

Communicating Economic Relief Interventions in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Crisis Communication Updates 2–8: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Angel Edward Kongo

*Department of Communication Studies,
University of Professional Studies, Accra; Accra, Ghana
angel.kongo@upsamail.edu.gh*

ABSTRACT

This study examines how economic relief interventions were discursively constructed in President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8 and how the discourse represented confidence and resilience amid economic disruption. Drawing on Fairclough's (1992, 1995, 2015) Critical Discourse Analysis, the study adopted a qualitative design to analyse transcripts of seven presidential updates delivered between March and April 2020. The analysis focused on economic-relief segments concerning the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme, business support, tax relief, utility subsidies, food assistance, and financial support. Five discourse strategies emerged: policy specification, problem–solution framing, quantification/evidentialisation, beneficiary orientation, and legitimization. Quantification/evidentialisation was most frequent (37 occurrences), followed by policy specification and beneficiary orientation (28 each), legitimization (20), and problem–solution framing (16). These strategies represented government as capable, responsive, and committed, constructing confidence around governmental capacity and responsiveness. Resilience was constructed through problem–solution framing and policy specification, portraying economic disruption as serious but manageable through coordinated intervention and recovery pathways. Beneficiary orientation positioned vulnerable citizens, households, informal workers, and businesses as legitimate recipients of state protection. The study argues that economic-relief discourse functioned not merely to communicate policy but also as a form of crisis governance through which responsibility, institutional capacity, vulnerability, confidence, and resilience were constructed, contributing to scholarship on economic intervention and recovery in Ghana and crisis communication more broadly.

Keywords: COVID-19; economic-relief discourse; strategic governmental communication; crisis governance; Critical Discourse Analysis; Ghana

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic generated profound economic disruptions worldwide, affecting business continuity, employment, supply chains, household incomes, and national economic stability (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2021; World Bank, 2022). In response, governments introduced fiscal and monetary interventions, while international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), mobilised emergency financing, grants, concessional resources, and technical assistance to address the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2021; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020; World Bank, 2020). However, crisis management involved more than providing economic assistance; governments also needed to communicate interventions in ways that explained their purpose, justified their implementation, and established expectations about collective responses. Crisis

communication is therefore important because it can shape perceptions of responsibility, credibility, uncertainty, and collective action (Coombs, 2021; Heide & Simonsson, 2021), while strategic communication extends beyond information dissemination to purposeful communication that facilitates stakeholder engagement and resilience (Cornelissen, 2020). The communicative dimension of economic relief is particularly significant because governmental messages can construct understandings of crises, governmental responsibilities, affected populations, and possible responses. Strategic communication is widely recognised as a component of crisis management because it can reduce uncertainty, strengthen institutional legitimacy, and encourage cooperation (Coombs, 2021; Falkheimer & Heide, 2022; Hallahan et al., 2007). Through linguistic and discourse choices, political actors may represent government as responsive and capable, portray citizens as deserving recipients of assistance, emphasise continuity and collective effort, and communicate assurances about the capacity to withstand adversity. Such discourse may consequently construct orientations such as confidence and resilience, although these should not automatically be equated with actual changes in citizens' attitudes or behaviour. Rather, they can be examined as discursively constructed meanings within texts, making Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) appropriate for examining how economic relief is represented and how discourse constructs understandings of governmental support and citizens' capacity to cope with crisis.

In Ghana, the government introduced several economic interventions to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic during the early containment period. Following the announcement of the partial lockdown on 30 March 2020, the government introduced the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP), which included measures intended to support households and businesses and sustain economic activity during the restrictions (Ministry of Finance, 2020). The Coronavirus Alleviation Programme Business Support Scheme (CAPBuSS) was subsequently introduced through the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) to provide financial assistance to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises affected by the pandemic (NBSSI, 2020). Other measures announced during this period included tax relief initiatives, credit support mechanisms, utility subsidies, food assistance, and financial support for businesses and affected economic actors (Bank of Ghana, 2020; Ministry of Finance, 2020). These interventions constituted part of Ghana's immediate emergency response, whereas the Ghana CARES "Obaatan Pa" Programme, launched later in 2020, represented a subsequent medium-term economic recovery strategy rather than an intervention directly associated with the immediate emergency response examined in this study (Ministry of Finance, 2021; National Development Planning Commission [NDPC], 2021). The communication of these interventions was particularly important because President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo assumed a central public communication role through nationally televised COVID-19 updates delivered between March and April 2020. Although the updates predominantly addressed public-health interventions, they also communicated economic measures intended to mitigate the pandemic's effects. Across Updates 2–8, the President communicated interventions including the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme, financial support for businesses, tax-related relief measures, utility subsidies, food assistance, and other forms of economic support. These presidential addresses therefore constituted an important channel through which economic relief interventions were explained, framed, and legitimised, while also providing opportunities to represent the crisis, establish governmental responsibility, and communicate assurances about citizens' ability to endure economic difficulties.

