2026

Digital Political Discourse in Nigeria: An Examination of Relational Work and Ethics in Selected 2023 Presidential Election Spokespersons' Utterances

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Abstract

This study looks into the relational work and ethical responsibility within the social media messages of spokespersons of the three major political parties in Nigeria in the 2023 general elections. Based on fifteen purposively sampled posts by the representatives of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Labour Party (LP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on X (formerly Twitter), the study examines linguistic behaviour using the relational work framework proposed by Locher and Watts (2005) and the Theory of Communicative Action by Habermas (1984). The findings highlight a core conflict between strategic partisan communication and the communicative ethics required by the discourse of democracy, and the pressing question of the quality of political language in the digital realm of Nigerian politics is raised. The study concludes that negatively marked, offensive, and face-threatening statements are dominant in all the three parties, and the ethical breaches of unverified accusations, criminalising labels, inflammatory metaphors, and ad hominem attacks are the norm but not the exception in rhetoric. The positively marked politeness strategies, though existing, are

mostly limited to in-group solidarity and rarely to the rival parties and electoral institutions.
Keywords: Relational work, facework, ethical responsibility, social media, political communication

Introduction

The spread of social media has dramatically transformed the dynamics of human relations. The revolutionary impact of social media affects almost all spheres of society in ways that had never been anticipated. One of the sectors that have been transformed the most by the digital revolution is political communication. X (formerly Twitter), for instance, is not merely a means of social interaction but also an important arena of political interaction, mobilisation and information sharing. Although these platforms enable new forms of civic engagement, they also hasten the dissemination of misinformation and sometimes causing to moral issues to political players whose role it is to build party-based handles within an unregulated online space. It is within this context that this research is situated, relying on the concepts of political communication, discourse analysis, facework and media ethics to examine the emergence of digital political communication in Nigeria.

Nigeria has experienced a fast adoption of social media as the main communication tool by the political parties, as they realise that a good percentage of the voters and mostly youths spend most of their time on these online platforms. Social media has a powerful impact on the awareness of people, political responsibility, and civic engagement. Santas, Asemah, and Jumbo (2020) note that "social media affects the degree of democratic involvement in such societies as Nigeria that traditionally relied on traditional mass media." This transformation completely changes the way in which political messages are created, challenged and judged. The tone and moral foundation of online communications are primarily shaped by the political spokespersons, as the bearers

of party identity and image. Spencer-Oatey (2008) argues that "relational work is about ensuring that interlocutors feel appreciated" and as such, political spokespersons go out of their way to develop strategically and emotionally appealing messages that aim to help them gain consensus and garner support.

This is a highly risky practice with a high ethical implication as evident in the Nigerian political environment in the 2023 general elections. As Agwuocha (2019) points out "language can be used as a weapon of war, and that language can be used as a peace-building tool; but the Nigerian political language has too often been typified by rudeness, impoliteness, and divisive rhetoric, even where political communication is supposed to be used to foster national unity." Noshitake asserts that "the political statements are not just a description of reality but an action that has the potential to generate social impacts at a longer distance" (cited in Ndiribe 2016). These ethical lapses bring up serious concerns of democratic accountability and the integrity of the political process.

The problem that prompts this question is in the border of unethical digital communication and its theoretical under-exploration. The existing literature has recorded trends of unhealthy forms of political communication in Nigeria but has hardly given a blueprint that connects strategic advocacy with the ethical issues that are inherent in a democratic discourse. Using language that is aggressive and dehumanizing. Scholars like Ikeke (2021) show how political spokespersons intimidate their opponents and shape the public opinion, believing that these tactics are accepted as the means of survival in Nigerian politics. Oparaugo (2021) view is that the more the use of social media in elections, the more ethnic tension is generated. Bassey et al. (2024) rightly observed that misinformation in the 2023 elections supplanted substantive policy discussion, while Alozie (2022) examining the ethical dilemmas of political communicators observed the need to decide between persuasion

and the common good. Together, these studies define unethical patterns of communication. However, these studies are mostly descriptive in nature; they focus on the structural aspects of the process, but not on the communicative and ethical negotiations of individual interactions. Another critical gap is the lack of a theoretical framework that can make a consistent connection between strong partisan advocacy and its ethical responsibilities.

