

**IMPOLITENESS IN X DISCOURSE IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT  
MUHAMMADU BUHARI**

**BY**

**Osaivbie Nice ARASOMWAN (MISS)**

**ART2100179**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BENIN CITY**

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,  
BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENT OF BACHELOR OF ART(HONS) DEGREE  
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**CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this study was carried out by **Osaivbie Nice ARASOMWAN (Miss)** in the department of English and literature, University of Benin city, under her supervision.

**Dr. Akorogie Austin**

**(SUPERVISOR)**

**DATE**

### **DEDICATION.**

This study is dedicated to God Almighty who has brought me thus far in my academic pursuits and has seen me through the phase of writing this study and to everyone who has experienced Impoliteness in one way or the other during online discourse.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

My sincere appreciation to God Almighty who has never ceases to be faithful at every phase of my academic pursuits particular during the writing of this study.

To my inestimable supervisor, Dr. Akoriogie Austin, thank you for your guidance, assistance and patience.

To My late Father, thanks for your investment, love, resources and encouragement.

To my mom, thanks for your constant prayers, love and support toward me.

To my Older Siblings, you've all been a steady source of Support.

To my aunty, thanks for your assistance.

To My friends thanks for your support.

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the Impoliteness strategies employed by Netizens during online discourse in Nigeria.

Drawing on Jonathan Culpeper's Framework, the research identifies the frequently used Impoliteness strategies in online interactions.

This study is based on screenshotting Impolite comments in regards to the post of president Muhammadu Buhari's death.

By applying Culpeper's Impoliteness strategies to the data, the results of this study were obtained. The findings reveals that commenters commonly employ mock/ sarcasm Impoliteness, negative Impoliteness and bald on record Impoliteness.

Furthermore, the study examines the functional roles of impoliteness, focusing on its affective, coercive, and entertaining functions. These functions highlight how impoliteness is used to express emotions, assert power, or provoke amusement at the expense of others.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **1.1. Purpose of study**

This study examines the use of impoliteness in X discourse following the announcement of the death of President Muhammadu Buhari. However, it explore how language is employed to convey emotions, political views, and reactions to this event. The research will investigate the nature of impolite expressions, such as insults, sarcasm, or mockery, and how these reflect the broader social and political climate surrounding Buhari's leadership.

### **1.2. Scope of Study**

This study investigates the manifestation of impoliteness in X reaction in relation to President Muhammadu Buhari's death. It focuses on how X users responded to the news through impolite language such as criticism, mockery, and other forms of impolite expressions.

The research covers to tweets posted from the day of the announcement to the following day, a period characterized by heightened online engagement and emotional reactions. It concentrates primarily on Nigerian X users. The study draws on a reliable dataset of tweets written in English and Nigerian Pidgin. Through the lens of Culpeper's impoliteness theory, the research observes the linguistic strategies used to express, authority, and show Buhari's political legacy. This analysis shows how sociopolitical group, and ethnic tensions, influence the tone and content of these online expressions.

However, the study does not account for private or deleted tweets, and does not attempt to measure the sincerity of the sentiments expressed, recognizing the performative nature of social media. These findings are based on what people said online and do not represent the opinion of everyone in Nigeria.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The research is a descriptive research with a qualitative approach and it describes the types of impoliteness strategies employed by concerned members on X posts and comments.

To limit the data, we purposively collected 3 post and 25 reactions, but only 15 reactions will be carefully selected for this study. Thus, 2 posts and 16 reaction will be analyzed in total.

In collecting the data, we would log in X with android phone, then screenshot the post and comments whose content relates to the focus of this study and serve as useful data.

The post is capture between 13th to 14th of July 2025. This period marks the peak of the announcement of the death of President Muhammadu Buhari's death. The data is subjected to descriptive and pragmatic analysis within the range of Culpeper impoliteness theory.

### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory, complemented with his Control System. Based on Brown and Lavinson's model of politeness strategy Culpeper writes a seminal article on impoliteness. He identified impoliteness as "the parasite of politeness" and the politeness strategies are the opposite of impoliteness strategies. The opposite here refers to its orientation to face. Politeness strategy is utilized to enhance or support face which can avoid conflict while

impoliteness strategies are used to attack face which cause social disharmony. As (Culpeper 8) defines impoliteness as the use of strategies to attack the interlocutor's face and create social disruption. These theoretical approaches take care of the different aspects of the study. (Culpeper 8) was specifically designed to answer Craig, Karen and Frances's call for a comprehensive treatment of face-attack strategies. The impoliteness super-strategies and examples of output strategies proposed in (Culpeper 356) are as follows:SS

**1. Bald-on-record impoliteness:** The Face Threatening Act (FTA) is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimized. (Culpeper 357). This is rudeness without filter. The person is being intentionally and directly offensive, making no effort to soften the blow. It's the verbal equivalent of a slap in the face.