Existing scholarship on COVID-19 crisis communication has largely examined how governments and political leaders communicated health risks, promoted behavioural compliance, managed uncertainty, and sought public trust during the pandemic (Coombs, 2021; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021; Malecki et al., 2021). Within Ghana, emerging studies of President

Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 communication have similarly examined rhetorical strategies, political leadership, persuasion, national identity construction, public-health discourse, and the framing of citizens' responsibilities during the crisis (Kwame, et al, 2023; Rockson, 2024). These studies have provided valuable insights into how presidential discourse was used to legitimise containment measures and mobilise public cooperation. At the same time, research on pandemic economic responses has concentrated substantially on the design, implementation, distribution, and effectiveness of economic relief policies and institutional responses (Béland et al., 2021; Gentilini et al., 2022; IMF, 2020). Although strategic communication is recognised as an important component of crisis governance because it can influence perceptions of uncertainty, policy legitimacy, and public understanding (Coombs, 2015; Seeger et al., 2018), comparatively limited attention has been given to the specific discourse strategies through which economic relief interventions were communicated and how such strategies sought to construct citizens' confidence and resilience. This gap is significant because the communication of economic relief involves more than announcing government programmes; the language used can shape representations of government action, assistance, responsibility, hope, continuity, and collective capacity within a crisis narrative. Existing research has not sufficiently examined how these meanings were constructed through President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 updates, particularly in relation to the economic relief interventions communicated in Updates 2–8.

The present study therefore addresses this gap by examining the discourse strategies employed to communicate economic relief interventions and the ways in which those strategies sought to construct citizens' confidence and resilience. The study does not claim that presidential discourse actually produced confidence or resilience among citizens, nor does it measure citizens' perceptions, policy acceptance, programme uptake, or economic outcomes. Instead, confidence and resilience are treated as discursively constructed orientations that can be inferred from the textual representation of economic relief and the communicative functions performed by the identified discourse strategies. Against this background, the study is guided by two research questions: RQ1. What discourse strategies are employed to communicate economic relief interventions to citizens in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8? RQ2. How do the discourse strategies employed in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8 discursively construct citizens' confidence and resilience in relation to economic relief interventions? Addressing these questions, the study contributes to scholarship on political discourse, strategic communication, and crisis communication by demonstrating how governmental economic relief can be constructed not merely as a set of policy measures but also as a communicative resource through which citizens are positioned in relation to crisis, assistance, and collective capacity to cope with economic disruption.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which views discourse as social practice that both reflects and constructs social reality, institutional relations, and power (Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2015). CDA is relevant to presidential crisis communication because governmental discourse explains policies, constructs legitimacy, represents social actors, and seeks public cooperation. In the context of COVID-19, communicating economic relief required the government to explain financial support, tax relief, utility subsidies, and business assistance while addressing uncertainty and projecting governmental capacity. The framework therefore enables this study to examine how economic relief was discursively constructed and legitimised rather than measure citizens' confidence, participation, or economic outcomes.

Fairclough's three-dimensional model provides the analytical structure, comprising text, discursive practice, and social practice. At the textual level, the study examines discourse strategies to identify how economic relief interventions, government actions, responsibilities, and social actors are represented. The discursive-practice dimension considers the presidential updates as official institutional communications, focusing on their production, circulation, narratives, representations, and relationship with governmental and policy discourses. The analysis does not examine media content, audience responses, or stakeholder interviews; consequently, it makes no claims about how citizens or businesses interpreted the addresses.

At the level of social practice, the analysis situates the presidential discourse within Ghana's political, economic, and institutional response to COVID-19. Contextual evidence is drawn from Ghana's *COVID-19 Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies*, the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP) implementation framework, government budget statements and economic policy measures, and official reports from the Ministry of Finance, Bank of Ghana, and Ghana Statistical Service. These sources provide context for understanding economic disruption, employment pressures, fiscal constraints, and government interventions during the pandemic. The social-practice dimension consequently enables the study to examine how discourses of relief, support, resilience, partnership, and recovery relate to wider structures of crisis governance, economic responsibility, and institutional legitimacy.

Although CDA has been criticised for researcher subjectivity, selective interpretation, ideological over-reading, limited replicability, and attributing intentions without sufficient evidence, these concerns are addressed through systematic and transparent analysis. Interpretations are grounded in identifiable textual evidence and connected to Fairclough's three dimensions and relevant institutional contexts, while the study avoids claims about the speaker's private intentions (Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2015). The framework directly informs the research questions: the first is addressed primarily through the textual dimension by identifying discourse strategies used to communicate economic relief interventions, while the second draws on the interaction of text, discursive practice, and social practice to examine how such interventions are constructed to foster confidence and resilience. Thus, Fairclough's CDA provides a framework for moving beyond identifying discursual strategies to explaining their communicative and socio-political significance within Ghana's COVID-19 crisis discourse.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Empirical research on governmental crisis communication during COVID-19 establishes that official communication was central to managing uncertainty, explaining interventions, sustaining trust, and guiding public responses. International studies associate effective crisis communication with consistency, transparency, empathy, reassurance, and institutional credibility (Coombs, 2021; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021; Malecki et al., 2021). However, communication does not produce uniform responses because its effects are shaped by political contexts, institutional trust, and audience interpretation (Malecki et al., 2021). Crisis communication should therefore be examined not only in terms of information transmitted but also how official messages construct understandings of crises, government responses, and affected groups. Despite this broader perspective, much empirical research has focused on health risks, behavioural compliance, and public reassurance, with limited attention to the discursive communication of economic relief.