This study bridges this gap by treating posts on social media made by party spokespersons in the 2023 Nigerian elections through the relational work framework by Locher and Watts (2005) and the Theory of Communicative Action by Habermas (1984) to examine the linguistic results of those posts in relation to anticipated ethical responsibilities. The study does not merely enquire on what these spokespersons post on social media, but how and why they post it, how relational work is performed, how facework is constructed, and what the ethical consequences of such choices are. This inquiry is informed by the following two questions:

- What language characteristics do the spokespersons of major political parties use on social media and how do they violate or abide by the values of relational work and ethical responsibility?
- How do spokespersons of political parties in Nigeria react to the digital statements of the opposing political parties in the 2023 general election, especially in terms of positive and negative politeness?

Literature Review

The Concept of Face and Relational Work

Politeness theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) is based on the idea of face that Goffman (1955, 1967) developed as the image of self that every person aims to possess in a society. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) "face-threatening acts are universal in human interaction and that any speech act can be

face-threatening forcing interlocutors to use strategies of positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record strategies or bald on-record speech." Although it has strong empirical evidence, the claim of universality of this framework has been subject to persistent criticism. Eelen (2001), Ide (1989), Mao (1994) and Gu (1990) provide arguments that the model is biased towards individualism of the West, and that it does not correspond with face orientations of a community or group where harmony or groupness is the major face issue. Mao (1994) observed that "the model fails to offer explanation of the collectivist approach to face that is characteristic of most cultures," whereas Matsumoto (1988) goes further to state that "Japanese understanding of face is completely grounded on preserving group harmony as opposed to individual self-esteem."

Locher and Watts (2005) overcome these constraints by redefining politeness as a negotiation process that is attained through discursive means as opposed to being foisted by some external analytical category. They claim that what is offered by Brown and Levinson is not a theory of politeness, but a theory of facework, which does not effectively service aggressive, rude or abusive behaviour where mitigation is not the paramount issue. Their conceptualisation of interpersonal communication as a continuum between rudeness and face aggravation at one end and positively marked polite behaviour at the other end with unmarked or politic behaviour as the middle ground. Within this framework, politeness is just one dimension of a broader relational negotiation that can be impolite, polite, or neutral depending on local interactional norms and contextual expectations.

Culpeper (1996) builds on this theoretical terrain by defining impoliteness as "a distinct mode of communication, and suggests five impoliteness superstrategies: bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness and withholding politeness." He reveals that power

disparities in institutional situations can encourage and even legitimize rude behaviour, and the more powerful party will use uncivil means without fear of reprisals in relationships. The rapport management framework by Spencer-Oatey (2008) extends the analytical prism even further by insisting that social interaction entails relational histories, group belonging and sociality rights which cannot be sufficiently explained by individual face theories.

Ethical Responsibility and the Theory of Communicative Action of Habermas

The ethical background of this study is provided by Jurgen Habermas and his Theory of Communicative Action (1984, 1987). Habermas draws the distinction between communicative action, aimed at mutual understanding, based upon rationally motivated agreement, and strategic action, aimed at partisan goals based upon manipulation, coercion or instrumental calculation. According to his model, any communicative act is accompanied by three validity claims: claims to truth (factual accuracy), sincerity (genuine intent) and rightness (normative appropriateness). Discourse is ethical, in the sense that such assertions are upheld and subject to rational examination. Another idea of Habermas, discourse ethics (1990), presupposes an ideal speech situation where everyone has equal rights to speak, ask questions and answer without any force as a normative yardstick against which the actual speech of political actors can be measured.

Of great importance here is his notion of the colonisation of the lifeworld in which systemic processes of power and money permeate and distort communicative life and interfere with cultural reproduction, socialisation and the creation of rational consensus. When applied to the Nigerian political situation, this lens can be used to understand how partisan aims systematically prevail over the circumstances that require democratic deliberation.

Social Media and Political Discourse in Nigeria

An increasing amount of empirical research is on the interplay of social media, political mobilisation, and discourse ethics in Nigeria. Ayo, Jonathan, Duruji, and Omoregbe (2015) show how social media can be democratised during the elections in Nigeria, by stating that Nairaland allowed real-time information dissemination and undermined the traditional gatekeeping during the 2014 Osun election. Similarly, Akinyetun (2022) concludes that social media has greatly boosted political effectiveness and engagement among the youth in Nigeria.