**2. Positive impoliteness:** The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants. This strategy targets a person's need to feel liked, valued, and part of the group. It's designed to make them feel rejected and worthless. E.g.

a) Ignore, snub the other, fail to acknowledge the other's presence.

b) Exclude the other from an activity.

c) Disassociate from the other deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.

d) Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic.

for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.

e) Use obscure or secretive language -

for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.

g) Seek disagreement - select a sensitive topic. Make the other feel uncomfortable. E.g. do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.

h) Use taboo words - swear, or use abusive or profane language.

i) Call the other names - use derogatory nominations. (Culpeper 357)

3. **Negative impoliteness:** The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants. This strategy targets a person's need for independence and freedom of action. It's about imposing on them, making them feel trapped, or questioning their abilities. e.g.

a) Frighten - instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.

b) Condescend, scorn or ridicule - emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).

c) Invade the other's space

d) Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect. (Culpeper 358)

4. **Sarcasm or mock impoliteness:** The FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations. (Culpeper 360).

This is when you use the word of politeness to be impolite. You say something that sounds nice on the surface, but your tone and context make it clear you mean the exact opposite.

5. **Withhold impoliteness:** The absence of politeness work where it would be expected.

For example, failing to thank somebody for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness (Culpeper 361 ).

Furthermore, according to Culpeper's Control System which complements his impoliteness theory in this study, readers/audience embark on a process which can be datadriven (i.e. evidence that adds to, confirms, or fine-tunes our understanding of a specific character, or challenges it) or inference about/understanding characters based on prior knowledge (pre-existing expectations, information, socially or culturally held view of certain character or character-type, such individuals have shared characteristics by which they are understood in society) and the Textbase (what the character says at any given point) and Surface Structures (how the character says what they say) to stylistically read, interpret and understand character types and motivations (Culpeper, 2001).

Lastly, Culpeper addresses the specific functions of Impoliteness which includes the affective Impoliteness, coercive Impoliteness and entertaining Impoliteness.

1. Affective Function: It is used by speakers to display a negative emotional state such as anger in the context where the target is responsible for the negative feeling. To sum up, affective Impoliteness is the targeted display of heightened emotions, typically anger with the implication that the target is to blame for producing that negative emotional state.

2. Entertaining Function: it involves entertainment at the expense of the target of Impoliteness. The function is to amuse other people by utilizing impolite strategies towards the target. It usually occurs between two or more interlocutors

3. Coercive Impoliteness: This type of impoliteness is used to assert power or highlight social dominance. It demonstrates an imbalance in authority or status between individuals or groups, making the target aware of their lower position in the social hierarchy.

## **1.5 Literature Review**

Impoliteness has gained considerable scholarly attention, with various research efforts aiming to understand how language is used not only to cooperate but also to cause offense. Scholars have offered multiple definitions to account for the nature and function of impoliteness.

Computer-mediated discourse is the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers. The study of computer-mediated discourse (henceforth CMD) is a specialization within the broader interdisciplinary study of computer-mediated communication (CMC), distinguished by its focus on language and language use in computer networked environments, and by its use of methods of discourse analysis to address that focus. Most CMC currently in use is text-based, that is, messages are typed on a computer keyboard and read as text on a computer screen, typically by a person or persons at a different location from the message sender. Text-based CMC takes a variety of forms (e.g. e-mail, discussion groups, real-time chat, virtual reality role-playing games) whose linguistic properties vary depending on the kind of messaging system used and the social and cultural context embedding particular instances of use. (Herring 612).

X, in particular, has become a common platform for real time reactions, political expression, and public engagement. Its structure character limits, public visibility, and ease of access makes it a potent space for both civil discourse and impolite behavior.

Impoliteness in CMC, especially on X, has been a growing area of study. The reduced social cues and perceived anonymity in online discourse can lead to more confrontational and aggressive behavior. This aligns with view that impoliteness is more prevalent in online spaces due to reduced accountability (Bousfield's 2008). When applied to sensitive topics such as the death of a public figure like President Muhammadu Buhari, these features of X can magnify expressions of impoliteness, ranging from sarcasm and mock.

The occurrence of impoliteness in written conversations between readers and reporters, agreeing with Herring's observation that many text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) modes are anonymous and lack non-verbal cues (Herring 612).

In his study, Neurauter-Kessel found that a growing number of users wrote extremely impolite comments. He suggested that the special right of being anonymous in the web is the main reason. Being anonymous gave advantage to the users to avoid being responsible for their misbehavior. They would also not be afraid of losing their face or damaging their public image as they could hide their true identity.

Their findings concurred with Suler, who noted that people reacted differently when communicating face to face versus online (Suler 321). When face to face with an authority figure, individuals would typically avoid saying what was truly on their minds to prevent punishment or disapproval. On the other hand, online communication reduced this fear, allowing people to speak more freely or even inappropriately, as they were not physically present with others. This highlights the role of anonymity and the absence of non-verbal cues in enabling impolite behavior online. These factors help explain the emergence of impolite discourse in online

reactions to the announcement, as users may feel freer to express themselves without concern for consequences or social judgment.

Existing studies have documented adequate evidence of the connection between impoliteness and online discursive culture (Kessels 187). Such studies based on the Nigeria context have identified different forms of impoliteness in online discourses in Nigeria is partly similar to this study in the sense that it investigated politeness in asynchronous computer mediated discourse in Nairaland Forum(Taiwo 67). However, looking beyond the expression of impoliteness, this study further explores the largely uncharted aspect of the nexus between the projection of participants interpersonal positioning and their expression of impoliteness, especially among Nigerian participants in online political forums.