This limitation is particularly evident in research on Ghanaian governmental communication during COVID-19. Studies of President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 addresses have examined

how his communication responded to public concerns and facilitated public understanding and cooperation (Adjin-Tettey, 2021; Gyamfi & Amankwah, 2021). Gyamfi and Amankwah (2021) identify features of effective crisis communication in the presidential addresses, while Adjin-Tettey (2021) examines responsiveness to public opinion in the lockdown speeches. These studies demonstrate the importance of presidential communication in shaping public understanding, encouraging compliance, and sustaining governmental legitimacy. Nevertheless, Ghanaian literature has predominantly examined Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 communication through public health communication, political leadership, responsiveness, and national mobilisation. Limited attention has therefore been given to how the discourse represented COVID-19's economic consequences and communicated assistance to businesses and other affected groups. The gap is thus not an absence of research on Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 communication, but limited examination of its economic-relief dimension and the discursive processes through which assistance was represented, justified, and legitimised.

A related strand has examined economic responses to COVID-19, largely from policy and implementation perspectives. International assessments by the International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and World Bank document governments' fiscal responses, stimulus measures, and recovery programmes (IMF, 2021; OECD, 2020; World Bank, 2022). In Ghana, studies and policy assessments have examined interventions including the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme Business Support Scheme (CAPBuSS), focusing on funding arrangements, beneficiary selection, implementation, and outcomes (Ministry of Finance, 2021; National Development Planning Commission [NDPC], 2021). This literature establishes the economic significance of relief interventions but leaves their communicative dimension insufficiently examined. It explains more about what governments implemented than how language was used to explain, justify, legitimise, and socially position those interventions. An important empirical gap therefore exists between research on economic policy and governmental communication.

The literature on stakeholder confidence further demonstrates the importance of this communicative dimension. Studies suggest that transparent, consistent, and empathetic crisis communication can reduce uncertainty and strengthen institutional credibility (Coombs, 2021; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). In economic crises, such communication is particularly consequential because businesses and affected groups depend on governmental messages to interpret risks, understand available support, and anticipate institutional responses. Yet existing studies commonly investigate confidence through stakeholder perceptions, surveys, or organisational case studies rather than linguistic construction within governmental discourse. Consequently, limited empirical evidence exists on how official crisis communication positions businesses, constructs governmental support, and represents resilience and recovery. In Ghana, this gap is significant because presidential updates did not merely announce economic interventions but situated them within narratives of governmental responsibility, national recovery, and collective resilience.

Methodologically, previous empirical research has employed qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, rhetorical analysis, crisis communication frameworks, and Positive Discourse Analysis to examine COVID-19 governmental discourse (Adjin-Tettey, 2021; Gyamfi & Amankwah, 2021; McKeown, 2026). These approaches have generated findings concerning dominant themes, rhetorical appeals, leadership narratives, and representations of government responses. Their contribution, however, has been stronger in explaining what governments communicated and which strategies were evident than how linguistic choices connect to institutional authority, power, ideology, and wider socio-economic relations. This limitation is important because the presentation of economic assistance is not ideologically

neutral: choices concerning representation, agency, obligation, beneficiaries, responsibility, and recovery can shape understandings of government actions and economic actors. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (1992, 1995, 2015) addresses this limitation by relating textual features to discourse production and broader social practice.

Taken together, the literature establishes three points. First, governmental crisis communication is fundamental to managing uncertainty, trust, and public responses, but COVID-19 research has disproportionately emphasised health communication and behavioural compliance. Second, research on COVID-19 economic relief has documented interventions and implementation while paying limited attention to the discourse through which governments communicated and legitimised them. Third, studies of governmental COVID-19 discourse have identified rhetorical and thematic patterns but less frequently examined how language constructs power relations, institutional legitimacy, economic identities, and resilience. These limitations create a specific empirical gap in Ghanaian research: limited discourse-analytic research examines how presidential communication constructed economic relief interventions and represented relationships between government, citizens, and economically affected actors during COVID-19.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the economic-relief discourse in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8 through Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework. Rather than treating the updates merely as policy announcements, the study examines how textual choices, communicative practices, and wider socio-economic contexts constructed economic relief, governmental responsibility, citizen confidence, and resilience. It thereby extends research on Ghanaian COVID-19 communication from a predominantly public-health and rhetorical focus towards the underexplored discourse of economic intervention and crisis recovery.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in Fairclough's (1992, 1995, 2015) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The design was appropriate because the study sought to examine how linguistic and discourse choices constructed meanings around economic relief, governmental responsibility, citizen confidence, and resilience in President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of government interventions or determining citizens' actual perceptions and behavioural responses, the study examined how such meanings were produced and made available through presidential discourse. This distinction is important because the corpus provides evidence of governmental representation and communicative intent, but not direct evidence of audience reception or policy outcomes.

