

**Framing Patterns of Influencers' Hate Speech on X During the 2023 Presidential
Election Campaign in South-West Nigeria**

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Abstract

Digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) have expanded the influence of social media influencers in Nigeria's online political communication, but have also intensified the spread of hate speech during elections. This study examines how selected influencers framed hate speech during the 2023 presidential election campaign. Using quantitative content analysis, posts from three purposively selected influencers; @SeyiLaw1, @AisahYesufu, and @DemolaRewaju, representing APC, LP and PDP were retrieved on Twitter, screened

through a validate hate-speech lexicon, and coded into ten framing categories. A total of 1,634 posts were identified and 580 posts consists of hate speech content which were analysed using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and Tukey's HSD test to test differences in the frames. Findings show that influencers employed diverse framing strategies, with foreign interference and economic marginalisation emerging as the most prevalent frames, while victimhood appeared least. ANOVA results indicate statistically significant overall differences in framing patterns across influencers, although post-hoc comparisons revealed no significant pairwise differences. The study contributes to scholarship on digital communication by demonstrating how influencer-generated frames shape the visibility and circulation of hate speech during elections. It also highlights the need for strengthened digital governance and targeted interventions to mitigate the risks associated with influencer-driven polarisation.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Framing, Political Communication, Digital Governance, Framing, X (Twitter)

Introduction

The growing visibility and influence of social media influencers have become a central feature of contemporary digital communication. These individuals, often regarded as relatable and credible sources, command substantial followership and actively shape discussions within online public spheres (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, and Freberg 2011, as cited in Suuronen, Reinikainen, Borchers, & Strandberg, 2021). Their communicative power is not limited to entertainment of lifestyle content increasingly, influencers have become prominent actors in political discourse. A notable concern arising from this shift is their deployment of framing strategies that lend coherence, emotional weight, and persuasive force to hate speech circulated on digital platforms. Techniques such as selective emphasis, the omission of contextual details, and the strategic use of memes and visual rhetoric have been shown to enhance the appeal and spread of hostile messages (Entman, 1993; Lamerichs, Dennis, Mari, Puerta, Radmila, & Anna, 2018).

Evidence from various geopolitical contexts underscores the extent to which these patterns have taken root. The Brazilian elections of 2018 and 2022 witnessed widespread dissemination of polarizing content by influential online actors, contributing to intensifies public division (Machado, Kira, Narayanan; Zamudio, 2023). Similarly, in India, the framing of religiously and ethically charged messages by digital influencers has been linked to heightened communal sensitivities, further entrenching societal divides (Kaushik & Agarwal, 2024). These cases illustrate a border global trend in which influencer-mediated framing contributes not only to the visibility of hate speech but also to its normalisation within digital publics.

The nature of social media platforms themselves facilitates this process. Digital environments reward sensational and emotionally charged content, enabling hate speech to circulate

through multimodal formats such as memes (Lamerichs et al., 2018), emojis (Matamoros-Fernández, 2018), GIFs (Jackson, 2017), and fabricated identities designed to provoke conflicts (Farkas, Jannick, & Christina, 2018). Influencers who employ provocative framing thus achieve disproportionate digital visibility, reinforcing a communication environment in which divisive rhetoric is routinely rewarded.

In Nigeria, where political contestation intersects with ethnic and regional pluralism, the proliferation of hate speech on social media has become increasingly prominent (Adebayo & Ojo, 2019; Nwozor, Ajakaiye, Okidu, Olanrewaju, & Afolabi, 2022). The country's high internet penetration and the growing reliance on digital platforms for political information further accentuate this trend (Dzandu, Boateng, Agyemang, & Quansah, 2016). Within this environment, influencers frequently act as conduits for political narratives, framing issues in ways that highlight ethnic, partisan, or cultural cleavages (Gräve & Greff, 2018). Their capacity to set agendas and shape interpretive schemas places them at the centre of digital political communication during election periods.