Another study by (Smilowitz et al 88) used Asch's social influence experiment as the basis to determine how the absence of contextual cues in CMC affected individual perception. Their study disclosed that “it is easier for a deviant to persist in the CMC background. Since the upshot of the majority opinion is lessened, individuals with unusual opinions are more likely to hold out than to relent. According to them, this is because of missing physical cues, lack of non-verbal cues and reduced sense of the existence of others. As they suggest that the absence of contextual cues online can embolden individuals with deviant or minority opinions to express themselves more freely. This can contribute to understanding why impolite or dissenting views may have been more prominent in online reactions to the announcement, as individuals may feel less pressure to conform to social norms or majority opinions.

It is apparent that many researchers have attempted to define impoliteness. Culpeper assumes impoliteness as a situation where a speaker communicates face-attack purposefully, or when the

hearer comprehends and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of both. Based on these definitions, even though there are differences, it can be seen that face and intention are the two notable commonalities shared by them. At the similar time, (Spencer-Oatey 145) infers that our assessment of impoliteness should be restructured to address ‘rapport management’. She also exhorts for a more complete view of impoliteness on the basis of the conventional rules and norms of behavior.

The way people communicate online through and how they choose to be impolite or rude is a complex issue. When people are online, they often feel more comfortable expressing themselves freely because they're anonymous and can't see each other's reactions. This can lead to mean or aggressive behavior. As online communication becomes more popular, it's crucial to understand how people behave online and how it affects our relationships and social norms. By studying how people are impolite online, researchers can learn more about how people interact, form identities, and establish power dynamics in digital spaces. This knowledge can help us create strategies to promote more respectful and constructive online interactions.

## **1.6 Justification of Study**

This study is justified by the increasing relevance of social media as a platform for political discourse and public sentiment, particularly in Nigeria. X, as a space of immediate and uncensored expression, has become a site where impoliteness is not only common but also reflective of deeper social, political, and emotional tensions. Analyzing the language used in response to the death of a public figure like President Muhammadu Buhari provides valuable insight into how Nigerians use impoliteness to express political dissatisfaction, and challenge authority,

Although politeness has been widely studied, impoliteness especially within digital African contexts remains under-researched. This study seeks to bridge that gap by applying key theoretical perspectives (such as those of Culpeper and Bousfield) to Nigerian online discourse. It not only enriches scholarly understanding of language use in digital spaces but also sheds light on how power, identity, and resistance are negotiated through impolite expressions.

Additionally, the findings may have practical implications for political communication, social media moderation, and public discourse analysis, particularly in understanding how language can influence opinion, activism, and societal change in Nigeria.

### **1.7 Thesis Statement**

This study looks at how people on X reacted to President Muhammadu Buhari's death announcement by using different impolite strategies especially negative mock or sarcasm and bald on record impoliteness.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **NEGATIVE IMPOLITENESS STRATEGY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Negative impoliteness, as defined by Jonathan Culpeper, refers to communicative strategies that are designed to attack the recipient's negative face wants that is, their desire for autonomy, freedom from imposition, and personal space. It involves expressions that directly insult, threaten, or disregard the individual's dignity, respect, or social norms. These acts are intentionally face-threatening and lack politeness redress, often coming across as blunt, hostile, or cruel. Common strategies include condescension, dismissal, ridiculing, and the use of taboo or disrespectful language.

#### **2.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

The comments extracted from the Twitter thread in response to a post by @vdmempire reveal various forms of impoliteness commonly found in online discourse. Drawing from Culpeper's (1996) framework of impoliteness strategies, this analysis investigates how language users

express disbelief, through negative Impoliteness. This strategy is often influenced by the anonymity and informality of social media platforms, which create a space where users feel less constrained by conventional politeness norms. The data exemplifies how users challenge the relevance and truth of the original post while reinforcing solidarity among themselves through shared skepticism and humorous banter.

Excerpt 1



This image can be

pragmatically analyzed based on the context, implicature, speech act, and tone conveyed through both text and visuals.

1. Context & Speech Act:

The post is an announcement of the reported death of former President Muhammadu Buhari, shared by a commentary account on social media. The speech act here is primarily informative (assertive) and expressive, as it informs the public of the supposed death and expresses condolences. However, it's important to consider whether the statement is \*true or satirical\*, since the account is labeled "commentary," which might influence how the audience interprets it.

## 2. Implicature & Presupposition:

The tweet presupposes that Buhari has passed away ("passes away in London") and that the speaker (poster) is offering genuine condolences ("My deepest condolences to his family"). However, given the mixed use of emojis (a dove and a broken heart), there might be an implied tone of sarcasm or mockery, especially when contextualized with previous tweets from this account.