Fairclough's three-dimensional model provided the analytical architecture for moving from textual description to interpretation of discourse practice and social practice. At the textual level, attention was given to discourse features through which economic relief was represented. At the level of discursive practice, the analysis considered how the presidential addresses organised, framed, explained, and justified economic interventions within the communicative context of a national crisis. At the level of social practice, the analysis related these discursive constructions to the wider political, economic, and institutional circumstances of Ghana's COVID-19 response. The three levels were treated as analytically interconnected rather than as isolated stages.

3.2 Data Source

The data comprised the official transcripts of President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8, delivered between March and April 2020. The transcripts were retrieved from publicly accessible Ghanaian government and reputable media archives. The selected updates constituted the corpus because they cover an important phase of Ghana's early COVID-19 response, including the introduction of movement restrictions, the partial lockdown, the announcement of economic relief measures, the extension and modification of those measures, and the subsequent easing of restrictions. Table 1 presents the updates included in the corpus, their dates, principal focus, and source.

The corpus was treated as a bounded presidential discourse corpus rather than as a representation of all governmental communication during the pandemic. Consequently, references to government programmes, institutional actions, or economic interventions were analysed primarily as they were represented within the presidential addresses. External sources were used to establish the contextual circumstances of the addresses where necessary, but they did not constitute part of the primary linguistic corpus.

Table 1: *Presidential COVID-19 Updates Included in the Study and Their Sources*

Update	Date	Main Focus	Online Source
Update 2	15 March 2020	Confirmation of Ghana's first COVID-19 cases, initial preventive measures, and travel restrictions	Ministry of Finance, Ghana
Update 3	21 March 2020	Closure of Ghana's borders to human traffic, mandatory quarantine measures, and restrictions on public gatherings	Ministry of Finance, Ghana
Update 4	27 March 2020	Announcement of the partial lockdown and major economic relief measures	Government of Ghana
Update 5	5 April 2020	Assessment of the first week of the lockdown and implementation of relief measures	Ministry of Health, Ghana
Update 6	9 April 2020	Extension of the partial lockdown and announcement of free water and subsidised electricity measures	MyJoyOnline
Update 7	19 April 2020	Lifting of the partial lockdown while maintaining selected restrictions and announcing further support measures	Graphic Online
Update 8	26 April 2020	Continued preventive protocols and ongoing government response to the pandemic	Ministry of Finance, Ghana

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select Updates 2–8 based on theoretical and substantive relevance rather than statistical representativeness. The seven updates provide a coherent temporal sequence spanning the emergence of economic disruption and the introduction, explanation, implementation, extension, and continuation of major economic-relief measures, including the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP), free water, subsidised electricity, food assistance, and business support.

Sampling occurred at two levels. At the corpus level, Updates 2–8 constituted the study corpus. At the textual level, only segments relevant to the research questions were coded. These included passages that communicated economic-relief interventions, described economic hardship or its consequences, identified beneficiaries, explained implementation mechanisms, justified government action, or represented citizens' capacity to cope with pandemic-related economic effects.

Segments focused exclusively on epidemiological information, infection statistics, clinical advice, or preventive health measures were excluded unless directly linked to the explanation or justification of economic relief. This ensured that the analysis remained focused on economic-relief discourse rather than COVID-19 communication more broadly.

3.4 Unit of Analysis and Analytical Coding Framework

The presidential update constituted the contextual unit of analysis, while the principal analytical unit was the meaningful discourse segment, defined as a sentence, clause, group of clauses, or contiguous passage performing one or more functions related to economic relief or the construction of confidence and resilience. This unit enabled analysis of linguistic choices while retaining sufficient context for interpretation, which was important because CDA strategies such as legitimation, beneficiary orientation, and problem–solution framing may depend on relationships across clauses or sentences.

A deductive coding framework, informed by the research questions and Fairclough's CDA principles, was refined inductively through repeated engagement with the corpus. Five discourse strategies were identified: policy specification, referring to government programmes, interventions, financial commitments, implementation mechanisms, or assistance; problem–solution framing, linking economic or social problems to governmental responses; quantification/evidentialisation, involving numerical or measurable information used to make interventions concrete or verifiable; beneficiary orientation, identifying individuals, households, businesses, workers, vulnerable groups, or communities as affected by or benefiting from relief; and legitimation, representing government intervention as necessary, appropriate, responsible, justified, or institutionally warranted.

The categories were analytically distinct but not mutually exclusive. Segments could receive multiple codes when they performed several functions. For frequency analysis, each occurrence was assigned to its dominant strategy, while overlapping functions were retained for qualitative interpretation.