The 2023 Nigeria general elections illustrated these dynamics vividly. Reports documents widespread circulation of hate speech on social media, often framed through emotionally resonant tropes intended to mobilise support or undermine opposition groups (Adio, 2024). South-West Nigeria, a region characterised by high internet usage, robust political engagement, and significant influencer presence, which was a notable locus of these activities (Ikeanyibe, Eze, & Okoye, 2017; Adetayo & Eze, 2022). Influencers employed a range of textual, visual, and symbolic framing devices to shape narratives around political identity and competition. These practices align with broader scholarly observations that framing strategies gain traction when they resonate with pre-existing perceptions and contextual tensions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Despite extensive scholarship on hate speech in Nigeria, research specifically examining the framing techniques used by social media influencer remains limited. Prior studies tend to approach online hate speech as a generalised phenomenon, with insufficient attention to the distinct communicative choices and stylistic patterns adopted by influential digital actors (Ben-David & Fernández, 2016; Ejiga & Ede, 2024). Moreover, analyses that focus on the South-West region during the 2023 electoral cycle are notable scarce, despite the region's prominence in online political mobilisation and discourse.

This gap provides the impetus for the present study. By interrogating how social media influencers framed hate speech during the 2023 elections in South-West Nigeria, particularly on platforms such as X, the study aims to contribute empirical and theoretical clarity to an emerging area of digital communication research. It seeks to illuminate the specific framing devices and rhetorical strategies that structured the dissemination of hate speech during a significant political moment, thereby offering insights relevant to scholars, policymakers, and digital governance stakeholders.

Statement of Problem

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has reconfigured political communication, offering new channels for participation while simultaneously creating an environment in which hate speech circulates with unprecedented speed and scale (Verovšek, 2021; Ben-David & Fernández, 2016). Within this landscape, social media influencers have emerged as significant actors whose posts, commentary, and visual content shape public discourse digital networks. During Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, X (formerly Twitter) became a central arena for political messaging, where influencers frequently utilised framing strategies that rendered hate speech more visible, resonant, and difficult to regulate (Adio, 2024).

Despite legal provisions within Nigeria's Electoral Act (Shuaibu, 2023) and various government-led and platform-level interventions to curb hate speech (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2022), these measures remain insufficient in addressing the evolving communicative tactics of influencers. Influencers frequently utilise coded language, emotive framing, and algorithmic affordances to disseminate inflammatory content in ways that evade regulatory scrutiny (Matamoros-Fernández, 2017; 2018). Their ability to cultivate parasocial binds with followers (Marwick & Lewis, 2017) makes such content particularly persuasive among youth populations, who constitute the majority of social media uses in Nigeria (NBS, 2023) and are highly susceptible to echo chambers and low digital literacy (Habib, Srinivasan, & Nithyanand, 2022; Zabiti, Yerima & Baba, 2023).

Existing scholarship on hate speech in Nigeria has largely concentrated on its politicisation, electoral mobilisation, and role in fostering polarisation (Fasakin, Oyero, Oyesomi, & Okorie, 2017; Asogwa & Ezeibe, 2020; Ezeibe, 2020; Ridwanullah, Sule, Usman & AbdulSalam, 2024). However, limited empirical attention has been paid to how influencers specifically framing hate speech on X during critical election campaign periods in South-West Nigeria.

Likewise, research has not adequately explored the circulation patterns of these posts during the election campaign periods of the 2023 election presidential election.

This lack of systematic analysis presents a significant empirical and theoretical gap. Without understanding the types of frames employed by influencers, and how specific frames perform relative to others. These blind spots hinder scholarly efforts to map the evolving architecture of hate speech dissemination on social media and limit the capacity of regulators and civil society actors to respond effectively.

The gap, therefore, is the absence of rigorous research that examines the framing strategies used by social media influencers on X to propagate hate speech. Addressing this gap is essential for advancing theoretical understanding of digital political influence and for developing evidence-based approaches to mitigating the spread of harmful political communication in Nigeria's online sphere.

Research Questions

1. What hate speech frames did social media influencers use in their posts on Platform X before and during the 2023 presidential election campaign?

Literature Review

Social Media Influencers' Use of Hate Speech

Social media influencers have become central actors in contemporary political communication, shaping public discourse through strategic content production and sustained parasocial relationships with followers (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Suuronen et al., 2021). Their perceived authenticity, combined with deliberate self-branding and commercial collaborations, amplifies their visibility and persuasive capacity across platforms (Abidin, 2016; Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). While much scholarship highlights influencers' contributions to civic mobilisation, a growing body of research focusses on the troubling dimensions of their influence, particularly on the propagation and normalisation of hate speech.