### Excerpt 2



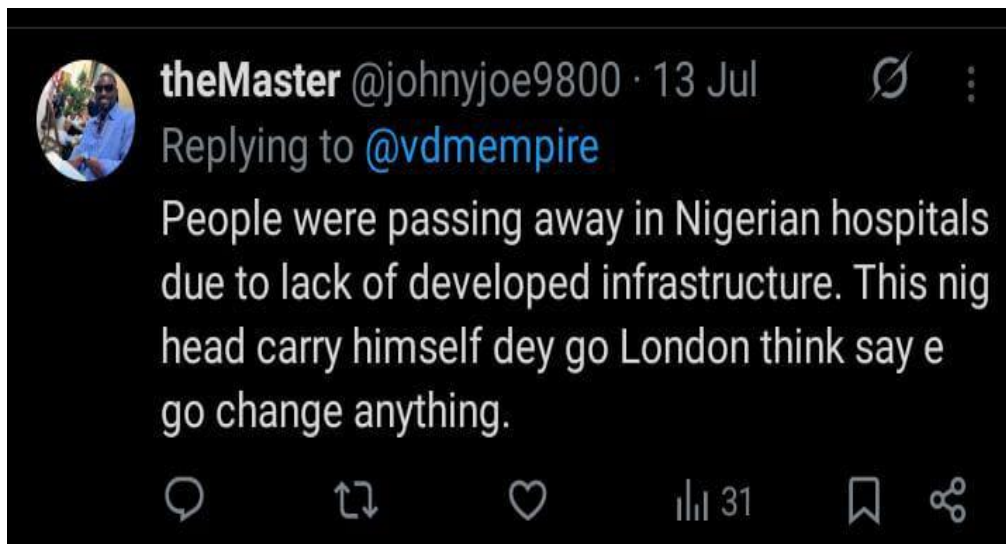
In the tweet by

@Sundayclara5; "Am the happiest person right now and he won't even see rest in peace" the

speaker deploys negative impoliteness by expressing joy at someone's death and denying them the basic decency of peaceful rest, which is culturally expected. This utterance attacks both the memory of the deceased and offends any sympathizers, violating norms of respect and mourning. The speaker's words are not just a personal opinion but a public attack meant to intensify emotional hurt. The lack of empathy and intentional cruelty characterizes this comment as a clear case of negative impoliteness under Culpeper's framework.

This response strongly reflects the speaker's deep dissatisfaction, anger, and frustration towards the late President Muhammadu Buhari. Normally, when someone dies, people tries to speak kindly or respectfully out of social norms and cultural expectations. However, this speaker intentionally goes against that norm by using offensive and bitter language. This Culpeper calls negative impoliteness; a deliberate use of words to attack someone's dignity, face or reputation. Even though Buhari is deceased, the speaker's words are aimed at damaging his memory or public image.

Excerpt 3



This comment

demonstrates negative impoliteness as defined by Culpeper, which involves strategies used to attack a person's desire not to be imposed upon or offended their negative face. The speaker uses derogatory and disrespectful language ("this

big head carry himself") to refer to the former president, a clear act of ridiculing and belittling. The tone is mocking and dismissive, undermining the subject's dignity and status, even in the context of death. Such language is not just impolite but intentionally face-threatening, showing no concern for social decorum or the mourning associated with someone's passing.

The comment also reflects contempt and moral outrage, indirectly blaming the deceased for poor infrastructure in Nigerian hospitals, thereby justifying the disrespectful tone. The speaker insinuates hypocrisy and selfishness, suggesting that the leader neglected the healthcare system while opting for foreign treatment. By doing this, the commenter strips the individual of any entitlement to respect, using negative impoliteness to criticize systemic failure in a deeply personal and hostile manner.

#### Excerpt 4



Ibi  
@thisibi

This man sanctioned the murder of Nigerians at Lekki toll gate!! Thousands of Christians were murdered while he was twirling between Aso Rock and London.

He ushered in the cancer that is APC!

The only evil greater than that man is Tinubu.

I hope he rests in the burning lake!!

This comment is a strong example of negative impoliteness, particularly through explicitly expressed insults, condescension, and dismissiveness, which Culpeper identifies as core strategies. The speaker aggressively attacks the subject's moral character, using emotionally charged language such as "sanctioned the murder" and "twirling between Aso Rock and London." These expressions not only blame the individual for national tragedies (e.g., Lekki toll gate and killings of Christians) but also show complete disregard for respectful discourse, especially in the context of death. The intent is not to criticize constructively but to strip away the subject's dignity posthumously, violating their negative face wants the desire to be unimpeded and assaulted.

The comment also employs intensified blame by associating the deceased with ongoing political failures ("the cancer that is APC") and elevating another figure (Tinubu) as an even greater evil. The final statement "I hope he rests in the burning lake" is a direct and hostile rejection of the

conventional phrase “rest in peace,” flipping it into a curse. This violates social norms around mourning and death, showcasing mock impoliteness with genuine hostility. The utterance aims to shock, offend, and degrade, fitting firmly within Culpeper’s framework of negative impoliteness designed to maximize the emotional damage inflicted on the hearer or the subject.

Excerpt 5



**iamdesmond\_\_**  
@iamdesmond\_\_

Replying to [@GucciStarboi](#)

**BIG AYO**  
@47kasz

Subscribe

- \*Banned Twitter in 2021 cos of protest
- \*END SARS victims in 2020
- \*Cash Scarcity in 2023 for no reason(people di Ed)
- \*ASUU STRIKE
- \*called the youth lazy cos they asked for better govt
- \*wasted 8years of peoples lives
- \*the biggest dispensation in the county’s history

He should rest in peace only if God wants.. Gtf

18:12 · 13 Jul 25 · 1,132 Views

This text reflects negative impoliteness through direct attacks on the subject's competence, moral judgment, and the impact

of their leadership. The speaker lists a series of grievances banning Twitter during protests, the #EndSARS violence, cash scarcity, ASUU strikes, and derogatory labeling of youths as evidence of failure and insensitivity. These are used to construct a portrayal of the subject as an authoritarian figure who not only disregarded the people's needs but also actively caused hardship. By referencing "wasted 8 years of people's lives" and calling it "the biggest dispensation in the country's history," the speaker implies irreparable damage and failure, employing condescension, scorn, and accusation, all of which are strategies of negative impoliteness according to Culpeper.

