Lekki shootings: Verbal aggression and impoliteness in EndSARS virtual discussions[1]*Sharafudeen KAREEM, PhD; \

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Abstract

This paper examined the use of verbal aggression and impoliteness in digital communication, focusing on YouTube comment discussion platform. The data was extracted from comments of Nigerian YouTubers on some video clips of Lagos State's judicial panel of enquiry on Lekki Tollgate shootings of EndSARS protesters. Using a discursive approach, the study found that the YouTubers were verbally aggressive. They used lots of impoliteness and verbal aggression, e.g. threats and curses (unfavourable wishes) and identity attacks; the government (federal and state) and its security agents and defence counsel were the major targets of attacks. The paper argued that verbal aggression was as a result of vengeance against the government and that the use of verbal aggression in these instances seemed to be intentional. The paper concluded that the YouTubers used verbal aggression as a retaliation on their perceived oppressors against whom they seemed to have no other means of redress and/or retaliation.

Keywords: impoliteness, verbal aggression, threats, insults, digital communication, EndSARS

Introduction

Conflict is inevitable in any human societies. Conflicts often arise due to opposition between, or differences of expectations by, various groups or individuals (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2019). There have been conflicts in several parts of the world, ranging from violent or armed conflicts, such as that which Nigeria experienced in the Niger-Delta region where government oil facilities were incessantly destroyed, to peaceful protests like that of Bring Back Our Girls, EndSARS, etc.

The Internet has revolutionised human lives; a lot of things can be done on the Internet now. Conflicts are no longer restricted to any physical geographical location; they are also carried out online now through petitions, social movements, etc. One central element of these is language; language is used by people involved in conflicts and it has its own peculiarity. The language of conflicts tends to be verbally aggressive. Verbal aggression and physical aggression are interconnected; the former often leads to the latter (Sutter & Martin, 2009). Culpeper, Iganski, and Sweiry (2017) have proved that hostility and verbally aggressive language often occur in the 'heat

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of the moment; that is, they are out of emotions, and intention is not usually attached. The Internet offers unlimited opportunities for social movements through the social media. The Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) is a shining example; it was a product of conflict and gained international recognition by mounting pressure on the Nigerian government to find and secure the release of the Chibok girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram insurgent. EndSARS too resulted from a conflict; it has generated lots of both verbal and physical aggressive reactions from the youths and the government.

Studies on online interactions (e.g. Dynel, 2012; Haugh, 2010; Lorenzo-Dus, Garce´s-Conejos Blitvich, & Bou-Franch, 2011) have frequently reported preponderance of impoliteness and verbally aggressive messages or language that causes offense, e.g. insults, name calling, threats, etc., among Internet users. This paper aims to investigate the use of verbal aggression and impoliteness among the YouTubers who post comments on the videos of the Lagos State judicial panel of inquiry on the alleged shooting of EndSARS protesters on 20th of October 2020. Every interaction features impoliteness as people construct identities and establish social relationships in various settings (Graham, 2017). Face-to-face and online interactions have very similar norms and expectations (Dynel, 2012; Graham, 2007, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Haugh, 2010). Evaluations of im/politeness are influenced by violation of the norms and expectations of the participants. There are, however, certain factors which differentiate the latter from the former. Im/politeness is encoded into digital interactions via paralinguistic tools which enable users to evaluate behaviours e.g., like, report abuse, block, thumb up, thumb down, etc. That is not the case in face-to-face interactions; people are not required to openly evaluate behaviours (Graham, 2017; Haugh, 2010; Locher, 2010).

1. **Communication in the virtual world**

There are a lot of studies on online communications and interactions (e.g. Bou-Franch, 2013; Bou-Franch, Lorenzo-Dus, & Garce´s-Conejos Blitvich, 2012; Dobs & Blitvich, 2013; Dynel, 2012; Graham, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Haugh, 2010; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011). The term computer-mediated communication (CMC) is often used for any communication or exchange of ideas and information through the means of the computer or a technology channel; it is also seen as interactions through the computer or a digital channel (Graham, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Locher, 2010). With technological advancement, interactants have had access to numerous channels of communication which are technologically mediated, e.g. Short Message Service (SMS)/text messages, Instant Message (IM), etc. It is because of this that Graham (2017) and Graham and Hardaker (2017) suggest that communications through digital channels are better termed 'Digital Communication' (DC) since one may not necessarily have to depend on a computer to interact online nowadays; a lot could be done with Smart phones.