Hate speech online refers to communication that expresses hostility or discrimination towards individuals or groups based on identity markers such as ethnicity, religion, nationality, and political ideology (Agha, 2022; Banaji & Bhat, 2023). The structural affordances of social media, such as algorithmic amplification, virality, and inconsistent platform regulation create

a fertile condition for the rapid circulation of such content (Perera et al., 2023). Within this environment, influencers operate as potent vectors; their posts not only reach large audiences but often confer legitimacy on divisive narratives, particularly when conveyed through memes, humour and coded expressions (Żywiołek, 2024).

Studies have shown that the speech intensifies during politically contentious moments, especially election periods, when identity tensions are heightened and digital publics are more reactive (Ubong, 2024). Influencers often deploy emotionally charged visuals, provocative hate speech, and multimodal format that accelerate cognitive processing heighten emotional arousal (Schmid, 2023; Kjeldsen, 2021). Younger audiences, who dominate many influencer communities, are especially responsive to such affective stimuli, increasing their susceptibility to hostile messaging (Ohme & Mothes, 2020).

The consequences of influencer-driven hate speech extend beyond online discourse. While such content can sometimes galvanise civic attention to longstanding grievances (Banaji & Bhat, 2023; Żywiołek, 2024), the broader evidence links it to intensified polarisation, weakened institutional trust, and deteriorating social cohesion, effects that are particularly consequential in politically fragile democracies (Madriaza, Hassan, Brouillette-Alarie, Mounchingam, Durocher-Corfa, Borokhovski, Pickup, & Paillé 2025). During elections, the strategic use of hate speech by influencers further complicates the distinction between genuine political critique and harmful incitement, which distorts public perceptions of democratic processes (Ubong, 2024; Żywiołek, 2024).

Moreover, some influencers intentionally cultivate echo chambers by invoking shared identity markers to deepen emotional ties with followers, reinforcing exclusionary beliefs and normalising adversarial discourse (Żywiołek, 2024). Conversely, influencers who challenge or counter hate speech may strengthen audience trust, illustrating a complex relationship between influence, polarization, and perceived credibility. Nonetheless, repeated exposure to hate speech has been shown to desensitize audiences, normalise prejudice, and heighten the risk of violence (Banaji & Bhat, 2023; Madriaza et al., 2025).

Hate Speech on X in the 2023 Presidential Election Campaign

The 2023 presidential election campaign period in Nigeria exposed the increasingly volatile relationship between political competition, ethnic identity, and digital communication. Scholars note that the hate speech intensified dramatically during the campaigns, as political actors adopted hate speech to mobilise supporters and delegitimise opponents, thereby

deepening pre-existing social fractures (Muaz, 2023; Shuaibu, 2023). Rather than functioning as a space for democratic deliberation, the political arena became a site where entrenched ethnic and regional tensions were strategically exploited, posing significant risks to national cohesion (Shuaibu, 2023).

Social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), played a central role in this escalation. Originally, envisioned as a platform for open communication, X became a conduit for inflammatory discourse that linked electoral competition to long-standing ethnic and religious resentments (Shuaibu, 2023).

The Igbo community was particularly targeted during the election cycle. Narrative on X portrayed Igbos as “land grabbers” attempting to dominate Lagos. This undermined interethnic trust and cast certain groups as political outsiders (Adetayo & Eze, 2023). Misleading claims and conspiracy theories entrenched these perceptions, framing the Igbo population as a threat to regional autonomy (Adetayo & Eze, 2023). A notable example involved a high-profile tweet by Bayo Onanuga, spokesperson for the APC presidential campaign, which asserted that Lagos is “Yoruba land” and urged an end to Igbo “interference”. The tweet garnered more than 5.5 million views, illustrating the powerful reach and potential societal consequences of such rhetoric (Bello & Johnson, 2023).

Misinformation also played a catalytic role, as a digitally manipulated image depicting a Biafran flag being waved in Lagos was circulated to suggest an Igbo secessionist agenda. Despite being debunked, the narrative was amplified through the hashtag #DefendLagos on X, which accumulated approximately 6,100 mentions in the week preceding the gubernatorial election (Nwankwo, 2023). Similarly, coordinated harassment of an Igbo X user in Lagos gave rise to the hashtag #YorubaJobsForYorubaPeople, which attracted 13,400 mentions within two days, reinforcing exclusionary labour narratives and intensifying ethnic hostility (Nikunen, Haara, Kosonen, Knuutila, Pöyhtäri, & Saresma, 2025).

