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Informed Policy Engagement or Intensive Personality Disparagement in Osun 2022 Governorship Election Campaign?

Osun 2022 Governorship Election Campaign Monitoring Report

Issue 3, May 28, 2022

Introduction

By July 16th, 2022, registered voters in Osun State will be at their various polling units in the state to elect a new governor who will be leading the state from November 2022 when the tenure of Alhaji Gboyega Oyetola expires¹. Governor Oyetola was elected in 2018 after the former governor, Engineer Rauf Aregbesola, spent 8 years of two terms. Since the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared the official date for electorate to be at the poll, and hinted that primary election would commence in February and end in March 2022, political parties and candidates have been campaigning, informing electorate why they should be voted for. Though the national electoral body approved April 2022 as the month for official campaign, our observations of various campaign platforms in the state revealed that concerned stakeholders had earlier started internal campaign before the month. Available information indicates that the All Progressives Congress (APC) officially inaugurated its Campaign Council in May 2022, while the People's Democratic Party (PDP) initiated its committee in April 2022². There have been a number of mixed results since the incumbent governor took office in 2018, employing the state's human and material resources to generate and preserve public goods. In terms of socioeconomic growth, the governor has adamantly maintained that he fulfilled nearly all of his pledges in 2018 and that voters should re-elect him to continue working for the good of all citizens and communities³. His opponents, both within and outside his political party (APC), say he has accomplished little and hence should not be re-elected. Since the national electoral body lifted the ban on campaign activity, these two lines of thinking have been part of the campaign. Similar to what characterised previous campaigns of the various elections held since 1999, political actors have started raising various concerns ahead of the July election. There have been allegations of vote

¹ INEC (2022). Osun State Governorship 2022 Timetable and Schedule of Activities. <https://inecnigeria.org/osun-state-governorship-2022-timetable-and-schedule-of-activities/>.

² Dada, L., (2022). Osun Guber: Senate spokesperson named DG Oyetola's campaign council. *The Sun*, May 5, 2022. <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/osun-guber-senate-spokesperson-named-dg-oyetolas-campaign-council/>;
Ezedinuo, F. (2022). Osun 2022: PDP inaugurates campaign, anti-rigging committees. *Daily Post*, April 26, 2022. <https://dailypost.ng/2022/04/26/osun-2022-pdp-inaugurates-campaign-anti-rigging-committees/>.

³ Amata, D., (2022). Osun 2022: 6 Key Socio-Economic Indicators Candidates and Electorates Should Know, available from: <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/elections/osun-2022-6-key-socio-economic-indicators-candidates-and-electoralates-should-know/>

buying, use of thugs to disrupt campaign venues and harm attendees, as well as threat to life.

Although all these issues can affect the credibility of the July 16th, 2022 poll, our analysts believe that the issue of vote buying requires specific attention of concerned stakeholders, most importantly the electoral body and citizens. Vote buying is one of the strategies usually deployed by political actors such as candidates, their representatives, direct and indirect supporters; throughout the previous governorship elections in the state, vote buying was employed by the stakeholders using different approaches. Events that characterised the 2014 and 2018 attest to this fact. During the 2014 gubernatorial election, the two leading parties in the election, the ruling APC and the opposition PDP engaged in the unethical electoral practice. Popular mechanisms of vote buying before and during the previous elections include pre-election hand-outs such as food and money; infrastructural projects to targeted electoral districts; as well as provision of incentives to voters/supporters to attend polling. In line with this background, this report, which is the third output of the 2022 governorship election campaign monitoring in the state, specifically considers campaign strategies employed by candidates, parties and their supporters, most importantly members of the media team of the parties and the candidates for communicating these issues and engaging with the potential electorate ahead of the July election. The strategies were examined within the context of the intended and unintended outcomes of the messages spread on social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter) and political actors' interactions with the conventional media (newspapers and presentation of party as well as candidate agenda through radio jingles in the state). The incumbent government's policy issues or programmes were also looked at, with the idea that opposition parties should use them to engage the public by offering alternatives or discussing recognised flaws.

Our Approach

Messages posted on Facebook and Twitter by the political parties through their official pages, candidates' pages and supporters' personal accounts, radio jingles, as well as news stories were the primary sources of data for this report. The social media platforms of those stakeholders were monitored from May 19 to May 28, 2022. This is a 7-day period. During the period, our analysts paid specific attention to messages that were campaign-

driven (not general messages), especially those promoting activities of the incumbent governor, and mere social engagements of the candidates that were not related to political activities. Attacks, acclaims and defenses were the three categories of campaign strategies our analysts looked for in each message extracted from Facebook, Twitter, radio jingles and national newspapers, and campaign speeches. Attacks were the messages that denigrated personality traits of candidates and leadership qualities and/or competences of the parties and candidates to govern the state. Attacks were also examined from the perspective of the actors, demeaning the quality of programmes, initiatives and projects of the incumbent. Acclaims were the messages that show that the parties and the candidates were better in terms of personality traits, leadership qualities as well as competences in delivering quality public goods to the residents. Defenses were the messages that refuted negative elements pushed out by actors against candidates and political parties. In this context, our analysts looked for traces that established members of the opposition and the ruling camps defending what were considered as negatives and/or not true about the personality traits, leadership styles and competences of the candidates and political parties.

Based on the emerging trends previously discussed in the introduction, our analysts added new categories of issues and needs being tracked weekly. The initial focus of the monitoring is to find informed policy engagement or intensive personality disparagement in each week. Thus, there is a need for more metrics to properly examine campaign messages and discover levels of informed policy engagement and intensive personality disparagement. In this regard, *highly informed policy engagement* which means mentioning of a particular policy or programme, citing location of the programme or when the policy was implemented, and discussing its consequences on the targeted beneficiaries or communities, were formulated. *Moderately informed policy engagement* represents a message that contains specific policy or programme and cites the location or discusses its impacts. No message can fit this category without having at least two of the elements associated with *highly informed policy engagement* metric. *Slightly informed policy engagement* metric entails a message that has one of the three elements associated with *highly informed policy engagement* metric. For the personality assessment, we considered *highly intensive personality disparagement*, *moderately intensive*

personality disparagement, slightly intensive personality disparagement and none intensive personality disparagement. A message falls into highly intensive personality disparagement when it has elements that establish lack of competence of a candidate, incomplete educational qualifications, and previous history of poor management of resources either in a private or public establishment. *Moderately intensive personality disparagement* was measured with the consideration of two of the three elements of *highly intensive personality disparagement* metric, while *slightly intensive personality disparagement* denotes a message that has only one of the three elements. *None intensive personality disparagement* specifically represents absence of all the three elements. *Threats to credible poll* is a main metric with a focus on vote buying, rigging through political thugs, rigging through collusion with electoral body, and rigging through collusion with security agencies. Representations of these sub-metrics are premised on the trends discussed earlier. Apart from the campaign strategies (attacks, acclaims and defenses), infrastructure, social programmes, workers' salary, welfare and employment, agriculture, economy, education, health, security and others were created as campaign issues or policies that the parties and their supporters need to address for the electorate to make informed decision on July 16th, 2022. The campaign strategies and issues/or policies were reliably checked using stability and reproducibility approaches. A member of the research team coded the messages several times while another member repeated the process of coding the messages. The outcome indicated a strong level of agreement in line with what each campaign strategy and issue and/or policy represented.