The closing line "He should rest in peace only if God wants... Gtf"—is particularly striking. It mocks the convention of respectfully mourning the dead and introduces mock politeness and dismissiveness. The abbreviation "Gtf" (likely "get the f\*\*k") adds a vulgar, emotionally charged dismissal, signaling hostile disengagement. This final blow minimizes any possible empathy, showing a refusal to extend dignity or compassion. Overall, the utterance demonstrates intentionally face-threatening acts, aimed at denying the subject's right to respect and invoking public resentment, thus aligning clearly with Culpeper's framework of negative impoliteness.

EXCERPT 6



This comment "No peace for those that wicked Nigeria" expresses strong disapproval using negative impoliteness, particularly through a direct attack on the moral character of the deceased. The phrase implies that the individual being referred to (in this case, the former president) caused harm or injustice to the country and, as a result, does not deserve peace, even in death. The statement reverses the culturally expected norm of offering respectful or neutral condolences when someone dies. Instead, it denies the deceased rest or peace, which is a powerful social condemnation. The verb "wicked," used here informally as a transitive verb (common in Nigerian Pidgin), intensifies the accusatory tone, directly attributing suffering or evil to the person in question.

This comment shows that the speaker is very angry and disappointed. It goes against the usual way people speak about the dead, which is normally respectful. Instead, the speaker uses harsh and offensive words, which fits into Culpeper's idea of negative impoliteness; where someone uses strong language to attack or insult. This kind of comment also reflects how many people in the country may feel hurt or betrayed by the leader's actions. So, the speaker is not just sharing a personal opinion, but also expressing a larger frustration felt by others, using impoliteness as a way to reject any praise or respect being given to the person who died.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **SARCASM AND MOCK IMPOLITENESS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Culpeper, sarcasm or mock impoliteness is a form of impoliteness where the speaker deliberately uses polite or positive language in an insincere or exaggerated way to mock or insult the hearer. It often involves saying the opposite of what is meant, using irony or an overly polite tone to highlight criticism or contempt. This strategy can appear playful on the surface but carries an underlying intention to damage the hearer's face. Culpeper sees this as a subtle and strategic way to be impolite while maintaining a superficial layer of civility.

## 3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

### EXCERPT 1



This text exemplifies mock or sarcasm impoliteness as described by Culpeper, where politeness expressions are used ironically to convey contempt. The phrase “RIP Muhammadu Buhari” mimics a respectful farewell, but the follow up “Gone too late” undercuts any genuine sympathy, implying that his death should have occurred earlier. This shift from apparent respect to open hostility is characteristic of sarcasm impoliteness, as it uses a socially accepted form to deliver a face threatening act, thus amplifying its impact.

The final line, “May God handle you the way you handle us,” is a sarcastic curse cloaked in religious language. It mimics the tone of a prayer or blessing, yet it implicitly wishes divine justice or retribution upon the deceased. This inversion of expected politeness, especially in a culturally sensitive context like death, creates a powerful form of mock impoliteness. The speaker pretends to show reverence while actually reinforcing blame, anger, and resentment, using irony to intensify the communicative attack.

### EXCERPT 2



This response from an X user “Finally the script has been played and the whole drama has ended,” reflects "mock impoliteness" in the fact that the commenter make good use of metaphor and sarcasm. By referring to the death of a public figure, former President Buhari's life as a “script” and “drama,” the commenter is telling us that the entire life, leadership, and death of the president Buhari was like a performance or staged act. This figurative language undermines the gravity of death, presenting it not as a solemn, natural occurrence but as the end of a prolonged, possibly manipulative or insincere public spectacle. The use of “finally” further suggests that the speaker had long anticipated or even hoped for this “ending,” showing a lack of sympathy or empathy for the deceased. It indirectly conveys that the individual’s time in the public eye was burdensome or exhausting, and the commenter is relieved that it is over.

EXCERPT 3



The second comment,

"Bro has died like three times from 2017 till date 🦴,"uses sarcasm and mock impoliteness\* to cast doubt and ridicule on the news of the death of former President Muhammadu Buhari. The user implies disbelief, suggesting that the news of Buhari's death has been announced multiple times in the past, thus causing the current announcement to be unremarkable or even laughable. The phrase "like three times" exaggerates for effect, conveying cynicism about the credibility of the news or perhaps insinuating that the public has been misled repeatedly. The use of the informal "Bro" to refer to a former president is itself a form of linguistic minimization or disrespect, breaking the norm of showing reverence toward public figures, especially in death. Adding the skull emoji further emphasizes the sarcasm, mocking the idea of death and showing a

lack of solemnity.