Mediated Framing Differences

The variability of hate speech framing provides a strong foundation for anticipating similar, if not greater, differences in the framing practices of social media influencers. Okeke, Ugwulor-Onyinyechi, Ezugwu, and Onyiwalu (2024), in a content analysis of *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers, demonstrated that hate speech was framed in multiple, shifting ways before and after the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. These findings indicate that even

within highly regulated traditional media ecosystems, hate speech framing is neither uniform nor static.

Similarly, Aondover, Onyejelem, and Iloanya (2025) examined 536 articles from *The Punch* and *Vanguard* and found that hate speech varied not only in prevalence but also in targets and tone. Their study identified tribal, religious, and political groups as the primary targets and reported that implicit hate speech accounted for 88.4% of all instances. The distribution of tones and targets also shifted across the electoral cycle. The high degree of implicitness observed in these outlets reinforces the idea that hate speech does not manifest in a single form; rather, it adapts to communicative contexts. This tendency toward subtle and indirect expression is even more pronounced in influencer communication, where audience engagement often depends on creative, coded, and emotionally resonant framing strategies.

Further evidence of the complexity and diversity of hate speech framing by social media influencers comes from Ocampo, Sviridova, Cabrio, and Villata (2023), whose systematic analysis of implicit and subtle hate speech showed that these categories are conceptually distinct and may occur in overlapping combinations. Their evaluation of state-of-the-art neural architectures across seven benchmark datasets revealed that automated systems struggle substantially with detecting implicit and subtle forms of hate speech, despite performing relatively well on explicit cases. These findings underscore the fundamentally multi-layered nature of hate speech, particularly in online environments where indirect messaging is common.

These studies collectively demonstrate that hate speech framing varies across media type, target, tone, and level of implicitness, which offers strong empirical justification for expecting similar variability among social media influencers. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. There will be differences in the framing of hate speech by social media influencers.

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

Framing theory remains one of the most influential perspectives in communication research, offering a robust analytical lens for understanding how meaning is constructed and circulated within mediated environments. At its core, the theory rests on the premise that communicators do not simply relay information; rather, they actively shape reality by

highlighting certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). This process of selection and emphasis creates interpretive structures, such as frames that guide audiences toward particular understandings and evaluations of events. The conceptual origins of framing can be traced to Bateson's (1972) work on psychological frames and Goffman's (1974) later sociological elaboration, both of which underscore that individuals rely on frames as organising principles to make sense of complex social phenomena.

Media scholarship extends this foundation by demonstrating how communicators strategically construct frames through narrative structure, linguistic cues, metaphors, and symbolic representations (Gitlin, 1980; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). These media frames serve as templates that simplify issues, direct attention to specific causal interpretations, and shape public judgements. At the audience level, individual frames operates as internal cognitive schemas that filter information and influence how messages are interpreted (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The interaction between media frames and audience frames forms the basis of framing effects, which can alter attitudes, redefine issue importance, and even shift political behaviour (Iyengar, 1991; Nelson, Oxley & Clawson, 1997).

Contemporary developments in digital communication have intensified these dynamics. The highly interactive, fragmented, and algorithm-driven nature of social media platforms produces environments where frames compete for visibility and influence at unprecedented speeds (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Frames that evoke conflict, moral outrage, or identity threats tend to circulate more widely because they trigger strong emotional reactions that stimulate engagement, likes, shares, and comments, which further boots their algorithmic reach (Vargo, Guo & Amazeen, 2017). Consequently, framing processes on platforms like X are shaped not only by communicator's intentions but also by platform logics that privilege high-arousal content.

Framing theory provides a critical foundation for examining how social media influencers construct and disseminate hate speech during the 2023 election period in South-West Nigeria. influencers, as prominent digital actors, function as frame-builders who deliberately employ frames that depict political opponents or ethnic groups through lenses of blame, threat, moral failure, or conflict. These frames can transform hate speech into seemingly legitimate political expression by embedding it within familiar narratives structures. Given the competitive nature of digital discourse, influencers often rely on emotionally polarising

frames because they generate higher levels of user engagement, precisely the metrics this study investigates.