4. ANALYSIS

The analysis proceeded through four stages. First, the seven transcripts were repeatedly read and segmented according to the inclusion criteria. Second, relevant segments were coded using the five strategy categories, with attention to lexical choice, modality, transitivity, pronouns, evaluation, repetition, parallelism, numerical specification, agency, and representations of social actors. Coding was based on each feature's communicative function within its discourse context.

Third, the coded segments were reviewed across the corpus to identify recurring patterns and calculate the frequency of the five strategies. These frequencies were used descriptively to indicate relative prominence rather than statistical significance or generalisability. Finally, Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework guided interpretation of how linguistic choices realised the strategies at the textual level, how they functioned within presidential crisis

communication to frame and legitimise economic-relief interventions at the discursive-practice level, and how they related to broader issues of governmental responsibility, institutional capacity, vulnerability, and recovery at the social-practice level. Within this interpretation, confidence and resilience were treated as discursive constructions, focusing on representations of government responsiveness, crisis management, economic continuity, coping, adaptation, and recovery. The study did not claim that the speeches directly increased citizens' confidence or resilience, as audience reactions, compliance, policy acceptance, and actual economic outcomes were beyond its scope.

5. FINDINGS/RESULTS

This section presents the findings in relation to the research questions. Drawing on Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis framework, it examines how President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 updates 2–8 constructed and communicated economic relief through five discourse strategies: policy specification, problem–solution framing, quantification/evidentialisation, beneficiary orientation, and legitimation. The findings reflect the communicative construction of economic relief rather than its actual effects on citizens.

5.1 RQ 1. What discourse strategies are employed to communicate economic relief interventions to citizens in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8?

This section addresses Research Question 1 (RQ1): What linguistic and discourse strategies are employed to communicate economic relief interventions to citizens in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8? The analysis focuses exclusively on discourse segments that communicate economic relief interventions. Drawing on the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study examines how discourse strategies are employed to communicate, justify, and reinforce government economic interventions introduced in response to the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the analysis identifies discourse strategies including policy specification, problem-solution framing, quantification/evidentialisation, beneficiary orientation and legitimation. Below is a table illustrating the frequency of the types of discourse strategies across the updates 2–8.

Discourse strategy	Updt 2	Updt 3	Update 4	Updt 5	Updt 6	Updt 7	Updt 8	Total
Policy specification	0	0	6	7	4	8	3	28
Problem–solution framing	0	0	3	4	3	4	2	16
Quantification/evidentialisation	0	0	7	10	6	9	5	37
Beneficiary orientation	0	0	5	7	5	8	3	28
Legitimation	0	0	4	5	3	5	3	20
Total occurrences	0	0	25	33	21	34	16	129

Source: COVID-19 updates 2–8

5.1.1 Policy specification

Policy specification emerged as a prominent discourse strategy through which economic relief interventions were presented as identifiable, structured, and actionable government measures. Rather than referring to economic assistance in general terms, the President specified the nature, scope, beneficiaries, and mechanisms of particular interventions. This strategy enabled the discourse to transform government relief from an abstract promise into concrete policy actions that citizens could identify and understand. The extracts below illustrate how policy

specification was used to communicate the content and purpose of economic relief interventions across the selected updates.

In Update 4, the specification of the “Coronavirus Alleviation Programme” (CAP) gives the economic intervention a distinct institutional identity and establishes its intended purposes. The extract reads: “a Coronavirus Alleviation Programme to address the disruption in economic activities, the hardship of our people, and to rescue and revitalize our industries.” The verbs “address,” “rescue,” and “revitalize” present the programme as a deliberate response to identifiable economic difficulties rather than as a general expression of governmental concern. The formulation also connects the intervention to three dimensions of the crisis; economic disruption, hardship, and industrial decline, thereby presenting government action as targeted at specific consequences of the pandemic.

5.1.2 Problem–solution framing

Problem–solution framing was employed to establish a relationship between the economic difficulties created by the pandemic and the interventions introduced by government. The strategy typically presents a recognisable problem such as economic disruption, hardship, declining business activity, or pressure on livelihoods and subsequently positions government intervention as the appropriate response. Through this structure, economic relief is represented not as an isolated policy choice but as a necessary response to identifiable conditions. The extracts demonstrate how the presidential discourse connected economic problems with specific forms of government action.

In Update 5, the extract “protect households and livelihoods, support SMEs, and minimize the impact of the lockdown on businesses” presents economic relief as a deliberate response to the adverse consequences of the lockdown. The sequence of verbs: “protect,” “support,” and “minimize” constructs intervention as purposeful action directed at reducing economic harm. The formulation also broadens the scope of the response from individual households to livelihoods, SMEs, and businesses, thereby representing the intervention as addressing several interconnected effects of the crisis.