Construction, negotiation and evaluation of im/politeness are influenced by the digital contexts of interactions and this is due to certain features of the digital media (Graham, 2017). One such feature is whether the channel is a/synchronicity. Computer mediated communication has two modes, synchronous and asynchronous (Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Shum & Lee, 2013). Platforms which have audio-visual facilities and afford participants opportunities to orally interact and exchange instant messages at the same time are synchronous, e.g. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Skype, etc. Asynchronous platforms, on the other hand, afford participants time lapse of several days and months to read and respond to messages, e.g. YouTube comment discussion

platforms, blogs, emails (Graham, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Shum & Lee, 2013). The extent to which a platform is asynchronous is proportional to the extent to which impoliteness perception within that environment tends to multiply and grow; several other participants, who do not have the background knowledge of a conflict, could join before the initial poster of the perceived impoliteness could be able to offer an explanation and resolve the issue (Graham, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017).

Similarly, evaluation of impoliteness in CMC is also influenced by the orientation structure of a platform, private-oriented or public-oriented. Participants in private-oriented platforms know the recipients of their messages, while those in a public-oriented media do not have an idea of who their audience is. It has been established in research that impoliteness evaluations are influenced by the level of closeness/distance among discussants; it is the case then that enactment, negotiation and assessment of impoliteness would be shaped by a platform's orientation structure (Graham, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017).

In addition, *anonymity* in digital communication impacts on impoliteness negotiation and perception. The real identity of the Internet user could not be known; male could use female identities and vice versa. This has been adduced as the reason why online communication is replete with impoliteness (Bou-Franch et al., 2012; Dynel, 2012; Graham, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011). People tend to be more impolite in virtual worlds than in face-to-face interactions because they feel free from any consequences their acts could have (Dery, 1994; Dynel, 2012; Graham, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017). Dery (1994, p. 1) states that interactants in digital communication: "tend to feel they can hurl insults with impunity" because they are anonymous and fear no consequences.

2. Aggression and impoliteness

A lot of studies (e.g. Culpeper, 2009; Culpeper & Haugh, 2020; Culpeper et al., 2017; Martin, Anderson, & Horvath, 1996; Sutter & Martin, 2009) have explored (verbal) aggression from various perspectives. In linguistic impoliteness scholarship, *aggression* is used synonymously with impoliteness (Bousefield, 2007; Culpeper, 2011; Culpeper et al., 2017; Dynel, 2012, 2015b). The use of the term *aggression* in im/politeness scholarship does not differ much from its use in communication studies, where aggression is defined as verbal attacks on the self-concepts of others to cause them "psychological pain such as humiliation, embarrassment, depression, and other negative feelings about self" (Infante & Rancer, 1996, p. 323). Aggression is also viewed "as any form of behaviour directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment" (Baron & Richardson, 1994, p. 37; cited in Culpeper, 2011, p. 20). Verbal aggression involves threats, insults, teasing, maledictions, ridicule, profanity, swearing, and attacks on competence, character, physical appearance, personal failing, etc. (Infante & Rancer, 1996; Martin et al., 1996; Sutter & Martin, 2009). It has been reported that verbal aggression causes psychological pain in the target whether it is intentional, unintended or accidental (see Culpeper, 2011, p. 52).

Talking about insults, which have been identified as a prime for verbal aggression, Allan and Burridge (2006, p. 79) state that they:

> are normally intended to wound the addressee or bring a third party into disrepute, or both
> …. Insults typically pick on and debase a person's physical appearance, mental ability, character, behaviour, beliefs and/or familial and social relations. Thus insults are sourced

in the target's supposed ugliness, skin colour and/or complexion, over- or undersize … perceived physical defects … slovenliness, dirtiness, smelliness, tardiness, stupidity, untruthfulness, unreliability, unpunctuality, incompetence, incontinence, greediness, meanness, sexual laxness or perversion, sexual persuasion, violence towards others (even self), ideological or religious persuasion, social or economic status, and social ineptitude …