Applying framing theory therefore allows for a systematic analysis of the types of frames influences use and how these frames shape interaction patterns on X. by examining variations in frames across pre-election, and post-election periods, the theory supports the study's central expectation that hate speech will not be presented uniformly but will vary depending on strategic communication goals, audience resonance, and contextual triggers. In this sense, framing theory aligns directly with the hypothesis that social media influencers will differ in their framing of hate speech and provides a conceptual basis for interpreting how these frames influence engagement dynamics on X.

Methodology

This study adopted Content Analysis as its research method, and the social media influencers were purposively selected based on the strength of their followership and relevance in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election campaign period. The selected influencers were Seyi Law (@SeyiLaw1), Aisha Yesufu (@AishaYesufu), and Demola Olarewaju (@DemolaRewaju). The selected social media influencers were selected to represent the three prominent political parties during 2023 presidential election campaign, Seyi Law (@SeyiLaw1) represented the All Progressive Congress (APC), Aisha Yesufu (@AishaYesufu) represented the Labour Party (LP), and Demola Olarewaju (@DemolaRewaju) represented Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The study examined the framing patterns associated with hate speech on X (formerly Twitter) in South-West Nigeria during the presidential election campaign period from 28 September 2022 to 23 February 2023, a timeframe recognised as the most crucial phase of electioneering activities.

Given the potentially large volume of posts generated during this period, a multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to ensure that the final dataset was both manageable and representative for systematic content analysis. In the first stage, all original posts authored by the three influencers within the designated period were retrieved using data-scraping tools and platform archives, in compliance with ethical standards and platform data policies. The extracted posts then underwent a two-stage screening process. An initial automated screening was executed using validated hate speech lexicons, incorporating political, ethnic, and religious identifiers as well as contextual vocabulary relevant to Nigerian political communication. Secondly, the lexicons were pilot tested on a subset of posts to confirm its

contextual appropriateness. Following this automated filtering, manually trained coders conducted a verification stage to ensure that only posts that accurately reflected hate speech were retained.

For the purpose of this study, hate speech was operationally defined in accordance with the United Nations (2019) Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which characterises it as any form of communication in speech writing or behaviour that uses discriminatory or demeaning language targeted at individuals or groups on the basis of identity attributes, and which has the potential to incite hostility, discrimination, or violence. This definition provides a comprehensive framework for identifying posts containing divisive or inflammatory discourse.

Once all eligible hate speech related posts were isolated, the study employed stratified systemic sampling. The posts were stratified according to influencers identity to ensure proportional representation, after which systematic sampling was applied by selecting every *k-th* post based on a calculated sampling interval for each stratum. In line with recommended guidelines for content analysis sampling (Neuendorf, 2017; Krippendorff, 2018), 15% of all verified posts were sampled for coding. The final study sample was 1,634 eligible posts identified.

Prior to the main analysis, a pilot test was conducted to refine the coding instrument and establish intercoder reliability. Four trained coders independently classified the sampled post using a structured coding sheet which were established:

Influencer identity: (i) Seyi Law (@SeyiLaw1) (ii) Aisha Yesufu (@AishaYesufu) (iii) Demola Olarewaju (@DemolaRewaju).

Frame Type: (i) Political Power Struggle (ii) Religious Superiority (iii) Security Crisis (iv) Fake News (v) Foreign Interference (vi) National Fragmentation (vii) Ethno-Regional (viii) Victimhood (ix) Youth Disenfranchisement (x) Economic Marginalisation

Instrument validity was ensured through expert evaluation, while intercoder reliability assessed using Holsti's coefficient on 21 randomly selected posts yielded a reliability score of 0.90, demonstrating high coder agreement. Each post constituted the unit of analysis, and the coded data were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS to compare the framing approaches adopted by the influencers. Also, the hypothesis were analyse using One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) combined with Tukey's HSD Post-Hoc Test.

Findings

Based on the data collected through content analysis with regards to framing of Influencers' Hate Speech on X in South-West Nigeria During the 2023 Presidential Election, the data retrieved were subjected to quantitative analysis using tables, frequencies, percentages and bar chart.