EXCERPT 4

Pragmatically, these statements violate the maxim of relevance (Grice) and the norms of polite mourning discourse, replacing solemnity with ridicule. Rather than offering condolences, the users reject or downplay the legitimacy of the report, using humor and local expressions (“nah lie,” “nah old news”) to signal distrust and disinterest. The impoliteness here is veiled in humor, making the tone seem playful, but the illocutionary force is actually accusatory and disrespectful toward both the deceased and the medium sharing the news. These comments reflect deep societal skepticism and are a form of public dissent masked in sarcastic banter.

These comments exemplify mock or sarcasm impoliteness, a strategy identified by Jonathan Culpeper where a speaker appears to be unserious or joking, but the underlying message is cutting, dismissive, or face threatening. In these replies, the users trivialize or reject the announcement of Buhari’s death by claiming he had already died in previous years “Dead and gone since 2017,” “Persin wen don die since how many years ago,” “Not new,” and “Nah lie.” These comments sarcastically frame the death as either false, old, or irrelevant, thereby undermining the gravity and respect typically associated with death announcements. The mockery lies not just in denying the news, but in implying it’s a recycled or staged narrative a script the public has “seen before.”

EXCERPT 5



This post employs mock/sarcasm

impoliteness, as defined by Jonathan Culpeper, by using humor to deliver a disrespectful message in a veiled but cutting manner. The image and accompanying text “Contribution for Buhari’s Burial” and “Pls ask for account details “create2 a parody of community fundraising, typically associated with compassion or emergency support. However, in this case, the sarcastic twist trivializes the death of a former president, suggesting the matter is so casual or unimpressive that it warrants a group chat joke rather than dignified mourning. The intention is to ridicule rather than honor.

Pragmatically, this act violates expected mourning conventions and the maxims of tact and approbation, two politeness principles that promote respect, especially in death-related contexts. The user mocks the situation by implying that Buhari’s burial is a cause for mock celebration or even financial exploitation. This also reflects broader socio-political resentment, where citizens

use satire to critique leadership failures. Underneath the humor lies a strong ideological stance refusing to show reverence due to perceived injustices committed during Buhari's administration.

#### EXCERPT 6



This tweet, at first glance, appears polite and complimentary with the phrase "Awwwwn such a good man". However, the inclusion of two laughing with tears emojis (😂😂) immediately signals a sarcastic tone, suggesting the speaker doesn't genuinely believe the person is a "good man." Instead, the exaggerated sweetness ("Awwwwn") combined with laughter implies mockery, positioning the statement as sarcasm rather than sincere praise. This fits into mock politeness, a form of impoliteness where the speaker pretends to be nice while actually being critical or scornful.

Under Impoliteness Theory, this tweet functions as a face threatening act masked in fake politeness. The sarcasm undermines the recipient's positive face their desire to be liked or admired by ridiculing rather than validating them. Rather than a direct insult, the speaker uses irony to indirectly belittle the subject, which may be more socially acceptable in online discourse

but still achieves the goal of impoliteness. This indirectness also allows the speaker to deny offense if challenged, further showing how sarcasm operates as a strategic impoliteness tool.

#### EXCERPT 7



This tweet employs

sarcasm/mock impoliteness by simulating grief in a humorous and exaggerated way. The speaker claims that upon hearing about someone's death, they were so heartbroken and they could only eat seven out of eight wraps of "appo" (a local food), ending with crying emojis (🥹🥹🥹). The contrast between the supposed emotional pain and the unimportant complaint of missing one wrap of food reveals the sarcastic undertone. Rather than expressing genuine sorrow, the tweet mocks the idea of performative grief, using exaggeration to pinpoint how unserious the reaction

From an Impoliteness Theory perspective, this is mock politeness aimed not necessarily at the deceased, but at the discourse surrounding the death. It subtly attacks the sincerity of others' mourning or overdramatic reactions, while presenting the speaker's own reaction in a satirical light. The crying emojis amplify the irony, making it clear that the tweet isn't meant to be taken at face value. This kind of sarcastic comment can undermine both positive face (by not aligning

with expected emotional norms) and social seriousness, turning what should be a solemn moment into a space for dark humo

## CHAPTER 4

### BALD ON RECORD IMPOLITENESS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Bald on record impoliteness is a type of impoliteness strategy where the speaker delivers a face threatening act (FTA) in a direct, clear, and unambiguous way without any effort to soften or mitigate the impact. This strategy is the opposite of politeness it involves saying something potentially offensive or hurtful bluntly, without trying to save the hearer's feelings or maintain social harmony.

#### 4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

##### EXCERPT 1



This image features a tribute post to former President Muhammadu Buhari by Dr. Hidima, which contains both a religious quote and a farewell message. Pragmatically, the post is rich in contextual meaning and reflects a respectful, solemn reaction planted in cultural and religious norms. The phrase "And every soul shall taste death" is a direct quotation from the Qur'an (Surah Al-Imran 3:185), which is often invoked in Muslim communities when someone passes away. It acts as a religious marker and a universal truth, reminding followers that death is inevitable and predetermined by divine will. By starting the message with this verse, the speaker aligns the message with religious values, giving it both spiritual depth and communal resonance.