5.1.3 Quantification/Evidentialisation

Quantification/evidentialisation constituted another important strategy through which the presidential discourse gave economic relief a measurable and apparently verifiable character. Monetary amounts, percentages, beneficiary numbers, and other numerical details were used to demonstrate the scale, scope, and specificity of government interventions. In this way, numbers functioned not merely as informational elements but as discursive resources for making government support appear concrete, substantial, and accountable. The following extracts illustrate how numerical information was deployed in communicating economic relief. In Update 7, the specification of “six hundred million cedis (GH¢600 million)” quantifies the financial resources allocated to micro, small, and medium-scale businesses. The figure gives material expression to the scale of government assistance and makes the intervention more concrete for the economic actors to whom the policy is directed. By attaching a precise monetary value to the intervention, the discourse also presents government support as a substantial and measurable commitment.

5.1.4 Beneficiary orientation

Beneficiary orientation refers to the explicit identification and categorisation of the individuals, households, businesses, sectors, and economically vulnerable groups intended to receive or benefit from government relief. The strategy makes the target population of economic interventions visible within the discourse and connects specific forms of assistance to particular

groups. By naming beneficiaries, the presidential discourse constructs economic relief as targeted rather than indiscriminate and represents government as responsive to differentiated forms of economic vulnerability. The extracts below demonstrate how particular groups were positioned within the relief discourse.

In Update 6, the phrase “the poorest of the poor, i.e. for all lifeline consumers” places economic vulnerability at the centre of the justification for electricity relief. The expression “poorest of the poor” is strongly evaluative and distinguishes those considered most economically disadvantaged from the wider population. Its association with “lifeline consumers” gives the intervention a specific target group and suggests that the subsidy is intended to reach households with limited capacity to absorb additional economic costs. The relief is thus presented as differentiated according to levels of economic vulnerability.

5.1.5 Legitimation

Legitimation was employed to present government economic interventions as appropriate, necessary, responsible, and justified responses to the crisis. Unlike policy specification, which establishes what government was doing, legitimation explains or constructs why those interventions should be regarded as appropriate. The strategy frequently relied on representations of governmental responsiveness, competence, responsibility, and concern for citizens' livelihoods. Through these representations, economic relief was positioned as a legitimate exercise of state responsibility during an exceptional crisis.

In Update 5, legitimation is conveyed through the presentation of economic relief as a response to the effects of the lockdown: “protect households and livelihoods, support SMEs, and minimize the impact of the lockdown on businesses.” The verbs “protect,” “support,” and “minimize” foreground the practical purposes of the intervention. They associate government assistance with the protection of livelihoods and the reduction of economic hardship, thereby presenting the intervention as justified by its expected benefits to households and businesses. Economic relief is consequently framed as part of the government's responsibility to lessen the economic consequences of the restrictions.

5.2 RQ2. How do the discourse strategies employed in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 Updates 2–8 seek to construct citizens' confidence and resilience through the communication of economic relief interventions?

The findings for RQ2 examine how discourse strategies construct citizens' confidence and resilience through the representation of government economic relief interventions in updates 2–8. Confidence and resilience are treated as discursive constructions rather than directly measured outcomes.

5.2.1 Governmental Capacity → Confidence

This construction draws particularly on policy specification, quantification/evidentialisation and legitimation. The President does not merely say that government will help citizens; he specifies programmes, amounts, beneficiaries and mechanisms. This represents government as organised, capable and able to respond materially to the economic crisis. The extract from Update 4, “a minimum of one billion cedis (GH¢1 billion) to households and businesses, particularly small and medium scale enterprises,” constructs governmental capacity through the combination of policy specification and quantification. The specification of a minimum financial allocation transforms the government's commitment to economic relief from a general promise into a measurable undertaking. The phrase “a minimum of” also suggests that GH¢1

billion represents a committed baseline rather than an uncertain estimate, thereby presenting the intervention as financially planned and institutionally supported. By identifying households and small and medium-scale enterprises as beneficiaries, the discourse further demonstrates that the allocation is directed towards specific economic groups affected by the crisis. In this way, the precise monetary commitment makes government capacity materially visible and can support an inferred sense of confidence in the availability and reliability of institutional assistance.

5.2.2 Crisis Manageability → Resilience

This construction is achieved mainly through problem–solution framing and policy specification. The speeches acknowledge economic hardship but simultaneously represent it as a problem that can be managed through identifiable interventions.

In Update 4, the extract “a Coronavirus Alleviation Programme to address the disruption in economic activities, the hardship of our people, and to rescue and revitalize our industries” constructs the economic crisis as a problem that can be addressed through a specified government intervention. The naming of the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP) gives the proposed response a concrete institutional form, while the verbs “address,” “rescue,” and “revitalize” establish a progression from economic difficulty towards recovery. Importantly, the extract does not present disruption, hardship and industrial decline as conditions beyond government control; rather, each is connected to an identifiable remedial action. The discourse therefore creates a problem–intervention–recovery sequence in which economic adversity is represented as manageable. This construction can support resilience by positioning households, economic activities and industries within a framework in which the effects of the crisis can be confronted and overcome through organised intervention.