Insults are considered as verbal aggression and impoliteness in appropriate contexts. Allan and Burridge's description of insults and categories given above fit in both aggression and impoliteness in specific contexts. The reason is that both terms are used for offensive language; they are being used as near synonyms. The above definitions of aggression are similar to that of impoliteness which has been described as a general term covering the semantic space of language which causes offence (Culpeper, 2011; Culpeper & Hardaker, 2017). Impoliteness is also viewed as:

an umbrella term that covers all kinds of evaluative meanings (e.g., warm, friendly, considerate, respectful, deferential, insolent, aggressive, rude). These meanings can have positive, negative or neutral connotations, and the judgments can impact upon people's perceptions of their social relations and the rapport or (dis)harmony that exists between them. (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 97)

Going by this definition, aggression is an act of impoliteness. However, verbal aggression has also been described as a cover term for impoliteness. In this view, impoliteness is seen as a type of verbal aggression (Dynel, 2015a). A similar definition by Bousefield (2007, pp. 2186-2187) defines impoliteness as:

the issuing of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully performed: (i) [u]nmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or, (ii) [w]ith deliberate, aggression that is, with the face threat intentionally exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted.

There has been a lot of debate about intentionality in impoliteness scholarship. Some scholars argue that impoliteness is intentional as we have seen in the definitions above, while unintentional use of a face attack is regarded as rudeness by some. Culpeper states that:

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively − considered "impolite" − when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not. (Culpeper, 2011, p. 23)

As indicated in this definition, the hearer(s) evaluate a behaviour as impolite if it contradicts their beliefs and/or expectations in a particular social context even if the behaviour is viewed as

incidental; viewing it as intentional only adds to the level of the offense. This is in tune with Dynel (2012), Graham (2017) and Graham and Hardaker (2017) who have argued that messages that violate the norm of a communicative context are interpreted as impoliteness.

3. Methodology
3.1 Data

The data set for this paper is a polylogue discourse; a polylogal communication involves three interactants or more (Dobs & Blitvich, 2013, p. 112). The data is a product of a conflict between a section of the Nigerian youths and the Nigerian government and its security forces. It comprises three hundred and one (301) comments posted on five video clips of the proceedings of the judicial panel of inquiry set up by Lagos State to investigate the alleged shootings and killing of EndSARS protesters at Lekki Toll Gate by some men of the Nigerian Army and the police on 20th October 2020.

Prior to setting up the panel, Lagos State had been thrown into tumults by the angry youths and the atmosphere was highly tense. The situation was worsened when the Minister of Communication, Mr Lai Mohammed, in his address made available to the public in the press, claimed that "the Army fired empty bullets into the air".

To properly contextualise the data, there is a need for a brief background of EndSARS protests. EndSARS began as an online social movement in December 2017 on the Twitter. It was a campaign against the power abuse, brutality, harassment and assault by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigerian Police Force, from which the Nigerian youths suffered (Dambo et al., 2020; Soladoye & Ojo, 2020). The movement left the virtual world, attracting international attention, when on October 8, 2020 Nigerian youths at home trooped to the streets of major cities across the country in peaceful protests that lasted about a month. Nigerian youths in diaspora and their sympathisers staged protests in many countries of the world, including UK, USA and Germany (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020).

Before long, what started as peaceful demonstrations turned to physical aggression involving looting and destruction of public and private properties. The situations reached a climax on October 20, 2020; it was reported that the state brutally descended on the protesters; the army and the police allegedly fired live bullets at them and killed many, while hundreds of them sustained injuries (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020). Following this incident, the Internet was flooded with reactions (several of them aggressive) from various quarters, and the Lagos State had to set up a judicial panel of inquiry to investigate the claims. The video clips of the proceedings of the panel were posted on the YouTube by Channel TV; included in the videos was the visit of the panel to the venue of the alleged shootings and killing and a visit to the Army hospital where some corpses were allegedly kept. The events at the visits and the proceedings have attracted a lot of comments from several YouTubers. A glance at these comments shows that they were produced in a context of conflict and they are worth an academic investigation.