Key Results

Across the campaign platforms that were examined, 92 messages were found as relevant for evaluation by our analysts, representing 2.9% increase from week two (n=85) and 13.5% from week one (n=60). The examination of the messages across the campaign strategies in the three weeks of monitoring indicates a total of 286 traces from 237 messages. Out of the 286 traces, 49.65% are acclaims while 41.60% (n=119) and 8.74% (n=25) are attacks and defenses respectively. Week-by-week analysis of the strategies shows that the level of using attacks increased by 3.88% in the third week of the monitoring. For example, when the candidate of the PDP spoke about his readiness to

spend money for the election, Accord Party's candidate, Dr Akin Ogunbiyi, was reported to have attacked the PDP's candidate's personality:

Even the PDP dancing senator, nothing will work. He said he has all the money to be voted (into power). 'fire for fire'. Is Osun for sale? Ask Ademola Adeleke, the candidate of (the) PDP, what is his source of income⁴.

In another instance (at a campaign), the APC candidate and incumbent governor, used an implied attack on the earlier statement made by the PDP's candidate. He said:

I don't have pound sterling. I told Kabiesi that I will not buy a jet. We should know that deceit is in town. Don't be deceived. Those that have nothing to offer. We do not fire for fire⁵.

In addition, when the Labour Party's candidate, Honourable Lasun Yusuf was reportedly attacked physically in Osogbo, he attacked the oppositions in a manner that implies that they sponsored the thugs that attacked him:

The sitting Governor and other contestants are hereby advised to desist from thuggery and hooliganism and let our campaigns be based on sound debates focused on issues and our programs for Osun economic growth and development⁶.

Another instance of attack was when Senator Ademola Adeleke of the PDP accused the APC of stealing his mandate in 2018, vowing that he would not allow such to happen in the July election. He stated:

Unlike what happened four years ago, I will not allow anyone steal my votes and that of the PDP. We all saw what happened four years ago, when angels of darkness colluded with some anti-democratic forces to upturn the desire of the good people of Osun State⁷.

This is a surprising result considering the level of reduction in using the strategy reported in the previous week (see Exhibit 1). Acclaims and defenses also increased marginally while defenses reduced. For defenses, the APC reacted to the PDP's candidate's accusation of stealing his mandate in 2018:

Referring to the 2018 Osun State governorship election by any entity as being rigged by Governor Oyetola is tantamount to rubbishing the

⁴ Obarayese, S., (2022). Dollars, Pounds, Euros, Comment: Ask Ademola his source of wealth – Ogunbiyi to Osun, *Daily Post*, May 19, 2022 Available from: <https://dailypost.ng/2022/05/19/dollars-pounds-euros-comment-ask-ademola-his-source-of-wealth-ogunbiyi-to-osun/>

⁵ Dada, L., (2022). Osun guber: I come to serve not to share dollars, says Oyetola, *The Sun*, Available from: <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/osun-guber-i-come-to-serve-not-to-share-dollars-says-oyetola/>

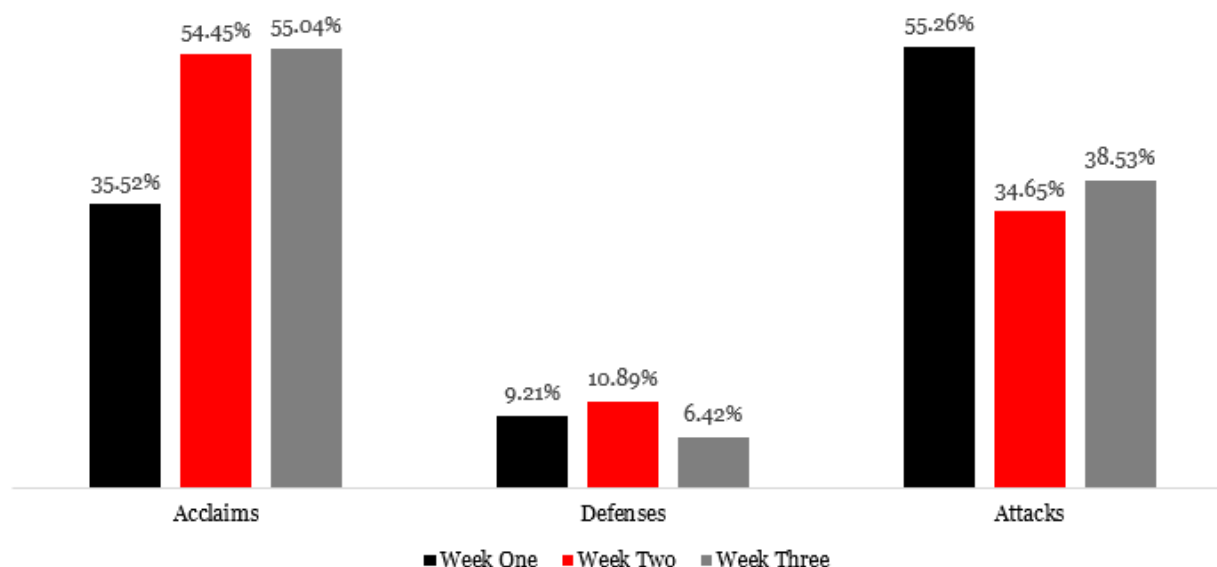
⁶ Osun guber: LP candidate, Lasun Yusuf, alleges threat to life, destruction of campaign office, *The Sun*, Available from: <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/osun-guber-lp-candidate-lasun-yusuf-alleges-threat-to-life-destruction-of-campaign-office/>

⁷ Bamigbola, B., (2022). I won't allow anyone steal my votes this time – Adeleke, *The Punch*, May 22, 2022, Available from: <https://punchng.com/i-wont-allow-anyone-steal-my-votes-this-time-adeleke/>

highest court in the land with impunity. If Ademola is insisting that he won the 2018 governorship election, why has he not been the four-year tenant of the Bola Ige House? Ademola Adeleke is only ranting. He should be ignored⁸.