5.2.3 Social Protection → Confidence and Resilience

This construction draws especially on beneficiary orientation, quantification and legitimation. The President repeatedly identifies particular groups such as poor households, vulnerable citizens, informal workers and MSMEs as beneficiaries of government assistance.

In Update 8, the extract “the impact of the restrictions on several sectors of our population, especially our informal workers” foregrounds the differentiated economic consequences of the containment measures. Identifying “several sectors” and, more specifically, “our informal workers,” the discourse acknowledges that the effects of the restrictions are unevenly distributed across the population. The possessive “our” also creates an inclusive representation of informal workers as part of the national community whose economic difficulties require governmental attention. Rather than presenting these effects as unintended consequences outside the scope of policy, the extract incorporates them into the government's crisis-management considerations. This construction contributes to resilience by representing economic disruption as a condition that can be recognised, considered and responded to through appropriate policy measures.

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings demonstrate that economic relief in President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 updates 2–8 was constructed through five interrelated strategies. Quantification/evidentialisation was most frequent (37 occurrences), followed by policy specification and beneficiary orientation (28 each), legitimation (20), and problem–solution framing (16). These patterns indicate that economic relief was presented as concrete, measurable, targeted, and justifiable government action, particularly from Update 4, when the partial lockdown and major relief interventions

were introduced. Quantification/evidentialisation was particularly prominent because monetary amounts, percentages, beneficiary numbers, and eligibility thresholds transformed relief into measurable governmental action. References to GH¢1 billion for households and businesses, GH¢600 million for MSMEs, 400,000 individuals and homes receiving food assistance, and specified electricity-consumption thresholds gave interventions a seemingly verifiable basis. This finding is consistent with crisis-communication literature linking transparency, consistency, and credibility to effective governmental communication (Coombs, 2021; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). It extends this literature by demonstrating how credibility may be constructed linguistically through numerical evidence. Numbers therefore did not merely communicate information; they made state action visible by representing government as capable of identifying problems, mobilising resources, and allocating them to specific interventions. From a Faircloughian perspective, these measurable commitments constructed government as materially capable and administratively organised. The movement from promises of “bold measures” to specific financial commitments, including the GH¢1.2 billion CAP described in Update 7, gave economic intervention a concrete institutional form.

Policy specification similarly represented economic relief as organised governmental action. By naming programmes, objectives, delivery mechanisms, and forms of assistance, the President presented the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme, soft-loan scheme, tax relief, utility subsidies, and business support as identifiable interventions rather than general promises. This complements research on Ghanaian presidential COVID-19 communication, which identifies governmental responsiveness, reassurance, and institutional leadership as important features of the addresses (Adjin-Tettey, 2021; Gyamfi & Amankwah, 2021). The present findings further show that responsiveness was constructed through detailed economic-policy specification. References to institutions such as the National Board for Small Scale Industries, Business and Trade Associations, and financial institutions represented relief as an organised process involving identifiable actors.

Problem–solution framing constructed economic disruption as a condition that could be addressed through government intervention. Although the discourse acknowledged “discomfort and difficulties,” it connected these challenges to measures intended to protect households, support businesses, minimise job losses, and revive industries. This created a problem → intervention → recovery trajectory, consistent with crisis-communication scholarship emphasising the importance of explaining crises and governmental responses (Coombs, 2021; Seeger et al., 2018). The framing also contributed to resilience by presenting economic hardship as serious but manageable. The sequence in Update 4, economic disruption, recognition of hardship, intervention, and potential recovery, positioned citizens and businesses within a framework of response rather than uncontrollable crisis. The reference in Update 7 to making the Ghanaian economy “much more resilient” further establishes resilience as an explicit policy objective.

Beneficiary orientation gave economic relief a social dimension by repeatedly identifying households, MSMEs, poor and vulnerable citizens, informal workers, and affected communities as recipients of assistance. This finding resonates with scholarship emphasising audience orientation and attention to affected populations during crises (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021), while extending Ghanaian research by showing that inclusivity and responsiveness were constructed through the explicit representation of differentiated economic vulnerability. The repeated identification of MSMEs is particularly significant because businesses were represented as integral to national economic recovery. Likewise, the representation of informal workers as people who need “a day out” to provide for themselves and their families linked livelihood survival with economic continuity. In Fairclough’s terms, the discourse did not

merely identify social actors; it constructed social relations in which government appeared as provider and protector and citizens and businesses as legitimate recipients of intervention.

Legitimation reinforced the representation of governmental responsibility. Expressions such as “As a responsive Government” and assurances about the capacity to “bring back” the economy represented government as responsive, purposeful, and competent. This accords with Fairclough’s (1992, 1995, 2015) view that discourse contributes to the construction and maintenance of institutional relations and power. Economic relief was therefore represented not simply as an intervention government chose to provide but as an institutional responsibility arising from its role in managing the crisis.