Table 1: Types of Frames during the 2023 Presidential Election Campaign

Types of Frames	Frequency			Total	Percentage (%)
	@SeyiLaw1	@AishaYesufu	@DemolaRewaju		
Political Power Struggle	21(10.6%)	20(9.3%)	17(9.0%)	58	10.0%
Religious Superiority	17(8.6%)	28(13.0%)	16(8.5%)	61	10.5%
Security Crisis	16(8.1%)	19(8.8%)	20(11.0%)	55	9.9%
Fake News	23(11.7%)	17(8.0%)	19(10.1%)	59	10.1%
Foreign Interference	18(9.1%)	26(12.1%)	21(11.1%)	65	11.2%
National Fragmentation	22(11.2%)	18(8.4%)	17(9.0%)	57	9.8%
Ethno-Regional	24(12.2%)	19(9.0%)	15(7.9%)	58	10.0%
Victimhood	20(10.2%)	23(10.7%)	21(11.1%)	44	7.5%
Youth Disenfranchisement	16(8.1%)	20(9.3%)	22(11.7%)	58	10.0%
Economic Marginalization	20(10.2%)	25(11.6%)	20(10.6%)	65	11.2%
Total	197(100%)	215(100%)	188(100%)	580	(100%)

Source: Researcher's field work, 2025

The data in table 1 reveals the types of frames used by social media influencers in framing hate speech during the 2023 presidential election campaign. The frames are political power struggle, religious superiority, security crisis, fake news, foreign interference, national fragmentation, ethno-regional domination, victimhood, youth disenfranchisement, and economic marginalization.

The table indicates that @AishaYesufu made use of more frames than @Seyilaw1 and @DemolaRewaju in their tweets during the presidential election campaign. As shown in table 4.2, during the 2023 presidential election campaign, foreign interference and economic marginalisation frames were the highest frames with 65 (11.2%) respectively, while victimhood frame with 44 (7.5%) stands as the least frame. Other frames used are political fake news with 59 (10.1%), power struggle frame and ethno-regional frames with 58 (10.0%) respectively, national fragmentation frame with 57 (9.8%), security crisis with 55 (9.0%), and victimhood with 44 (7.5%).