After some thugs attacked journalists and APC party supporters in a campaign rally in Gbongan, the PDP defended herself when the APC accused her to have sponsored the thuggery by reiterating: “As a party, we assure the general public that our members have nothing to do with the incident. It is a known fact that the PDP, unlike the APC do not harbour thugs.”⁹

Exhibit 1: Campaign strategies by week¹⁰



Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Campaign issues and/or policies engagement

Individual analysis reveals that the category “others” grew by 11.34% against 28%, which was recorded in week two, while discussions of social programmes and the economy grew by 3.12% against 16% of the previous week. The discussion of economic issues and needs reduced from 25% growth rate attained in week two to 8.33%. The topics of security and health in various media forms reduced and improved respectively. According to our

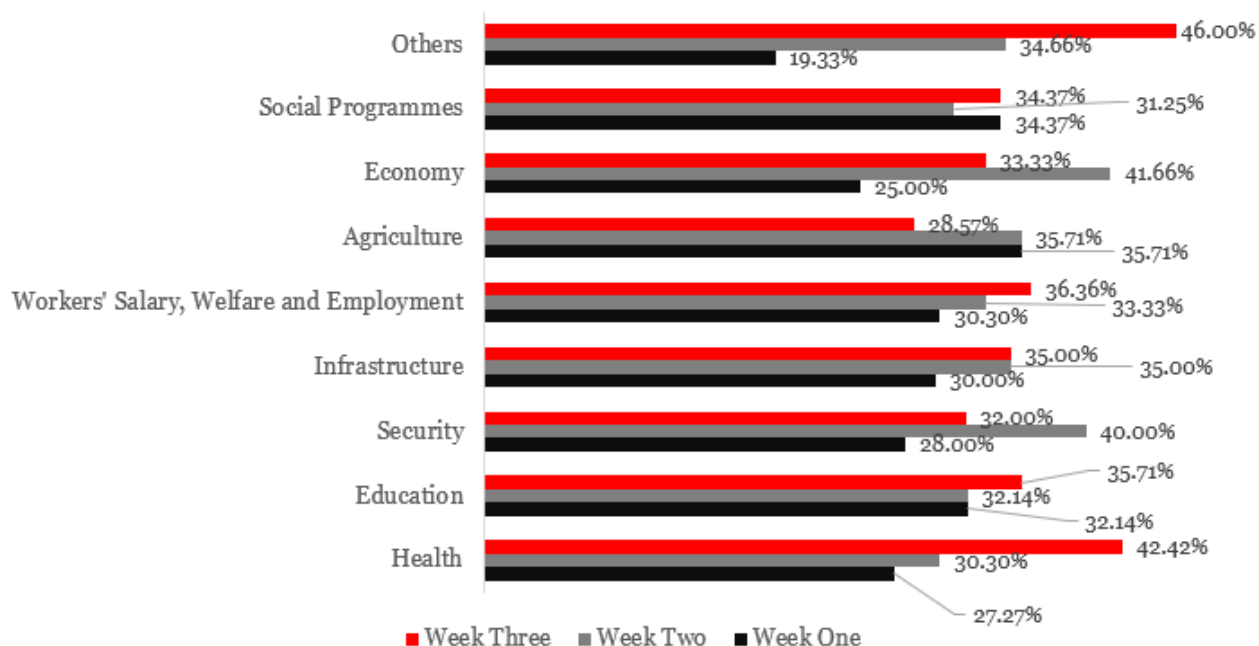
⁸ ibid.

⁹Ezediuno, F., (2022). Osun guber: APC breeding violence – PDP denies attack on Governor Oyetola, *Daily Post*, May 25, 2022, Available from: <https://dailypost.ng/2022/05/25/osun-guber-apc-breeding-violence-pdp-denies-attack-on-governor-oyetola/>

¹⁰ **Key:** Week One=76, Week Two=101, Week Three=109

analysis, the discussion of employees' salaries, welfare, and employment has increased only somewhat (see Exhibit 2).

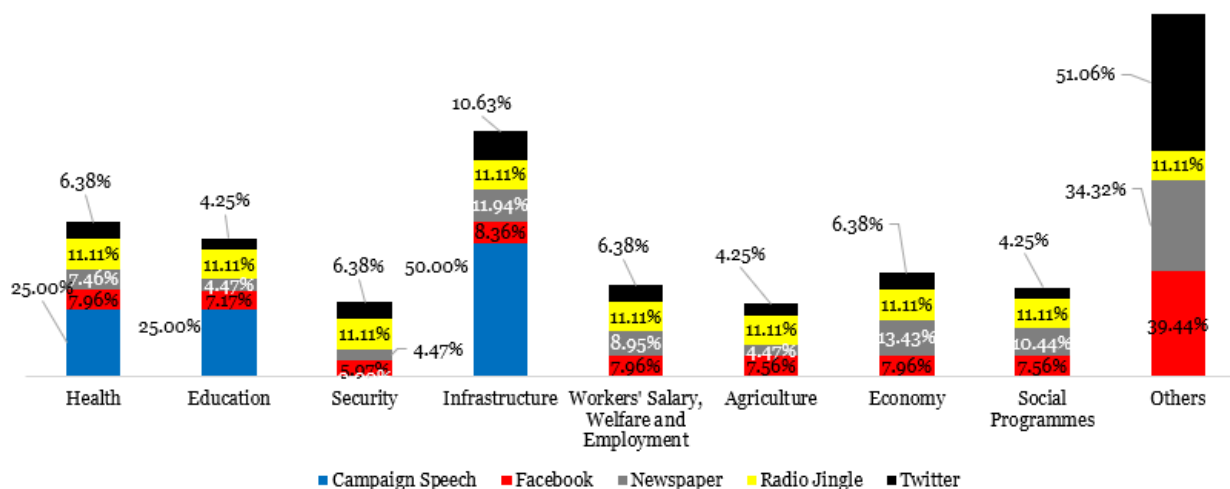
Under other categories, for the week three, our analysts found some elements relative to what were discovered during week two. Stakeholders discussed a candidate's competences as well as attacked the candidate and his political party. These also permeated week two. Our analysts equally found condemnation of physical attacks that occurred during the ruling party's campaign activities in a town in the state from both sides (the ruling and opposition). Our data suggest that the issue of vote buying raised in the previous week materialised on the different campaign platforms monitored in week three. Actors were discussing it and at same time attacking personalities with a focus on questioning sources of wealth of the candidate who uttered the statement as well as the distribution of monthly foods to some citizens as one of the key elements of vote buying. Beyond the discussion of negative campaign elements under the category, the need for peace during the poll and why eligible citizens should vote were also prominently discussed.