The findings for RQ2 show that confidence and resilience were constructed through governmental capacity, crisis manageability, and social protection. Governmental capacity emerged primarily through policy specification, quantification/evidentialisation, and legitimation, as programmes, financial allocations, beneficiaries, and implementation mechanisms represented government as organised and capable. This interpretation is consistent with literature connecting crisis communication to institutional credibility and uncertainty management (Coombs, 2021; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021), while extending it by identifying the textual mechanisms through which credibility was constructed. Crisis manageability was produced through the interaction of problem–solution framing and policy specification, which presented economic disruption as serious but responsive to intervention. Importantly, this does not establish that citizens actually became more resilient because of the addresses; rather, the discourse created a representational environment in which disruption was framed as something that could be endured, mitigated, and overcome.

Finally, the interaction of social protection, confidence, and resilience demonstrates that economic relief was constructed through a human-centred representation of crisis governance. The combination of beneficiary orientation and quantification made both the scale of intervention and its intended recipients visible, as illustrated by the identification of 400,000 individuals and homes receiving food assistance and MSMEs receiving GH¢600 million in support. All in all, the findings show that economic relief functioned simultaneously as policy communication and crisis-governance discourse. Interventions were specified, measured, targeted, problematised, and legitimised in ways that represented government as responsive and capable while positioning citizens and businesses as legitimate beneficiaries of state protection. From Fairclough’s CDA perspective, the significance lies in the relationship between textual choices and social practice: language did not merely describe economic interventions but participated in constructing governmental responsibility, institutional capacity, economic vulnerability, and collective possibilities for coping with crisis.

7. CONCLUSION

The study examined how economic relief was discursively communicated in President Akufo-Addo’s COVID-19 Updates 2–8 and how this discourse constructed confidence and resilience. Five strategies were identified: policy specification, problem–solution framing, quantification/evidentialisation, beneficiary orientation, and legitimation.

Quantification/evidentialisation was most frequent, followed by policy specification and beneficiary orientation. Collectively, these strategies represented economic relief as concrete, measurable, targeted, and institutionally organised. Confidence was constructed through representations of state capacity, responsiveness, resource mobilisation, and implementation, while resilience was constructed by presenting the crisis as manageable and linking hardship to intervention, mitigation, and recovery. Social protection reinforced these constructions by

positioning vulnerable citizens, informal workers, households, and businesses as legitimate beneficiaries.

The findings contribute to crisis communication scholarship by showing that governmental communication is not merely a channel for transmitting policy information but a discursive process through which state–citizen relations and crisis responses are constructed and legitimised. The study extends Ghanaian research on COVID-19 presidential communication beyond public health, persuasion, solidarity, and political leadership to the discursive construction of economic intervention and recovery. It also demonstrates the usefulness of Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis for connecting textual features with presidential communication and the wider practice of crisis governance.

However, the findings are limited to what can be established from presidential discourse and cannot demonstrate actual changes in citizens’ or businesses’ confidence, resilience, behaviour, or economic outcomes. Confidence and resilience are therefore understood as meanings constructed within the discourse rather than demonstrated effects. Future research could combine CDA with interviews, surveys, media-reception studies, and policy-outcome data to examine audience interpretations and observable effects. All in all, the study shows that economic-relief communication was an important dimension of COVID-19 crisis governance in Ghana, constructing economic assistance not only as material support but also as a resource for representing governmental capacity, social protection, collective endurance, and economic recovery.

8. IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, the study extends Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis by demonstrating that economic-relief communication functions not merely as information dissemination but as a form of crisis governance through which governmental responsibility, institutional capacity, vulnerability, confidence, and resilience are discursively constructed using strategies such as policy specification, quantification/evidentialisation, beneficiary orientation, problem–solution framing, and legitimation. Managerially and practically, the findings suggest that government communicators should provide clear and credible information about the nature, scale, beneficiaries, implementation mechanisms, and purpose of relief interventions, while using concrete figures and problem–solution framing to communicate hardship and pathways to mitigation and recovery without assuming that communication alone produces confidence or resilience. From a policy perspective, the study highlights the importance of integrating communication into the design and implementation of economic-relief programmes, ensuring that public messages correspond with actual resources, eligibility criteria, and delivery arrangements, while promoting transparency, accountability, audience feedback, and outcome evidence to assess whether discursively constructed confidence and resilience reflect citizens’ and businesses lived experiences.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is limited by its focus on seven presidential COVID-19 updates (Updates 2–8) and economic-relief discourse, as well as its reliance on presidential discourse and contextual policy documents without direct evidence from citizens, businesses, media audiences, or implementing institutions; consequently, it establishes how confidence and resilience were discursively constructed but cannot determine whether these constructions translated into actual stakeholder perceptions, acceptance, or economic outcomes. Future research should therefore combine discourse analysis with surveys and interviews involving households,

informal workers, MSMEs, and other beneficiaries, alongside media-reception and policy or administrative data, to examine how relief messages were interpreted, reproduced, challenged, and associated with programme uptake and outcomes. Comparative studies across African governments and different national crises could further establish whether the identified discourse strategies are context-specific or reflect broader patterns of governmental crisis communication.

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