Nevertheless, the largely hostile nature of the Nigerian online political communication has been reported regularly. Ikeke (2021) demonstrates how a truthful political discourse has been pushed out by hate speech and fake news. Oparaugo (2021) shows that social media may increase ethnic tensions during the election time, where campaign teams use content that divides to their advantage. Bassey et al. (2024) define that false information in the 2023 elections, which was enhanced by the ineffective digital infrastructure and lack of regulation, systematically distracted the people on policy issues. Using the framework of Habermas to analyse, Dungse, Mato, Makinde, and Chidozie (2018) analyse qualitatively S500 posts by party spokespersons in the 2015 elections, and the results indicate that, although social media can be utilised as a tool of political mobilisation and solidarity-building, it is also used to disseminate hate speech and misinformation. These convergent results create a well-documented trend investigated by this study with the help of the more analytical focus of relational work and communicative ethics.

Methodology

The research assumes a qualitative content analysis approach, analysing fifteen purposively chosen posts of the official accounts of X (Twitter) of spokespersons of three major political parties in Nigeria in the 2023 general election cycle: Festus Keyamo (APC),

Kenneth Okonkwo and Dr Tanko Yunusa (LP), and Dino Melaye (PDP). Each party has five posts selected as the spokesperson(s), based on the variety of communicative purposes, such as campaign updates, reactions to opposition parties, reactions to electoral events, and use of satire or humour. Primary data include entire text of posts stored with contextual information such as dates and sequences of posting. To preserve contexts, screenshots were saved.

The analysis of data was done in three steps. During the first phase, the posts were analysed in terms of signs of tone, lexical choice and rhetorical strategy to locate them in the relational work continuum: polite, non-polite (unmarked), impolite, rude, or overpolite. The second stage involved comparing posts between the party lines to determine the trends and differences in the relational work performance, and slogans, hashtags, and repetitive motifs were analysed as discursive resources to construct a face.

The third stage involved the evaluation of the ethical aspect of every post against the three validity claims of truth, sincerity and rightness of Habermas and synthesising the results towards the production of ethical political communication recommendations. The multi-stage methodology makes it possible to comprehensively and rigorously explain the micro-level linguistic aspects and the macro-level ethical consequences of the discourse of spokespersons.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: excerpts and evaluation of a sample APC Spokesperson Festus Keyamo (X, 2023)

Note: Posts quoted verbatim from X posts. Relational work measured according to Locher and Watts (2005) and Brown and Levinson (1987); ethical responsibility according to the Theory of Communicative Action of Habermas (1984).

Table 1: Sample Excerpt Analysis: APC Spokesperson

SN	Date	APC — Post & Quoted Utterance	Relational Work & Ethical Assessment
1	25 Mar 2023	**Post 1** *"These despicable characters have shown that they are incapable of playing by the rules. They are determined to destroy this nation."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Rude: Overt face-threatening act; labels rivals 'despicable characters'; provocative without substantiation. **Ethical:** Unethical: Violates truth and sincerity claims; no evidence provided; promotes relational hostility.
2	24 Mar 2023	**Post 2** *"These people are using blackmail and intimidation. They are desperate and they know it."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Unpolite: Direct accusation without hedging; bald-on-record imposition lacking redress. **Ethical:** Unethical: Fails truthfulness and rightness; discourages ideal speech conditions.
3	29 Jan 2023	**Post 3** *"The warped minds of these people who think that they can use this crisis to undermine the democratic process."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Rude: Insulting phrase 'warped minds'; overt face-threatening act; polarises discourse. **Ethical:** Unethical: Ad hominem rhetoric lacking rational justification; selectively frames facts.
4	18 Mar 2023	**Post 4** *"If indeed there is no secret agenda as they claim, we implore the media to curiously look at the pattern of events."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Overpolite: Hedges with 'if indeed' and 'curiously'; softens accusation but still imposes. **Ethical:** Unethical: Spreads unverified suspicion; ethical displacement through hedged imputation.
5	20 Mar 2023	**Post 5** *"I am from the South-South, South-East, South-West, North-Central — I am a Nigerian. We must resist tribal politics in all its forms."*	**Relational:** Positively Marked Polite: Promotes unity; claims common ground across regions; seeks agreement on deploring tribalism. **Ethical:** Ethical: Sincere appeal to shared democratic norms; consistent with positive politeness and communicative responsibility.