Exhibit 2: Campaign and/or Policy Issues by week¹¹

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Across media types (Facebook, Twitter, radio jingles, campaign speech, and newspapers), analysis reveals that the identified campaign issues and/or policies were discussed on Facebook, in newspapers, and on Twitter more than in radio jingles (this is largely due to repetition of the previous jingles) and campaign speeches (see Exhibit 3). It further indicates that actors discussed elements identified under 'other category' earlier mostly on Twitter, followed by Facebook and newspapers. Apart from **other category** that was explored by the actors, infrastructure (50.00%), education (25.00%) and health (25.00%) were mainly discussed during campaign rallies. These issues/policies were basically explored by the ruling party during its campaign tours in week three.

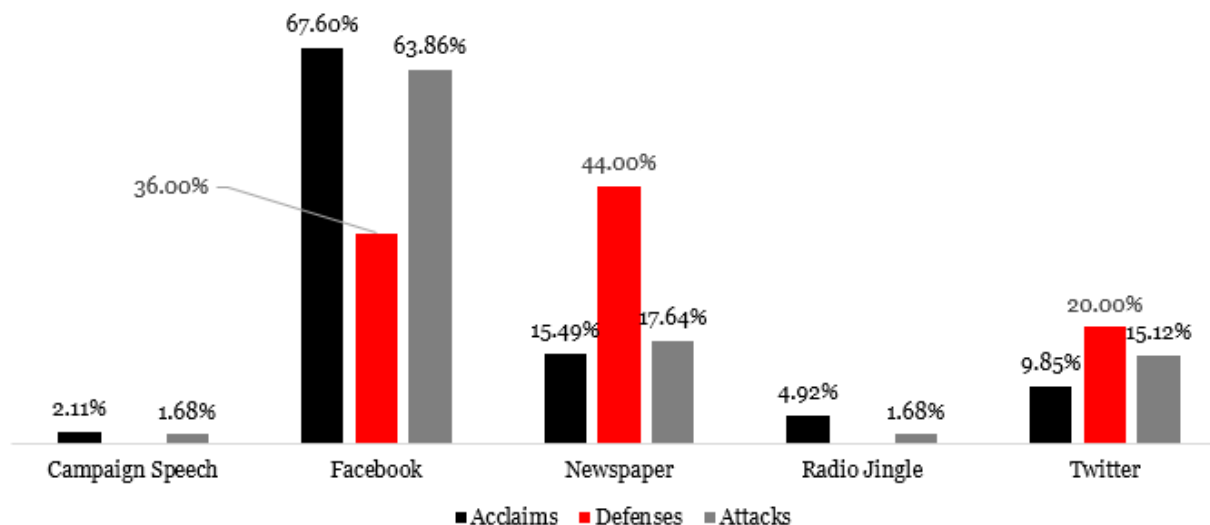
¹¹ **Key:** Health=33, Education=28, Security=25, Infrastructure=40, Workers' salary, welfare and employment=33, Agriculture=28, Economy=36, Social Programmes=32, Others=150

Exhibit 3: Campaign and/or Policy Issues by Media Types¹²

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Again, it seems that actors exploited the reduced regulation of Facebook for significant deployment of attacks as a campaign strategy. This platform was used more than newspapers, Twitter and radio jingles for attacking personalities as well as policies or activities. Over 63% of 119 traces of attacks as a strategy discovered for the three weeks were found on pages of political parties' supporters and groups. Defenses were equally used on the platform significantly. The two strategies were also deployed in newspapers while acclams were more used in radio jingles than other campaign strategies.

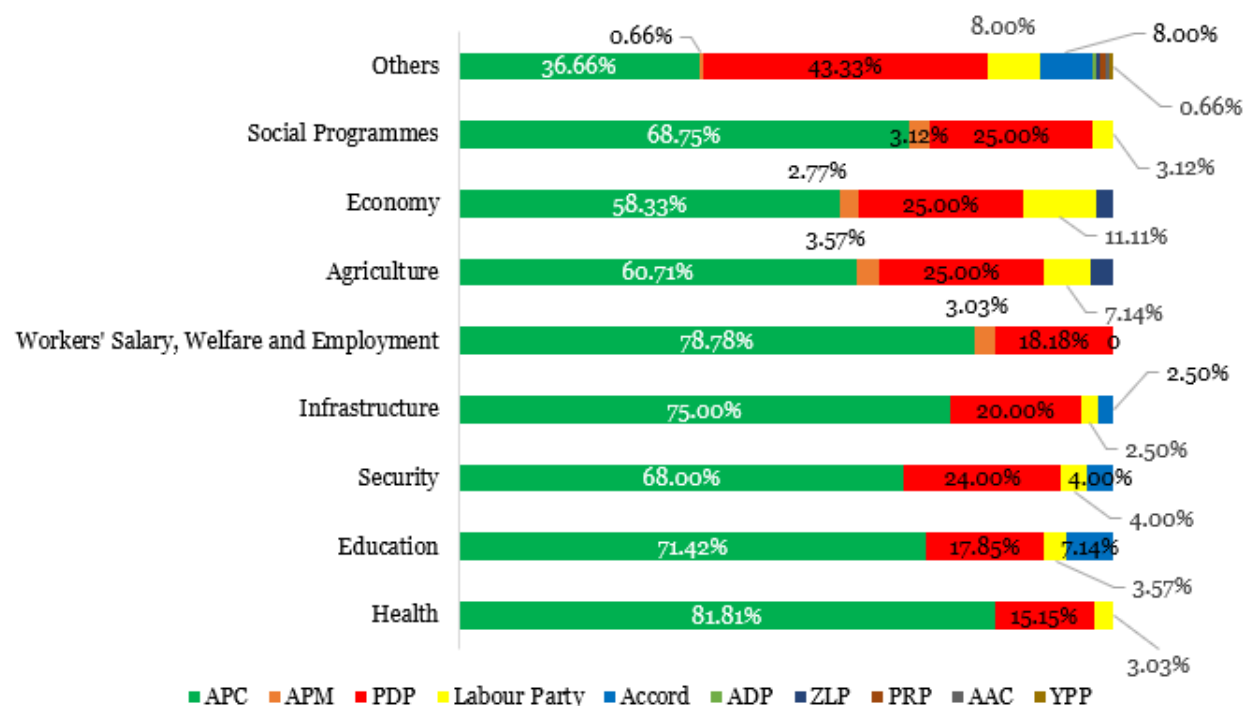
¹² **Key:** Campaign Speech=4, Facebook=251, Newspaper=67, Radio Jingle=36, Twitter=47

