

Textual Analysis of Select Political Rhetorics on Edo 2020 Governorship Election

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Abstract

The interest of this study is predicated on the premise that politicians creatively manipulate the electorate by using language and other semiotic resources, such as billboards, pamphlets and brochures, to appeal to a wide audience. Hence, the tendency to manipulate public opinion takes a strong hold in Nigerian political discourse. From avoidance of obvious facts to deliberate insertion of misrepresentative information, the discourse of politics is laden with manipulative rhetoric. The objectives of the study were to analyse the rhetorical strategies employed by politicians during the 2020 Edo governorship election campaigns, the development issues that dominated their rhetoric and the emotional appeal used. The paper used qualitative content analysis with focus on textual analysis. In the seven weeks leading to the September 19, 2020 Edo Governorship election, a total of 243 speeches were identified from television, social media and online sources. They were categorised into three areas based on the attacks, development and emotive appeal inherent in them. In total, excerpts from six speeches were analysed. The result showed that attack dominated the text of the rhetoric, infrastructural development was the dominant development issues and ethnic appeal, mudslinging were the emotional appeals used in the campaigns. The researchers concluded that the 2020 Edo governorship election was characterized by attacks and emotional rhetoric and recommended the need for communication advisers in campaign councils to design messages based on issues.

Keywords: Rhetoric, Political Discourse, Manipulation, Party, Elections