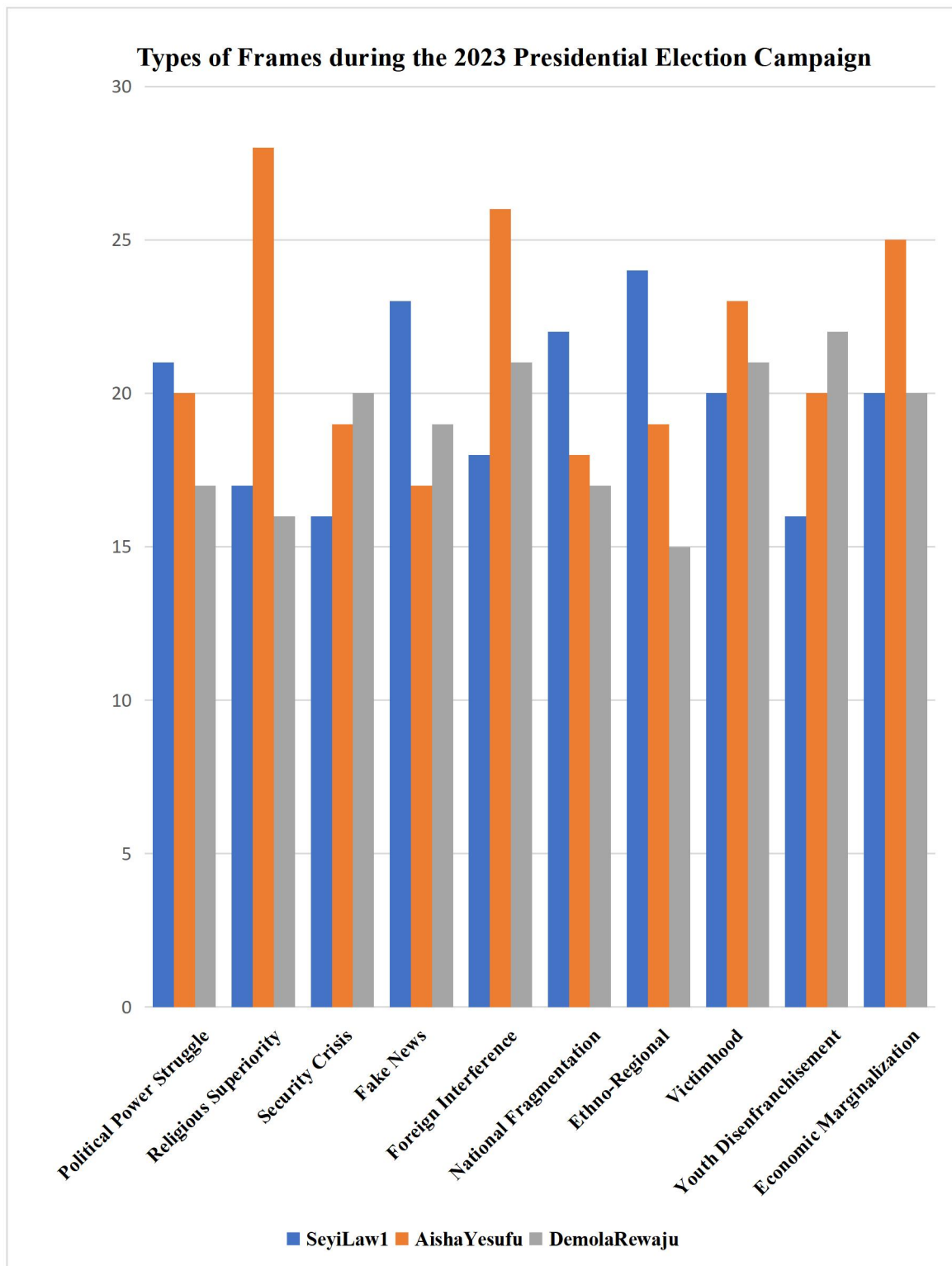


Figure 4.1: Bar Chart for Types of Frames during the 2023 Presidential Election Campaign

Test of hypotheses

Prior to the testing of the hypotheses, the items used in measuring the key constructs were indexed, correlated and screened to eschew problems of multi collinearity and variance inflation. At the end, the data were found to be perfect to test the hypotheses advanced. Hypothesis 1 predicted the differences in the framing of hate speech by social media influencers.

H1: There will be differences in the framing of hate speech by social media influencers

Table 4.9: Differences in the Frames

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
SeyiLaw Framing	41	447	10.90244	15.72358
AishaYesufu Framing	41	525.6667	12.82114	20.12832
DemolaRewaju Framing	41	542.3333	13.22764	23.94133

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	126.4607	2	63.23035	3.172451	0.045437	3.071779
Within Groups	2391.729	120	19.93107			
Total	2518.19	122				

Pairwise Comparison	Mean Difference	Significant? (Difference > HSD = 2.340)
SeyiLaw Framing	1.919	No
AishaYesufu Framing	2.325	No
DemolaRewaju Framing	0.407	No

ANOVA Results and Interpretation

The one-way ANOVA tested the null hypothesis (H0) that there are no differences in the mean framing scores of hate speech across the three influencers ($\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$) against the

alternative hypothesis (H1) that at least one pair of means differs. The summary statistics revealed the following group characteristics:

- a. **Seyilaw Framing:** Mean = 10.902, Variance = 15.724, $n = 41$
- b. **AishaYesufu Framing:** Mean = 12.821, Variance = 20.128, $n = 41$
- c. **DemolaRewaju Framing:** Mean = 13.228, Variance = 23.941, $n = 41$

The ANOVA results indicated a statistically significant difference among the group means, with an F-statistic of 3.172 ($df = 2, 120$) and a p -value of 0.045, which is less than the alpha level of 0.05. The F-critical value for this test was 3.072, and since the observed F (3.172) exceeded this threshold, the null hypothesis was rejected. The between-groups sum of squares ($SS = 126.461$) and within-groups sum of squares ($SS = 2391.729$) yielded mean squares of 63.230 and 19.931, respectively, confirming the F-statistic calculation ($F = 63.230 / 19.931 \approx 3.172$). This result supports H1, indicating that there are statistically significant differences in the framing of hate speech among the three influencers.

The significant ANOVA result suggests that the way these influencers frame hate speech, as measured by their respective scores, varies in a manner that is unlikely to occur by chance. However, the ANOVA does not specify which pairs of influencers differ, necessitating a post-hoc test to explore specific group differences.