Exhibit 4: Campaign Strategies across Media Types¹³

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

The All Progressives Congress was better than the People's Democratic Party and the Labour Party combined (see Exhibit 5) when supporters and candidates that engaged the public using the campaign issues and/or policies was used as a yardstick. However, the People's Democratic Party led the All Progressives Congress in the *others category*. Textual analysis of the category reveals that supporters of the party and the party itself (through its campaign Facebook page [*Imole DE*]) predominantly leveraged on vote buying (defending PDP candidate's utterance on bringing local and foreign currencies for the election) component of the category. Messages that established discussion of the strategy were also found for the ruling party (APC), which weaponized it as lacking substantial values on the part of the PDP's candidate and the party itself.

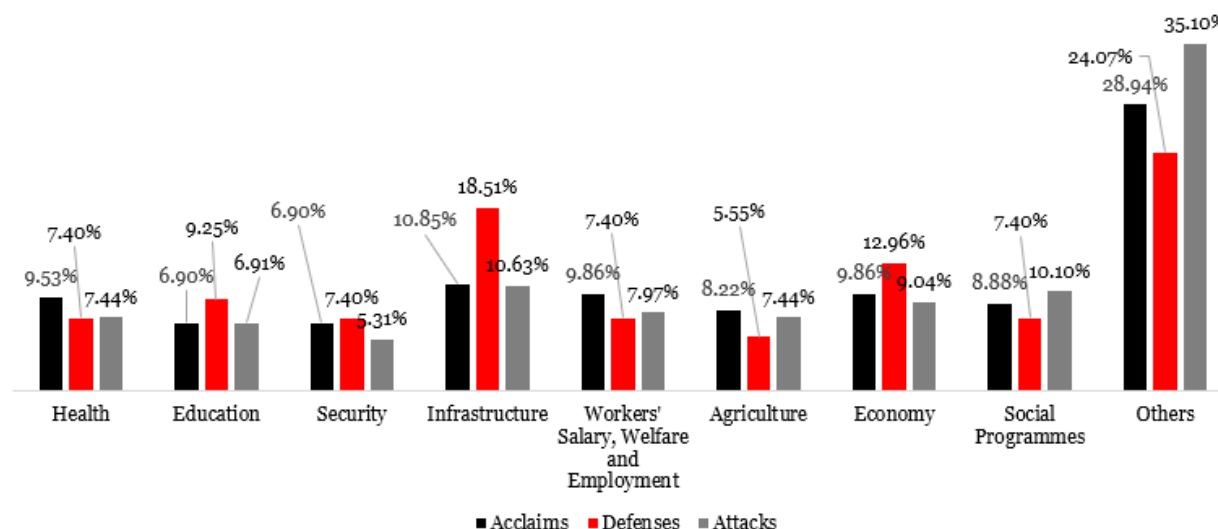
¹³ **Key:** Attacks=119, Acclaims=142, Defenses=25

Exhibit 5: Campaign and/or Policy Issues by Political Parties¹⁴

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Our analysis also shows that acclaims and attacks were closely used by the actors. A total of 546 traces of the strategies were found across the campaign issues. From this figure, 34.43% were associated with attacks, while 55.67% and 9.89% resonated with our definitions of acclaims and defenses. Further analysis establishes that attacks were predominantly employed while actors discussed within the context of *others category* (see earlier definition of others for more components of the category). Acclaims were also deployed significantly while discussing these components. Defenses were mostly employed when infrastructure, economy, education security and health (see Exhibit 6) were discussed. In this regard, our analysts found members and supporters of the All Progressives Congress as the main users of the strategy. It was mainly used to correct perceived negativities communicated by members and supporters of the People's Democratic Party.

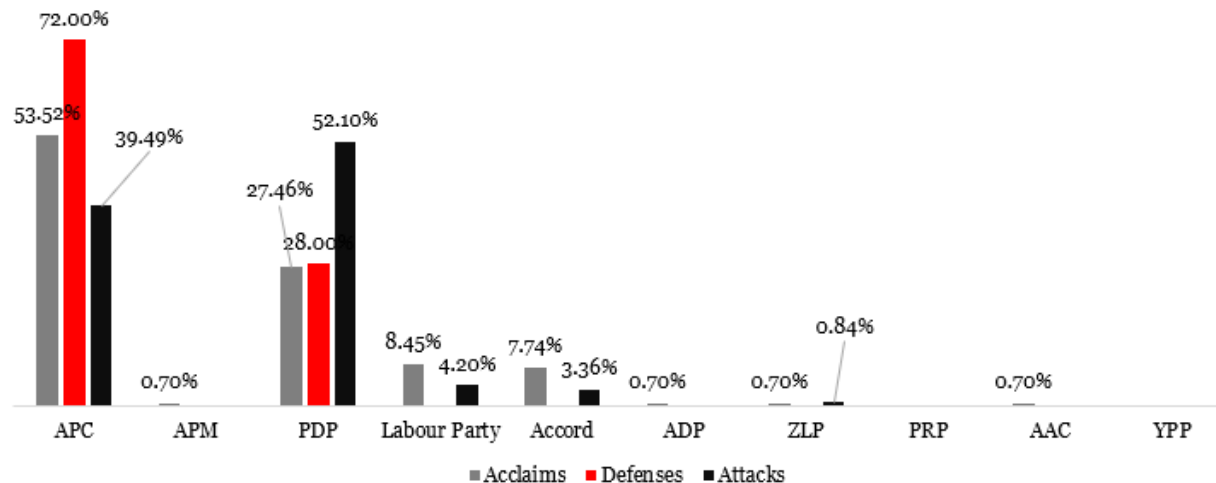
¹⁴**Key:** Health=33, Education=28, Security=25, Infrastructure=40, Workers' salary, welfare and employment=33, Agriculture=28, Economy=36, Social Programmes=32, Others=150

Exhibit 6: Campaign Strategies across Campaign and/or Policy Issues¹⁵

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Beyond understanding which political party and its supporters deployed these strategies mostly across the campaign issues and/or policies, our analysts were equally interested in knowing which of the political parties employed the strategies significantly in the last three weeks. A total of 286 traces against 177 traces of the strategies were discovered in the last two weeks and over 41% of this figure were attacks while 49.65% and 8.74% were acclaims and defenses respectively. Further analysis indicates that the People's Democratic Party attacked more than acclaimed and defended while the Labour Party and Accord only acclaimed. Over 70% of defenses found were basically deployed by the All Progressives Congress' members and supporters (see Exhibit 7).