It has been argued that the use of texts from digital media must involve (1) obtaining the participants' consent and (2) avoiding using anything that could identify them by using pseudonyms in order to minimise harm. The need to minimise harm and get consent is determined by whether the text in question is a 'private' or 'public' text (Graham & Hardaker, 2017). A discussion on an online platform such as the YouTube is viewed as a public discourse (Graham &

Hardaker, 2017; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011). There is a consensus among researchers in linguistics that one does not need any consent to use public texts, but it is needed to use private texts (Graham & Hardaker, 2017), such as private emails. Graham and Hardaker (2017, p. 801) have rightly argued that:

> … people posting to public online forums can have no reasonable expectation that their behavior will not be examined. They are 'putting themselves out there' and public discourse is off the limits in terms of scientific study. In these cases, participants accept any harm that might come their way because they chose to make their communication available in a setting where others (who may be unknown) will have access.

Since it is difficult to know the real identity of an online participant, due to anonymity, it seems that using their online texts poses no harm to them. For this reason, consent was not obtained for using the data for this study.

3.2 Method

The present study analysed the raw comments posted on the videos of Lagos judicial panel of inquiry to investigate allegation of shootings and killing of some youths during a protest at Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos State, Nigeria on October 20, 2020 with a view to investigating aggressive and impolite language used by the YouTubers who posted comments on the videos of the proceedings which were uploaded by Channel TV. The comments were analysed as posted, with all the typos.

The data was analysed for aggression. There does not seem to be any specific formulae or framework for aggression. However, insults, taboo words, character attacks, competence attacks, swearing, teasing, name calling, and maledictions have been identified as categories of aggression in scholarship. Others are attacks on sex orientation, race, physical appearance, etc. (Infante & Rancer, 1996; Martin et al., 1996; Sutter & Martin, 2009). These categories were used for the analysis and many of them featured in the data.

Using a discursive approach, this study adopted impolite2 or second-order understanding of impoliteness and aggression, informed by first-order understanding. Studies (e.g. Dynel, 2012; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011) have shown that first-order and second-order understandings and evaluations of impoliteness, and aggression by extension, are significantly similar. Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011) reveal that participants do not evaluate impoliteness on YouTube comments as norm or unmarked; insults, name calling, and obscene language are evaluated as very impolite. They argue that interpretations of YouTube interpersonal relations should be guided by norms of civility. YouTube is a platform for social networking where people connect to the world just to relate with others. There are norms of appropriate behaviours in various contexts of digital communications in the form of manuals or guidelines which are revised from time to time (Haugh, 2010).

To perform the role of social networking well, YouTube sets out guidelines for using its platform, "Community Guidelines". The guidelines do not permit any use of aggressive and offensive language such as insults, attacks on personality, race, religion, sexual orientation of others. YouTube hate speech policy states explicitly that hate speech is not permitted on YouTube; it lists contents that violate the policy to include religious slurs, attacks on a group or individual based on ethnic origin or race, gender, disability, veteran status, nationality, race, and sexual orientation. Threats, incitements, praising and encouraging violence against other users, are considered

violation of the policy.[2] The manual provides tools to report abuse, edit and/or delete messages (Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Haugh, 2010). It has, however, been revealed that aggression and impoliteness abound in YouTube comments (Dynel, 2012; Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Haugh, 2010) despite that they are against the legal norms, netiquette or guidelines. Dynel (2012) supports Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011) when she points out that expletives are viewed as impolite conventionally in first-order conceptions, and interlocutors, therefore, consider them offensive. Consequently, Dynel argues that blatant aggression on YouTube comments should be interpreted as second-order impoliteness. It is also pointed out that "many of those offended [by offensive/aggressive messages] cannot experience the abuse, if they never read the commentary …" (Dynel, 2012, p. 36). This indicates that even if the specific targets do not have an opportunity to get the aggression and impoliteness, some other participants may still evaluate them as such, even if they do not respond to such. The fact still remains that they are aggression and impoliteness.

According to her, participants use expletives for three functions: aggression, solidarity or social connection, and catharsis. The use of aggression and impoliteness, e.g. swear words, are intentional even if produced emotionally, or they are pre-meditated. She argues that the receivers could still evaluate a cathartic swearing as impoliteness whether or not they know the emotions and intentions of the user. This, perhaps, is because the speaker/writer and receivers tend to have different interpretation of intention and impoliteness (Graham, 2007). Dynel (2012) argues further that it is hard to conceive a purely cathartic use of expletives in the case of a written discourse, such as in YouTube comments, because the asynchronous nature of an online platform affords users enough time to think twice before sending an offensive message, and to delete, or edit it as appropriate. Thus, participants have a full control over their emotions and expressions; offensive comments, therefore, correspond to abuse and could be interpreted as impolite (Dynel, 2012).