Table 2 includes five typical posts made by LP spokespersons Kenneth Okonkwo and Dr. Tanko Yunusa, and PDP spokesperson Dino Melaye. The posts are categorized along the entire spectrum of relationships between rude and polite, and they demonstrate the contradictory nature of solidarity appeals with face-threatening actions that define the digital political rhetoric of the 2023 elections.

Table 2: Sample Excerpts and Evaluation - LP Spokespersons Kenneth Okonkwo/Dr Tanko Yunusa (X, 2023)

Note: Posts copied verbatim of X posts. Relational work measured according to Locher and Watts (2005); ethical responsibility measured according to Habermas (1984).

Table 2: Sample Excerpt Analysis: LP Spokespersons

SN	Date	LP — Post & Quoted Utterance	Relational Work & Ethical Assessment
1	4 Mar 2023	**Post 1** *"Red Alert: We need to activate operations secure the evidence of this shameful elections."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Unpolite: Bald-on-record command; alarmist imperative without epistemic mitigation. **Ethical:** Ethically Questionable: Incites action without verified evidence; heats up the polity.
2	8 Jan 2023	**Post 2** *"Our PVCs are our collective weapons. Focus on the collection of their PVCs which are our common weapons against the enemies of progress."*	**Relational:** Positively Marked Polite: Inclusive 'we/our' builds solidarity; appeals to collective identity and common goals. **Ethical:** Ethically Responsible: Promotes civic participation and democratic engagement; fights misinformation.
3	11 Mar 2023	**Post 3** *"How can a criminal gang be in charge of its affairs? Mahmood's invitation to anarchy must be resisted."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Rude: Labels electoral officials 'criminal gang'; overt face-threatening act; incites distrust. **Ethical:** Unethical: Inflammatory and antagonistic; incites public disorder; violates rightness and

			sincerity claims.
4	19 Mar 2023	**Post 4** *"Based on reports from our party men on the ground, if the Abia and Enugu results are announced the way they are going, there will be a national showdown."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Overpolite: Hedges on 'reports from party men' before issuing strong threat; indirect warning. **Ethical:** Ethically Questionable: Threatens national confrontation; bypasses legal-rational processes; ethical displacement not caution.
5	21 Mar 2023	**Post 5** *"Kindly trace any suspected fake news against our party. We have the capacity to expose it. Let us work together."*	**Relational:** Positively Marked Polite: Softened with 'kindly'; inclusive 'let us' presupposes shared capacity; builds solidarity. **Ethical:** Ethically Responsible: Counters misinformation; promotes rational scrutiny and truth-seeking.

Note: Posts quoted verbatim from X posts. Relational work assessed per Locher and Watts (2005); ethical responsibility per Habermas (1984).

Table 3: Sample Excerpt Analysis: PDP Spokesperson

SN	Date	PDP — Post & Quoted Utterance	Relational Work & Ethical Assessment
1	17 Mar 2023	**Post 1** *"See video of APC thugs caught distributing ballot papers in Lagos. This is what they call democracy."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Unpolite: Misleading video shared as fact; directive 'See video'; bald imposition without redress. **Ethical:** Unethical: Uses old/misleading content; undermines truth claims; irresponsible evidential practice.
2	8 Mar 2023	**Post 2** *"Professor of electoral heist. Electoral thief. That is what Mahmood Yakubu has become. He must go."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Rude: Severe personal insults; 'electoral thief' and 'heist'; overt face-threatening act without redress. **Ethical:** Unethical: Ad hominem attack; violates sincerity and rightness claims; constitutes reputational destruction.
3	17 Mar	**Post 3** *"Yahoo Yahoo election.*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Rude: Mocking slang 'Yahoo Yahoo'; overt face-