The second part of the utterance, "May Jannatil Firdaus be your abode", is a speech act of prayer and blessing, wishing the deceased the highest level of paradise in Islamic belief. This form of positive expressive language conveys empathy, respect, and communal mourning. It functions as a solidarity-building act, especially within the Muslim audience, by expressing hope and goodwill in accordance with shared religious values.

From a pragmatic point of view, the post emphasizes positive politeness strategies. It appeals to shared beliefs, avoids confrontation, and demonstrates closeness, compassion, and reverence for the deceased. The image of Buhari waving while ascending an aircraft can also be interpreted metaphorically as his "final journey" or "departure from this world." This reinforces the symbolic nature of death as a transition rather than an end, which is consistent with Islamic eschatology.

Overall, there is no trace of impoliteness in this post. Instead, it functions as a respectful farewell that upholds the face (dignity and honor) of the deceased. It reflects the pragmatic norms of religious mourning, where language is used not only to inform but to comfort, bless, and unify.

#### EXCERPT 2



This comment “He would have lived longer if he build a nice hospital in Nigeria” is a strong example of bald on record impoliteness, a concept explained by Jonathan Culpeper in his framework of impoliteness strategies.

The speaker does not soften the statement with politeness strategies, euphemisms, or any emotional cushioning, despite the sensitive context of someone’s death. There is no attempt to express sympathy or show restraint; instead, the speaker delivers a harsh truth in a direct and confrontational way. This is characteristic of bald on record impoliteness, where the goal is not to preserve face, but to challenge or criticize openly, especially in a socially inappropriate or emotionally charged moment. The comment strips away any social decorum, delivering the face threatening act without redressive effort.

Pragmatically, this utterance performs several functions. First, it openly criticizes the former president’s governance, specifically highlighting the failure to invest in healthcare infrastructure. Second, it implies that his own choices led to consequences even in death, thus holding him accountable posthumously. Third, it challenges the public narrative of mourning by rejecting any respectful tone and instead injecting political frustration. The impoliteness here is strategic it seizes a moment when many may be showing respect and uses it to voice anger, disappointment, and perceived truth. Culpeper sees such acts not just as rude, but as deeply intentional attacks on face, used to provoke, confront, or condemn and that is exactly what is happening in this comment.

#### EXCERPT 3



The speaker doesn't try to appear respectful or sensitive, even in emotionally charged situations like death.

In this case, the commenter, replying to a post mourning the death of former President Muhammadu Buhari, responds with a harsh counterpoint: rather than expressing sympathy, the user brings up alleged killings linked to Buhari's administration, such as at Lekki Gate (referencing the Lekki Toll Gate incident during the End SARS protest in 2020) and Kanu's compound (referring to a raid related to Nnamdi Kanu in 2019).

Statements like "Are they not human too?" and "Oga rest" show no attempt to be diplomatic or polite. "Oga rest" is a dismissive command, telling the original poster to stop talking or stop defending Buhari, which adds to the confrontational tone.

Pragmatically, this response challenges not just the mourning of Buhari but the morality of doing so, arguing that the focus should instead be on those allegedly killed under his leadership. It is a direct moral accusation delivered without concern for decorum or the sensitivity of the moment exactly what bald on record impoliteness looks like.

#### EXCERPT 4



This comment “But mini god don first taste am / No be so / Wicked souls” is a strong example of bald on record impoliteness, particularly in the way it disregards social norms of respect and sympathy surrounding death. According to Jonathan Culpeper’s framework, bald on record impoliteness occurs when a speaker directly performs a face-threatening act (FTA) without any redressive effort. In this case, the speaker uses raw, unfiltered language to express disdain and moral condemnation, especially aimed at figures of power.

The phrase “mini god don first taste am” implies that the deceased saw themselves as god-like, untouchable or oppressive while alive a form of hubris. The speaker mocks this by stating death has humbled them, stripping away that perceived power. Saying "Wicked souls" further reinforces a negative moral judgment, labeling the deceased (and perhaps others in power) as inherently evil. There is no attempt to soften this claim; it is a direct insult, timed deliberately to reject mourning and instead celebrate what the commenter sees as justice.

In this comment, the speaker reacts to the death of former Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari not with condolence or mourning, but with a sharp, critical remark. The comment implies that Buhari's own governance failures specifically, his alleged neglect of the Nigerian healthcare system ultimately contributed to his death. The statement strips away any ceremonial or sympathetic tone expected in the wake of a public figure’s passing, and instead, points an accusatory finger. This is done without hedging, politeness markers, or euphemism. The sentence is baldly declarative, providing a direct cause-effect judgment: had he built a proper hospital in Nigeria, he might still be alive. This statement deliberately violates the social norms of respectful public discourse, especially concerning death, which is generally considered a sensitive topic.

#### EXCERPT 5



The comment “They hate us with passion, not just late PMB!” is a good example of bald on record impoliteness, which, according to Culpeper, happens when someone says something rude or offensive in a very direct and blunt way, without trying to soften it or be polite. In this case, the person is not just defending the late President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB), but also

accusing others of hating a whole group of people likely referring to those who shared similar beliefs, region, or religion as Buhari.

The speaker is clearly upset and feels that the criticism of Buhari goes beyond politics or leadership and is instead based on personal or group hatred. By saying "they hate us," the commenter is drawing a line between "us" and "them," showing a deep sense of division and hurt. The phrase "with passion" shows that the speaker believes this hate is strong and emotional, not just a small disagreement.