The data was also explored for impoliteness using the conventionalised impoliteness formulae set out by Culpeper (2011, pp. 135-136). While "no sentence is inherently polite or impolite" (Fraser & Nolen, 1981, p. 96), "people possess a schematic knowledge regarding language and its social implications, knowledge that exists independent of any occasion of use" (Holtgraves, 2005, p. 89). This indicates that people's knowledge of language and its implications in social encounters enables them to appropriately evaluate utterances in appropriate contexts as im/polite. Thus, context has become a part of people's linguistic knowledge and they know which utterance is im/polite in specific contexts. The conventionalised impoliteness formulae is shown in Table 1 below:

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[2] http://www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines.

Table 1: Conventionalised impoliteness

S/N	Conventionalised impoliteness	Example
1	**Insults**	
a.	Personalized negative vocatives	"You lair"
b.	Personalized negative assersion	You don't even know anything mumu man
c.	Personalized negative references	… but for others because its bvious you may not have the capacity to reason but no offense meant,
d.	Personalized third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)	Am carefully watching this nonsense lawyer
2	Pointed criticisms/complaints	It is a colossal waste of money and time.
3	Unpalatable questions and/or presupposition	How and why was Evans relevant to these proceedings?
4	Condescension	Who is this agbero man in suit.
5	Message enforcers	"Listen here"
6	Dismissals	ALAKORI OSHI leave story.
7	Silencers	Shut up
8	Threats	This lawyer needs to be reprimanded
9	Negative expressive	Shame on u ppl

(Adapted from Culpeper (2011, pp. 135-136); except 1a and 5, all other examples are from my data).

4. Findings and discussion
4.1 Aggression

The use of verbal aggression is investigated in the comments on five video clips of the judicial panel of inquiry set up by Lagos State on the alleged shooting and killing of EndSARS protesters uploaded on YouTube. It should be noted that the panel sat in the atmosphere of conflict and tension; this reflects in the comments of YouTubers in terms of their language use. Only four categories of verbal aggression were found in my dataset: character attacks, competency attacks, insults and name calling (cf. Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2019; Infante & Rancer, 1996; Martin et al., 1996; Sutter & Martin, 2009).

4.1.1 Character attacks

Character attacks are sourced in the supposed faults in the targets' character and/or negative characters are attributed to them in order to harm, demean, or debase them (Allan & Burridge, 2006; Dynel, 2012; Infante & Rancer, 1996). Doubt and suspicion could also be raised concerning their character or reliability. Infante and Rancer (1996), argue that expressing negativity and suspicion about a person is an act of hostility. Examples (1-5) below are character attacks by YouTubers in EndSARS videos (the full online names of the participants are not used):

(1) Venasir: These ppl are jokeing they told us in the start that where no millitry and dat their cameras went off lies lies lies.
(2) christian: Very poor audio, but this soldiers can lie oo, who would in his right frame of mind throw stone on soldier, this is catastrophically lie, am just tired of this country lie
(3) Project: Why was Evans's name mentioned, why will we believe documents tendered by police, the same policed that move around with pos, the people that dont give a shit about due process, the same people who will invade your phone without your consent, the same people who torture Nigerian citizens at will. Documents tendered by police should not reliable.

The three turns above attack the character of the Nigerian Army. While (1) shows inconsistency in the claims of the military, that there were no military at the venue of the incident and that their CCTV went off; (2) indicates that no one "in his right frame of mind [would] throw stone on soldier". They go on record to accuse the soldiers of lies. An accusation implies an assertion that the target is involved in a misconduct and the accuser is offended (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2019). Example (3) attacks the character of the police and questions their reliability. This participant attributes four negative characters to the police and ends with a bald-on-record declaration that the documents presented by the police are not reliable. The two accusations and four negative attributes attributed to the police in examples (1-3) in this context demean the military and the police. The context here does not favour cathartic and solidarity interpretations; the interpretation of aggression is thus plausible here.