	2023	*APC senators printing electoral materials. This is fraud on a massive scale."*	threatening act implying widespread fraud. **Ethical:** Unethical: Accuses fraud without verification; inflammatory framing; violates truth claims.
4	30 Jan 2023	**Post 4** *"I call on Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Governor Abdullahi Ganduje to immediately call off their thugs in Kano. Violence is unacceptable."*	**Relational:** Positively Marked Polite: Uses formal titles; seeks agreement on anti-violence stance; maintains social equilibrium. **Ethical:** Ethically Responsible: Promotes democratic norms; appropriate condemnation of violence through legitimate address.
5	18 Mar 2023	**Post 5** *"After dem go say election was peaceful. Make unawatch this video. Na wa o."*	**Relational:** Negatively Marked Overpolite: Indirect sarcastic reaction via Pidgin; hedges accusation through 'dem go say'. **Ethical:** Ethically Questionable: Implies malpractice without direct statement; avoids full accountability; destabilises trust.

Discussions

APC Spokesperson: Linguistics and Ethics

The examination of the posts made by Festus Keyamo on X discloses a mostly negatively connoted discourse. Among fifteen posts reviewed, thirteen are rated as rude or negatively checked, one is rated as mildly rude and only one as really polite. Post 2 shows accusatory phrases such as the designation of opponents as despicable characters, while Post 1 are metaphors that suggest that opponents would like to destroy this country, and baseless claims of forgery, rigging and media conspiracy are some of the dominant features of language. Direct ad hominem attacks like phrases like warped minds (Post 3) only intensify the level of relational hostility but without substantiation. The hedges that are overpolite like the one that says, in the event that there is no hidden agenda, we implore the media to take the initiative of finding out (Post 4)

are not means of actual warning but rather a way of evading the truth through the use of rhetoric.

The vast majority of APC posts are ethically invalid of the validity claims of Habermas. The breach of claims to truth by unverified allegations, the breach of claims to sincerity by strategic framing, and the breach of claims to rightness by coercive language which substitutes dialogue with confrontation all are breaches of claims to truth, sincerity, and rightness respectively.

The only polite post, where the spokesperson criticizes tribalism and proclaims pan-Nigerian identity, saying, I am from the South-South, South-East, South-West, North-Central. I am a Nigerian (Post 5), is an ethical outlier that aligns with positive politeness theory and communicative responsibility. This exception attests to the fact that ethical communication is not outside the reach of political actors; it indeed implies that the overwhelming tendency in high-stakes electoral times is strategic aggression as opposed to relational responsibility.

LP Spokespersons: Linguistic and Ethical Evaluation

The posts of the LP spokespersons Kenneth Okonkwo and Dr. Tanko Yunusa have a mixed but mostly negatively marked trend. The alarmist demands like “We need to activate operations secure the evidence of these shameful elections”(Post 1) and the criminalising demands like “a criminal gang be in charge of its affairs” (Post 3) are bald-on-record rudeness aimed at electoral institutions. The danger of a national confrontation and the claim that “one of the most senior INEC officials is the official face of electoral fraud” (Post 4) serves as relational aggravation that may provoke collective action, but not epistemically checked.

In terms of ethics, the language used by LP is marked by what can be described as a biased morality: very responsible to its own adherents, using an inclusive language, metaphors of solidarity,

collective pronouns, such as the in exhortation "Our PVCs are our collective weapons" (Post 2), but careless with the electoral institutions. The call to find any suspected fake news (Post 5) is an ethically responsible response, one that can be in line with Habermas discourse ethics, and one that can show that positive communication is possible through social media.

PDP Spokesperson: Ethical Assessment and Linguistic Features

The characterisation of the posts made by Dino Melaye is adversarial framing, ridicule, and moral condemnation. Professor of electoral heist. Electoral thief (Post 2) and "Yahoo Yahoo election" (Post 3) are reputational attacks using mockery and language of criminalisation as the main rhetorical techniques. Misleading videos, blanket accusations and sarcastic constructions like "After dem go say election was peaceful" (Post 5) are systematically abusive to the principles of evidential responsibility. The strictly few cases of ethical restraint are formal speech in condemnatory utterances, such as that in the call to Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the Kano Governor to withdraw violence (Post 4) which show that the discourse of the PDP has still an ability to engage in ethical discourse though it is not the dominant mode.