This type of impoliteness is unfiltered and emotionally charged. The speaker doesn't try to sound respectful or neutral, especially during a time (after someone's death) when polite expressions are normally expected. Instead, they confront the critics head-on, suggesting that the anger towards Buhari is really about discrimination against a larger group

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1 Summary

The summary of this study is to find out the types of Impoliteness strategies and its trigger.

The data collected were analysed using Culpeper's Impoliteness strategies (2005)

The strategies are negative Impoliteness, positive Impoliteness, mock Impoliteness, withhold Impoliteness and bald on record Impoliteness. The most frequently used strategy in this research is the mock or sarcasm Impoliteness with Nine comments attached, and negative Impoliteness with five comments and Bald on record Impoliteness with four comments

In this study, we discover that the most employed Impoliteness is the Mock and sarcasm Impoliteness, a method that uses polite but with the intention of being ironic or sarcastic.

In various instances, we discover the use of hostile language, curse, insult, order and vulgar language. This strategy is explicit and attacks the addressees face directly. In Excerpt 6 in chapter 3, the appers polite and complimentary with the phrase of awwnn such a good man adding a laughing emojis, this shows that commenters in x often use Mock Impoliteness to convey their implied meaning. Other languages include " contribution for Buhari's death.

The negative Impoliteness is another strategy used in this study, it uses condescension, ridiculing and other belittling languages to cause offence. This strategy is the second most used

Impoliteness in this study by X users. It involves the use of languages such as "I am the happiest person right now and he won't see rest in peace". In this study, this strategy is used to speak negatively against the dead.

Another Impoliteness strategy used in this text is Bald on record Impoliteness. This strategy undermines the explicit and direct way of aggression. In various instances, we discover the use of threat, hostile language, curse, insult, orders and vulgar language.

This strategy is explicit and attacks the addressees face directly.

In this study, the effects of impoliteness in online reactions to former President Muhammadu Buhari's death are observable at both the individual and social levels:

1. Emotional Expression and Catharsis: Impolite comments allowed users to vent frustration, anger, and resentment over perceived political injustices, such as incidents at Lekki Toll Gate or alleged mismanagement during his tenure. It functions as a form of emotional release, enabling users to express feelings they might not voice in face-to-face interactions.
2. Challenge to Authority and Legitimacy: Negative and bald-on-record impoliteness directly questions the morality and decisions of political figures, even posthumously. By highlighting past grievances or alleged wrongdoings, users implicitly challenge the social and political legitimacy of Buhari's leadership.
3. Social Polarization and Conflict: Impoliteness can deepen social divisions, as comments often provoke strong reactions from supporters and opponents alike. This creates heated online debates, reinforcing group identities and political polarization.
4. Humor, Mockery, and Sarcasm: Mock/sarcastic impoliteness, such as calling for contributions for Buhari's burial, provides satirical critique. While humorous, it also undermines respect and can spread cynicism about leadership and governance.
5. Online Culture and Anonymity Effect: The study shows that CMC environments allow impoliteness to flourish due to anonymity and lack of non-verbal cues, making users more comfortable in expressing criticism boldly and unapologetically.
6. Influence on Public Opinion: Impolite discourse can shape perceptions of political figures, reinforcing negative sentiments and potentially influencing how wider audiences remember or evaluate past leadership.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This study has shown that impoliteness is common in online discussions, especially in reactions to the announcement of President Muhammadu Buhari's death. The research found that netizens used language that expressed anger, frustration, and moral judgment, often through strategies such as negative impoliteness, sarcasm, and bald-on-record impoliteness. Culpeper's framework helps explain these behaviors, but the study also highlights that social media encourages impoliteness because of anonymity, absence of non-verbal cues, and lack of immediate social consequences. People feel freer to express negative emotions online than they would in face-to-face interactions.

The findings also show that impoliteness reflects broader societal and political frustrations, not just personal feelings. While expressing anger online can be a way for people to release emotions, it can also harm relationships and create conflict. This study highlights the importance of promoting respectful communication online and provides insights into how impoliteness affects social interactions. Overall, the research contributes to linguistics, pragmatics, and digital communication studies by showing how impoliteness works in online discourse, its effects, and ways to reduce harmful behaviors.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Social media platform X is a dynamic space where individuals from diverse backgrounds interact and communicate. However, beneath the surface of these interactions lies a complex range of both politeness and impoliteness. Impoliteness, in particular, can have far-reaching consequences, including damaging relationships, undermining trust, and fostering a toxic environment. This study aims to identify and analyze the various impoliteness strategies manifested in X discourse following the death of President Muhammadu Buhari. Based on the findings, the study also provides recommendations for reducing impolite behavior and promoting more respectful communication on the platform.

**Promote Digital Etiquette Awareness:** Social media platforms should create campaigns or guidelines to educate users about respectful communication and the consequences of impoliteness online.

**Encourage Self-Moderation:** Users should be encouraged to pause and think before posting, especially when discussing sensitive topics, to reduce impulsive or emotionally driven impolite comments.

Encourage Positive Engagement: Highlight and reward polite, constructive, and supportive interactions through badges, likes, or other recognition systems to promote positive behavior.