4.1.2 Competency attacks

Attacking the competency of people could harm, debase, and inflict psychological pains on them (Allan & Burridge, 2006; Dynel, 2012; Infante & Rancer, 1996). Another major verbal aggression found in the dataset are competency attacks. The examples below attack the competency of people:

(4) Ajani: This panel of enquiries sound too apologetic and weak.
(5) Evo: @Tosin Ojo the panel is a scam that lacks power.
(6) Fine Trust: A total disgraceful panel ...some are serious while some are not . Even criticizing each other over question asked. Unprofessional panelist. This General Taiwo denying everything .....omg
(7) Prince: The panels is being disgrace shame on Nigerian
(8) SuperStarZ: Investigation Panel without real power. It's very embarrassing to watch this.
(9) Emeka Nnamdi: … HOWEVER, THIS PANEL OF INQUIRY IS USELESS AND WASTE OF TIME.I THOUGHT THE PANEL WAS SET UP TO LOOK INTO HUMAN RIGHT VIOLATION AND POLICE BRUTALITY...
(10) Flames: Are they stupid for going to the military morgue without clearance.. common nah.. this is not a competent panel, I don't think the panel can effectively carry out their duty. EndSars

The extracts in (4-9) are competency attacks, which constitute threat to the "quality face" (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, 2008) of the panellists. The competency of the panel of inquiry is questioned here. The participants observe with disgust that the panel is "too weak and apologetic" and it "lacks power"; therefore, it "is useless and a waste of time"; "Proceedings are useless! No justice will come!" Publicly 'criticizing each other' is described as unprofessionalism and incompetence. The participants express negativity throughout these extracts, which is a show of their hostility (Infante & Rancer, 1996) towards, and lack of faith and trust in, the panel. (10) contains three competency attacks. The participant starts by criticising the panel for visiting an army hospital for investigation without any official clearance or permit; this implicates an attack on their competency. That is followed by an on-record attack: "this is not a competent panel". The last act expresses doubt in their ability to do the task effectively, which also attacks their competency. Thus, (4-10) will definitely be evaluated as aggressive and impolite in this context.

In addition, competency attacks are not used for only the panellists; the competency of the security men is also attacked. See examples (11-13).

(11) Barnabas: This simply means that this Police Counsel just ended up wasting the Panel's time with unneccessary questionings and talk.
(12) Ebuka Chukwukaelo: Any uniform personal in Nigeria, should be reoriented, restructured and re-formed!!! So so rude!!
(13) BLACK: @Olubayo Olasokan The Nigerian army are so unprofessional its unbelievable

(11) above implicates that the police counsel is incompetent; otherwise he should not have asked unnecessary questions. Also, the participants attack the competency face of Nigerian uniform personnel; it simply implies they are not competent and that is why they "should be reoriented, restructured and re-formed". Otherwise, there will be no need for reorientation, restructuring and reform. Similarly, we see in (13) that "Nigerian Army are so unprofessional"; this also attacks their "quality face" their competence specifically.

4.1.3 Insults

Insults are also a major type of verbally aggressive comments in my dataset. Insults, or verbal abuse, are often used to debase, demean, harm or denigrate other participants or give them negative attributes (Allan & Burridge, 2006; Dynel, 2012; Infante & Rancer, 1996). The excerpts in (14-16) below are all insults.

(14) Patrick Smith: Shame on you. You don't even know anything   mumu man
(15) Danl Shame on u ppl just imagine the u really think u will find anybody here come on like say not be naija who na Dey
(16) Chukwunyere Why are you guys thank him for what. Una be mumu

The excerpts in (14-16) are insulting. "Shame on you (people)" is an insult. We can also see that the members of the panel are called a name, *mumu* (idiot), and they are insulted for visiting the morgue of the military hospital to find out whether there were any corpses of the acclaimed protesters who died at the Lekki incident. Similarly, the panel members are insulted for showing courtesy (16). Instances of these are many in the data. This seems to indicate a show of aggression

because of their anger against the government due to violation of human rights, as many participants allege.