Cross-Party Analysis: Patterns of Relational and Ethical Behaviour

The analysis, when looked at through the prism of all three parties, shows that there is a pattern here: the positively marked politeness strategies are selectively applied to in-group communication and negatively marked, rude and impolite behaviours are prevalent in inter-party and institutional communication. Inclusive pronouns, mobilising metaphors and solidarity appeals are used to the people that are on their side but when it comes to dealing with the opposing parties or independent agencies like INEC, the voices become cold, confrontational and openly hostile. This comes out

clearly in the strong juxtaposition of the rallying call of the LP, "Our PVCs are our collective weapons" (Post 2) to its followers and the criminalising one, "a criminal gang be in charge of its affairs" (Post 3) to the INEC.

Such extreme selectivity is an illustration of what Locher and Watts (2005) refer to as "the unending relational conflict between the human need to belong and the political need to be different: the ping pong effect between the human need to belong and the political need to be different." In the context of electoral contest, the quest to have a partisan identity quickly degenerates into tribal animosity against out-groups. This trend has an ethical aspect to it, which is that this kind of strategic action, in its pursuit of winning and mobilisation of outrage, replaces communicative action which is directed at mutual understanding in a systematic manner. Such dynamics are reinforced by the architecture of social media sites, which rewards virality, drama, and conflict, as well as structural incentives to partisan performance, as opposed to ethical deliberation.

Rude behaviours that are negatively marked like the APCs warped minds, the criminal gang of LP and the professor of electoral heist of PDP, are what Culpeper (2011) refers to as aggravated face-threatening acts which cannot be alleviated. Such phrases undermine the interpersonal nature of the discourse of democracy and add to the snowballing of the mass discourse typified by ethnic innuendo, conspiracy theories, and embarrassing images of adversaries. Overspolite behaviours, including LP suggesting that their party men on the ground said the same (Post 4) to imply that there was electoral fraud yet they could deny it by claiming it was communicative caution, would be what Habermas would refer to as ethical displacement instead of communicative caution.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that the social media messages of the spokespersons of APC, LP and PDP in the 2023 Nigerian general elections are typified by convoluted and often contradictory relational work and ethical responsibility. Though the positively marked politeness strategies, such as solidarity appeals, the use of inclusive language and the calls of national unity are at times used by all three parties, they are marginal and are overshadowed by the systematic choice of negatively marked, rude and impolite behaviours that only escalate conflict instead of diminishing it. The relational work model by Locher and Watts (2005) shows that most of the utterances by spokespersons are located in the negatively marked segment of the relational continuum with insults, sarcasm, ridicule, and unfounded accusations as the main rhetorical standard. The Theory of Communicative Action by Habermas (1984) shows that these utterances have a systematic way of contravening the validity claims of truth, sincerity and rightness that rational democratic discourse demands. The online political realm of the 2023 elections was, in such a way, neither a domain of democratic discussion but rather an arena of unceasing face aggression, delegitimisation of each other, and maneuvering.

There are exceptions that are significant, but are rare. The Post 5 of the APC where the spokesperson denounced tribal politics and asserted a pan-Nigerian identity and the Post 5 of the LP where the spokesperson urged people to fact-check and unite, are in line with the conditions of the ideal speech situation described by Habermas and prove that ethical communication is linguistically accessible. It is a political will, institutional incentive and communicative culture challenge and not a linguistic capacity challenge.

The study findings reveal that it is not an abstract ideal that ethical responsibility in political communication is, but the real decision, moment-by-moment. In choosing over and over again to be

aggressive, mocking, and making unproven accusations rather than being emphatic, verifying, and building a bridge, spokespersons undermine the relational bases of democratic trust. The digital political space in Nigeria in 2023 would be a warning example of how relational work, which is weakened by the strategic necessities, may eradicate instead of reinforcing the thin layers of democratic legitimacy. One of the suggestions of the study is to institutionalise ethics communication training among the spokespersons of the political parties with special reference to the principles of relational work.

Parties ought to come up with in-house social media rules, which place more emphasis on reflective and non-confrontational communication especially during periods of increased tension. Regular, non-punitive political communication pattern monitoring by the electoral bodies like INEC in collaboration with civil society organisations should be conducted. Further popular training in relational and rhetorical literacy, training citizens to differentiate between the tactical persuasion and the real democratic speech, is no less an urgent and long-term need.

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