¹⁵ **Key:** Acclaims= 304, Defenses=54, Attacks=188

Exhibit 7: Campaign Strategies across Political Parties¹⁶

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

From all the previous analyses, it is obvious that the actors are deploying the campaign strategies differently. The ruling party prefers acclaims and defenses to attacks while opposition party, especially the People's Democratic Party has largely deployed attacks as a strategy. This position led our analysts to further examine the number of times all the parties have deployed the strategies in the last three weeks. Looking at the data presented in Exhibit 8, attacks as a strategy has been used more than 7 times and 6 times for discussing issues and needs within *others category* (see earlier definition) and social programmes of the current government more than other campaign issues and/or policies. On defenses as a strategy, it appeared that the ruling party has used it more than 8 times in correcting the negativities communicated about its infrastructural development programme as well as economy (4.3 times) and agriculture initiatives (3.9 times). Acclaims strategy has been employed more than 4 times in discussing workers' welfare, salary and employment, and more than 3 times for education.

¹⁶ **Key:** Attacks=119, Acclaims=142, Defenses=25

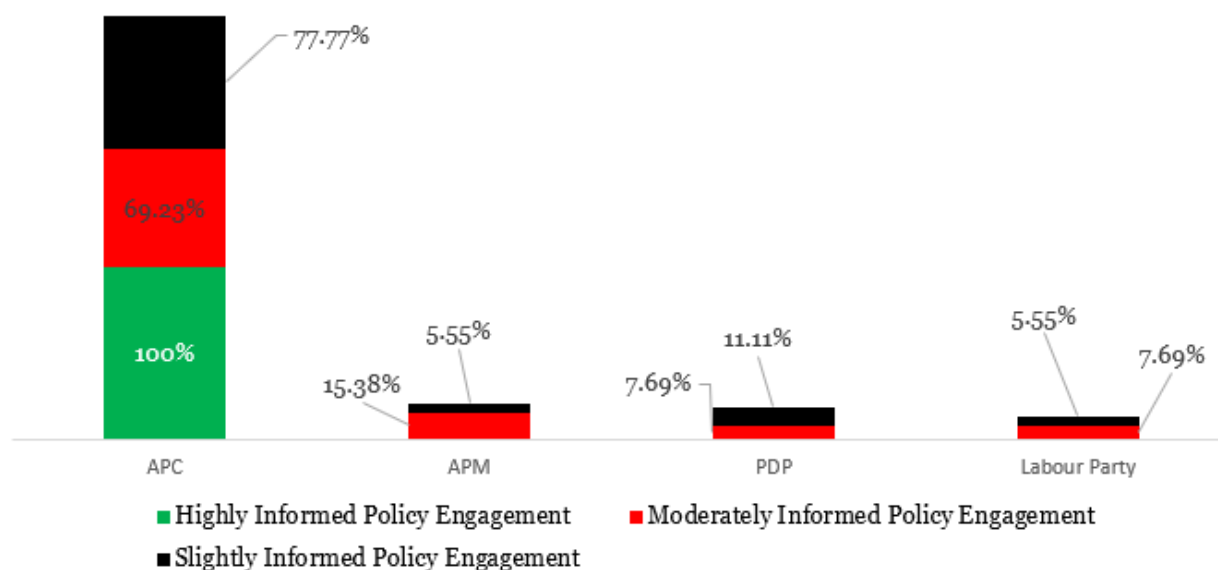
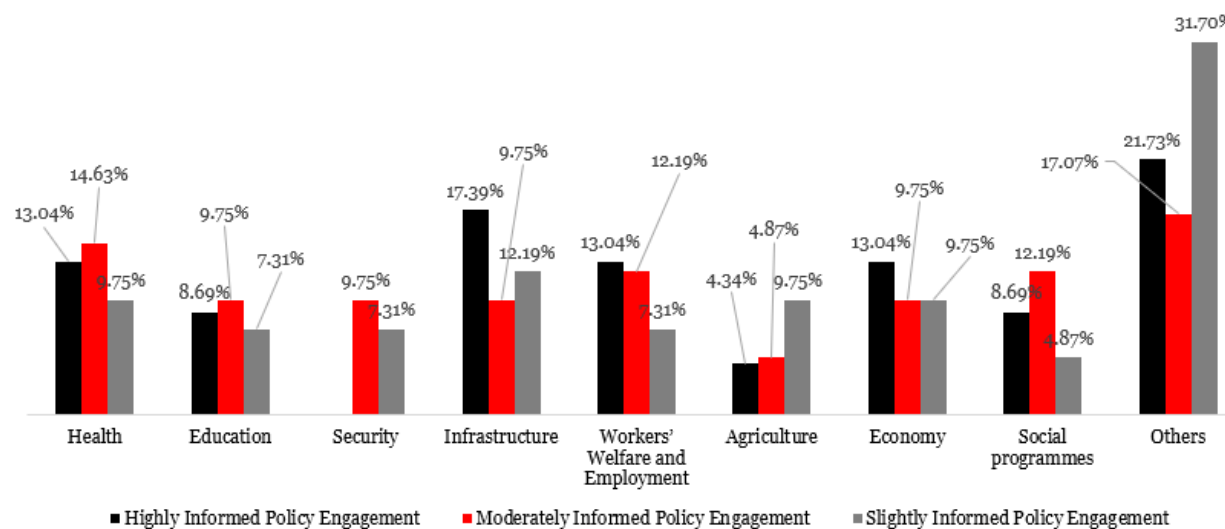
Exhibit 8: Number of times parties deployed campaign strategies across campaign issues/policies during the three weeks

	Acclaims	Defenses	Attacks
Health	1.2	0.6	2.0
Education	3.8	0.7	0.2
Security	0.0	0.1	2.6
Infrastructure	2.1	8.0	0.0
Workers' Welfare and Employment	4.2	0.1	1.4
Agriculture	0.8	3.9	0.2
Economy	0.1	4.3	0.2
Social programmes	0.0	0.1	6.6
Others	0.6	0.4	7.5