4.2 Impoliteness

The dataset was full of offensive language, impoliteness. This is in tune with previous studies that have reported that online interactions are filled with impoliteness (Dynel, 2012; Graham, 2007, 2008, 2017; Graham & Hardaker, 2017; Haugh, 2010). Figure (1) below shows the manifestation of conventionalised impoliteness (Culpeper, 2010, 2011, 2016; Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003) in the dataset:

Figure 1: conventionalised impoliteness in EndSARS videos
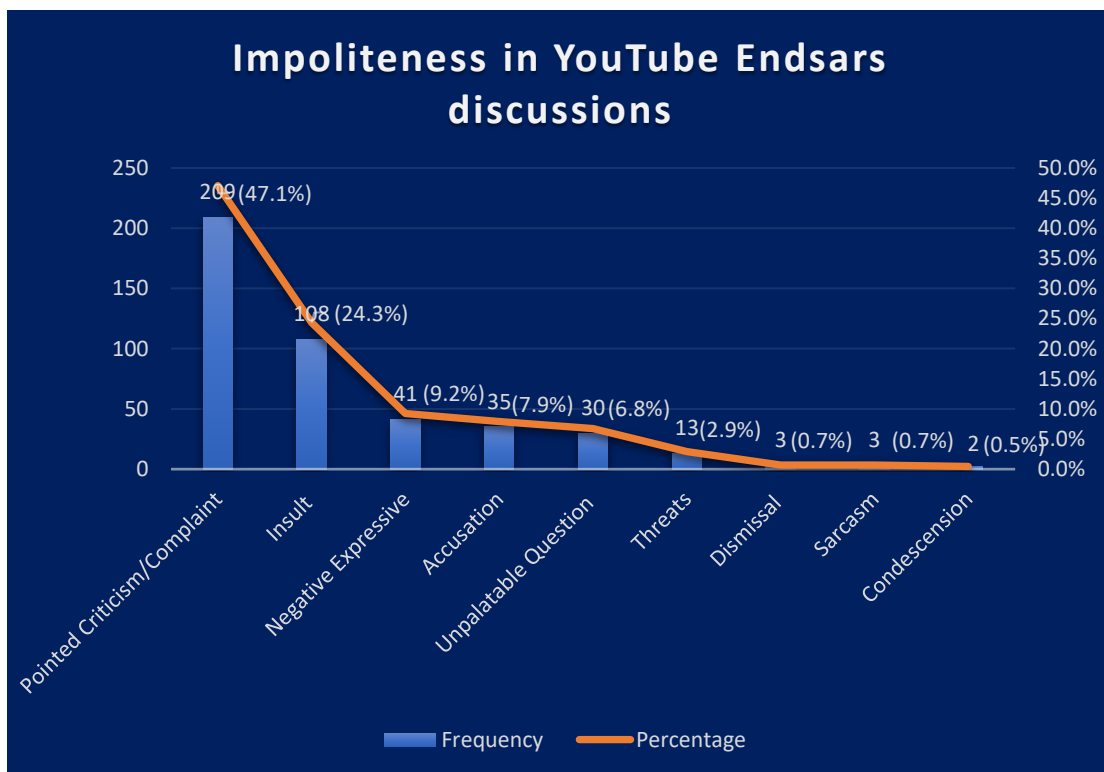
4.2.1   Pointed criticisms/complaints

As reflected in Figure 1, pointed criticisms/complaints and insults have the highest frequency of conventionalised impoliteness used by the YouTubers in the dataset. Pointed criticisms and complaints top the list with a frequency of 47.1%. This is a reflection of the conflict context in which the dataset is produced. The excerpts in (17-19) suffice here.

(17) bode abass: It is our right as citizens of our nation to express our dislikes with non violence protest which we did, But after the killings of the innocents, vandalization of properties was been carried out by the same people who committed genocide against their own children in order to justify their inhuman actions by roping us in, making the world thinks we've gone against the rules of engagement,,

(18) Note: protesters were armless,, We're your children, you should protect us, not kill us...