To determine which specific pairs of influencers differed in their mean framing scores, Tukey's HSD test was conducted. This test controls for the family-wise error rate at $\alpha = 0.05$ and is suitable given the equal sample sizes ($n = 41$ per group) and approximately similar variances across groups (15.724, 20.128, and 23.941). The HSD critical value was calculated as 2.340, based on the studentized range statistic ($q \approx 3.3561$ for $k = 3$, $df = 120$) and the standard error ($\sqrt{(MSW/n)} = \sqrt{(19.931/41)} \approx 0.6972$). Pairwise mean differences were compared against this HSD threshold to assess significance.

The pairwise comparisons yielded the following results:

- **AishaYesufuFraming vs. SeyilawFramin:** Mean difference = $12.821 - 10.902 = 1.919$. This difference is less than the HSD threshold of 2.340, indicating no statistically significant difference.

- **DemolaRewaju vs. SeyilawFramin:** Mean difference = $13.228 - 10.902 = 2.325$. This difference is also below the HSD threshold, suggesting no significant difference, though it is very close to the critical value.
- **DemolaRewaju vs. AishaYesufuFraming:** Mean difference = $13.228 - 12.821 = 0.407$. This difference is well below the HSD threshold, confirming no significant difference.

Despite the significant overall ANOVA result, Tukey's HSD test did not identify any specific pairwise comparisons as statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. This outcome suggests that while the overall variation in framing scores across the three influencers is significant, the individual pairwise differences are not large enough to meet the stricter threshold required for multiple comparisons under Tukey's test.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study indicate that social media influencers employed multiple framing strategies to propagate hate speech during the 2023 presidential election campaign. These frames were used to shape public perception, reinforce partisan divides, and mobilize political support along ideological, ethno-regional, religious, and socio-economic lines. The recurrent frames identified during the election campaign period included political power struggle, religious superiority, security crisis, fake news, foreign interference, national fragmentation, ethno-regional domination, victimhood, youth disenfranchisement, and economic marginalization.

During the campaign period, the prominence of framing patterns shifted. The foreign interference and economic marginalization frames were the most dominant. The increased use of foreign interference framing reflects attempts to construct the election as being influenced or threatened by external forces, thereby eliciting nationalist sentiments and distrust in the electoral process. Economic discontent continued to serve as a central narrative tool, reinforcing perceptions of systemic failure and political mismanagement. This finding is consistent with Entman (2007) who notes that political actors often use external threat frames to mobilize collective identity and urgency. Other frames such as fake news, political power struggle, and ethno-regional domination were also widely used, indicating heightened contestation and polarization during the campaign. The victimhood frame had the lowest frequency, implying that narratives of personal or collective suffering were less central during heightened political mobilization.

Conclusion

This study examined how selected social media influencers in South-West Nigeria framed hate speech on X during the 2023 presidential election. The findings demonstrate that influencers made extensive use of diverse and strategically constructed frames, such as political power struggle, religious superiority, foreign interference, ethno-regional domination, and economic marginalisation to shape political narratives and intensify partisan divides. These frames were neither uniform nor static, rather, they shifted in prominence across the election period, reflecting evolving political tensions and contextual triggers. The dominance of foreign interference and economic marginalisation frames indicates the heightened salience of nationalist and socio-economic grievances during the campaign.

Hypothesis testing using one-way ANOVA showed statistically significant overall differences in the framing patterns of hate speech across influencers, although Tukey's post-hoc analysis indicated that no specific pairwise differences met the threshold for significance. This suggests that while influencers differ in their aggregate framing tendencies, the magnitude of difference between any two individuals is modest when adjusted for multiple comparisons. Nevertheless, the presence of statistically detectable variation supports the theoretical expectation that influencer-driven hate speech is shaped by distinct communicative strategies and audience dynamics.

Collectively, the findings highlight the central role of influencers as frame-builders in contemporary digital politics. Their ability to embed hate speech within resonant narratives, combined with the algorithmic amplification of high-arousal content, contributed to the widespread visibility and normalisation of divisive discourse during the election period. These insights deepen our understanding of the mechanics of digital political influence in Nigeria and underscore the need for targeted interventions, ranging from platform governance reforms to enhanced digital literacy to mitigate the societal risks associated with influencer-mediated hate speech during periods of heightened political contestation.

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