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Policy Engagement or Personality Disparagement

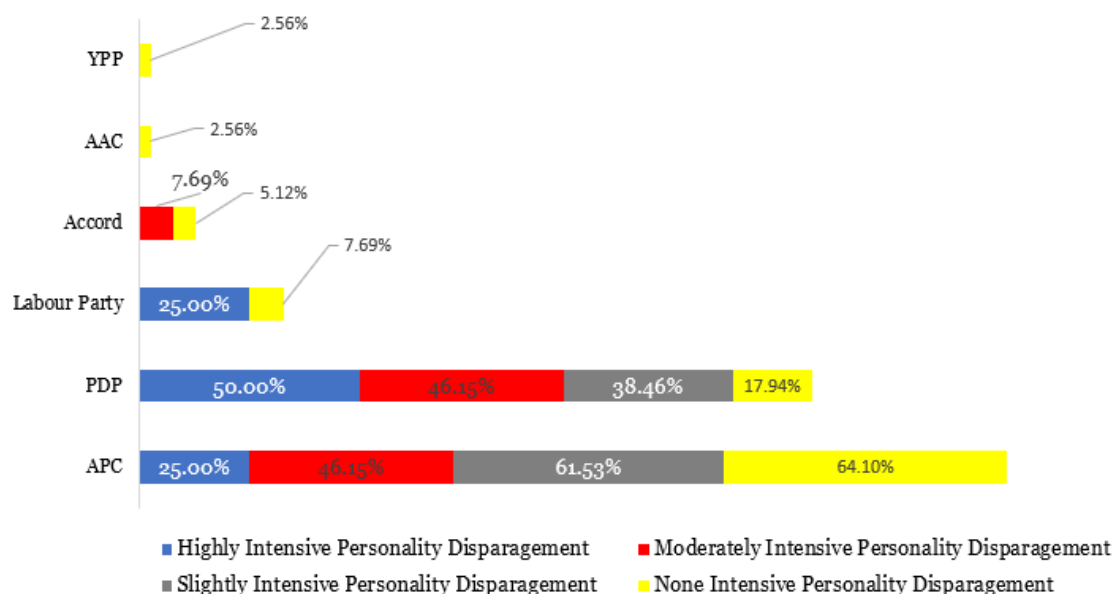
We discovered that the ruling party is better on informed policy engagement and less intensive in disparaging the personality of the opponents. The leading opposition party (PDP) slightly engaged the policies or programmes of the current administration while it moderately disparaged the personality of the ruling party's candidate and the party itself (see Exhibit 9 and 11). A further analysis of the levels of policy engagement across campaign issues and/or policies shows mixed results for *others category*. Parties and their supporters slightly and highly engaged potential electorate while discussing infrastructure, economy, workers' welfare, salary and employment, and health, they highly engaged the public (see Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 9: Levels of policy engagement by party¹⁷**Exhibit 10: Levels of policy engagement by campaign issues and/or policies¹⁸**

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

¹⁷ **Key:** Highly Informed Policy Engagement=8, Moderately Informed Policy Engagement=13, Slightly Informed Policy Engagement=18

¹⁸ **Key:** Highly Informed Policy Engagement=23, Moderately Informed Policy Engagement=41, Slightly Informed Policy Engagement=41

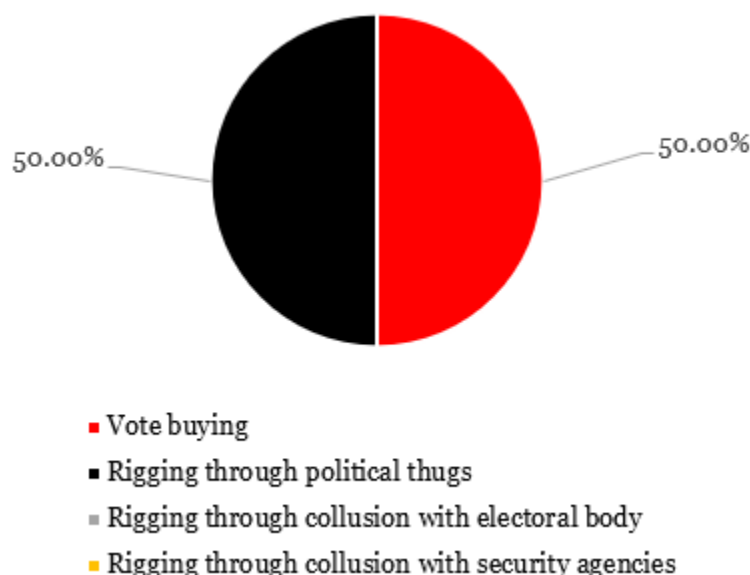
Exhibit 11: Levels of personality disparagement by party in week three¹⁹

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Threats to credible poll

Out of the four sub-metrics our analysts examined under *threats to credible poll* as the main metric, the APC and PDP extensively discussed vote buying and rigging through political thugs (see Exhibit 12). The APC defended the need for a poll devoid of vote buying while the PDP's statement suggested vote buying. They attacked each other based on the perceived use of political thugs for causing violence during campaigns and their possible use during the July 16th, 2022 election.

¹⁹ **Key:** Highly Intensive Personality Disparagement=4, Moderately Intensive Personality Disparagement=13, Slightly Intensive Personality Disparagement=26, None Intensive Personality Disparagement=39

Exhibit 12: Threats to credible poll²⁰

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Conclusion and Our Verdict

The online and offline trajectories of the campaign activities of the two leading political parties in the governorship election raise some concerns which should be addressed by the parties, the electoral umpire, and other stakeholders. That over 63% of 119 traces of attacks as a strategy discovered for the three weeks were found on pages of political parties' supporters and groups is an indication that the political parties need to work with their members and supporters to prevent further escalation of online attacks into the physical space. That campaign buses and posters were destroyed also shows lack of tolerance which can degenerate into more dangerous attacks if not controlled.

Political campaigns should be opportunities for presenting manifestoes and convincing the electorate about parties' programmes and projects, and not for discussing the competencies and maligning personal attributes of political opponents. This report shows that beyond their political differences, the two leading political parties united to condemn the physical attacks that occurred during the ruling party's campaign activities in a town

²⁰ **Key:** Vote buying=4, Rigging through political thugs=4, Rigging through electoral body=0, Rigging through security agencies=0

in the state. This is an act that should be reinforced for parties involved in the election to successfully achieve their campaign objectives.