(19) Aamira's Kitchen: Nigeria is a joke… Soldiers who are supposed to secure the lives of the citizens now end up killing them…

(17) is a pointed complaint. A complaint has been described as reproach because it shows a misconduct of the target and morally holds the target responsible for that wrongdoing (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2019). Examples (18-19) are pointed criticisms; they criticise the government (18) and the soldiers (19). The "youth protesters were armless" and "children" of the president and the governor of Lagos State; they do not deserve to be killed under any situation. The soldiers are pointedly criticised for misuse of power; they allegedly killed the citizens they are meant to protect. This turn simultaneously accuses the government of genocide. These are a way of blaming the government and morally holding it responsible (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2019) for killing its citizens.

4.2.2   Insults

The second highest conventionalised impoliteness found in the dataset are various categories of insults, with a frequency of 24.3%. As we saw under aggression, insults attack the quality face of the members of the panel, the military and police and the government. We can consider examples (20-23) here.

(20) Good luck: Whatever happens to her brother is not her business as long as she's not his criminal counterpart What's wrong with Nigerian police?. Nigerian police is a crazy organisation

(21) Chiebuk: Boko Haram you can't fight 🤣 🤣 🤣 🤣 See Nigeria soldiers 🤣 🤣 🤣

(22) DH : @Lancer Evo This is the problem with this country...everything that is done is scam…. Secondly, your statement clearly indicates that legal route is not an option for you…

Examples (20-21) are personalised negative references (Culpeper, 2011, 2016). It could be argued that these are to the hearing of the targets since they too have access to the YouTube platform. "See Nigeria soldiers" in (21) is used to ridicule them, which exacerbates the impoliteness of this turn. (22) is interesting in a way; it is directed at a co-participant. It is personalised with the use of "you" and a negative assertion is made about Lancer Evo, which is a threat on his/her face. It portrays Lance Evo as someone who is lawless.

4.2.3   Expressives

Conventionalised impoliteness of expressive category used in the dataset is 9.2%. This includes curses and ill-wishes, as shown in examples (23-26):

(23) Adesuyi: Thunder will fire buhari generation and his cabals sanwo olu, brigadier taiwo, fasola, tinubu ojuyobo, IG Mohammed Adamu

(24) AKEN: God punish you all evil soldiers

(25) Ejakhegbe God will punish all Nigeria leaders one be one

(26) SuperStarZ Investigation Panel without real power. It's very embarrassing to watch this … Shame on the Nigerian Government.

Turns in (23-25) are negative expressives. The Nigerian leaders and the soldiers are cursed. (23) specifically mentions the leaders who are the targets of its curse. (26) is another category of negative expressive; it is an ill-wish. These as well show that the YouTubers are angry at the Nigerian leaders and the military. The use of verbal aggression and impoliteness here seems to be a means of retaliation since the youths do not have any means of redress.

4.2.4   Accusations

Like complaints and criticisms, (pointed) accusations are also perceived as impoliteness. Although, they do not appear in conventionalised impoliteness of Culpeper (2011, 2016) and Culpeper et al. (2003), it has been argued that accusations too cause offence and conflict. And an accusation shows that the target has been involved in wrongdoing. It is also argued that accusation, complaint and blame can be used synonymously because one can implicate the other (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2019).

Accusations account for approximately 8% of the conventionalised impoliteness found in my dataset. Some of these are shown in examples (27-29).

(27) AKINFEMIWA: There's something in the offing that the Nigerian Army is covering up here …
(28) enehizena: They have gone to hide the bodies, what a shameless government
(29) Innocent Nwajiaku: Buhari has call this people not to allow you people not to enter, they are hiding clearing the death body.

In examples (27-29), the government and the military are accused of hiding the corpses of the protesters allegedly killed at Lekki Toll Gate despite that the panel does not find any corpses at the hospital. This shows the YouTubers do not have any trust in both the government and the military because several of them make these accusations. These are on-record attacks and implicate that the government and its security are lying to the public.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the use of verbal aggression and impoliteness in the comments posted on the videos of the Lagos panel of inquiry on the allegation of shooting and killing of EndSARS protesters. The results support previous studies that found excessive use of impoliteness in online platforms and interactions. This paper reveals that character attacks, competency attacks and insults were the most common verbal aggression employed in the dataset, while pointed criticisms/complaints, insults, negative expressives, accusations and unpalatable questions/assertions were the major conventionalised impoliteness used by the YouTubers. It was also found that the government, the military and the police, and the panel members were the major targets of attacks.

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