Vote buying has been a recurring discourse in Nigerian elections and there are signs that it will prominently play up in this election if stakeholders do not quickly use available legal, media, political, and moral measures to control it. The new Electoral Act has enough clauses on how to deal with vote buying and INEC has informed the political parties on the dangers of exploring the negative strategy during the election. Therefore, the media, concerned political parties, and other stakeholders should engage in more sensitization, education, and monitoring to ensure that the negative strategy does not mar the governorship election. Stakeholders can extract serious commitment from the candidates and their parties to openly denounce vote buying and empower security agencies and election monitors to identify and arrest those involved.

This report shows that the ruling party is better on informed policy engagement and less intensive in disparaging the personality of the opponents. The party also engaged the electorate using specific campaign issues and policies. This is a positive development that other parties in the election should copy, instead of attacks and vote buying. Deliberative democracy is an opportunity to sell oneself to the electorate and show that one can better deliver dividends of democracy to people if elected. The campaigns should be issue-based and not about hooliganism, physical and online attacks, and vote buying.

Our verdict is that the major opposition to the ruling party in this election needs to promote issue-based political campaign and constructively show to the electorate why its programs and projects can better solve the problems in the state. All media agencies in the state need to perform their impartial functions of education, information, mobilization, and sensitization, to control the issues of vote buying, physical and online attacks, and lack of clear manifestoes on the part of any political parties affected. Managers of digital and social media platforms need to ensure that posts and comments capable of inciting violence, abuse and attacks, and disparaging personalities and parties are censored.

About Positive Agenda Nigeria

Positive Agenda Nigeria is a non-governmental organisation led by a group of academics and independent researchers dedicated to adopting evidence-based approaches to preserve a favourable climate for Nigeria's socioeconomic and political activities.

Research Team

Rasheed Ademola Adebisi, PhD -Team Lead

Rasheed Ademola ADEBIYI holds a PhD from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is a member of the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON); Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR); International Association of Media & Communication Research (IAMCR); and African Council for Communication Education (ACCE). He teaches PR & Advertising; News Writing and Reporting as well as Development Communication at the Department of Mass Communication, Fountain University, Osogbo, Nigeria. He is a 2022 Fellow of the Solutions Journalism Africa Fellowship supported by the Solutions Journalism Network, New York and implemented by the Nigeria Health Watch, Abuja. He is a Co-Founder/Editor-in Chief of *Abitocitta*, a platform for solution-focused stories in Nigeria and Africa. He has published a number of articles in both national and international journals in his areas of research interest.

Mutiu Iyanda Lasisi, BA, mMBA -Senior Research Analyst

Mutiu Iyanda Lasisi is a Research and Communications professional with a special bias for combining academic and industrial approaches for issues and needs exploration towards personal and societal growth. His research and industry interests include entrepreneurship development, media, communication, public governance, big data analytics, computational and data journalism. He has published articles on media, journalism and communication in reputable national and international journals. He currently works with Infoprations Limited, a data-driven management consulting company, Lagos, Nigeria.

Mojeed Adekunle Animashaun -Msc -Senior Research Analyst

Mojeed Adekunle Animashaun received first and second degrees in Political Science from Nigeria's premier university, the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is a doctoral student at Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria. He currently teaches in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Fountain University, Osogbo, Nigeria where he has served at various times as Head of Department, Sub-Dean of the Faculty of

Management and Social Sciences as well as Acting Chairman of University Consultancy Unit. He has previously taught at Nasarawa State University, Keffi and Osun State University, Osogbo. His areas of research interest include comparative democratization, governance, state-civil society relations and policy analysis. He has published in reputable local and international journals with his two latest research efforts published in an edited volume by Springer Nature; and in the Contemporary Journal of African Studies of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

Obasanjo Joseph Oyedele, PhD -Senior Research Analyst

Dr. Obasanjo Joseph Oyedele is a Lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State. He holds a PhD in climate change communication of the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, where he also bagged his M.A. and B.A. His ongoing and concluded postdoctoral fellowships with the Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism and The Civic Media Lab respectively focus on Nigeria's policies and pledges on climate change sustainability and efforts at curbing fake news, misinformation, and disinformation in the Nigerian media space respectively. He has publications on climate change, health, risk, and environmental communication and media studies in reputable national and international journals. He has also attended seminars, conferences, and summer schools both at home and abroad.

Ridwan Abiola Kolawole, BA, MA, -Senior Research Analyst

Ridwan Abiola Kolawole teaches journalism and communication in the Department of Mass Communication, Fountain University, Osogbo, Nigeria. Kolawole holds M.A and B. A. in Communication and Language Arts from University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He also has National Diploma in Mass Communication, from The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Nigeria. His research interest focuses on Applied Communication with particular interests in Media Studies, Journalism, and Development Communication. He is a 2020-2021 Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellow of the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York. He has served as research assistant for Community-Based Crime Prevention and Control of the Evidence and Lessons from Latin America [and Africa] (ELLA) funded by the UKAID and Practical Action. He is a beneficiary of the University of Edinburgh-funded Catalyst Regional Early Career Workshop for early career scholars from West Africa. He is a research team member

(Nigeria) on the project, Young Women and Men's Aspirations and Resilience: Prospects for Livelihoods, Employment and Accountability before, during and beyond COVID-19 project. This is a MasterCard Foundation-funded project in seven African countries including Nigeria aimed at projecting African youth's voices to the critical stakeholders in the area of empowerment/employment.

Umar Olansile Ajetunmobi, BA -Research Associate

Umar Ajetunmobi Olansile is an Applied Communication Researcher who has a special interest in development, health, media and digital communication-related issues. He is a graduate of University of Ibadan where he studied Communication and Language Arts. He is currently a postgraduate student of the same department, and co-winner of the 2021 UNESCO Silk Roads Youth Research Grant. He is equally affiliated with Infoprations Limited, a data-driven management consulting company based in Lagos, Nigeria. Umar has co-authored peer reviewed and published research papers on digital media, journalism (traditional and digital) and COVID-19 pandemic.

Abdulgafar Adebayo, Bsc -Communications and Research Assistant

Abdulgafar Adebayo Adekunle holds a BSc in Mass Communication from the Department of Mass Communication, Fountain University, Osogbo where he concluded his undergraduate programme in 2022. He is currently interning at Abitocitta, and works as a Research Assistant for Solutions Journalism Advocacy organised by Nigeria Health Watch in Osun State. He is skilled in graphics design, camera handling and journalistic writing.